

Lectures by Sri Shyam Sundar Goswami
(I.42)

Body Purification in Hatha Yoga

Purification of the body means that the things not usable for its functioning should be eliminated. Both what we take in from outside and the impurities created in the body should be properly discharged. In Hatha Yoga, special consideration and attention is given to the cleansing of the alimentary canal, since other internal organs are not directly accessible to us.

Impurities arise and accumulate within the body as a result of chemical changes in the body, and additional impurities are frequently introduced from external sources. These impurities are not always discharged by the body, or at least not totally discharged. Accumulated impurities can disturb the normal body-functioning, giving rise to various symptoms of bodily malfunction. When the body's natural resistance is overwhelmed, the collection of symptoms may manifest into disease.

Everyone is endowed with the power of resisting disease – the chemical purification of the blood and body, which automatically takes place when we provide our bodies with the right things in the right amounts and thereby create favorable conditions in the body. Up to a certain limit of neglect, the body may remain in a state of health and the mind freely function at the sensory level. But, when the body is thoroughly purified at the gross level, the mind will be vital, forceful, enduring, constructive and intelligent. Of course, a dull-witted person will not become intelligent solely through the agency of physical purification, but an excellent physical condition may prove helpful in efforts to control the mind.

Enjoying excellent physical health at the gross level and an excellent, joyous, forceful mind-state at the sensory level is commonly thought to be quite

enough, yet physical purification in Hatha Yoga has a deeper goal—elevating the mind above the sensory level. When this is attempted, new problems arise with regards to the relations of the body and mind. The degree of bodily purification, which was sufficient at the sensory level will not prove sufficient to elevate the mind beyond the sensory realm. The blood may be chemically perfect for operation at the sensory level yet still fail to support the mind at the next higher level. For our blood contains any impurities which may be present in the body, but even modern laboratory analysis is too gross to detect them all. How then can they be detected? By their reaction on the mind put in a state of concentration.

It is not widely known that the total body-vibrations must be considered when attempting to elevate mind functioning above the sensory level. To prevent the bodily vibrations from disturbing the mind a super-purification is needed. Purification also has its levels. Higher, more refined thoughts are not possible if the body is not purified enough. All of this is very little-known, for the mind will not even recognize such disturbances at the sensory level but these disturbances will arise immediately if impurities remain somewhere in the body.

When we speak of body-vibrations, the word "vibration" is a confusing term, better replaced with the term "motional." Every part of the body is moving, not at the same rate and frequency but in a coordinated manner which gives rise to a sum total of all individual motions. All of these individual motions taken together may be quite all right at the sensory level when the body is in a perfect state of health, but they will prove too gross for the elevation of the mind. Therefore Hatha Yoga explains how we can even still build upon perfect health at the gross bodily level through the application of reverse actions.

The reversed action or motion will only operate at the level above the sensory. Its motional pattern is entirely different from (and even opposite to) those on the sensory level, thus the body alone cannot exhibit it, and it

therefore exhibits a reversed and entirely altered motion. When these reverse motions are initiated, their reaction reaches the physical level and the vibrational/motional summation is then altered. At the gross level, the bodily motions can be adjusted so as to blend with the reverse motion from above the sensory, thus neutralizing the body's disturbance of the mind.