

**Lectures  
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VOLUME I

**Lecture 12**

**Food Digestion and Assimilation**

Mind, in its operation, depends on the body. That is generally known, but in practice we mostly don't care much about it. Yet it is very important to know it, and to be able to answer the questions, whether it is the mind's full picture, or not, when functioning in relation to the body, and what part the body actually has in the functioning of the mind, what role it plays there. For unless the body's character, its parts and functions are understood, not only exactly as to the physiological, but in all its functions, collectively and in part, the role which the body plays in relation to the mind, will not be understood. And unless the mind does illuminate the body, it will not be a living body at all.

Our aspirations etc. are all intimately related to the mind, and that aspect makes us conscious of something. If we are not conscious, there will be no meaning in the relation to the body, or otherwise. The body exhibits movements of various types. But that is not the whole aspect of it. It is, before all, the chief-organ for the movements, which are the effects of certain desires, - as the last stage of these desires, i.e. the actualization of the desires is entirely dependant on what the muscles can exhibit of them. But before the body-muscles are able to perform movements of a rather high type, or even fundamental movements, locomotion must first be acquired. For the acquisition of a new movement mind plays the most important part. As the movements are graded to the higher level in mind, we conceive the type, or pattern of the movement, and by will and exercise try to execute that particular movement through the muscles. When the muscles are completely controlled in relation to the movement, it becomes easier, smoother, performed with care, and less attention from the mind.

Thus, as the mind operates, and we get from it the picture, method, impetus, the

body is made to obey by will. That the muscular movements are so much a mental factor is mostly overlooked. But mind helps the body in this, and the body helps the mind. Unless the body provides cerebral operators, mental actions are inconceivable. Therefore in all mental functions the help of the body becomes indispensable. And the practical point in this is, how the body can be made to help in its functioning, in the best way.

Mind functions through the brain. But what is the standard of this functioning, and how can we get a better functioning of the mind, by making the body more suitable for its purposes?

We find, that in cerebration, when the mind is functioning, it exhibits its activities, and the brain is at any moment not purely brain, or a working of the nerve-cells. The cerebrum existence depends upon and function on all the other parts of the body. In fact, at any moment the whole body is represented in the brain. First of all the body has, within each tissue and organ, the characteristic secretions of a particular organ and part of the body. These are collected by the blood, and carried to the brain by the work of the heart and the blood-vessels, oxygenized by the lungs, and with all the secretions, from the endocrine glands as well as from all the other parts of the body, poured into it. The brain functions by the medium of the blood. It is a basic form, but often ignored that the state of the body and thus the state of each organ and all this together in the miniature form of secretion, is carried by the blood (and lymph) to the brain. Yet it is logical, to consider that the state of the body thus will determine the functioning-state of the cerebrum.

In Yoga therefore, blood-purification is a most important factor, not only for the body, but also for the mind, as it functions by the help of the body, and is influenced by it. If the vital state of body is very low, it will be considered an impure state, which also will react on the mind. The fundamental point of purification is not only outer cleanliness. There is also the internal condition, which will ooze out through the breath, and all the secretions, the facial expression, the eyes, the tongue, etc. It cannot be hidden, how one's internal state is, since that can easily be detected by one who knows these things, as they actually are exhibited. The purification of the body is therefore to remove all that which is not necessary for its

functioning, since those things which are not necessary for a healthful, vital existence, are a hindrance to it, and must be eliminated. But it is not easy to detect, how much is necessary, or unnecessary and harmful.

Up to a certain standard things from outward are needed, and are from environment introduced into the body. Thus f.i. the breathing of outer air can't be stopped. We also need water and food, which cannot be processed within. And we need the light and other cosmic powers. Certain things also penetrate into the body, which we cannot control, since we are not conscious of them (f.i. cosmic elements etc.), and which can be both harmful and degenerating, or useful. What we take consciously is breathing, but also this is automatic, and thus only semi-conscious, and not as willed as the taking of food and water. But those desired and willed things demand to be regulated. They will therefore be modified in either a healthy, or a harmful way. For here, - if we have not enough knowledge as to the how much, and what, etc., we make mistakes, and then we have not much control over what follows in the body, before the blood acknowledges the results. Right selection of food, its quantity and preparation, are therefore important for its transformation into the final form, in which it gets transferred into the blood. The digestion and absorption should just be suitable for the purpose. Yet all too often food is not utilizable, since it is not taken in its right form, etc.

If there are any gross mistakes continually made in this, the condition created in the body will not be good for the vital functions. If things go wrong over the toleration point, the body will break, and there will appear symptoms of disease. One should therefore not let it go so long as to a not-standing- anymore. All that is impure can go over the toleration-point, for when it accumulates, disease will develop. So even before the appearance of symptoms, the question of purification will arise, for all that which is not fit is poison, and ought to be eliminated.

The food wastes which are left in the alimentary canal, are not passed into the blood. Those entering into the blood are purer than those rests. But there can yet be things in excess, or lacking. Often things are not taken and converted rightly, or

not rightly selected, so that there can be too much of something, which when being rightly converted, will prove as too much, on going to the blood, which means excess, or when not enough of something is taken, or that which is taken is not rightly converted, it will mean lack. So all depends on the voluntary selection of food, and the power of digestion and assimilation of it by the organs. The digestion is of an involuntary character, as it functions without our volition, automatically, in a way in which the digestive organs can fulfill the demands created by the muscles of the body. According to the level of muscular activity, the digestive activity will respond. Therefore, in order to make a dyspeptic neglected, organism strong, the right muscular exercise must be taken.

For, with a heavy form of exercise there will come a better appetite, etc. But one must not take more food than needed, for the body will not be able to utilize it, and there will only be fat-accumulation. Fat is generally distributed over the whole body, but it will first accumulate in the abdominal region, the hips and thighs, and then in other parts. Thereby one can see, whether a person eats rightly, or not. Also lack of food can thus be stated, and so an impurification can come from both excess and lack, and ought to be discharged.

This can partly be done by the cleansing of the alimentary canal. But, what remains as excess in the blood is not so easily eliminated. Making the blood-circulation really vigorous, may help. But we must, in that case, also stop all food-excess, and thus give the body an opportunity to resorb all that of which there is too much in the blood, so as to normalize it again.