

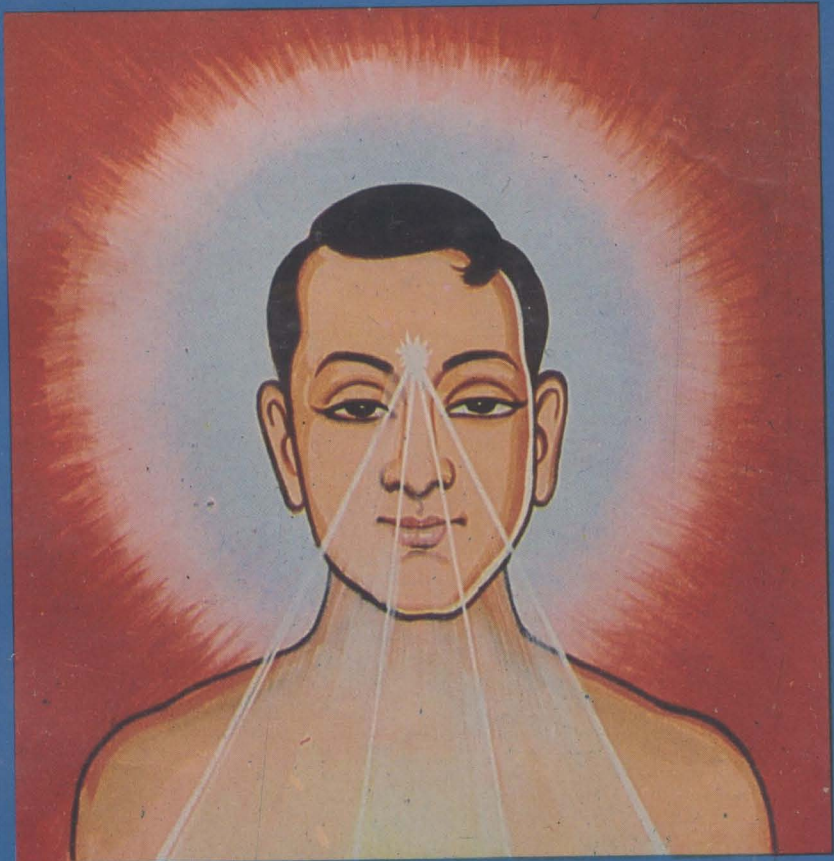
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Pratiksha Dhayana: Perception of Body

YUVACHARYA MAHAPRAJNA



“SCIENCE OF LIVING” SERIES—V

**PREKSHA DHYANA :
PERCEPTION OF BODY**

By
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**TULSI ADHYATMA NIDAM
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Publisher's Note

In publishing this booklet, it is hoped to bring to the reader, in simple language, some of the truths, already known to the ancient philosophies, and now known to modern science.

Age of Tension

In this age of technology, industrialisation and over-urbanisation, we are constantly subjected to tremendous stresses and tensions. These, in turn, produce psychosomatic diseases like hypertension, insomnia and various types of heart diseases. In desperation, people take to drinking and dangerous drugs which give temporary relief, but create more serious problems. The remedy does not lie in drugs or fantasy, but in the process of catharsis and development of the inherent powers.

Philosophy teaches us to realise that our existence is functioning in duality, i.e. there is a spiritual self within a physical body. Science is also proving that life's processes for man lie almost wholly within himself and are amenable to control. The control has to be exercised by the power of the spiritual self, and that inherent potency can be developed by knowing how to live properly, which includes eating, drinking and breathing properly as well as thinking properly.

What is *Prekṣā Dhyāna* ?

Prekṣā dhyāna is a technique of meditation for attitudinal change, behavioural modification and integrated development of personality. It is based on the wisdom of ancient philosophy and has been formulated in terms of modern scientific concepts. We hope that the synthesis of the ancient wisdom and the modern scientific knowledge will help us in achieving the blissful aim of establishing amity, peace and happiness in the world by eradicating the bestial urges such as cruelty, retaliation and hate.

The different methods of *prekṣā* (i.e. perception) include *Śyāsa-prekṣā* (perception of breathing), *Śarīra-Prekṣā* (perception of body), *Chaitanya-kendra-prekṣā* (perception of psychic centres), etc. All these are methods of ultimate transformation in inner consciousness. Here, there is no need to sermonize for adopting virtues and giving up evils. When one starts practising perception, one experiences himself that he is changing, that anger and fear are pacifying, that one is getting transformed into a righteous person.

Our series of "Science of Living" include tracts on various facets of *Prekṣā-dhyāna*. In the present one, the reader will find an elaborate discussion on "*Śarīra-prekṣā*" (perception of body). One could never reach the spiritual self without properly understanding the significance of the subtle vital energy flowing in the body, or the mysteries of the subtle and the most subtle bodies. It is, therefore, necessary first to become acquainted with the body as a medium of spiritual advancement. The "Perception of body" is a practice of becoming acquainted with the body. During this practice, the *sādhak* concentrates his perception on the various parts of the body and perceives the events taking place inside it without any like or dislike. A great number of changes take place every moment throughout the body. The practitioner of *śarīra-prekṣā* realizes them, and comprehends the truth.

The intellectual man of the modern age seems to have lost his self-awareness. The more he is engrossed in his intellectual activities, the less he knows about the "self" and his "body". He feels tension but it would be difficult for him to actually locate it. In the present tract, we shall see how the technique of *śarīra-prekṣā* enables one to reach the subtlest processes in the body, and helps him to regain his self-awareness.

Benefits of *Prekṣā Dhyāna*

Prekṣā may appear to mean different things to different people, because it contributes to increase physical, nervous as well as spiritual energies.

On physical level, it helps each bodily cell to revitalize itself: it facilitates digestion; it makes respiration more

efficient and improves circulation and quality of blood.

On mental level, it proves to be an applied method to train the mind to concentrate; it cleans and relaxes the mind; it offers a way to treat serious psychosomatic illnesses without drugs; it is an efficient tool for overcoming addictions and other bad habits; it reveals to one the mysteries of mind through realization and the real experience of the inner consciousness which includes the subconscious and the unconscious.

On the emotional level, the strengthening of conscious reasoning controls reactions to environmental conditions, situations and behaviour of others; harmonization of the functioning of nervous and endocrine systems results in control and ultimate eradication of psychological distortions.

On spiritual level, the firm control of the reasoning mind, regulation and transformation of blood-chemistry through proper synthesization of neuro-endocrinal secretions, and production of dispassionate internal vibrations lead one to attain the power to control the mind, and to become free from the effects of external forces compelling one to lose equanimity.

No Theological Dogma

Prekṣā dhyāna can be learnt and practised by anybody without distinction of caste, colour, country and creed. There is no communal or theological bias, nor does it insist on any particular theological belief.

Though the process is not very difficult to learn and practise, it is essential to learn the technique through experienced and trained teachers. Normally a 10-day retreat (training camp) is a suitable means to acquire proper training.

Review of Results

During the last 15 years, hundreds of training camps have been organised and more than 10000 persons have been oriented in this technique. Amongst them are scientists, doctors, engineers, professors, government servants and other intelligentsia, besides the general public. Police Department, Education Department and others have taken part in the Special Courses organised by Tulsi Adhyatma

Nidam. More such Courses are being planned for different disciplines, professions and work areas. Over and above those who have been trained in these camps, thousands of others have practised *prekṣā dhyāna* and have been benefited thereby. While many of them have restored their physical health, hundreds of others have been cured of mental tensions, hypertension and other psychosomatic diseases.

For all these, we are grateful to *Yugapradhāna Āchārya Shri Tulsī* and his successor-designate *Yuvachārya Shri Mahā-prajña* for their constant guidance and efforts in this direction.

These two great spiritual saints have truly blessed the entire human race with the boon of *prekṣā dhyāna*, and we are confident that all and sundry will be benefited by learning and practising this universal and easy-to-learn technique of *prekṣā dhyāna*.

Three permanent training centres have been established viz. 1. Tulsī Adhyatma Nidam at Jain Vishva Bharati, Ladnun (Rajasthan), 2. Adhyatma Sadhna Kendra at Chhattarpur Road, Mehrauli, New Delhi and 3. Tulsī Sadhana Shikhar at Rajsamand, Rajasthan.

Ladnun
15th December, 1992

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Introduction

Regular meditational practice is an efficient tool, both for healing and maintaining good health. Modern scientific research has now established that there is no denying the fact that sick people do get well by harnessing the psychic forces through mental imagery. In fact, a new discipline called psycho-neuro-immunology has entered the field of modern research. The body's natural defence mechanisms against infection, contagions, toxicity and other pathological disorders constitute the immune system of the body. Immunology, thus, means scientific study of body's defences and resistance to infection etc. The new discipline, therefore, is the study of inter-relations between the immune system, the brain and the psychical forces probably hidden in the subconscious portion of the mind.

Innate Immunity

Lymphocytes are the principal cells of the innate immune system. They operate in close association with the phagocytes which can engulf and inactivate micro-organisms. The bone-marrow, the thymus, spleen and some lymphoid nodules produce the lymphocytes. The production, activation and immune response is a highly complex process involving finely balanced relationships between many organs of the body.

Neuro-immunologists have, after elaborate study of men under stress, established that the immunity can be seriously affected by one's moods and attitudes, and there is a significant lowering in the functioning of this system under stress. Conversely, deep relaxation and sustained cheerfulness improve both the qualitative and quantitative efficiency of the system.

Apart from the researchers many eminent doctors as well as general practitioners agree that meditation and deep relaxation can cure and prevent any number of psycho-somatic diseases. Concentrated perception of

body—*śarīra prekṣā*—produces a more balanced equilibrium between the sympathetic and parasympathetic components of the autonomic nervous system which is ultimately responsible for the homeostasis in the body.

Improvement of physical health without the use of injurious drugs, though a valuable benefit is not the chief objective of meditation. It is a tool for awakening and developing one's conscious reasoning and thereby modifying one's attitude and behaviour to be truly worthy of a human being.

Deep-level consciousness is an innate aspect of human wisdom and has an elevating effect on human personality. Unfortunately, the modern way of life has considerably weakened this ability and one has come to believe that he can function satisfactorily without awakening and activating the inherent deep-conscious abilities. But there can be no spiritual advancement without reaching the deep-conscious abilities.

To become acquainted with one's own body is an essential medium of spiritual advancement and self-awareness. Perception of body is a technique of becoming acquainted not only with the gross physical body but also with the mysteries of the subtle (*taijas*) body and the super-subtle body (*karma-śarīra*). After this, it is not difficult for the practitioner to reach and be acquainted with his deep-level consciousness. On the other hand if one thinks that one could reach the spiritual self without properly understanding the significance of the flow of vital energy in different parts of the body, it would be a mere imaginary achievement.

Practice of perception of body is, thus, an essential step for acquiring not only physical goodness but psychical goodness also.

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I

Body : Scientific Version

Though everyone lives with one's own body each moment of one's life, one knows little about the structure of its vital organs and less about how they function. First of all we must acquire knowledge of the workings of various body systems. Only then we shall be familiar with our vital organs such as heart, lungs and liver. We shall then be equipped to stop misusing them and take better care of them.

Cell : the Unit of Life

The human body and its parts are made up of (i) trillions of microscopic structures called cells, (ii) inter-cellular material that the cells produce, and (iii) body fluids. If we compare our body to a building, the cells are the bricks i.e. they are the smallest living units of the body.

There are 60 billion¹ cells in a human body. Nearly all of them need a high magnification microscope to be seen and a super microscope to peep inside its body. The smallest cells (certain brain cells) are about 1/200 mm. and the largest ones (ova) are about 1/4 mm. in diameter.

For its operation the cell requires a lot of energy which is generated in super-minute power station in each cell. In almost every tissue, cells wear out and must be replaced. New cell formation occurs through cell-division. Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and its duplication in the nucleus of the cell is the essential event for cell-division.

Each living cell contains thousands of different kinds of chemicals. These chemicals are not an inert mixture but are constantly interacting with one another. The blue-prints of heredity are encoded in chemical form. The

1. This is equal to 600,000,000,000,00.

structures of the various organs of the body are built up from chemical constituents and differences in chemical composition distinguish one type from another. Cells participate in every function of the body from birth to death.

Tissues, Organs and System

Groups of cells with a similar structure together with the non-living material (inter-cellular substance) between them form many types of tissues such as :

- (i) Epithelial or covering tissue
- (ii) Bone and cartilage
- (iii) Muscle tissue
- (iv) Nerve tissue etc.

Tissues performing a common function or functions are grouped into organs, e.g. heart is one of the vital organs of the body. Team work is an essential ingredient for survival in the living body. A 'system' is a group of organs working together to perform a series of functions.

The skeletal system, the muscular system, the skin etc. are some of these. The other important systems of the body which merit more detailed treatment are :

- (i) Nervous system
- (ii) Circulatory system
- (iii) Respiratory system
- (iv) Digestive system
- (v) Endocrine system
- (vi) Urinary system.

1. Nervous System

The nervous system is the most complex system in the human body. It co-ordinates and regulates the work of other systems (of the body) and through them controls the functions of the body as a whole. That is why it is considered to be the most important system of the body. Its failure will result in total cessation of its activities, paralysis of all the organs and ultimate stoppage of all vital processes. One would be unable to use one's muscles,

unable to move one's hands, blink one's eyes, to sit or stand and even to breathe.

It has two divisions : (i) Central Nervous System (CNS) and (ii) Peripheral Nervous System (PNS).

The *Central Nervous System* is composed of :

- (1) The brain, and
- (2) the spinal cord.

They merge smoothly into one another without any obvious demarcation; the portion **above** the foramen magnum (the opening in the base of the skull) is considered as the brain, while the portion **below** it is the spinal cord.

The Peripheral Nervous System consists of 12 cranial nerves and 31 spinal nerves which branch and rebranch, after leaving the brain and spinal cord respectively, to form an intricate network throughout the body. The PNS also contains the autonomic nerves which regulate the activities of the internal organs. The action of these nerves is not generally under voluntary control.

More than 10 billion neurons comprise the human nervous system. Through the intricate network run impulses that are the foundations of creative thoughts as well as desires. Innumerable bits of data continually flood the body's sensory organs and pass from the receptors along the peripheral system to the central nervous system. The latter system screens and evaluates the incoming impulses; stores important data for future retrieval; formulates decisions and initiates actions via impulses sent along the peripheral nerves to the muscular system.

Thus the nervous system has two basic functions— (i) the detection and processing of information from within and outside the body, and (ii) production and regulation of movement by muscle-action. Some parts of the brain are also responsible for the control of emotions and the storage of information and are also concerned with personality factors and intellect.

The *Brain* has three major divisions : (i) the fore brain

(ii) the mid brain and (iii) the hind brain.

The forebrain and mid-brain together make up the *cerebrum*. It constitutes the bulk of the brain. It is composed of an outer grey layer beneath which is a mass of white tissues. Its wrinkled surface allows a very large number of brain cells to be packed into a limited space.

Buried deep within the brain are various important structures including the *hypothalamus*. It contains numerous specialised control centres. It is intimately connected with the pituitary gland, thus interlocking the endocrine system. *Medulla oblongata* joins the brain to the spinal cord.

The *Spinal Cord* extends from the foramen magnum down to the level of the second lumbar vertebral. The cord itself is suspended rather loosely in the vertebral canal. Its length is about 45 centimetres. Each pair of nerves is composed of (i) sensory pathways which carry the message of sensation to the brain, and (ii) motor pathways which carry the orders for movement from the brain to the muscles in the trunk and the limbs. The spinal cord also contains 'reflex centres' for immediate response to certain incoming stimuli without involvement of the brain.

Sense-organs

The human body is equipped with a versatile assortment of sensory outposts. Our eyes, ears, nose, mouth and the entire body surface are endowed with a vast variety of receptors for collecting useful information from outside. Sensations are the conscious results of the sequence: stimulus→receptor→conducting pathway→sensory area in the brain. Though hundreds of thousands of sensory messages are received by the brain, only those which are important are perceived while the rest are ignored. An intricate network of nerve-cells, called Reticular Activising System (RAS) acts as a filter and allows only strong or novel signals to pass up to higher brain for conscious perception. The process by which the mind converts raw sensations into perception is complicated. The RAS action

permits us to concentrate on a particular thought or activity.

2. Circulatory System

Every cell of the body needs a continued supply of nutrients and oxygen and a continual removal of wastes. Disease-fighters, chemical messengers and other vital substances also need a transporting medium to distribute them through the body to keep the cells active and alive. The blood-circulatory system with its intricately branching and interconnecting tubes provides these services.

The main organs of this system are : heart, aorta, arteries, veins and capillaries. The propulsive force that keeps the blood moving is the steady beating of a powerful pump—the heart. The contractions of the heart drive blood into arteries which branch and rebranch into smaller tubes—arterioles—ultimately leading into tiny capillaries, that penetrate the tissues. Here, the delivery of the nutrients and chemicals and exchange of gases take place. In time, the blood, reloaded with wastes, begins the return-trip draining it into successively larger veins and ultimately reaches the heart. The very name of the circulatory system implies that whatever blood goes out from the heart comes back to it, completing the circuit. The general sequence of circulation is—

Heart→artery→capillary→vein→heart.

The human heart is a miracle pump. Every day it pumps and circulates blood through about 1,00,000 k.m. of blood-vessels which form a completely closed system.

The heart is a hollow muscular organ which has four chambers, two each on the right and the left side. While there is no connection between the two sides, the upper and lower chambers on each side are connected by one-way valves. It is actually a dual action pump—one to send the blood into the lungs and the other to push it out into the body. The first action is done by the right side and the second one by the left side.

Muscular walls of the heart contract and relax rhythmically. This rhythm is self-initiated requiring no nervous or chemical stimulation. The phase of contraction is called **systole** while that of relaxation is called **diastole**. A full cardiac cycle—systole and diastole—takes less than a second, normal heart-rate being 70/72 beats per minute. But in the space of just one minute, a volume equivalent to all the blood, about 5 litres in the body, passes through the heart. Heart rate steadily slows down as one gets older; it is 140 before birth, 90 as a child and 70/72 as an adult.

Blood-vessels

Multitudinous branches of blood-vessels of various sizes form a complex inter-communicating net-work that reaches practically every cell in the body. The main types of blood-vessels are arteries, veins and capillaries. The blood vessels which carry the blood from the heart to the body are commonly known as arteries, while those which carry the blood in the opposite direction, i.e. towards the heart are called veins.

Capillaries are so small that the red blood cells have to pass through them in a single file. They permeate the tissues and service the body-cell directly. Oxygen, nutrients and hormones transported in the blood are transferred to the cells, while cell-produced products for export (carbon dioxide etc.) diffuse into the blood. This exchange is so rapid that each given unit of blood spends only one to three seconds in a particular capillary.

The Blood-stream

Besides the oxygen, a variety of other substances must be delivered to the cells and tissues to keep them alive and vigorous. Glucose, fat, amino-acids and water are some of the more common, while copper and cobalt, iodine and phosphorus are a few of the uncommon requirements of the cells. Salts, minerals, vitamins, and hormones are also carried by the blood-stream for delivery to appropriate places. Thus blood is ever-changing, yet its overall compo-

sition remains surprisingly constant. The main components of the blood are :

1. Blood-plasma—A clear straw-coloured fluid in which are dissolved salts, proteins, fats, sugar, hormones, vitamins, as well as waste products such as urea and lactic acid.

2. Red Blood Cells—These are small flattened biconcave discs. 3000 of them would be needed to measure an inch. There are five million red cells per cubic millimetre. Every second, three million cells die and equal number of them are born.

Haemoglobin—The red pigment of the red cells is an iron containing protein. Total amount of iron in the haemoglobin of all the red cells is about 3 grammes. But it is priceless as one cannot live without it.

3. White Blood Cells—They are larger and fewer than red cells. They are colourless and not uniform in size, shape and appearance. They are the soldiers of the body—defenders against foreign invaders—ready to fight to death.

4. Platelets—They go into action when a blood vessel is cut or pierced and blood is being lost. A substance called platelet factor initiates a chain of chemical reactions leading to the formation of a clot which effectively plugs the cut or hole.

3. Respiratory System

The body needs a continual supply of oxygen. In addition, the body also needs some means of disposing of the waste carbon dioxide, produced by the body cells. Respiratory system fulfils both these requirements.

This system includes passage-ways and tubes through which the air passes : the nose, trachea, bronchi and bronchioles arranged in a sequence that branches and rebranches and looks like an inverted tree. The tubes end in tiny air sacs called alveoli in which the exchange of gases takes place. The bronchioles and alveoli constitute the lungs. Human lungs contain about 300 to 500 millions

alveoli covering a total surface area of more than 90 sq. mtrs enough to carpet a tennis court. Each alveolus is a roughly globular structure about 100 microns in diameter. It has an extremely thin wall and is surrounded by a network of equally thin-walled capillaries. An exchange of the two gases occurs in the lungs. Oxygen passes out through the thin walls of the alveoli and in through those of the capillaries that surround them. At the same time there is a net movement of carbon dioxide in the opposite direction. Lungs themselves are devoid of muscular action but the system includes a bellow's arrangement—the rib cage—operated by muscle and controlled by nerves.

To a physiologist breathing is divided into :

(i) external respiration i.e. passage of oxygen from the lungs into the blood and the passage of carbon dioxide from the blood to the alveoli, and

(ii) internal respiration in which the body cells exchange carbon dioxide with fresh oxygen carried by the blood. The final aspect of respiration is cellular respiration i.e. chemical reactions of oxidation within the cells.

Three sets of muscles participate in the process of breathing :—(i) diaphragm, (a dome-shaped muscle between the chest and the abdomen) (ii) intercostal muscle (attached to the ribs) and (iii) clavicular muscles (attached to the collar bone).

The average adult, at rest and not emotionally excited, breathes about 14 to 20 times a minute. Emotional stimulation, pain, temperature, carbon dioxide level and age cause variations from this basic level. Like the heart-beat, the respiration rate tends to decrease from the birth to adulthood and increases in old age.

4. Digestive System

Energy is essential to maintain such vital functions and processes as breathing, blood circulation and brain function. It is derived from foodstuffs but food cannot be utilised by the tissues until they have been broken down to smaller simpler components through the process of digestion.

The digestive system is composed of the alimentary tract and accessory organs which contribute their secretions to the tract. The digestion begins in the mouth and ends in the bowel. The passage from the mouth to the rectum is about 9 metres in length.

Mouth, Salivary Glands, Aesophagus

The first station on the alimentary canal is mouth. Saliva from three pairs of salivary glands enters the mouth and mixes with the food. The tongue pushes the food between the teeth for mastication, shapes it into a glob or bolus and shoves it to the aesophagus, a muscular tube about 2.5 cms. in diameter and 25 cms. long, leading down through the chest and diaphragm to the stomach. As the food enters the aesophagus, it is propelled down to the stomach by alternate waves of contraction and relaxation of the muscular tube.

The Stomach

The food has now reached the second processing station on the tract. Stomach is a muscular collapsible bag about 22 cms. in length. It is tucked up in the abdomen at the lower rib-line under the diaphragm. Its wide end is at the top and towards the left while the narrow bottom end is towards the right. It retains food for 3 to 5 hours during which time partial digestion of protein takes place. The inside lining of the stomach contains 35 million gastric glands which secrete 2 to 3 litres of gastric juices containing mucin, hydrochloric acid and enzyme pepsin. Mucin lines the stomach and protects it from the acid and prevents it from being digested.

Duodenum, Small Intestine, Large Intestine (Colon)

The lower end of the stomach which becomes considerably narrower is connected to the small intestine through pyloric valve. The first portion of the small intestine called duodenum is about 16 to 17 cms. long—a C-shaped tube. It passes behind the liver and encircles the head of pancreas. It is the third processing station and an

important organ of the digestive tract. The second and third portions of the small intestine are called jejunum and ileum respectively. The major part of food-digestion and absorption takes place here. Peristalsis, the slow automatic movement along the whole length of the tract, propels the contents continuously onwards.

Next to the small intestine comes the large intestine or bowel. It is much wider—6 to 8 cms. in diameter, and about 2 metres in length. First it passes upwards. It bends when it reaches the bottom of the liver and remains horizontal upto the spleen. Then it bends downwards : its last part is in the pelvic cavity and is called the rectum. Finally, it ends at the external opening, the anus. Its outside wall is puckered rather than tube-like. Its lining secretes mucus but no digestive enzymes.

Accessory Organs of the Digestive System

Liver and Biliary System

The liver is the most important and an extraordinary organ which contributes to the process of digestion. It is reddish brown in colour and weighs about 1.5 to 2 kg. It is not only the largest but the most versatile single organ in the body. It lies in the upper part of the abdomen on the right side, beneath (and loosely attached to) the diaphragm. The bile secreted by the liver goes to the gall-bladder through bile-ducts, where it is stored and concentrated. Liver is the largest chemical factory in the body, and has at least five hundred known functions.

Pancreas and the Islets of Langerhans

Pancreas is an oblong, rather flattened, boneless, fatless and fleshy gland about 15 to 18 cms. long and 4 cms. wide. It has a head, a body and a tail; its head rests in the curve of the duodenum and its tail touches the spleen. It is a versatile organ, the second largest gland in the body (liver being the largest). It is connected to the duodenum through the pancreatic duct which extends throughout its length. 700 mls. of pancreatic juice containing several

digestive enzymes is produced and poured into the duodenum.

This gland functions both as a digestive organ (exocrine gland), and as an endocrine gland. In fact, it is two unrelated organs into one. Scattered throughout the pancreas are many pin-head-sized clusters of special cells. These are the Islets of Langerhans which carry out the endocrine function by secreting insulin and glucagon. Both are concerned with the regulation of the body's carbohydrate metabolism, by keeping the blood-sugar level within a relatively narrow range.

5. Endocrine System

The endocrine glands are ductless and their production passes directly into the blood-stream, circulates all over the body and acts at places far from where it originated. These glands are scattered through the body-like islands. Nevertheless, they are unified into a finely coordinated system, function in a marvellously harmonious fashion and control and coordinate the activities of the body. The main endocrines are: the pineal, pituitary, thyroid, para-thyroid, thymus, adrenals, Islets of Langerhans and gonads (sex-glands). All these glands are comparatively small. They have access to very rich vascular supply. The products of these glands are organic chemical compounds called hormone which are effective in very small quantities.

The Pineal Gland

This gland lies near the centre of the brain. It is very small, not much larger than a grain of wheat. As its name implies, it is a cone-shaped body, reddish in colour and weighs about $\frac{1}{2}$ gm. It is hidden away at the base of the brain in a tiny cave behind and above the pituitary gland.

The Pituitary Gland

This gland is about the size of a pea, situated almost exactly in the centre of the head at the base of the brain and just behind the root of the nose. It hangs suspended from the underside of the brain in a little cup or cradle. It

has a greyish yellow colour. It increases in size until about 30th year, and in the adult male weighs about 600 mgs. (slightly more in women). No part of the body is exempt from its influence.

Thyroid Gland

This gland consists of two maroon-coloured masses astride the upper end of the trachea, close to the larynx. The two parts are connected with a narrow strip of the same tissue just below the Adam's apple. Each lobe is about 5 cms. in length, 3 cms. in width and about 2 mms. thick. The normal thyroid of an adult weighs 25 to 40 gms. but its size fluctuates with age, habitation and diet. It is heavier in the female than in the male and becomes enlarged during sex-excitement, menstruation and pregnancy. The vascular supply to this gland is exceptionally rich, e.g. it receives four times as much blood as do the kidneys.

The Parathyroid Glands

They are four minute yellowish brown ovoid bodies about 6 mms. long and 3 mms. wide, embedded in the lobes of the thyroid gland (two in each lobe). Sometimes the lower two are found much farther down and in the chest.

The Thymus Gland

This gland is the source of one or more hormone-like factors. A lymphoid—two lobed structure—this gland is situated in the chest between the two lungs and extends up into the neck. A brownish mass—it reaches its largest size at the beginning of puberty, when it is about 5 cms. long, 3.5 cms. wide and 6 mms. thick.

The Adrenal Glands

They are a pair of three-cornered hat-shaped glands capping the upper end of the kidneys. Each adrenal is a double gland, composed of a cortex—an outer layer and a medulla—an inner layer. The cortex makes up the bulk of the gland, which is bright yellow outside and reddish brown

inside. The medulla is much thinner and grey in colour. The tremendous importance of these glands is better understood when it is known that death occurs very quickly if they are removed. More hormones—more than three dozens—are produced by the adrenal cortex than by any other endocrine gland. Number of these hormones are essential to life.

The Gonads (Sex-glands)

The term “gonad” literally means “seed” and the male and female sex organs—the gonads—produce the seeds of the new generation. The gonads also double as potent endocrine glands, secreting hormones that condition the functional state and influence the psycho-biological phenomena involved in the sexual act. Thus, besides producing the ovum, the ovaries also produce hormones that vitalize a woman and make her feminine. Similarly, secretion of male sex-glands are the male energising forces and what makes him really male. These hormones have profound influences not only on the sexual lives but also a number of body organs and function of an individual.

6. Urinary System

The Kidneys

The major excretory organs for the elimination of nitrogenous wastes are the kidneys. A pair of bean-shaped organs—they are among the hardest working organs in the body. The normal adult kidney is about 10 to 12 cms. long, 5 to 6 cms. wide and about 3 to 4 cms. thick. They are located under the diaphragm, just above the waist line, one on each side of the spine against the posterior body wall. They are embedded in a heavy cushion of a fat which both protects and supports them.

The Ureters

The urine that is formed continuously in each kidney trickles out through the ureters. Each ureter is a long muscular tube about 25 to 30 cms. long and 4 to 5 mms. in diameter.

The Bladder

It is an expandable baglike structure, situated mainly in the pelvic cavity below the navel. As it fills up, it expands upward into the abdomen. The two ureters enter the bladder and travel for a few centimeters under the bladder wall.

The Urethra

In both sexes, urine is emptied from the bladder through a pencil-size tube, the urethra, which emerges at the exterior surface of the body in an opening. In females, the urethra is a short tube about 2.5 to 3 cms. long. The male urethra takes a much longer, tortuous course. It goes through the prostate gland and has a total length of about 20 cms. It serves the double function of carrying urine as well as seminal fluid. Enlargement of prostate gland (in older men) can restrict the flow of urine making urination difficult and painful.

Besides cleaning and filtering the blood, kidneys encourage production of red blood cells. They regulate the proportion of sodium and potassium salts, water and other substances in the blood. A little too much or a shade too little of any of them can be fatal. They control vital water balance. They also keep blood neither too acidic nor too alkaline.

II

Body : Philosophical Version

According to the Indian medical system *Ayurveda*, our body is made up of seven types of chemical substances. Skin, hair, blood, bone, flesh and nerves are obviously the components of the body and this, therefore, is the common image of the body. But there are many ways of looking at the body. A layman's version would be—it is made of flesh, bones and blood. A doctor's version would be much more elaborate. A lover's version would be—body is beautiful. A *sādhak's* version would be quite different from all these, because his point of view is different. A *sādhak* would say—the body is the means of spiritual progress and development. There is no other tool besides the body. Telescopes, microscopes and other instruments and apparatuses are useful only when used by the human body. A *sādhak* must, therefore, study the body in great detail from all angles. One who is not wise with regard to his body can never fathom the profound spiritual experience, and can never ascend the heights of spiritual knowledge and can never reach the summit. One needs the body for ascending to the higher levels of consciousness. It is essential.

Flow of Vital Energy (*Prāṇadhārā*)¹

Our body is very precious. The innumerable mysteries

1. Indian Philosophical literature refers to a subtle life-force which is called *prāṇa*. It is difficult to give an exact translation of this term. It is sometimes referred to as electromagnetic force or bio-electric force in the body, but they are not exactly identical to *prāṇa* which is on a deeper and more subtle level, though it has some of the features of electro-magnetism. The term *prāṇa* is more appropriate to describe the life-force, which has various sub-divisions. In this booklet it will be referred to as vital energy or vital force.

of the body can be known to a *sādhak* alone. A doctor or a brilliant surgeon would not be able to unravel those mysteries which are known to spiritual masters. For instance, a doctor would not be able to enlighten us about the effect of breathing through the right nostril or the left nostril or both nostrils. The effect is definite in each case—breathing through the left results in cooling, and breathing through the right results in heating, and breathing through both results in quietening the mind and creating mental equilibrium. It is perhaps beyond the scope of a physician or a surgeon to explain why and how this happens. Only a master of meditation can throw proper light on the subject.¹

1. There are various channels for the flow and distribution of *prāṇa* called *nāḍīs*. Of these, three *nāḍīs* emanate from *śakti kendra* (also called *mūlādhārachakra*) at the base of the spinal column and lie along side the spinal column. They are *īḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *susumnā*. *īḍā* flows along the leftside of the spinal column and *piṅgalā* on the right. *īḍā* passes through the left nostril and enters the right cerebral hemisphere. *piṅgalā* passes through the right nostril and enters the left cerebral hemisphere. *īḍā* which is also known as *chandra nāḍī* carries the negative energy which is cold; *piṅgalā*, known as *sūrya nāḍī*, carries the positive energy which is hot. When the breath from the left nostril is stronger, the body will be cooled and when it is stronger from the right one, the body will be heated up. When the breath from both nostrils is completely equalised, *prāṇa* flows through *susumnā* and results in mental peace and equilibrium. In scientific terms. *īḍā* activates the parasympathetic nerve while *piṅgalā* activates the sympathetic nerve. Thus the effects of *īḍā* and *piṅgalā* are mutually antagonistic. They are given in a tabular form for convenience.

<i>īḌĀ</i>	<i>PIṄGALĀ</i>	<i>SUSUMNĀ</i>
Left Nostril	Right Nostril	Jñāna Kendra (Sahasrāra Chakra).
Right cerebral hemisphere	Left cerebral hemisphere	Direct to cerebral cortex
Para-sympathetic	Sympathetic	
Reduced blood-pressure, blood-sugar, heart-rate, respiration etc.	Increased blood-pressure, blood-sugar, heart-rate respiration, etc.	Homeostasis
Calm, unexcited state	Highly emotional excited state	Mental peace
Physical inactivity, lassitude.	Highly active	Psychic perception
Cool, negative	Hot, positive.	Tranquillity

Though the modern medical master may not be able to evaluate the significance of the body from the philosophical angle, it must be admitted that his knowledge about the nervous system (and other systems of the body) is very profound. He has a thorough knowledge of the structural and functional organisation of the central and peripheral nervous systems, of the physiology of neuron which makes up the nerve tissue and many other subtle mysteries of the nervous system. He will, however, probably be quite ignorant about *prāṇadhārā*—stream of vital energy, and how its flow can be diverted to or from a specific part of the body; about *bhāvadhārā*—the field of urges and emotions, and where they emanate from and how they influence the behavioural pattern of a person. It is because these things are not dealt with by the medical science.

Perception of Body—Philosophical Angle

There are several different streams of *prāṇa*—the vital energy. One of them flows in the heart, another in the nose, another in the navel region, yet another in the rectum and another one flows through the layer of skin. The master of medicine may question the very existence of such a stream and is certainly ignorant about the diversity of the stream. This is so because upto now the medical science is not concerned about this. The subject concerns the aspirant who wants to make an internal trip of the body. The knowledge of anatomy and physiology is not enough to enable one to take an internal trip or to unlock the internal gates. To unlock the gates and to take an internal trip, it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of the various streams of *prāṇa* and such other mysteries of life.

Bio-chemistry and Bio-electricity

A wise man wants to control his urges and impulses, emotions, passions and thoughts. But control is not effective unless the internal chemistry is transmuted. The controlling factors are bio-chemistry, bio-electricity, and neuro-endocrine system. Unless and until, therefore, these,

i.e., bio-chemical and electrical forces are transmuted, no change is possible (in the attitude and behaviour). Deep-level consciousness integrate the bodily functions of the chemical force and the electrical force.¹ In health, all the controlling forces are in harmony and equilibrium. Whenever the equilibrium is disturbed, illness follows.² Our body is subjected to continual changes in the conditions of the external environment—light-darkness, heat-cold, humidity-dryness. Our internal conditions must also continually change to cope up with the external changes. In fact, homeostasis i.e. maximum health condition is not a static condition, but a dynamic equilibrium, a matter of continual adjustment for maintenance of equilibrium between the organisation and the environment. Thus no body can remain unchanged during 24 hours, either physically or mentally.

There are innumerable different chemical³ compounds in our body. A nail or a hair contains a hundred different chemical compounds and there are differences from one person to another. Our sensations, movements, thoughts, and speech—virtually everything that goes on in our body—is partly chemical and partly electromagnetic. One can never, therefore, hope to acquaint oneself with all different factors in a few exercise of perceptual meditation. Regular and continued practice alone can result in knowing and being aware of the internal forces of the body. The practitioner should constantly watch his progress and development in this regard, i.e. how the capacity for perceiving subtle chemical reactions is enhanced by each exercise and how much is he able to evaluate them.

The second important body-force is electro-magnetic

1. Dr. F. K. Bellokossy of Denver Colorado describes life as an 'infinitely intelligent interaction of electromagnetic energies carried by chemical substances.'
2. Each group of cells vibrates with a frequency characteristically its own. During disease this frequency is altered. Therapy helps the cells to regain their natural frequency and affect the cure.
3. The number of different kinds of proteins alone within the human body is not less than 1,00,000.

force. Every organ, every cell, needs electricity to function. No living cell can function without bio-electricity. The flow of bio-electricity is one type of stream of vital energy called *prāṇadhārā* by the ancient yoga preceptors.

Our limbs are quite useful, but they cannot be called vital organs. They are workers or soldiers, not regulators or generals. The regulators in our body are : brain, spinal cord, endocrines, bio-electricity, and vital energy. These are the controlling factors—the regulators. From the meditational point of view, it is essential to know them, because through them we can be aware of the entire organism.

The Nervous System

A man is a living organism, but where is the life ? Is life in the skin or bones ? Is life in blood and flesh ? No, the life is in the nervous system. The life is in the endocrine system. The spinal cord, the brain and the endocrines, are the regulators of all physical, mental and emotional functions.

Spinal cord and the brain compose the Central Nervous System (CNS). Peripheral nerves emanate from the cranium as well as spinal column and branch out in the entire body in the form of an intricate network. The autonomic nervous system controls the functioning of the internal organs. Sensory nerves carry messages to CNS and motor nerves carry orders from the CNS. All the sense organs and mind are connected to the CNS. Intelligence, perception, conceptual planning are the functions of the Central Nervous System. It can be seen from this, that the nervous system is a very important system of the body. If the nervous system fails, the body would be paralysed. There will be neither physical activity, nor mental activity. The endocrine system is the other controlling system of our body.

Both systems are intimately associated with each other and together integrate the organism. The functional interlocking between both qualifies them to be regarded as constituting a single interated system called “neuro-endocrine system.”

The endocrine glands control the bodily functions through chemical regulators called hormones. They exert

profound influence on the mental states, emotions and behaviour of an individual. Irrational instincts and impulses emanate from the endocrines and not from the brain. They generate feelings and demand appropriate action to satisfy the need. Psychological distortions (irrational fear, retaliation, cruelty etc.) vitiate our behaviour.

Let us not forget that our existence is a union of two primal forces—consciousness and vital energy, and their physical correlate is our gross body. Every part of the subtle body has its correlate in the physical body. Physical correlates are the medium of manifestations of the primal forces. Nervous system is such a medium. The sensory nerves are the media of consciousness, while the motor nerves the media for vital energy. Endocrines are the inter-communicating transformers between the subtle spiritual self and the gross physical self. They translate the code of intangible spiritual forces into a form of crude power which can work on gross physical organs of our body through the nervous system.

The seat of vital energy is also situated at the base of the spinal column. Normally the vital energy manifests itself as sex-energy (or libido). The flow can be reversed and made to travel upwards. The upward flow produces increased psychic perception. While the downward flow increases physical activity and sensuous pleasures, the upward flow will bring mental peace and equilibrium and state of bliss. All that is required is the regulation of the direction of flow.

It has been established that meditation has the power to alter the electrical activity of the nervous system as well as transmute the synthesization of the chemical messengers. Perception of body and psychic centres (endocrines) will weaken the forces of irrational impulses and ultimately eradicate the psychological distortions and evil behaviour.

Development of Parapsychological Capabilities

Man represents the culmination of the process of evolution. Human mind is unique and constitutes the highest product yet available. This is because man alone, by means of science, has the power of setting higher

standards and values for his progress.

It is said that even gods (inhabitants of heaven) desire to become human beings for spiritual progress. Man alone has reasoning mind. He has capacity for conceptual thinking and achieving higher level of consciousness and thereby transcend the perceptual knowledge.

Normal range of human knowledge is very limited. In this age of technology and sub-atomic physics, it may appear that human race has made vast progress in the field of science and knowledge. However, the fact is that our achievement to date is only a small fraction of what we are capable of. Instruments of our perception are limited to our sense-organs and the mind. Beyond the boundaries of perceptual knowledge, there lies the immense field of parapsychological experience. Man has the capacity to develop parapsychological abilities. He can then have direct knowledge of his own self, of the structure of matter, interaction of matter with conscious self and innumerable other Truths about which, with his limited apparatus, he can only speculate and surmise.

III

Perception of Body : Raison d'etre

The slogan—"see thyself by thyself" means—"perceive carefully deeper levels of consciousness by your conscious mind". This process of seeing will take us to our goal—the pure consciousness. However, the first object of our perception is body. But body is also consciousness. As long as one lives and the vital energy continues to flow in the body, it cannot be separated from the conscious self. One can raise one's finger because it is energised by consciousness. Not a single organ in the body is devoid of consciousness—not a single cell can function without consciousness. Life is consciousness. One eats, speaks and breathes, because one is 'living'. If the conscious self leaves the body, one cannot eat, speak or breathe. Breath, speech and body, thus can be identified with the conscious self. The processes of eating, digesting, speech, perception and thought are physiological as well as psychical functions. The whole body itself is physiological as well as psychical.

Principality of the Body

Breath, speech and mind have no independent existence. The body contains the machinery for producing the apparatus of breathing, speaking and thinking. The respiratory system, the vocal cords and the brain are the instruments of breathing, speaking and thinking respectively. The body possesses the complete blueprints for producing these instruments. This is the physical aspect. The philosophical aspect is different, according to which there are specific different groups of material particles which are taken in by the body to make these instruments. For instance, a specific class of particles is 'taken in' by the body and

transmuted into voice through the voice-box and the vocal cords. The transmuted particles are then radiated in the form of sound-waves and the speech comes into existence. The entire exercise of transmutation etc. is performed by the body. Speech, therefore, has no independent existence apart from the body. In the same way, the mind which is the instrument of thinking is created by the transmutation of another specific class of material particles (mindeons?). They are collected, transmuted into thoughts through various parts of the brain and radiated as electromagnetic waves. The existence of mind, the instrument of thinking, is transitory, while the organism which integrates the process is the body. In fact, the body is the only organism which can coordinate and integrate the functions of breathing, speaking and thinking. Thinking without and outside the body is not possible. Bodyless thought, bodyless speech and bodyless breath just do not exist. Realising this basic principle of the organism, the importance of a steady motionless body to keep a steady mind is self-evident. External wandering of the mind and the sense-organs is fundamentally caused by a restless body. No sooner does the body assume a steady posture than it becomes motionless and still; the wandering mind and sense-organs reverse their field, and turn inwards. The process of reversal commences. Wandering in external field is transgression (*atikramaṇa*) whereas retreat from the conflict with others is *pratikramaṇa* or retracing one's steps. The retreat automatically commences.

In the state of *pratikramaṇa* the conscious self reverses its connection with the external world and turns inwards. When it is engaged in the perception of internal phenomena with full concentration, it becomes fully aware of the breath. Each and every breath is consciously taken and the breath fills up the entire awareness. The first effect of turning inwards is perception of breath—an effortless awareness of the phenomena of respiration. In motionless body the respiratory system continues to function slowly, silently and rhythmically. When the body is restless, active and tense, the rate of breathing is high. As the restlessness or excitement increases, the rate of breathing also increases. The normal rate, at rest, is 16 breaths per minute which

increases to 20, 25, 30 and may sometimes become as high as 60 or 70. As the excitement and tension reduces, the rate comes down, the fragmental breath becomes regular and ultimately becomes slow, silent and rhythmic. Thus the state of breathing is intimately related to the state of the body.

Some aspirants may find it odd that so much importance is being given to the perception of the body. For those who presumed that meditational practice must be a religious mystical exercise, perception of the body may look cheap. "Perceive your eyes, your ears, your mouth, your cheeks"—all these can be, perhaps, more carefully, perceived through a mirror. One can do it at home and perhaps in a better way, why then organise *shibir*s (meditation camps) ?

What you can perceive through a mirror is only skin-deep, the outermost portion of the body, the shape and colour of the body. Have you ever perceived what lies beneath the skin? Have you ever become aware of the internal sensation caused by the flow of vital energy inside? No! Nobody even thinks of being aware of what is happening inside, deep inside where the conscious self is activating the flow of the vital energy. The reason for perception of body is not to look at the external surface of the body but to be aware of one's own real self, to realise that within this bundle of bones and flesh, vital energy is constantly flowing energising every cell. Perception of body is the only means of direct cognition of the internal phenomena.

Process of Self-awareness

Perception of the body is the means of self-awareness and self-realization. One who hasn't mastered the technique of perception can never achieve self-awareness. A doubt may be raised—every one sees his own body day in and day out. The body is visible. Moreover, there are mirrors—full size mirrors—to look at every part of the body. This 'looking at' is not perception. Perception of the body is a technique; it is a system. And until one learns the technique, one can see the skin, the colour, the form, the limbs, the face, but none of these can be called perception of

body. To do this, one must first understand the system and learn the technique—focus the attention on each part of the body in turn, starting from the outermost surface, penetrate deep inside and concentrate. In the body, various systems are functioning continually. The heart beats, the blood circulates, oxygen fills the lungs and is carried inside by the haemoglobin in the blood; all organs are active; the whole organism throbs with activity. The machinery of the organism works incessantly like a colossal factory. Every minute, innumerable phenomena occur, thousands of chemical reactions take place, millions of old red blood cells are destroyed and new ones are created, but the common man is completely unaware of all these. He is blissfully ignorant of what goes on inside (his body). The reason of unawareness is that most of the functions are automatic, i.e., do not involve the conscious mind. Only a deliberate concentration of internal perception can give an idea of the colossal activity within. And there is a high degree of automatization which filters out most of the sensations from being perceived. The instrument of perception has thus been blunted and is unable to detect subtle sensations. A process of deautomatization by a deliberate concentration and focussing of the attention can sharpen this instrument to some extent to enable it to get an idea of the colossal activity inside. Be aware of the tremendous activities of various organs such as, subtle movements inside due to the flow of the vital energy; chemical reactions due to metabolic functions; electrical impulses being transmitted from nerve to nerve; every moment various body mechanisms have to react to the continual changes in the external environment—heat and cold, humidity and dryness—a dynamic equilibrium is maintained by continual adjustments of body fluids; food materials are torn down into simpler units or oxidised to release the energy; bio-electrical phenomena take place continually. All these are to be perceived and be aware of before one thinks of the most subtle element—the soul. The soul is inside the body, but before one can reach this most subtle truth, one has to open umpteen windows and unlock umpteen doors. When everything else is perceived and laid threadbare, one can hope to realise the soul. The soul is at the centre,

surrounded by impenetrable envelopes of subtle body material. Unless and until these envelopes are torn open, one cannot come face to face with one's real self. The process is long and arduous. One has to develop the ability to perceive more and more subtle phenomena, step by step. One cannot aspire to reach the destination at the very instant of one's commencing the tour. A tour must take its own course; however high the speed of the transport may be, it must travel the distance between the point of leaving and the point of arrival. Some journey may take a few minutes while some may last for hours.

Our tour of self-awareness, tour to realise the pure innermost self, commences with perception of breath. The second step is perception of body. Perception of body ! The body is what we live with. It is our constant and closest companion. What is there to see ? What is there to perceive inside the body ? Such doubts arise only until one commences the perception. Afterwards, such doubts automatically vanish. In fact, there is so much to perceive that it is never completed. Each exercise of perception will reveal new and interesting events. One would then realise that perception of body is really worthwhile. A doctor has to examine a patient's body from within to diagnose the disease. He will measure the temperature, feel the pulse, examine the chest, listen to the heart-beats, probe the abdomen, have a look at the tongue and the throat. If the clinical examination fails to tell him what is wrong, he may order an X-ray or pathological tests. He may take help of delicate instruments and probe carefully inside. He does all these to know the state of the internal organs and thereby infer where and what is amiss. The intense search for the symptoms of the disease finally succeeds in revealing the dysfunction of an organ or a system and in diagnosing the cause of illness. No doctor can diagnose a disease without proper examination with or without the help of instruments. One must probe deep to get at the root of the trouble. Perceptual meditation (*prekṣā dhyāna*) also probes deep to perceive the subtle. It is concentration of perception.

Perception is a process of great significance. Its

importance can be realised only when one's attention is totally concentrated, focused and riveted to the object. Perception of the body means perception of the internal functions. It is the process of looking wholly inwards abandoning the outside or external objects. Extent of soul is precisely equal to that of the body and the consciousness pervades each and every space-point covered by the soul. In other words, consciousness pervades each and every cell in the body. That is why hundreds of thousands of sensory messages are received by the brain every second from all over the body. The raw sensations are converted into perception by the conscious mind. Thus to perceive is to know, to be aware of one's own existence. A high level of self-awareness leads to higher level of consciousness.

It is obvious that the process of the body-perception is that of looking inwards. Conscious activity, normally, engages itself with the external environment. The body is the tool for reversing the direction of the conscious activity from outwards to inwards. The technique enjoins one first to be aware of the outermost layers of the body, and then move inwards, i.e., the process is centripetal—towards the centre. Once the conscious mind is withdrawn from the exterior surroundings and turns inwards, it is comparatively free from the emotions of likes and dislikes and is therefore calm. Such a state of mind can reach cellular levels within the body. Cellular organisation is benefitted by direct communication with the conscious mind. When the attention is wandering externally, cellular organisation functions subconsciously, without the benefit of the psychical supervision. With the supervision of the conscious mind, the cells function more efficiently. Regular practice of perception of body by well-trained mind enhances cellular consciousness and a high degree of self-awareness is achieved.

Process of Self-realization

Our existence is made up in several levels. Firstly, it is a dual existence that is an immaterial conscious self or soul within a material body. Though transcendently separate, the two elements are so combined that separate-

ness is not perceptible. Secondly, the material body itself is divided into gross, subtle and subtlemost body or micro-body.

The aim of body-perception is to realise and directly experience the separateness of the body and soul. Obviously this can be achieved in specific steps. The easiest, and so the first, perception is that of the gross body. Next comes the flow of the vital energy from the blood-stream to the cellular nuclei. Next to that is the activity of the subtle body—*taijasa sharīra*—in the form of electrical impulses criss-crossing the nerves. If one is able to perceive the bio-electrical functions, one can hope of perceiving the vibrations of subtlemost or microbody. At this stage the transcendental separateness is no longer an imagination but becomes a real experience. The existence of the real self with all its glory is then revealed. When one is in direct contact with the splendour of the real self, the exterior loses its charm and appears pale and trivial. Till then one is not aware of this inherent treasure. How divine is the internal music, how sweet is the smell, how beautiful and captivating is the scene ! One is unaware of all these until the door is unlocked and the treasure is revealed. However learned or religious one may be, his total interest will be in the exterior, until he has had a glimpse of the inherent treasure. There is no other way to withdraw from this temptation. Any number of theological discourses and sermons, any amount of traditional rites and rituals would fail to draw one away from the lust of the sensual pleasures, until and unless one has had a glimpse of the inherent, has become aware of his own real self. Best of sermons delivered by the cleverest minister is able to reach and impress the intellect—the brain—but is incapable of unlocking the deep-level consciousness.

IV

Perception of Body : Technique of Perception

The basic principle of Preksha Dhyana is—live fully and entirely in the present moment. To be keenly aware of the present state of the body, of the restlessness, sensations and vibrations in the body and the causes of these sensations, is perception of body. The structure of the body is extremely complex and not easily comprehensible. Cell, the living unit of the body, is so minute that it needs a high power microscope to be seen and a super electron microscope to peep inside its body. One has to have a long practice to become familiar with it. Capacity of comprehension is never uniform and varies from *sādhaka* to *sādhaka*. A beginner can cognise only very gross phenomena. On the other hand, *sādhaka* with long experience can perceive very minute sensations by intensifying his concentration and developing his perception, and there is no comparison between the two.

From Gross to Subtle

Perception of body is a process for enhancing self-awareness. This is a centripetal process i.e. we travel from outside to inside towards the centre. Starting from the outermost layers of consciousness, one has to penetrate more and more deeply, i.e., we go from gross to subtle. First, we perceive gross muscular movements. Then we become aware of the subtle vibrations of the inner organs. Then we see the chemical reactions as well as the electromagnetic impulses which incessantly criss-cross our body, and finally we come face to face with the flow of the vital energy which energises them all. Penetrating deeper still we perceive the subtle body and the subtlemost body—

karma sharīra which produces the impelling forces within the body. Ultimately one realises one's own real self i.e. the spiritual self.

Profoundness of the Body

The instructions for perception of body enjoin the practitioner to go deeper and still deeper inside the body. To a beginner this could be quite confusing. Human body has only a small depth. It is so small, slim and narrow that depth as such is not to be found easily. True, there is no physical depth; we cannot realise the body's depth with our eyesight. It is only when we perceive layer after layer of the consciousness, that we have been able to enter the subtle world of living tissues and cells. We realize the sheer profoundness of the body which is unique and incomparable. The practitioner has to try hard to reach the subtle world.

Sequence of Perception

The successive stages of perception would be :

(i) awareness of the superficial sensations of the skin such as contact with cloth, warmth, perspiration, itchiness etc.,

(ii) awareness of the sensations produced by the muscular movements,

(iii) perception and awareness of the sensation produced by the functioning of the internal organs such as heart, liver etc., and finally,

(iv) awareness of subtle vibrations produced by the electrical impulses travelling within the nervous system and the flow of vital energy in the whole body.

Thus commencing with the outermost layers of the skin, the practitioner of *śarīra prekṣā* concentrates his attention on each and every organ of the body—from head to feet and feet to head—in turn penetrates deeper and deeper, and develops a high degree of self-awareness by impartial perception of gross and subtle sensations.

Pure Perception

To perceive is different from seeing with one's eyes. Perception, when it is bereft of thought, word, imagina-

tion, memory, conception and dream, is perception—perception and nothing but perception, uncontaminated pure perception.

What is pleasure ? What is pain, misery or suffering ? One has to get the deeper meaning of these common terms. Both are perceptual awareness of different classes of sensations. One has to grasp the remarkable distinction between perception and sensation. While sensation signals are the unprocessed inputs of awareness, perception is the finished product processed by the brain. The processing will depend upon the mood, expectations and many other complicated variations. In the case of pain, for example, sensation-signals of the same intensity (say from a toothache) affect each person differently. Each person's suffering is his perception and this varies immensely from person to person. It is, therefore, possible to reduce the element of suffering (or that of pleasure) from each perception or even to make it devoid of either emotion. In *śarīra prekṣā* one practises to achieve pure perception.

Perception of body is an exercise for para-perception—perception that is bereft of emotions of likes or dislikes when there is no attachment or aversion. It is the total awareness of the self—one's conscious self. Normally one's perception is coupled with likes or dislikes, i.e., either it is pleasant or unpleasant, either one enjoys or suffers. It is difficult to visualise without emotion. But unless one learns to transcend the duality of likes and dislikes, one cannot reach higher levels of consciousness. Perception of body initiates transcendental outlook.

Awareness of the Present Moment

One of the basic features of perception of body is the awareness of the present moment. It shows one the way to be keenly aware of what constitutes the present moment. In other words : what is the present state of the body ? What chemical reactions are taking place ? What is being synthesized ? What is being torn apart ? What bio-chemical changes are taking place ? What is the rate of the heart-beat ? How are the electric impulses conducted along the nerve-paths ? To become aware of all these metabolic and other processes is to perceive the present moment. The

practice of perception of body is strictly a reality of the present—neither memory from the past nor planning for the future. It encourages the practitioner to live in the present moment alone.

V

Perception of Body : Benefits

A significant benefit derived by the perception of body (*śarīra-prekṣā*) is the balanced flow of vital energy in the body.

Perception of body is not only a spiritual exercise but physical as well as mental one also. It is a valuable therapy for maintaining good health. The practitioner of this technique not only has a spiritual experience but undergoes a therapeutic treatment. He provides remedy for his maladies.

Evenness of Vitality

Why does one fall ill ? An allopathic doctor would say that disease-producing germs are the main cause of illness. When the resistance to these microbes is at a low level, one becomes ill. A practitioner of Ayurvedic system, on the other hand, would declare that imbalance in the trinity—*vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*—is the primary cause of sickness. A *sādhaka* would be reluctant to accept either of the above statements. He will aver that imbalance in the vital energy—*prāṇa*—is the fundamental cause of all diseases. If the vital energy is balanced and its flow is unimpeded, there will be no sickness. One becomes a victim of illness only when one does not maintain the vital equilibrium. If the flow of vital energy to some organ is impeded, the equilibrium is disturbed. The flow of vital energy must be perfectly even in all parts of the organism. The flow of electrical impulses in the body should be well regulated. If the regulation is weakened, diseases get an upper hand. If there is pain, the body is unwilling to work. If some vital organ fails to function properly, there would be aches and

pains. All this is because the flow of vital energy to the organ is not even. In perception of body, the *sādhaka* perceives the whole body from the tip of one's toes to the top of one's head. Each and every part of one's body is carefully tended by one's consciousness. And wherever the consciousness goes, it is faithfully followed by the vital energy. Conscious attention and vital energy always go hand in hand. Wherever and whenever there is concentration of attention, vital energy will have to reach that part. Vital energy is the faithful follower of the conscious attention. When the conscious attention embraces the whole body, as in *śarīra-paekṣā*, the vital energy also flows evenly in the entire body. If there were an imbalance, it would be corrected. The entire body gets filled up with vital energy. The main objective of perception of body is regulation of the flow of vital energy and the objective is achieved because the flow is even and unimpeded after the exercise. 'Perception of body' is a technique for alerting the deep-level consciousness and balancing the flow of vital energy. Functional efficiency of the sensory and motor nerves is enhanced. Consequently, while the spiritual self is cleansed (of contamination), the physical and mental elements are also benefitted satisfactorily due to the increased vitality, more efficient nervous system, improved blood circulation and balanced muscular movements.

Immunity

Another means of keeping the body free from disease is development of immunity. When the immunity is strong, the disease-producing microbes cannot harm the body. Even when some of them succeed in entering the body, they fail to colonise and are destroyed. Anybody having strong immunity and resistance power, even if attacked by bacteria or virus, does not fall a prey to their depredations because immunized body stays healthy. Perception of body enhances the immunizing capacity of the practitioner and fortifies him against the vicious attack of the enemy.

How and Why Health Improves ?

A question may well be asked—'How does one improve one's health just by perception of body?' The anatomy and the physiology teach us that the homeostasis of the

body depends upon a balanced equilibrium between the two components—sympathetic and parasympathetic—of the autonomous nervous system. This system controls all the automatic functions of the body, such as rate of respiration, digestion, heart-rate, blood-pressure, blood-sugar etc.

In other words all the internal processes are controlled by it. Now, as soon as our conscious attention is concentrated on a particular organ or a part of the body as in the perception of body exercise, our will establishes its control over the automatic functions and our conscious mind becomes their regulator. For instance, the rate of breathing is regulated normally by the respiratory centre situated in the medulla oblongata, but in perception of breathing, the control is transferred to the conscious mind as soon as it becomes aware of the function. Similarly the vagus nerve which regulates the heart-rate can be brought under the control of the conscious mind by perception of heart. In the beginning, of course, the concentration is not satisfactory and full control may not be established, but continued practice to concentrate full attention on various parts and organs of the body enhances the efficiency and depth of perception. And, in due course, our conscious mind will be able to dominate such automatic body functions, as maintaining constant body temperature or regulation of the digestive processes. This is perhaps the only technique for coordinating and integrating the functions of the subconscious and the conscious minds, for relieving tension and producing homeostasis.

Physical illness (*vyādhi*) is produced by mental tension (*ādhi*) which in turn is produced by frequent emotional stresses (*upādhi*). The question arises : Is the perception of body an efficient cure for somatic diseases ? The answer is : Yes, it is. But the process of curing is rather round-about and not direct. While a doctor treats the symptoms of physical disease, *śarīra prekṣā*, on the other hand, goes to the root of all troubles and cures the emotional malady (*upādhi*). The remedy for emotional upset cures the mental illness (*kaṣāya*) and this, in turn, cures the physical disease (*vyādhi*).

Vigilance

The second benefit of *śarīra prekṣā* is vigilance—increased awareness of the conscious mind. One, who closely perceives the everchanging pattern of the sensations, stays always active and awake. Sometimes the sensation is pleasant and sometimes it is painful. The vigilant *sādhaka* carefully avoids involvement of attachment to the pleasant and aversion to the painful. He is fully but neutrally aware of the phenomena.

Swimming Upstream

A further benefit of *śarīra prekṣā* is swimming upstream. Our habit of perceiving non-self (i.e. external things) has so vitiated our perception that we never think of seeing the self. We have forgotten that we must also sometimes turn inwards. *Śarīra prekṣā* is the process of looking inwards and seeing one's own self. This process strengthens our consciousness and enables it to swim against the (habitual) current. Consequently, it gets rid of the habit of seeing non-self and begins to see one's own self. At the commencement of the meditation session it is customary to recite the slogan, "See the self. To see the self, I am going to practise prekṣā meditation." The object of reciting and repeating the slogan at every session is to strengthen our consciousness, stop the habitual drifting and create the capacity to swim upstream.

Until this happens, we consider the external conditions to be more attractive than our own selves. When, however, the transformation takes place, the values are reversed, i.e., the self takes the driver's seat and the environment is relegated to the back seat. Thus the capacity for swimming against the current enables us to resist and overcome the forces of circumstances and establish full control over them.

Transmutation

In the process of *śarīra prekṣā*, one not only perceives the state-of-the-moment but is also fully aware of the transformation and transmutation (resulting from the practice). One feels the change from heaviness to lightness at the beginning and the end of the session. Sometimes at

the commencement one may feel heaviness in the head, but at the end of the session, the heaviness is gone, the load is removed, tension is relieved. The benefit is immediate. *Śarīra prekṣā* is valuable, because the benefit derived from it is immediate and measurable. We achieve higher levels of consciousness; internal cleanliness is enhanced; bliss is inexhaustible and there is a general feeling of well-being and lightness. To achieve higher levels of consciousness, it is essential to revitalise the physical body, and *śarīra prekṣā* is the process for doing this regeneration.

Rejuvenation of the Body

The most important benefit derived from *śarīra prekṣā* is development of the power of Will which is inherent in the conscious self. Old vicious habits are destroyed and new ones are created by the will. To keep the body young and healthy, it must be washed and cleansed by catharsis of poisons and contamination. When the excretable elements accumulate in the body due to improper or inefficient functioning of the excretory systems, they become poisonous and impair proper functioning of the vital organs. If the excretory system functions properly, one enjoys a pleasant and comfortable life. *Śarīra prekṣā* helps the body's excretory systems to remain active and efficient so that the poisonous metabolic wastes produced in the body are excreted easily and naturally. The respiratory system, besides inhaling oxygen, also excretes carbon-dioxide. If the lungs are kept properly ventilated by total and scientific breathing, and slow, deep, and rhythmic breathing is cultivated as habit, one can control emotions and passions easily.

Blood circulation improves; impediments in the circulatory system are eliminated; arteries are kept free and properly dilated, and the blood pressure is kept normal. The heart is never overloaded and it functions efficiently for a long time.

Stomach, liver, intestines and other organs of the digestive system function properly. Consequently adequate nutrients reach each and every cell in the body. The muscular and other tissues are ever ready to give proper service at all times. All the maladies of the gastro-intesti-

nal tract are automatically eliminated and prevented.

Sarira prekṣā directly affects the nervous system. All our mental brain-illness are produced by distortion and improper transmission and communication by the nerves. If the nervous system is in top condition, all the mental problems disappear.

While we should be aware of all phenomena, nothing should disturb our equanimity and poise. One should neither feel elated nor miserable. Practitioner of *sarira prekṣā* will be keenly aware of the state of his body; he will continue to do his duty. He will apply his mind to the work in hand, but will not get upset, and unduly anxious. He will be free from irrational psychological distortions and will thus be ever blessed with perfect bliss.

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