

The Body – Temple of God

We have been considering the view of Hatha Yoga with regard to body-mind relations, including the possibility of mind-control over the body. This mind-control is necessary to achieve, for it will help us to make our life successful. We have not considered the aspect of the mind functioning irrespective of the body. In those rare cases, we find an expression of that aspect, which is really independent of the body and brain (the brain is also a part of the body). But even in those cases, when it is possible to make the mind function without the help of the body, the body's influence cannot be ignored. Attempting to ignore the body is both unwise and foolish. The mind functions in relation to and through the body, causing (up to a certain level) an unavoidable interrelation between mind and body.

At the human level there is both the mental and the physical life. We often declare the mental life as the most

important, since it is not possible for us to divorce the body from the mind, even though the body is often enough ignored. Hatha Yoga recognizes that man's specialty lies in his mental life (which therefore should be well maintained⁷) but it is to be remembered that the body plays a huge role in the growth of the mental life. St. John professed that the body is the Temple of God, but it cannot fully be the Temple of God if it is internally and externally weak and unhealthy. Godliness cannot be rightly expressed in such a body. It is another thing when we are able to go entirely beyond the sensory level, but until then, whenever the body is ill, disabled or upset, we cannot think clearly and it cannot serve us properly. Therefore, it is wisest to nurture the body correctly so that it can be helpful for the growth of our mental life. Thus we must understand the interrelation of body and mind.

There are examples of brilliant minds in weak bodies, but these are exceptional cases. If analyzed, we observe that, in the majority of those cases, there is a swift decline of that brilliancy. There are also examples of high physical development without a corresponding mental

development. Mostly this is the case with athletes, physically at the top-level, who have never been able to bring their mental life to a high level.

For all high levels of development, whether physical or mental, the conservation of energy is needed for a right application, or a directing towards a particular goal. If we concentrate exclusively towards physical development and work to the maximum possible there, very little energy is left for other things. With such modes of living, the whole life centers around exercise, sleep, food. On the other hand, if all energy is devoted towards mental goal-attainment only, then that person will become very brilliant and learned, but physically weak. If the body is overlooked to the point when it no longer can stand so much mistreatment, it will just break, thus causing the memory to fail and deep thinking to become impossible. Hatha Yoga does not advocate such one-sidedness of living.

The vital point, then, lies in how to economize and use one's energies rightly, for the correct growth in body and the mind simultaneously and harmoniously. Hatha Yoga is

an efficient and reliable means to that end. A disciplined and sustained practice of Hatha Yoga will prevent even old age from precipitating a quick decline. If the stage of physical development is good (and concomitant with the stage of mental development), then the eventual decay will be delayed longer than with the general populace and it will not be as painful. The decline will be graceful and systematic, not affecting the mental life at all. In old age, the physical growth factor is no longer at work; there is only maintenance. The decline, when it comes, does not bring complete decay, but rather is systematically managed so as not to touch the mental life. In a well-trained body, the eventual and graceful decline of the body can even bring a further growth of the mind.

In other words, if the Brahma-aspect is fully cultured, the Vishnu-aspect will be at its best state. Then, the Shiva-aspect will not mean utter destruction, but a very gradual decline. When the growth-aspect becomes masked, the body thereafter shows the signs of decay, in a stage by stage, systematical and graceful way. This prevents energy from expressing at its maximal degree, as it has done under the influence of the Brahma-principle – and

could do also under the Vishnu-principle – but not under Shiva. At this point, most of the energy is absorbed from Brahma-Vishnu, thus giving very little to the body. Shiva (whose name means, “the really good”) takes and utilizes this process. The mental life is thereby transferred into a spiritual life. When we are getting old, the mental life will still be able to develop to a very great extent, if things proceed in the right way. And then the body will never show signs of being unhealthy or weak.