

Volume 25 Issue 3

NAMAH

THE JOURNAL OF INTEGRAL HEALTH

15th October 2017

The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It

Code Krishna

Body, the Occult Agent

The experience of surrender



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NAMAH

is published quarterly,
by Pradeep Narang on behalf
of Sri Aurobindo Society
at Sri Aurobindo Society,
Puducherry 605 001.

Printed by
Swadhin Chatterjee
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Press, 38, Goubert Avenue
Puducherry 605 002.

www.namahjournal.com

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2. Arrami M, Garner H. A tale of two citations. *Nature* 2008; 451(7177):397-9.
3. Goldacre B. Trivial Disputes. *Bad Science*. Weblog. [Online] Available from: <http://www.badsociety.net/2008/02/trivial-disputes-2/> [Accessed 19th June 2008].

REPRINTS

Authors will receive 25 offprints of their articles.

CORRESPONDENCE

All correspondence, including letters to the Editor, subscription queries/renewals, address changes to be addressed to:

The Editor, NAMAH, Sri Aurobindo Society, 11, St. Martin Street,

Pondicherry 605 001, India.

E-mail: namah@aurosociety.org

Website: <http://www.namahjournal.com>

SUBSCRIPTION

Rates in India

1 year: Rs 400 2 years: Rs 700 3 years: Rs 1000

Single copy: Rs 120

All cheques should be made in favour of NAMAH

(Please add Rs. 30/- for outstation cheques in India)

Rates for all other countries (in US\$)

Air 1 year: \$45/€37 2 years: \$80/€67 3 years: \$120/€100

Single copy: \$13/€11 (Air)

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We wish to thank the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust for permission to quote from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Pain and grief are Nature's reminder to the soul that the pleasure it enjoys is only a feeble hint of the real delight of existence. In each pain and torture of our being is the secret of a flame of rapture compared with which our greatest pleasures are only as dim flickerings. It is this secret which forms the attraction for the soul of the great ordeals, sufferings and fierce experiences of life which the nervous mind in us shuns and abhors.

— Sri Aurobindo

The Fear of Death and the Four Methods of Conquering It

Generally speaking, perhaps the greatest obstacle in the way of man's progress is fear, a fear that is many-sided, multiform, self-contradictory, illogical, unreasoning and often unreasonable. Of all fears the most subtle and the most tenacious is the fear of death. It is deeply rooted in the subconscious and it is not easy to dislodge. It is obviously made up of several interwoven elements: the spirit of conservatism and the concern for self-preservation so as to ensure the continuity of consciousness, the recoil before the unknown, the uneasiness caused by the unexpected and the unforeseeable, and perhaps, behind all that, hidden in the depths of the cells, the instinct that death is not inevitable and that, if certain conditions are fulfilled, it can be conquered; although, as a matter of fact, fear in itself is one of the greatest obstacles to that conquest. For one cannot conquer what one fears, and one who fears death has already been conquered by it.

How can one overcome this fear? Several methods can be used for this purpose. But first of all, a few fundamental notions are needed to help us in our endeavour. The first and most important point is to know that life is one and immortal. Only the forms are countless, fleeting and brittle. This knowledge must be securely and permanently established in the mind and one must identify one's consciousness as far as possible with the eternal life that is independent of every form, but which manifests in all forms. This gives the indispensable psychological basis with which to confront the problem, for the problem remains. Even if the inner being is enlightened enough to be above all fear, the fear still remains hidden in the cells of the body, obscure, spontaneous, beyond the reach of reason, usually almost unconscious. It is in these obscure depths that one must find it out, seize hold of it and cast upon it the light of knowledge and certitude.

Thus life does not die, but the form is dissolved, and it is this dissolution that the physical consciousness dreads. And yet the form is constantly changing and in essence there is nothing to prevent this change from being progressive. Only this progressive change could make death no longer inevitable, but it is very difficult to achieve and demands conditions that very few people are able to fulfil. Thus the method to be followed in order to overcome the fear of death will differ according to the nature of the case and the state of the consciousness. These methods can be classified into four principal kinds, although each one includes a large number of varieties; in fact, each individual must develop his own system.

The first method appeals to the reason. One can say that in the present state of the world, death is inevitable; a body that has taken birth will necessarily die one day or another, and in almost every case death comes when it must: one can neither hasten nor delay its hour. Someone who craves for it may have to wait very long to obtain it and someone who dreads it may suddenly be struck down in spite of all the precautions he has taken. The

hour of death seems therefore to be inexorably fixed, except for a very few individuals who possess powers that the human race in general does not command. Reason teaches us that it is absurd to fear something that one cannot avoid. The only thing to do is to accept the idea of death and quietly do the best one can from day to day, from hour to hour, without worrying about what is going to happen. This process is very effective when it is used by intellectuals who are accustomed to act according to the laws of reason; but it would be less successful for emotional people who live in their feelings and let themselves be ruled by them. No doubt, these people should have recourse to the second method, the method of inner seeking. Beyond all the emotions, in the silent and tranquil depths of our being, there is a light shining constantly, the light of the psychic consciousness. Go in search of this light, concentrate on it; it is within you. With a persevering will you are sure to find it and as soon as you enter into it, you awake to the sense of immortality. You have always lived, you will always live; you become wholly independent of your body; your conscious existence does not depend on it; and this body is only one of the transient forms through which you have manifested. Death is no longer an extinction, it is only a transition. All fear instantly vanishes and you walk through life with the calm certitude of a free man.

The third method is for those who have faith in a God, their God, and who have given themselves to him. They belong to him integrally; all the events of their lives are an expression of the divine will and they accept them not merely with calm submission but with gratitude, for they are convinced that whatever happens to them is always for their own good. They have a mystic trust in their God and in their personal relationship with him. They have made an absolute surrender of their will to his and feel his unvarying love and protection, wholly independent of the accidents of life and death. They have the constant experience of lying at the feet of their Beloved in an absolute self-surrender or of being cradled in his arms and enjoying a perfect security. There is no longer any room in their consciousness for fear, anxiety or torment; all that has been replaced by a calm and delightful bliss.

But not everyone has the good fortune of being a mystic.

Finally there are those who are born warriors. They cannot accept life as it is and they feel pulsating within them their right to immortality, an integral and earthly immortality. They possess a kind of intuitive knowledge that death is nothing but a bad habit; they seem to be born with the resolution to conquer it. But this conquest entails a desperate combat against an army of fierce and subtle assailants, a combat that has to be fought constantly, almost at every minute. Only one who has an indomitable spirit should attempt it. The battle has many fronts; it is waged on several planes that intermingle and complement each other.

The first battle to be fought is already formidable: it is the mental battle against a collective suggestion that is massive, overwhelming, compelling, a suggestion based on thousands of years of experience, on a law of Nature that does not yet seem to have had any exception. It

translates itself into this stubborn assertion: it has always been so, it cannot be any different; death is inevitable and it is madness to hope that it can be anything else. The concert is unanimous and till now even the most advanced scientist has hardly dared to sound a discordant note, a hope for the future. As for the religions, most of them have based their power of action on the fact of death and they assert that God wanted man to die since he created him mortal. Many of them make death a deliverance, a liberation, sometimes even a reward. Their injunction is: submit to the will of the Highest, accept without revolt the idea of death and you shall have peace and happiness. In spite of all this, the mind must remain unshakable in its conviction and sustain an unbending will. But for one who has resolved to conquer death, all these suggestions have no effect and cannot affect his certitude which is based on a profound revelation.

The second battle is the battle of the feelings, the fight against attachment to everything one has created, everything one has loved. By assiduous labour, sometimes at the cost of great efforts, you have built up a home, a career, a social, literary, artistic, scientific or political work, you have formed an environment with yourself at the centre and you depend on it at least as much as it depends on you. You are surrounded by a group of people, relatives, friends, helpers, and when you think of your life, they occupy almost as great a place as yourself in your thought, so much so that if they were to be suddenly taken away from you, you would feel lost, as if a very important part of your being had disappeared.

It is not a matter of giving up all these things, since they make up, at least to a great extent, the aim and purpose of your existence. But you must give up all attachment to these things, so that you may feel capable of living without them, or rather so that you may be ready, if they leave you, to rebuild a new life for yourself, in new circumstances, and to do this indefinitely, for such is the consequence of immortality. This state may be defined in this way: to be able to organise and carry out everything with utmost care and attention and yet remain free from all desire and attachment, for if you wish to escape death, you must not be bound by anything that will perish.

After the feelings come the sensations. Here the fight is pitiless and the adversaries formidable. They can sense the slightest weakness and strike where you are defenceless. The victories you win are only fleeting and the same battles are repeated indefinitely. The enemy whom you thought you had defeated rises up again and again to strike you. You must have a strongly tempered character, an untiring endurance to be able to withstand every defeat, every rebuff, every denial, every discouragement and the immense weariness of finding yourself always in contradiction with daily experience and earthly events.

We come now to the most terrible battle of all, the physical battle which is fought in the body; for it goes on without respite or truce. It begins at birth and can end only with the defeat of one of the two combatants: the force of transformation and the force of disintegration. I say at birth, for in fact the two movements are in conflict from the very moment one

comes into the world, although the conflict becomes conscious and deliberate only much later. For every indisposition, every illness, every malformation, even accidents, are the result of the action of the force of disintegration, just as growth, harmonious development, resistance to attack, recovery from illness, every return to the normal functioning, every progressive improvement, are due to the action of the force of transformation. Later on, with the development of the consciousness, when the fight becomes deliberate, it changes into a frantic race between the two opposite and rival movements, a race to see which one will reach its goal first, transformation or death. This means a ceaseless effort, a constant concentration to call down the regenerating force and to increase the receptivity of the cells to this force, to fight step by step, from point to point against the devastating action of the forces of destruction and decline, to tear out of its grasp everything that is capable of responding to the ascending urge, to enlighten, purify and stabilise. It is an obscure and obstinate struggle, most often without any apparent result or any external sign of the partial victories that have been won and are ever uncertain — for the work that has been done always seems to need to be redone; each step forward is most often made at the cost of a setback elsewhere and what has been done one day can be undone the next. Indeed, the victory can be sure and lasting only when it is total. And all that takes time, much time, and the years pass by inexorably, increasing the strength of the adverse forces.

All this time the consciousness stands like a sentinel in a trench: you must hold on, hold on at all costs, without a quiver of fear or a slackening of vigilance, keeping an unshakable faith in the mission to be accomplished and in the help from above which inspires and sustains you. For the victory will go to the most enduring.

There is yet another way to conquer the fear of death, but it is within the reach of so few that it is mentioned here only as a matter of information. It is to enter into the domain of death deliberately and consciously while one is still alive, and then to return from this region and re-enter the physical body, resuming the course of material existence with full knowledge. But for that one must be an initiate.

Bulletin, February 1954

— *The Mother**

*The Mother. *Collected Works of the Mother, Volume 12*. 2nd ed. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust; 2002, pp. 82-7.

Moving Forward

We move towards the New and the Unknown through the known. But the known may itself become a hindrance to new knowledge. The certainty of the present may well come in the way of expressing the new. This is the passage through which we seem to move. We live in an Age of the unexpected, an era of the unpredictable.

Of course, in a certain sense life has always been unpredictable in its predictability, uncertain in its certainty. It is certain that we die one day but death may come in the most unpredictable of ways and strike at a time when we are least prepared. Yet we have been conditioned into creating a certain safe-zone or a comfort-zone within this unpredictable predictability. But when Nature is moved by a higher impulsion, then one of the things that happens is that the unpredictable multiplies and becomes the norm. It is a sign that a shift is taking place within the workings of Nature and her processes that she has evolved so far.

Today we seem to be witnessing such a shift, right from the magnetic poles of the earth to the very modes of functioning of the society and even of our very body. Thanks to the rapid modes of travel and transfer of information, our very cells are being called upon to rapidly adapt and evolve under the stress of a new life. This life is not just a conception any more but already a new birth. Slowly it is learning to stand upon its feet and adapting to the existing ways of earthly life. Soon it will assert itself and eventually overthrow the old. But for the moment it has led to confusion: a confusion of values, a confusion of institutions, a confusion in our modes of thinking and even of our physical functioning.

Possibly the confusion is there to teach us how to truly live. It is there to pressurise us to evolve farther, yet farther beyond all that we have known and been towards the New and the Unknown.

Apropos human attachment

One of the hallmarks of humanity is the phenomenon of human bondage and attachment. Indeed it is that which has given a meaning to collective existence, consolidated the family, welded friendship, ushered humanism and deepened our emotional repertoire to a level that had never been achieved by a non-human species.

Yet it is the very phenomenon of attachment that has brought endless misery, fostered the bitterest enmity and perpetrated abject jealousy and horrendous revenge. It is no wonder then that the greatest volume of violence against the person occurs among first-degree relatives. Rightly, the proverb exists: *'Familiarity breeds contempt'*.

The masses had their most memorable moments as well as their most poignant miseries in the matrix of attachment. The poets and storytellers had therefore no dearth of subjects and the counsellors, formal and informal, no dearth of clients.

The seekers of spirituality took a different recourse. To avoid the pitfalls of human bondage and attachment, they sought the monastic life, the abbey, the hermitage, the ashram. There were world-shunning hermits who preferred sheer isolation, free from the security of the hermitage, in the loneliness of intractable terrains. The Rishi of the Pole justifies his sojourn with solitude:

"The many's voices fill the listening ear,
Distract the head:
The One is silence; on the snows we hear
Silence tread (1)."

Centuries after, the post-modernist voice also expressed a poignant concern with attachment, though for a different reason. Any attachment was fatalistic and meaningless as ultimately death was inevitable and the Great Void was the only reality. Foucault extols, "To be attracted is not to be beckoned by the allure of the exterior, rather, it is to suffer — in emptiness and destitution — the presence of the outside and, tied to that presence, the fact that one is irremediably outside the outside. ...The outside cannot offer itself as a positive presence....but only an absence that pulls as far away as possible.... Attraction, the marvellous simplicity of opening, has nothing to offer but the infinite void...One is attracted precisely to the extent that one is neglected (2)."

An alternate movement

If the surface personality as studied by conventional psychology or what is known as the outer being in yoga psychology is considered to be the only poise of personality, then Foucault's speculation has a relevance worth considering. If what the spiritual tradition holds true that the outer being is false and illusory and only the void exists, then also a contention somewhat similar to

Foucault's idea could hold a truth. The only difference is that while Foucault has to go to the outside of the outsides to access the void, the mystic's Void is all-inclusive. However if we consider three other principles, the balance can shift:

- a. The void need not be a real zero but a phenomenal nothingness as it surpasses any cognitive grasp; yet it is dormant with teeming potentialities;
- b. There is not only a movement 'outside the outside' but if the inner ranges of the being are developed, a movement to the inside of insides. The crystal doors of these inner planes open up as one surpasses the ego. There are ranges of the being behind the outer being and if developed and activated, allows a journey inwards to seize the now hidden fountainhead of immortality.

- c. And one is never neglected if caught hold by the Truth that is as much impersonal as it is personal, for the Grace is a dynamic reality.

It is in the depths and ranges of the inner beings that stand behind the surface personality, where the true meaning of life is concealed. Once accessed, they open up new vistas of consciousness, new perspectives of psychology, new orientation to the meaning of life, new paradigms of health and well-being.

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— Dr. Soumitra Basu

Code Krishna: an innovative practice respecting death, dying and beyond

**Dr. Bhalendu Vaishnav, Dr. Somashekhar Nimbalkar, Sandeep Desai,
Dr. Smruti Vaishnav**

Abstract

In moments of grief, human beings seek solace and attempt to discover the meaning of life and death by reaching out to wider and deeper dimensions of existence that stem from their religious, cultural and spiritual beliefs. Conventional patient care fails to take cognisance of this vital aspect of our lives. Many hold the view that life and its experiences do not end with death; the body is but a sheath which holds the soul that inhabits it. The use of a protocol-based practice to create a solemn atmosphere around the departed individual can bridge the gap between the materialistic and non-materialistic perceptions of the dimensions of care. The innovative practice, “Code Krishna”, is aimed at institutionalising a practice which sensitises and empowers the treating team to address the grief of the relatives of deceased patients, and respect the departed in consonance with the family’s cultural, religious and spiritual beliefs so as to see to the spiritual aspect of care. The practice entails the creation of a solemn atmosphere amidst the action-packed environment of the critical care unit at the time of the patient’s death, offering of collective prayer and floral tributes, and observation of silence both by the healthcare team and family members. Code Krishna attempts to blend current care practices with spirituality, ensuring that the treating team is the first to commiserate with the grieving family, with warmth and openness. In this piece, we briefly report our first-hand experiences of practising Code Krishna in our hospital [Shree Krishna Hospital, Karamsad, central Gujarat].

Introduction

Death is the only predictable event in the unpredictable course of human life. The extent of suffering and fear that death entails is phenomenal. Though issues related to death and dying are relevant to health professionals, they are avoided. The typical non-abandonment response, defined as “open-ended, long-term,

caring commitment to joint problem-solving (1)”, has been considered an all-important obligation of physicians. It consists of providing continuity of expertise and a therapeutic relationship, and facilitating closure of that therapeutic relationship (2). This response has been observed to be consistently inadequate across various specialties, although some differences do exist in attitudes towards

death, depending on the clinical branch and duration of clinical practice (3).

Death does not have only a visible component, i.e. biological demise; it also has social, cultural, religious and spiritual connotations, which describe the reality of death from different perspectives. Almost all religions describe death both as an event and a process. Almost all medical professionals view death as a defeat and avoid exploring the phenomenon as a process. If healthcare professionals were better sensitised to aspects of the natural, inevitable occurrence of death and, therefore, the care of the dying, it would have important implications for counselling.

Since the process of dying and death fall in an area where medical treatment comes to an end, the incorporation of the spiritual dimension is of the utmost relevance. While adding the term “spiritual dimension” in its definition of health in 1968, the *World Health Assembly* mentioned that this dimension pertains to social beliefs, customs, traditions, rituals, religion and culture, and enables peoples to develop and maintain a positive attitude towards health. It would be very useful to create an awareness of various religious/spiritual convictions among the treating team, and for medical facilities to incorporate a code of practice that respects these convictions.

An analysis of the contexts of care is crucial to the fulfilment of the expectations of the society we serve during terminal events. The concept of care tenor, defined as the attitudes and behaviours of those interacting with the patient, includes the physical, emotional as well as spiritual care tenors. The physical care tenor is aimed at enhancing physical comfort, and the emotional care tenor at providing

emotional support to patients and treating all patients with compassion. The spiritual care tenor aims to provide patients with access to spiritual support, and has been perceived of as a vital factor in fostering the patient’s dignity and supporting the culturally driven wishes of patients and their families in end-of-life situations (4,5).

Code Krishna: driving philosophy and elements

Code Krishna was designed to establish a protocol that (i) sensitises the treating team to the need to address the grief of the relatives of deceased patients; (ii) expresses empathy and gives loving care to the bereaved family; (iii) extends homage to the departed in consonance with the family’s cultural, religious and spiritual beliefs regarding “death, dying and beyond”; and (iv) symbolises institutional commitment to whole-person care and healing.

Code Krishna is a practice aimed at offering the aggrieved family emotional support in a culturally and spiritually appropriate manner. The treating team is to pay its respects and homage to the departed soul in the critical care unit itself, where the patient dies. The “outward” or “visible” components of the practice include the following: members of the treating team assemble at the bedside of the patient who has expired; team members and patient’s relatives offer floral tributes to the deceased; and a prayer is recited / played according to the family’s religious faith, following a few minutes of meditative silence. The “inward”, “non-visible” or implicit components of the practice are: showing respect for the deceased, attempting to share the bereaved family’s grief, and creating a solemn environment and a “silent space”

amidst the action-packed environment of the critical care unit.

Code Krishna — conceptualised and introduced by a group of volunteering doctors — was soon adopted as an institutional practice and is now followed after every death that takes place in all wards of the hospital. Before its implementation, sensitisation and training sessions were held for the doctors, nurses and other staff members. Further, the undergraduate and postgraduate students were sensitised to the need to handle the emotionally traumatic event of death with the requisite sensitivity. When the entire medical team gathers at the bedside of the deceased patient, it can help the bereaved family to derive strength and solace in the philosophical domain in its time of grief. This forms the core of Code Krishna. It is aimed at shortening the period of grief and helping the bereaved family move to more stable mental stages of grief management.

Experiential anecdotes

We have not evaluated Code Krishna with rigour and we present it as an innovative practice in the field of death and dying. Our personal experiences have been gratifying. According to some family members, “The practice provides the much-needed humane touch in the era of high-tech medicine, and the solace it offers is very deeply touching.” The relative of a deceased patient said, “It far exceeds expectations in the most crucial moments of hospitalisation, and is very rare to find anywhere.” One relative mentioned that it was beyond her wildest imagination that the treating team would stand with them in silence in the critical care unit and solemnly recite a prayer observing the moment

of death. Another said that she “was deeply moved by the spontaneity with which the whole team gathered quickly”, and “the care of the dead should always be like this”. One of the relatives said, “The practice reflects an altogether different paradigm.” Describing her response to the practice, a family member said, “The practice meant a lot to me as a soothing experience, which will go a long way in healing.”

The nurses felt that the practice gives rise to a stillness, which brings peace. A nurse said, “The silence is so unique!” Another opined that the practice gives one a sense of accomplishment or makes one feel that one has fulfilled one’s duty of treating a human being to the end. The postgraduate students were awestruck. Those who were involved in initiating the practice observed that the implementation of Code Krishna helped to align the orientation of the treating team to the care of the whole person and his/her family. They also observed that the spontaneity with which everyone participated in Code Krishna revealed that even medical persons are, after all, human beings sharing beliefs and sentiments with others. It was also felt that it helped to de-stress the intensive care unit (ICU) staff. The students appreciated the fact that the practice served the non-materialistic, yet tangible and deep-rooted needs of society, thereby helping the institution honour its commitment to culturally synchronous, value-based humane care.

The perspectives of the patients are only one aspect of the documentation. We suggest that the next step in taking the project forward should be to capture the objectivity of the observations and reflections in a more structured and reflective manner, so that the

practice helps to strengthen the holistic attitude through objectivity. We intend to further study and document the responses of the relatives of patients, doctors, nursing staff and other healthcare personnel.

Reflections

Code Krishna enables healthcare professionals to fulfil one of their well-recognised responsibilities, i.e. to provide the appropriate support and care to grieving families. Despite the normative nature of this obligation, it is known that clinicians mostly fail to do what is required of them (6). The culture of avoiding death and dying in acute care hospitals remains a significant barrier to the provision of end-of-life care, even when the tools are available and accepted by the staff, due to attitudinal issues (7). Our experiences should encourage others to come up with similar practices that are in line with the cultural milieu in which care is being provided.

Healthcare professionals provide care which is known to cure and/or extend life, as we know it. The medical team sees the end of life as a defeat, or at the least, as a termination of the patient-doctor relationship. However, sociocultural beliefs about existence often do not draw the final line at death and extend the phenomenon of existence to a realm beyond death. Thus, relatives may believe that the patient has gone into another life. Whatever the personal beliefs or concepts of the healthcare professionals, Code Krishna should be considered an extended aspect of the relationship with the family and/or departed individual. Since all healthcare professionals may not have the ability to provide this aspect of care or the attitude required to do so, including a clearly outlined

protocol of care among their professional duties would give them a framework to adhere to. Code Krishna is unique in that it encourages healthcare professionals to express care for the departed soul (for the believers), while at the same time, eases the grief of the bereaved family.

Our model is unique also because it does not rely on influences that are external to the hospital environment; the attempt is to provide components of the spiritual tenor through the involvement of the entire treating team. Traditionally, the responsibility of providing healing care and emotional support to the bereaved family has been entrusted to spiritual caregivers, such as chaplains and nursing staff, in the case of institutional deaths. As for deaths that take place in the community, traditional healers shoulder this responsibility. The medical team, however, is not called upon to play this role (4,8,9). In an environment in which resources are scarce or individuals such as chaplains and nurses are unavailable or unwilling to provide healing care, a process that emanates from the medical team may have the same, or even better, influence. Not only does this help the bereaved family cope better with its loss, it may also have beneficial effects on the caregivers, who may have been under stress or formed strong emotional bonds with the deceased.

It is known that those working in ICUs have repeated exposure to death and grief. While most of the staff may view caring for the dying as just one part of their duty to rationalise events, such exposure can lead to occupational stress, disenfranchised grief and ultimately, burnout. Emotional disengagement from caring for the dying may have an impact on the quality of

care, both for the dying patient and his/her family (10). The processes evolved by us may have long-term implications when it comes to reducing stressful outcomes among the staff. Practices such as those which form a part of Code Krishna help the members of the treating team to overcome their own suppressed grief, reflect on the meaning of life, improve the quality of the care provided by them and show greater compassion. Further, they prevent desensitisation to events related to death. Additionally, they play a part in assuring the relatives that the institution is committed to humane care based on religious or spiritual beliefs. The benefits of practices of grief management have been documented for both the treating team and the bereaved family (11).

Our innovative practice is also aimed at enhancing the spiritual tenor, which is of the utmost relevance in situations in which medical treatment has come to an end. Various religious, cultural and spiritual belief systems have different views on the event of death, the process of dying and phenomena beyond death. The humanists, including atheists and agnostics, believe that death is the end (12). However, a majority of people seek succour in religion when they lose their near and dear ones since it is a common human tendency to look to non-biological, existential considerations to derive solace and relief from the suffering inflicted by the event of death (13). Religion has a strong influence on grieving and death rituals.

Hindus believe that while death is the end of this life, it is also the beginning of a new cycle. According to Hindu beliefs, the concept of life extends beyond the two polarities of physical birth and death, and much consideration has

been given to the latter. It is held that while the physical body has a limited span of life, the underlying principle of life — the atman or supreme spirit — is eternal and, therefore, is not subjected to the same laws which govern the perishable physiological body. End-of-life rituals, such as creating a peaceful and solemn environment around the deceased person, chanting prayers, putting tulsi leaves and water from the Ganges into the mouth of the dead person, are considered important for the soul's purity and peaceful transition from this life (14). Christians believe that death is the beginning of an everlasting life with God. Among Christians, the care of the dying involves prayer and anointment of the body with holy oils. The dying person confesses his/her sins in the presence of a priest to obtain forgiveness and receives holy water (15). In Islam, it is considered that submission to suffering is submission to God. Great importance is given to participation in prayers and rituals in the final moments of life (16).

We named our model Code Krishna for two reasons. First, conventionally, terms such as "Code Blue" and "Code Red" convey that a duty should be performed urgently, responsibly and assiduously. While "Code Blue" refers to resuscitating a patient and "Code Red" indicates urgency in case of fire, "Code Krishna" is a call to fulfil one's obligation to deal with the death of a patient in a humane way. Second, the name of our hospital is *Shree Krishna Hospital*. We introduced Code Krishna as a signature practice of our institution, reflective of its commitment to offer truly humane and integrative care to patients/their families in end-of-life situations by incorporating a spiritual component into the existing conventional healthcare practices.

Considering that a hospital is a place of healing, Code Krishna aims to offer quality care that facilitates the sharing of deeper individual and collective feelings arising from the event of death. The words, actions and gestures involved are intended to help everyone find meanings in the larger dimensions of life and death.

While introducing Code Krishna, we ran into several implementation-related difficulties. For example, we had to convince the healthcare team about the practice, persuade it to participate whole-heartedly and try to make it consider the practice as a priority in the totality of care. Constraints of time, e.g. due to the need to attend to other patients, were another important obstacle. Incorporating this practice in the standard operating procedure (SOP) for end-of-life care helped in overcoming these difficulties to a great extent. We hope that our innovation will foster introspection among all those concerned with providing humane care to patients, whether living, dying or deceased. We also hope it encourages them to evolve practices appropriate to their own setting to achieve the same goal.

Epilogue

In the light of our experience with Code Krishna, we would like to make the following observations.

First, recognising the fact that death is an event as well as a process with deep-rooted emotional, behavioural and spiritual elements, every effort should be made to address the physical, emotional and spiritual components of care. Second, the task of addressing that which lies beyond death should not be assigned to a team of spiritual support givers or chaplains; the entire healthcare

team should be involved. Third, since holistic end-of-life care is essentially attitude- and behaviour-centric, systematic training and sensitisation of the staff are necessary to raise the standards of such care. Finally, there is growing recognition of collaborative wisdom in care, based on a scientific, social, spiritual and cultural understanding of the process of death. Collaborative wisdom should be used as a framework to bring about a paradigm shift in the care of patients.

To sum up, we have made a small beginning and aim to go further by making end-of-life care an integral part of holistic healthcare, as a continuation of the critical care component.

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Courtesy: Indian Journal of Medical Ethics. Online. First Published June 6, 2017: DOI: 10.20529/IJME.2017.059

Natural healing — in theory and practice

Prashant Shivanand Shah

Abstract

Today we have been ingrained into believing that our health depends on doctors, medicines and the healthcare industry; whereas the truth is that our health depends more on our lifestyle, diet, emotions and constitution. If we understand this simple truth, we can learn to restore and maintain our health by our own efforts and, except in extreme cases, we shall not need to consult a doctor. Here you learn how to awaken your own inner doctor.

In continuation

In the July issue of *NAMAH* in 'Holistic Healing and Alternative Therapies', we asked, can alternative therapy deliver the kind of results that modern medicine fails to deliver? Is there a flaw in the method of modern science? Is the primary aim of medical science to serve the ailing humanity, or is it to promote technology and business?

Then we concluded that modern science works on the basis of *reductionism* – that is, it lowers the level of the search (the depth) and replaces it with increased complexity and data (surface). As a result, our medical practitioners are unable to appreciate the higher-level solutions that are provided by alternative therapies. They consider the alternatives to be just too simple to be true. Continuing the description of the holistic

sciences in the previous article, here we offer the second article titled, 'Natural Healing'. In the next issue we shall write on the Biochemic remedies of Dr. Schuessler that show how this method serves as an alternative therapy.

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12. Why have other causes like stress, emotions and *karma* not been discussed?

1. The modern approach in medicine

The modern approach is to classify a disease as a collection of symptoms and then to treat the symptoms with powerful drugs. This method is very useful in treating life-threatening diseases and stubborn infections. However, most of our everyday illnesses are only *functional disorders* such as *respiratory disorders* like the common cold and cough; *skin disorders* like rashes that itch, dandruff and foul odour; *pains* like headache, stiff-joints and back pains; and *digestive disorders* like irritable bowels, constipation and flatulence. And for such ailments the modern medical science has no effective remedy. They only try to manage or relieve the symptoms of the disorder so as to provide some temporary relief.

2. What is so wrong with treating symptoms?

When you habitually treat the symptoms of the common functional disorders with drugs, you only modify the symptoms *without* removing the causes. And when the underlying causes continue, the disease develops further and becomes chronic. It gives rise to annoying symptoms like headaches, stuffed nose, acidity, gas trouble, rheumatic pain, skin rash, respiratory allergy (like asthma, wheezing), blood pressure, etc. Such chronic disorders are less intense in their effects, but they harass more since they last for a long time and recur periodically.

And for such chronic conditions there are '*no outright cures*' — there are only medications that temporarily manage or relieve the symptoms.

Hence, you are never healed; and you may be put on medication that has to be taken for the rest of your life! Further, since the cause continues, newer symptoms keep on arising from time to time and the treatment you get only keeps on suppressing them.

However, in the early stages, a disease is always just a functional disorder. If you choose to suppress the symptoms at this stage, you bypass the healing that should happen at this stage and allow the disease to become internalised. Then it develops further and becomes chronic; and ultimately it becomes degenerative wherein the structures of the organs like the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, etc. begin to break down. However, it does not bother the advocates of modern medicine since now they can show you the 'wonders of surgery'. And of course, you have to pay the price.

The basic problem with the modern approach is that they focus only on relieving symptoms (the localised manifestation of the disease) so that they can deal with the 'end spectrum' of the disease — where it becomes degenerative, and where it is most profitable for the medical business.

3. Where exactly is the problem?

Medical science has misrepresented the true nature of a disease by considering it to be merely an *effect* on the body — as something that can be removed *by external means* like drugs and surgery. As a result the medical science keeps on searching for the remedy in the wrong places; and looks for temporary solutions.

The three big mistakes:

- The symptoms are considered as the disease, whereas the symptoms are only the *effects* of a diseased state.
- The causes of a disease are sought in external agents like germs and bacteria, whereas the true cause is due to *toxaemia* — a 'diseased state' that arises due to the accumulation of toxins in the body at the cellular level.
- When the treatment focuses on merely relieving symptoms, the *cause continues*. Then the ailments become chronic or newer disorders continue to arise. Hence, the patient is never really healed.

4. The holistic and the specialised approaches

When symptoms are seen in the context of the whole person, they take on a totally different significance than when they are seen in the context of an ailing part of the body. When you think analytically, you simply *reduce* the level of the insight from the whole to the part. Then you only see the disorder in the parts, the symptoms, as the disease. As a result your treatment will be directed to suppressing the symptoms or to surgically cut up the part. However, when the underlying cause is elsewhere in the system (as in an eating habit), then you miss it completely. This is precisely what happens when a health problem arises due to a disorder in the functioning of the whole person, as in a faulty lifestyle or a psychosomatic disorder. The disorder simply shows itself as symptoms in the parts. Then, if your treatment aims at curing the part without attending to the deeper causes, you can only provide some temporary relief. The underlying 'disease factor' will continue. Then the symptoms will continue to play hide and seek; and you will keep going from one specialist to another,

to be cured again and again, and yet again.

From the holistic point of view the solutions that emerge from a fragmented perspective, themselves become problems for the whole! In other words, when you aim to give some temporary relief by suppressing the symptoms, you can in the process create bigger and long-term problems for the person as a whole. Further, when you resort to 'quick-fix' cures, you also disturb the natural feedback mechanism that the body uses to heal itself. In this way you create obstacles in the processes of natural healing.

5. A disease in terms of toxaemia and the vital force

In natural healing the primary disease factor in the body is called *toxaemia*. It is experienced as irritation, pain, restlessness, indigestion or sluggishness. The deeper causes of the toxaemia usually lie inside the person — in his or her lifestyle, diet, emotions and constitution. Let us perceive how this diseased state arises.

Natural healing systems explain healing in terms of the vital force. It is something subtle, like electricity, which circulates in and around the body and the body organs, and keeps them working as 'a whole'. This vital force regulates all the functions of the body and it has the power to restore the body in illness. When the vital force is abundant this energy flows smoothly and the body functions properly. Then we feel light and alert. When the vital force becomes weak, the flow of this energy is disturbed and the body functions get disordered. Then we experience sluggishness, irritation and an upset feeling. The vital force carries out the functions of

digestion, assimilation and elimination in the body. Through digestion, it transforms the food into material that the body can use. Through assimilation, it transforms the digested food into body tissue or oxidises it to generate energy. And through elimination it removes the waste-products. That is, it decomposes the waste — the poisonous and dead materials — so that they can be easily eliminated from the body. All these functions are complementary and are carried out simultaneously or side by side.

Whenever there is some disturbance or excess in our life, the vital force gets depleted. Then it becomes insufficient. Then our digestion, assimilation and elimination also become weak and our system becomes sluggish. That is, our digestion is incomplete; our assimilation is poor; and all this stuff has to be decomposed so that it can be thrown out. The ultimate effect is that there is a gradual build-up of toxins or waste-products in the body at the cellular level. And once the 'toxin level' is higher than the body can tolerate, the body's resistance to the external agents of disease like allergens, germs, etc is lost. And that makes the body *susceptible* to illness.

6. Aren't germs and bacteria the causes of disease?

Modern medical science makes you believe that germs, bacteria, microbes, viruses and parasites are the causes of your disease. However, natural healing considers them as only the *external agents* of the disease and not the true causes. Just as flies breed where you keep your garbage, so also germs breed easily when the body or an organ is loaded with toxins!

Natural healing considers the germs and bacteria as nature's scavengers that mainly carry out the function of decomposing the waste-products of the body and preparing them so that they can be easily eliminated. (They also assist digestion and perform other functions like synthesizing vitamins.) However, the germs and bacteria are harmless against healthy living cells. They become complicating factors in a disease only *after* the conditions of disease, the toxaemia, already exists.

Once waste-matter has accumulated, the cells lose their vitality. Then the bacteria can decompose them and feed on them. However, in our healthy condition the cells are not affected by bacteria. Further, the by-products of bacterial decomposition become dangerous only when they accumulate. Hence, so long as our body is able to eliminate the toxins there is nothing to fear from germs and bacteria!

Natural healing systems regard an infection as a subsequent complication that arises when the primary disease factor, the toxaemia, already exists. Thus, the disease is not the result of an attack by germs. The germs only grow when the body or a body organ has become vulnerable. And if that is true, it is more appropriate to focus on building your immunity and resistance to germs and bacteria by detoxifying your system than to focus on destroying all the external agents of disease.

7. The fundamental steps of natural healing

The remedy in natural healing is simple:

- a. Reduce the existing 'toxin level' in the body. It will reduce your susceptibility to disease. Once the toxin level is lowered,

the vital force will be able to perform the function of healing naturally

- b. Correct your lifestyle, eating habits, etc. so that toxins are not allowed to accumulate in the body.

So, once toxæmia exists in the body, the work of elimination becomes the most crucial factor for our health. It becomes our *bottleneck* problem. Then our vital force *will use every acute illness to throw out* the toxins that have accumulated in the body.

How can we assist this elimination process?

At such times the natural instinct of the body is to rest and abstain from eating. If we eat at such times, the food will remain undigested and become an *extra load* on our system. Instead, if we provide the condition of *total rest* — rest from work and rest from digestion, the reserve vital force of the body will take up the task of cleansing our system. Thus, we have to only conserve our vitality so that the vital force can complete the task of elimination. However, if we suppress the symptoms with drugs during this process, we disturb the natural feedback mechanism the body uses to guide the vital force.

8. If natural healing is so simple, why isn't everyone doing it?

We can explain it in two ways:

- a. Most people do not know what they need to do to restore their health. So perhaps it is more appropriate to ask: *Why has natural healing not been popularised?* Natural healing is not something new. It has been around for centuries. However, its message has got lost in our times since the modern medical business is not interested in finding a solution from which there is no money

to be made.

- b. Some people understand the message of natural healing, but still they do not pursue it. That happens because they lack the will-power that is necessary to change their lifestyle, diet and emotional habits. So they come for advice, but they are actually looking for a quick fix. These people don't want to accept the responsibility for their health. So, they prefer to take the pill and settle for some temporary relief.

9. How to detoxify the body

Naturopathy uses many methods for reducing the toxins in the body, such as fasting; water cure; baths; packs; elimination diets, etc. Here we discuss the simple method of elimination diet.

The *diet* is to simply eat *only fruits for breakfast*. The diet has two considerations:

- a. You give the body a long period of rest from digestion on a daily basis. Then the body will use the extra vitality that becomes available to eliminate the toxins.
- b. Next, you eat fruits that have good cleansing properties for breakfast. They assist in eliminating the toxins.

The best fruits are black grapes, pomegranate, *guava* and *papaya*. Other good fruits are apples, figs, prunes, *jambu*, orange, mango, peach, pears, grapefruit, *chiku*, and dates. All these fruits have cleansing properties and require very little effort of digestion.

The correct way to eat fruits: when you use fruits to detoxify your body, do not eat them along with other foods that require a lot of digestion. When you mix fruits with other food, the mixture stays in stomach for a long

time and ferments (turns to acid). Then you experience acidity or gas.

We suggest that after every acute ailment you should undertake the elimination diet for a month.

10. How to avoid generating toxins

Rule-1: eat less, and take only easy-to-digest food.

When you eat less food, you do not waste your vital energy on processing the excess food. Further, when you can digest all the food you eat, you become more energetic and produce fewer toxins.

Rule-2: when food remains undigested in the body, it ferments, accumulates and creates toxins in the body. Hence, you should value the food items *according to your ability to digest* and assimilate them, and *not* according to their nutrient content! Simply avoid eating food that is hard to digest or has toxic additives.

In specific:

- Avoid fried food, soybean preparations, sweets, chocolates, refined flour preparations and food containing preservatives.
- Avoid consuming food that is highly processed, highly sweetened or salted; or foods that carry health claims (don't encourage deceivers). Food is processed to increase its shelf-life (not your life) and the processing makes it more indigestible in your body.
- Further, some foods are processed to make them tasty (deep-fried or addictive ingredients are added). It increases their consumption. However, that is better for the seller's business and not for your body.

- Avoid consuming 'concentrated' foodstuff. Don't be deceived by the label of extra nutrient value. They will be harder to digest. Instead, eat the food with lower nutritional value that comes with a lot of roughage and fibre. The fibre and roughage make it easier for the body to digest and assimilate the food, and the waste-products that are generated will also be easier to eliminate.
- Avoid consuming diet-supplements and micro-nutrients unless you have a specific deficiency. Otherwise by taking them you serve the interests of the pharmaceutical companies, and not your interest. If you have a specific deficiency, take the supplement (preferably from a natural source) only until the deficiency is overcome. Do not continue to consume it thereafter. Otherwise it creates *dependencies* and generates imbalance in the body.

11. Some good eating habits

The main purpose of eating is to feed the body. Hence, *do not combine* other purposes, like parties and thrills with the act of eating.

While eating, try to become conscious of what you eat, and how much you eat. When you maintain this discipline, the natural instinct of the body will awaken and allow you to sense the quality of the food you eat.

Eat only *two main meals* in the day. Establish your meal-time and adhere to it. Avoid eating between meals. If you eat at odd times, you will not be hungry at the meal-time! Further, if you don't get the hunger sensation at meal-time, don't eat.

Drinking water: you need about 9 glasses of water a day. Try to drink 'fresh stream' or

mountain water; and avoid drinking tap water or recycled water. Further, drinking water is not the same thing as drinking beverages.

The time factor: the morning is naturally suited to the function of elimination. Hence, at this time avoid eating food, and drink a lot of water. The digestion is strongest around midday. Hence, lunch should be your main meal. Take rest after eating a big meal. The digestive fire becomes weak on overcast days and in the rainy season. Hence, eat less on such days and in the corresponding season.

12. Why have other causes like stress, emotions and karma not been discussed?

All these causes affect the body by disturbing the vital force. And the weakness in the vital force ultimately increases the toxaemia in the body. Hence, instead of complicating the issues, we have kept it simple. Our primary focus is to induce healing by reducing the toxaemia. We want you to experience some benefit by doing this practice. Then you can go further and uncover the complexity of the situation.

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Taking charge

James Anderson

Abstract

Having order and control in our lives is a human necessity but humanity resorts to ego for the solution. The ego provides a very superficial answer and is ultimately a major cause of failure and dissatisfaction. The path of growth offers greater challenges but much richer rewards. It is about knowing ourselves in entirety and the key is consciousness. The author shares some experiences.

Introduction

There comes a time when all of us feel the need to take charge of our lives. The demand is there, always in the background, from early infancy. It starts with the urge to take charge of external circumstances. Eventually however, we come to realise that the only way to do this is by taking charge of one's self. But when faced by this question, our knee-jerk reaction is to resort to ego. This may appear to work for a while, but soon the solution becomes part of an even bigger problem. The only way to truly take charge of our lives is by taking charge of our nature, but which is so riddled with ego that we have to resort to something totally independent from it. A disinterested attitude truly helps: if your aim is motivated by true progress and not ego, one is bound to move forward much quicker. So faced with this impasse, the human being is forced to look deeper. This is where his true

journey begins and he looks for a means of more authentic control. He needs to find the true source of individual power. The irony is, once he takes charge and finally accesses a means of self-mastery, he has to give it all up and allow an even higher power to take up his being. It is a divine process and with this surrender, his power becomes magnified into the Infinite. The charge is taken out of our hands and the perception of individuality becomes an irrelevance.

Ego

There is a time when the ego helps us. Most people however, it has to be said, rely upon it almost exclusively throughout the course of their lives. It might even be their only point of reference. The child from an early age relies upon it in order to get its demands met. The adult depends upon it to climb the social ladder. And so it goes on. The ego shapes and moulds every aspect of

human existence. Through this minuscule power a thousand and one things need to be controlled. The task is too demanding and one may find one's life soon spiralling out of control. The ego is simply not capable of juggling so many balls in the air. This is a godsend because eventually the performance has to end and when it does, the individual looks finally for something deeper in his or her being.

In truth though, with virtually everyone, the ego is never totally relinquished. For many, the necessity is never recognised, while for some an uneasy arrangement between ego and soul is drawn which has to be continuously readjusted throughout every lifetime. There are different levels of adjustment varying with each one's progress and evolution. Vanquishing the ego is a long-term process. If the balance goes awry and tilts towards ego, there is a sense of greyness and dullness, a feeling of depletion and dissatisfaction. The degree of control is very flimsy when one finds oneself in this condition. Most people seem to meander through their lives in this sterile state; they never truly address the question. In truth, the necessity will never be faced when the soul is not ready.

"Almost totally, everybody lives on the surface, all the time, all the time on the surface. And for them it's even the only thing which exists — the surface (1)."

Meanwhile other souls are ripening and so a jolt might come. It is a wake-up call and should be interpreted as a sign of being 'called'. The individual has then to rise up to a higher life or forfeit his or her destiny. Sometimes the necessity for change may

dawn through a growing awareness. In others, the urge may be prompted by a crisis or misfortune. Indeed, the catalyst for me was illness although the realisation took many years to sink in. I guess that everyone is different. So this article is directed at those whose time has come.

Becoming conscious

The first step in this process is to become conscious. "But for this one must work a little within oneself. One must withdraw from the surface (2)." One has to know oneself. This means reversing the entire orientation of one's consciousness. This reversal is invariably a gradual process because a whole legacy of habit has to be reversed too. It is a time of herculean effort. Here, in many respects, one might feel oneself even less 'in charge' than ever before as one finds oneself oscillating uncertainly between a duality of extremes. A foundation needs to be built and a start must be made. It was only self-giving that saved me from oblivion when I embarked on this stage. Sometimes I felt that a single gust of wind might have been enough to destroy these tiny beginnings but thankfully there was a strand of faith that told me that self-giving was the best way forward and protection. Nevertheless I found myself rotating frequently between the different poises of *tapasyā* and surrender from the beginning, although I had fixed on surrender as the basis of all my future practice.

The sign that a decisive shift has been achieved comes when we find ourselves pulled out into the outer consciousness for one reason or another. These interruptions are very frequent and can extend over long

stretches. Without our awareness, all the lights go out. One "has the impression of falling into a black hole....(3)." These two states of consciousness, outer and inner, are indeed dimensions apart. They are different worlds. The outer poise gives such a feeling of suffocation. Sometimes, when I come out and emerge into my true station within, I briefly look back and wonder how I was able to crawl through life in such a condition!

By making this shift, every inner movement needs to move within the light of this consciousness. We need to become conscious of all the patterns and shifts of our nature and the only sure means of doing this is by becoming more and more conscious of our inner truth. Once we know it, it becomes our infallible guide. It is the only way of attaining true knowledge of the nature. "And to know oneself is not enough: this knowledge must bring a conscious control. To know oneself perfectly is to control oneself perfectly (4)." The shift from knowledge to control can be simultaneous. The will must be applied and when one aspires for change knowledge spontaneously becomes an action. With this aspiration, the two come together automatically so that Consciousness becomes Force.

The first step of taking charge involves familiarising oneself with one's consciousness. With this familiarity comes the knowledge that this consciousness can be moved around and 'localised' in the different parts of our being (5). This way of movement becomes an essential tool in mastering our nature.

"You put the consciousness in these things, so you become conscious of your body, conscious of your vital, conscious of your mind,

conscious of all your activities through your will for identification; but... first your consciousness must not be completely entangled, mingled, joined, so to say, with all these things; it must not take them for itself, must not be deceived (6)."

It is by distinguishing its different parts that some authentic control emerges. By moving it around, we get to understand what our consciousness is. From experience, I felt compelled at these early stages to strive to reach out to my true centre. It seemed to me to be the only way; it became my only means of separating the truth from the dross. It has helped me detach from the different sides of my nature and identify with a deeper truth inside, "And so, by progressive eliminations one succeeds in entering into contact with something, something which gives you the impression of being — 'Yes, that's 'myself' (7)."

Unification

Once this impression dawns, the consciousness will gradually start unifying with this inner truth. This Divine Person inside is our individual truth and the merger is the summit of the process. It can be a very long journey because so much debris needs to be cleared out first. But the portals for change and transformation gradually open. Initially there are glimpses, moments of an inimitable sweetness and clarity. These moments have to be prolonged, not retarded by the resistances of our ego nature. They must become our central poise and our unique and individual station in life. The unification must become so complete that the consciousness, when it moves around between mind, life and body and even when it is somehow summoned down the lowest

depths of our being, is embraced still by the central truth of the psychic being. If this is achieved, I believe that true transformation is not only possible but inevitable.

This consciousness offers us the only remedy for the division of our being. Frequently we might find one part of our being readily progressing, while another might completely stand still. So often we drop our baggage and it pulls us back. The consciousness offers us the means of picking it up again and taking it along the way (8). We come to realise that human nature is but a fragmented assortment of competing entities and only the consciousness has the way of making them into a homogenous whole. When our nature becomes one, something greater can truly take charge of it.

So how is it to be done?

The best way is to go *directly* to that side of our nature that is standing still. One has only to move one's consciousness to the psychological knot and address it directly, whether it is mental, emotional or physical. The Mother speaks aptly of the need to "look yourself straight in the face, *straight in the face*, not try to sugar-coat the bitter pill (9)."

Very often though, one needs to go deeper. One needs to find the complete cause to discover a true solution. The distortion needs to be plucked out by its very roots. It is a more integral approach. For this work in detail I use the medium of the body. For me, the body is the perfect transcript for everything happening inside. So many habits, memories and associations lie buried within our nature and the only way they can articulate is through the body itself. If they are left unattended

they will only rot and produce disease. They have to *surface* somewhere and there is nothing more visible than our physical consciousness. The body also seems to me to resonate much better than the mind or vital to the psychic influence at work. So when I have a problem with the mind or the vital, I invariably unearth it through the medium of the body itself.

The further one progresses, the deeper this consciousness has to go. But the paradox of this work is that, ultimately, everything is contained in the body. With consciousness, everything rises eventually to the surface. The body can be used as a gateway to going very deep inside our being. Through the tiniest cell we can expand into the vastness of the universe. Involved in matter is the Truth Consciousness, the golden future of mankind itself. Everything is involved there. It is also like a blueprint of our entire existence. With the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the chalice of transformation has been handed over to the body.

True connection is the foundation of all inner work. We must not lose touch of the divine thread. By observing the body from top to bottom, I stop wherever I might sense unease or pain. The poise is one of enquiry. We come to find that there are locations in the body which correspond to different levels or states of our psychology. What is negative will appear as a distortion and what is distorted will usually manifest in pain.

I look always at the energy flow of Force going down to the feet. Where there is a break in it, I hold my gaze and enquire into the cause. Usually, simply by 'being there',

the knot unravels and normalcy returns. Sometimes a question needs to be asked, knowledge comes and needs to be verbalised back. I look at 'normalcy' as being a state of divine felicity. It is a human birthright and the practice simply returns me to my source, which is forever divine: it is not 'me'. I find that the work always leaves an imprint of immutable and dynamic peace.

Round-the-clock practice

So the work is based on concentrated practice but needs to overspill into everyday life. Consciousness never rests and it is up to us to keep it as attuned and as aligned as possible at all times. The body gets so many mixed messages in everyday life. As yet I find it impossible to get the same degree of clarity that I get in detailed sittings. Those two bedfellows, the mind and the vital, are rarely quiescent. But to be alert and attentive must be the biggest gift we can give ourselves. "To be in this state of attentive observation, you must have, so to say, antennae everywhere which are in constant contact with your true centre of consciousness (10)."

This necessity compels me also to stay grounded, which is something not so natural to me, because really, the work has to be undertaken with a round-the-clock consciousness. It is not really something that one can switch on or off. Whenever an anomaly rises in the surface nature it can be immediately effaced by holding a mirror up against ourselves. Ideally, it must always be held up and when the mirror

reflects back to our psychic being, all will be well and good.

This in a nutshell is how I have endeavoured to take charge of my life. It is only work in progress and I have far from reached the summit. There is still a balancing act between soul and ego. Ultimately though, the *sādhana* is out of my hands and I find this deeply humbling and gratifying. Sincerity will be the key to the next step because once the peak has been conquered, it will only remain for me to give it all back, prostrate myself, to fly away on the Mother's wings.

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Evolution Next XIII — a perilous bridge

Dr. Alok Pandey

Abstract

The evolutionary journey has its own dangers and perils. It is full of the unpredictable as our past and present formation of nature adapts to the new. Nature tries and tests our limits, creating a number of sub-types and abortive sub-species before finally yielding the old and arriving at a new poise. It is this we seem to be passing through now.

Introduction

Evolution means crossing a perilous bridge in Time. It is a bridge from the past to the future, negotiating through a narrow gorge of the present. What we mean by this is that Nature has evolved certain capacities and functioning in us, in each species. And while these capacities and functions help us navigate through life, they also become our limits. Take for example, at the purely material level, the action of lungs and breathing or of the heart and circulation. They are crucial and even critical to our functioning. These devices have evolved over millions of years and have been slowly and systematically perfected so as to serve us well through the thick and thin of our living. We cannot even imagine living without these organs except perhaps for a short while and supported by machines. However these organs have been set with a timer embedded in our very genes and

the entire physiological apparatus. Slowly the watch of life unwinds, slows down or more correctly deteriorates and eventually ceases to work. We call it death. But then we are also conscious of an inner being in us that remains young even when our body is growing old, a mind that may still want to learn and grow, a soul that yet aspires to fulfill its deepest seeking. But the body sets the limits to these other parts in us. The life-force in us does not die, the mind in us does not really stop working, the immortal soul within us continues to seek and aspire, but the body refuses to co-operate. The result is that the inner being has, at some point of time, to choose either to dwell in the same body, accepting the slowing down due to the limits imposed by the physical apparatus or else decide to leave this device for another. In this case we do not say that we die but very simply we, the true 'I' is unable to function anymore in the body. It is hampering and hindering our growth in

other dimensions and hence it is perhaps better to go in for a complete change of the device we use. Normally Nature has created provisions for the same. But the problem is twofold. The true 'I' has to go through the complex process of death and rebirth, a transit during which quite a bit of what we have accumulated through our efforts is lost and goes back into the store-house of Universal Nature. However and thankfully the essential gains are preserved and kept intact in the soul. It is a different mode of information and is not destroyed by the disintegration of matter. It is, if we like, in the form of energy and consciousness. However when we come back again, this information we carry over from our past in our soul must once again use the device and machinery of Nature to be able to express itself through the new body and under new and changed circumstances. The good news is that this allows us to advance afresh, to come out of certain grooves of Nature in which we were stuck and which were preventing our soul-growth. It is like a fresh opportunity, a new lease of life, so to say. But the bad news is that all this entails a cumbersome process, a loss of time, a forgetfulness of the past (which is in some ways a blessing) which may lead to repetition of the same tendency, and through all this, a tremendous waste of time and energy. At the same time we return to the same device, a similar apparatus heavily dependent upon the complex and intricate machinery of Nature with all its attendant problems. It is like the traveller who steps out of a car that has broken down due to wear and tear and after resting for a while boards a new car which is however very much the same model and with the same risk of breakdowns and thereby punctuating

our journey. This may not matter so long as we are unconscious travellers who are spending our time mostly asleep while the car of life moves on guided by some unseen hands or by a mechanical auto-pilot setting, if you like. But the problem starts when one is awake and knows the distance to be covered, the dangers to be overcome, the safer routes and the tortuous paths and seeks to reach rather safely and smoothly and consciously without the interlude of rest and sleep. Also the traveller may now like to have a better model of car that may serve his needs better and not be subject to so much breakdown and repairs that hamper his journey. This is the second problem that even when the essential information is preserved, the return is very much in a similar body with all its attendant issues, its heavy dependency on food, its animal-like propensities (since the human body is at best an extension of the animal and shares a lot in common with it), its proneness to disease and decay. To this is added the vagaries of unchanged life-energy that only sharpens the prick of our animal instincts and turns the animal wants and needs into lusts and greed. We are as if trapped in an animal body. The inner being has gone far beyond in its travel towards divinity but the body denies the leap. We are as if caught with one leg in animality and the other in humanity while our mind and soul is rushing to go towards divinity! This is not a happy state once the soul and mind in us have awakened to a new possibility and seek to go beyond our human limits.

An artificial evolution

It is to this deeper need of the soul that

Nature has now begun to work upon. Due to the long period of evolution, more and more souls are waking up. The mind itself has accelerated in its development and the force of life seeks to go much beyond what has been or can be accomplished given the restrictions of the human body and its intricate anatomy. This deeper need is declaring itself in imagination and fictions but also in efforts of science to prolong life, to perfect the human apparatus, even to find ways and means to create or manufacture new devices. It will not be surprising if science prompted by Mother Nature, disclosing some of her secrets, actually ends up finding ways and means to bypass the heart and lungs without the cumbersome machinery that is needed now. We may even be able some day to replace each part and organ with some other kind of matter that is more durable and lasting. However this process has one inherent danger. Once science develops something it is eventually available for general use. Besides practically this general use, generally means that the richer will be able to access these possibilities more than the poor ones. After all these devices need money and resources and even if the scientists are well-intentioned the sheer economy-driven society will end up with this gap. This means that we will have a situation wherein a better body with replaced organs is at the disposal of a man with an undeveloped mind and a crude life force and a yet-to-awaken soul. One dreads such a civilisational misadventure as it will most certainly lead to the destruction of the human race given as man will end up with gigantic appetites which he will have now at his disposal the physical apparatus to satisfy. The natural limiting factor of

age and disease and who knows possibly eventual disintegration of the body will no more be there. But even if that does not happen there is another problem. As of now, Nature has created processes for the transfer of information from a living body to the soul converting it into soul-values after whatever time it may take. But the occult and subtle means are there. However with the switching over to more inorganic substances, say a silicon chip and modified plastic or rubber into an organ, there will be a disconnect between the soul and the body even though the body itself may function very well. This may be even more frustrating since the human body is not just for survival but also a means for evolution. This will defeat Nature's deepest intention which is to evolve matter itself under the pressure of the soul. While it is natural that the intention of Nature may well be misread and scientists try to develop synthetic organs, it is unlikely that Nature will allow it as anything more than a passing means, a means to keep the urge for bodily transformation alive in man. But if the experiment goes too far it may either simply find ways and means to destroy the human species as it has done in the past or else it may abandon the effort with man to divinise matter and choose some other species, the dolphins for instance, for her grand and greatest of all adventures or even move over to some other planet capable of upholding the psychic flame for the evolutionary adventure. It will be a sad loss to earth, a forfeiting of her destiny if that were ever to happen. Hence this may well be at worst a last resort, for Nature does not give up the secret Will that drives it and is ready to work for another billion years to achieve its purpose. But for man as we

know today it will simply be a catastrophic end to a brilliant start. Let us hope and trust that this will not be the route mankind will take beyond a point. But one cannot deny that the danger is not there. Man has always mistranslated the intention of Nature and hence great and far advanced civilisations have plunged suddenly into darkness and gone into utter oblivion so much so that not even traces are left of their existence except in some psychic memory of the race.

The diversion of evolutionary energy

This is however only one of the dangers of the effort to create a new body more suitable for the indwelling deity. A similar danger arises because Nature has accelerated the evolutionary impetus within herself and man is feeling its heat. It is like the burst of a tremendous energy being given to us for a New Creation. But the question is whether man is ready to receive this energy boost or not. So far he has misused whatever new thing has come to earth. This may not matter much since that is always the first step, as long as he eventually learns fast enough to course-correct himself and diverts this Energy for the real purposes it is given. Nevertheless there is the danger that mankind may simply misuse and mis-spend this Energy in recreation and procreation rather than in New Creation. Here however we need not assume that the entire race will use it for the true purposes. It is enough if there are a critical number of persons who are inwardly awake and conscious enough to use it for the true purposes, that is of transforming the human consciousness and along with it the very human body. Fortunately, thanks to the tremendous efforts and *tapasyā* of Sri Aurobindo and

the Mother, the pioneers of this Evolution Next, there are a growing number of human beings who have not only reached this turning point but are being led in the intended direction. I say led, because it is not so much their effort but the Unseen Hand of Grace that seems to push them towards the Future even when everything in them is not collaborating. What we have to see is whether the misusing section gets the upper hand and destroys Nature in the process or those in whom the evolution is being worked out intensely, picking up a more and more rapid pace depending upon how much the person allows and can withstand the evolutionary heat and the pressure, the oestrus of a new creation so to say. Evolution is not an easy process, especially in the early batches of humanity where it is a bit uncertain which way the evolutionary experiment will go. Once it is stabilised then it is a different matter. It will become standardised and easier for others. But for now we, even among the best, are still in the making, half-baked, half-willing, half-resisting but flowing with it nevertheless! This is a crucial period and let us hope that the race between mutual destruction and the New Creation will be won by the yet-to-come super-humanity of the future. There may even be a conflict, who knows, between the old and the new species as distinctive differences emerge in ways of thinking, feeling, living and being. After all humanity itself evolved through this conflict between two subspecies of a pro-humanity that no longer exists except as a fossil. Possibly much of what we call or recognise and identify today as humanity may eventually be left aside as a fossil as the super-humanity evolves with some connecting links remaining here

and there for the evolutionary energy to find its way from matter to the Spirit. But the risk of a conflict cannot be excluded. Of course the danger is there only up to a point after which one has negotiated the troubled waters.

The problem of adaptation

There is however yet another danger and it comes from the very nature of evolution. All evolution is eventually an adaptation of the new and the old. The old body has to learn to adapt to the New Consciousness and increase its receptivity towards the change. However in the process it may experience many disturbances, which to a superficial way of seeing may appear as diseases and even be diagnosed as such, but they are actually evolutionary passages, a curve or bend where one mode of functioning is ending or fading away while the other mode is developing. Thus for example, we can envisage that the need for food and sleep may reduce and that source of pleasure called sex becomes no more pleasurable but even painful. The pressure of evolutionary forces in these corresponding organs may increase the risk of their breakdowns. The nerves and the circulation may also undergo changes at the cellular and molecular levels which may find full expression later on as new ways of functioning. But during the passage the human physiology and biochemistry may take a hit, especially when the transfer is taking place between the old and the new mode of functioning. Our heart may become increasingly sensitive to our inner states and eventually be driven by some central will and energy within us. But meanwhile and before that happens, it

may become prone to rhythm and other disturbances. The lungs themselves may develop new modes of absorbing energy and the complicated breathing apparatus may be slowly replaced by a direct drawing of energy from all around us. The body may become increasingly light-sensitive and many of its ailments may simply be healed by light-infusion. Still further, it may become more and more open to spiritual and higher forces with a corresponding molecular shift leading to self-healing through mere invocation of Peace and higher energies. These things are not entirely new to humanity. Certain spearheads of humanity have experienced these things in higher states of consciousness but these have been more as a promise, individual freaks rather than as something generalised in the race, which is what evolution is eventually about. The individuals multiply and eventually there is a shift in the functioning of the larger group. Each individual realising and working out the shift within himself makes it easier for others. He takes upon himself as it were, the burden of those who will follow. His successes set the tone and the pace and increase the momentum of change, but even his failures pave the way.

A word of hope

This is as far we can envisage now. For the rest we have to leave it to the Eye of Wisdom that is ever awake within us and the all-fulfilling march of Time to unfold in its own way and through its own means. For once the mandate has gone by then eventually nothing can resist and whatever stands in the way will simply have to pass away into the shadows, for the march towards the future is the one certainty regardless of

the perils of the passage. The evolutionary adventure is bound to eventually succeed but let us hope and try that it be here and now rather than later and hereafter. Let us hope that our humanity paves the way for the future species rather than becomes merely a hurdle to be removed thereby plunging an entire civilisation or large

sections of humanity into the darkness of destruction. Let us hope that the dance of New Creation will eventually pick up pace and outdo the dance of destruction and the mad fury of blind forces that yet drive matter and deny to earth and man the higher and greater possibility of a divine life in a divine body.

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An armchair view of physicians and patients

Ashok Kumar Bhatia

Abstract

Physicians are exposed to varying degrees of professional, scientific, administrative, commercial, personal and behavioural challenges. Despite these, they try to do their best to deliver, upholding the best standards of their profession. One of their main challenges is to handle a baffling variety of patients they come across. In our stressed-out times, The Hippocratic Oath might appear to be relegated to the background, but it is surely alive and kicking. While physicians deserve to be applauded for their inner resilience, most patients need to resort to spirituality to improve upon theirs.

Those who practise as physicians in our society are increasingly being looked upon with some suspicion. Dig a little deeper and one is apt to find that they are more to be pitied than censured.

A physician is denied the fundamental right to some solitude. Even at a social gathering, he is likely to be surrounded by wannabe patients who are keen to seek his impromptu advice as to the latest affliction the party has heard about and imagines he or she to be suffering from.

Close relatives are not too considerate either. A distant relative might call late at night, skilfully steering the conversation from children's career prospects to the current bout of migraine he happens to be suffering from. If anyone in the circle of friends or relatives happens to be admitted to a hospital, the

physician ends up spending sleepless nights, adroitly juggling his official commitments and personal relations, often messing up both.

Latest advancements in medicine keep them on their toes. So does the competition from various streams of medicine, such as Homoeopathy, Āyurveda, Yūnānī, Siddha and many other local variants of each of these streams. Superstitions, local beliefs, religion and social norms are but some of the constraints which need to be kept in mind. Legal tangles, such as those that apply to road accident cases, keep them on the defensive.

In advanced countries, they face tough customer care regulations. In emerging economies like India, they suffer humiliation — occasionally violent — at the hands of irate relatives and well-wishers of patients if the latter perceive the medical service provided to their kith and

kin to be deficient.

Return on Investment considerations

To be a mere graduate in any discipline of medicine does not amount to much these days. Even to become a graduate, the hapless souls have to experience at least five and a half years of the tyranny of the classroom, with the trauma of a stint as an intern thrown in for good measure.

Monetary rewards obviously vary depending upon their choice of a career. They could choose to be in their own private practice, or join a private sector outfit or become a part of the public health delivery mechanism.

If public spending on the health infrastructure is woefully inadequate, private players end up playing an important role in the medical education scenario. Many aspiring physicians opt for a private sector skill provider. As a consequence, hassled parents end up shelling out sackfuls of the green stuff. Return on Investment considerations then determine the choice of their career.

The blue-eyed ones

The resourceful ones set up their own practice. If the going is good, some of them end up laughing all the way to the bank, what with hefty commissions coming in from such allied medical service providers as marketers of branded medicines and diagnostic clinics.

Those who happen to be associated with five-star private sector health facilities have tough business targets to meet. This is not to say that patient care necessarily gets

compromised, but an overdose of medical investigations surely leaves the patient and her family deprived of mental peace and some hard-earned green stuff.

When the costliest of medicines and gadgets get recommended by physicians, stakeholders of pharmaceutical companies and those in the field of medical equipment laugh all the way to the bank. Admittedly, quite a lot of money gets pumped into research and development, but it is open to debate as to how much profit could be considered rational and socially justified.

Much like the marketing honchos in the private sector who bring in business and resultant moolah, such physicians happen to be the blue-eyed boys of any entity which boasts of being a corporate facility.

The grey-eyed ones

Physicians who are part of the government healthcare-delivery system and happen to be conscientious by nature are often overloaded with work. Monetary rewards are often not commensurate with the efforts being put in. The eyes of a majority of them would be a dull grey, revealing a soul which is tormented and has given up hope.

Besides having to publish research papers in peer-reviewed journals and making presentations at medical seminars, students have to be guided, examinations have to be conducted and internal meetings need to be attended. Administrative chores cannot be ignored.

Above all, routine patient care cannot be made to suffer. Patients, whether of the 'in' or

the 'out' kind, descend in droves, all eager to jump the queue and catch the attention of the physician. The plight of people in most of the emerging economies is most distressing because the per capita availability of physicians leaves much to be desired.

The Patient Satisfaction Quotient

It is well-known that the Patient Satisfaction Quotient is a function of various factors — the time spent with the physician, the quality of interaction, the seniority of the physician in the system hierarchy, etc.

It follows that the following laws might apply:

Law #1: the more the time spent with a physician, the higher the level of satisfaction of a patient.

Admittedly, this law does not apply to those perched on a dentist chair. Nor does it apply to those facing a minor surgical procedure without the aid of analgesics.

Law #2: the better the quality of interaction, the higher the level of satisfaction of a patient.

This law is a direct derivative of the psychology of the individual. The more a patient is able to off-load his worries and anxieties onto the hapless physician, the happier he is apt to feel.

There are some exceptions here as well. A physician found making an inappropriate remark about the weight of a patient who is a member of the female of our species will risk losing the latter's goodwill.

Law #3: the patient satisfaction level is directly proportional to the seniority of the physician

being consulted.

Amongst the well-heeled patients, the respect and admiration for a physician depends upon the amount of fee being charged, the waiting period to get an appointment, the seniority of the physician in the system and the value as well as the rare availability of the medications being prescribed.

This one surely does not apply to the teeming multitudes who strive to keep their body and soul together day after day.

It follows that most patients using the public hospitals are left dissatisfied. It does not occur to them that the sheer exposure of such physicians is so very wide that the medical advice they dish out is much better. Superfluous investigations are discouraged. Medications recommended are often of a generic kind, saving the patient some precious money.

A Patient Motivation-Hygiene Proposition

Those familiar with Herzberg's two-factor theory, popular in the realm of organisational behaviour, would notice a striking similarity between the situation envisaged in organisations and the one we are endeavouring to explore here.

In case of organisations, job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not part of a continuum. Absence of satisfaction does not necessarily imply presence of dissatisfaction. If the presence of Motivation Factors (respect and recognition on the job, for instance) improves job satisfaction levels, the absence of Hygiene Factors (such as physical working conditions, etc.) leads to higher job dissatisfaction levels.

Likewise, satisfaction/dissatisfaction levels of patients perhaps tend to be independent of each other. If the treatment is effective in the long run, the satisfaction level improves. If the time spent by the physician is inadequate, dissatisfaction sets in.

In that sense, Effectiveness of Treatment would be akin to a Motivation Factor in the theory propounded by Herzberg. However, the set of laws proposed above would be like Hygiene Factors, the absence of which would cause a patient dissatisfaction.

Patients of various hues

Patients obviously come in various body sizes, pocket sizes, shapes and hues. Amongst those who do not face a medical emergency, there are wide variations in temperaments. Here are some which might be of interest.

The reluctant ones

These are patients who believe that a doctor should be visited only as a last resort and that medicines need to be stopped as soon as the immediate problem is addressed. They believe that there is no need for any follow-up visit, till, of course, the next crisis strikes.

The casual ones

These are the ones who are casual in their approach. They may or may not follow either the doctor's prescriptions or the food restrictions placed on them. Nevertheless, a medical consultation is akin to a pleasurable outing for them, so they shall keep coming back to see the physician. For a public service doctor, they happen to be a nuisance. For those in the private sector, they are a source

of delight.

The conscientious ones

In this category fall the hapless and anxious souls who take their illnesses rather seriously. They take medicines regularly, and follow diet-related advice to the best of their ability. They tend to seek guidance at frequent intervals. Those who suffer from lifestyle diseases often end up forging a close bond with the physician, thereby replicating the age-old system of 'family doctors'.

The anxious ones

Then there are the well-heeled hyper-anxious ones who take a magnified view of their afflictions, tend to be jumpy, worry excessively about prognosis, and keep troubling the physician concerned with inane queries from time to time.

Of attitude and inner resilience

Much depends on the attitude of a patient. One could come across persons with a cheerful disposition headed for their second open heart surgery, relishing a deep-fried item with much glee. One could also run into those who worry endlessly over such transient ailments as a bout of common cold or sinusitis.

Physicians obviously deal with a baffling variety of patients with much finesse and aplomb. Nerves of chilled steel get deployed. A sense of detachment pervades their handling of a patient. Their inner resilience deserves to be applauded.

With such fine qualities of head and heart, one can merely admire the quality of their work

which keeps upholding the reputation of their profession. The Hippocratic Oath might appear to be relegated to the background, but is surely alive and kicking.

In many streams of alternative medicine, the patient is taken as a composite whole and treated holistically. The inner resilience of a patient is accorded a higher weightage. Allopathy, the mainstay of masses in the times we live in, does it the other way round, where each organ is looked at and treated separately. In mathematical parlance, alternative streams could be likened to Integral Calculus, whereas allopathy could be likened to Differential Calculus.

Shoring up one's inner resilience

There are indeed ways for patients to improve their inner resilience, so as to be able to handle the harsh slings and arrows of Fate in a more positive manner. A deeper inner connection helps. To achieve the same, regular introspection and meditation helps.

It stands to reason that almost all spiritual masters exhort one to simply disallow negative thoughts to gain a foothold in one's psychical system. Patients obviously need loads of patience to be able to put this advice into practice!

Inputs from Dr. Shivani Salil and Dr. Shruti Bhatia are gratefully acknowledged.

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Conscious perfection — dignity of the inner being

Dr. Soumitra Basu

Abstract

The perfect archetypal representation of each idea in the global cognitive field facilitates a progressive movement towards perfection. In the process, the pursuit of perfection through the cultivation of virtues becomes a sort of personal āsana in one's spiritual sojourn.

Perfection in all our activities, movements, gestures has been a eulogised mark of culture, an expression of finesse and a goal of civilisation. Nobody contests its utility, for both the *yogi* and the scientist strive for it with equal zeal. The Mother adds another dimension when she stresses that every effort towards perfection has to be 'conscious'. Even in each physical activity, it is not the mechanical technique but the consciousness infused that brings the result: "This amounts to saying that it is the conscious will which acts on matter, not the material fact (1)." Every act of perfection has to be executed consciously, with full awareness and with an investiture of appropriate energy, aspiration and goodwill.

The very moment every act of perfection is infused with consciousness, another dimension opens up. Perfection no longer remains static, it becomes dynamic and progressive. What is perfect at one point of time may not hold its fort at another point; what is perfect today may

not be perfect tomorrow. If something has been done perfectly now, it has to be repeated with a new denouement of perfection later. Perfection is an ever-progressive attempt to get to the Truth.

One might say, especially in the milieu of the psychiatric clinic, that the perfectionist trait has its pathological perspective too. After all, the individual with obsessive compulsive personality harbours perfectionist traits while someone with an obsessive compulsive disorder strives and suffers continually in the labyrinthine alleys of repetitive attempts to counter a perceived imperfection.

There is however an important qualitative difference in the striving for perfection as part of personal growth and the ruminations of fighting against imperfection in the obsessive compulsive subject. The obsessive compulsive subject suffers from pathological anxiety, exaggerated guilt, frustration and morbid

depression. The seeker of personal growth is free, detached and without any anxiety. While the obsessive subject struggles against an imperfection constructed in the mind, the seeker of personal growth attempts perfection with joy, spontaneity and freedom. While the obsessive subject gets more and more stressed, anxious and exasperated with every fight against imperfection, the seeker of Truth gets progressively free from stress with every conscious attempt at perfection that brings one nearer and nearer to the Truth.

The Mother described how every small movement could be executed with a conscious perfection. Sri Anirvan, the great wayfarer saint, expands on The Mother's insistence for perfection. He describes that every conscious act of perfection can be construed in two ways:

- a. Each movement could be a 'personal asana' in one's own spiritual pursuit; or
- b. Each conscious gesture could be a voluntary movement connected with one's most conducive spiritual poise.

In either case, each conscious attempt at perfection would reflect the dignity of the inner being (2).

Why perfection?

The anarchist would question the necessity to strive for perfection. After all, imperfection is a reality and part of life, so why deny it? A rational answer is difficult. One can venture to seek its reason in the Aurobindonian paradigm. The Supreme Creative Supramental Consciousness holds the 'idea' of each form while the Overmind plane of Global cognition manifests each 'idea' as a perfect archetype that would be replicated in the world bound

by space and time. However, during the process of replication, the archetype suffers distortion and deviation when ultimately manifested in the earth consciousness. The redemption comes by a continual process of progressive perfection striving towards the Truth. The perfect archetype in the global cognitive field exerts its pull in creation.

Amal Kiran (K.D.Sethna) explains how in one of his most moving poems, Sri Aurobindo describes the archetypal representation that is ever-perfect (the first two lines of each stanza) and the aspiration invoking its blossoming in the earth-consciousness (the last two lines of each stanza) (3):

"Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,
Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!
Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,
Image of immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man (4)."

If the Unconscious (in Freudian terms) influences each piece of behaviour, the Superconscious equally pulls up each piece of behaviour towards its heavenly archetypal representation. This is the *raison d'être* for the quest for progressive perfection.

Attributes of perfection

Perfection is a eulogised state needing the cultivation of certain attributes. The Mother, while describing psychological and spiritual significances of flowers, named *Plumeria rubra* to represent *Psychological Perfection*. This tree bears clusters of fragrant funneliform flowers with soft velvety petals in a large variety of

colour combinations. The Mother explains:

“There is not one psychological perfection but five. They are sincerity, faith, devotion, aspiration and surrender”. She elaborates, “Such qualities as faith, sincerity, aspiration, devotion, etc. make up the perfection indicated in our language of the flowers. In ordinary language it would mean something else such as purity, love, benevolence, fidelity and a host of other virtues (5).”

The pursuit of perfection automatically implies a cultivation of a host of virtues.

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The experience of surrender

Veronik Menanteau

Abstract

Faced by total physical breakdown caused by a cerebral oedema while in India, the author merely observed the body's responses and surrendered everything to the Highest Power. Many lessons were learnt by this affliction. The entire episode has inspired her also to share her experience with others in the realms of body consciousness and Yoga Nidra.

"I am not a scholar
I am a creative force in Action, that is all.
All depends on the Lord's Will.
If such is his will,
when I have to know, I know,
when I have to fight, I fight,
when I have to love I love,
and always there is the need to love, to know
and to fight (1)."

"Through each individual's formation the physical substance progresses, and one day this substance will be capable of establishing a bridge between the physical life such as we know it and the supramental life that will manifest (2)."

Each of us has a unique and specific experience to live and to manifest regarding our inner approach to health. It is this sort of personal experience that I would like to share with you here. Still, the above prayer of the Mother expresses for me the full quintessence of health and it contains everything in it. Even so, I have

decided to share my own experience with you for the sole reason of providing and infusing a life-transforming experience into Her words.

It is the harmony between knowing, loving, and fighting that creates the perfect balance of health. But how can we know, love, and fight unless we are living and being in the constant experience of them? The true knowledge of our self means accepting accidents or disease and then being able to discover what this unbalance in the being means in order to cure it and to bring back our harmony. It takes many lessons to touch this insincerity lying in the subconscious. So how do we decipher the message?

Let me take you on a journey! A few years ago, as a visual artist, I created a non-profit organisation that provided an art therapy programme for orphans with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). One evening, as I was working on a post-Tsunami mission in Kodakkarai, I found myself in a very unusual

nervous state. I tried to recall information that might give me an explanation for it, such as having drunk too much coffee or something else that would have made me feel such nervousness in the whole body. Nothing could explain it except that I must have been very tired, as was usual during such a mission. I tried to relax, tried to breathe and then I started to feel an unbearable pain in my left eye as if a knife was digging into it. It was a Friday night, so all my local team was away and I was totally alone in the guest house at Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary where the programme was taking place.

During this horrible pain where I could barely breathe, I tried to concentrate on my breathing, then I realised that it was difficult to give any order to my brain. At that second that I will never forget, when I witnessed that my brain wasn't functioning normally, I could touch the panic in the blood vessel, the acceleration of the blood pressure, the lack of oxygen and difficulty in breathing. I observed that all the nerves and small muscles of my face were moving on their own. I couldn't coordinate any action as I had lost psycho-motor control as well as the capacity to move or speak. And when I tried to speak, only gibberish came out without any understandable words. The pain in my eye was getting so intense that I could see that I was on the borderline of collapsing into unconsciousness.

There, I touched something (the Life-Force?) that made me absolutely determined to keep conscious, knowing that if I collapsed it would be over. Then at that very specific moment, a point was reached where I felt no more pain and it seemed that I was witnessing what was happening in the body: : 'the Observer'. And

I entered into an unknown state where all relations to the mental and vital were gone. I observed this state as if I was outside my body and, while continuing to exist out of the body, I emerged into another level of consciousness ... which appeared to me like a zone between unconsciousness and the subconscious. In a moment of lucidity, I tried to remember my name but I didn't know my name any more, the sense of self was gone! At that moment, I remember so clearly how I found it funny that I couldn't remember my name while at the same time I could feel the Presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in an ethereal plane so vividly. It was so clear, so evidently simple, that They were there, and I remember experiencing being totally absorbed and embraced in the Divine. You see, there are no words to describe this specific moment outside time, when entirely absorbed in the Divine, with that sense of being in Eternity and that sense of complete freedom. In *Mother's Agenda*, The Mother speaks about the freedom of the body, "But there is a new type of freedom: it's the freedom of the Body (3)". Once again, no words would be able to describe the experience, and with complete humility, I'm trying to share it as closely as I had lived it.

Then there was the perception of Something taking entire control of the body to make the *prāṇāyāma* start on its own without knowing who I was individually. Only the breathing was at work bringing ventilation and oxygen into the blood vessels. This consciousness was not a way of thinking or feeling, because all that was gone. Was I in an unknown living process in a new stream of a new energy? In the *Agenda*, The Mother speaks about "a wave-like undulatory movement (4)". It seemed so clear to me that consciousness is not a way of thinking or feeling but the origin of the Life-

Force itself: the *prāṇa* circulating in the body. I can share that this consciousness is independent of the mental, the vital and even from the body itself. The more we penetrate those planes of consciousness, the more we become aware of the Life-Force at work. It seems that it is a vibratory modality that oscillates from one state to another, discovering new layers in the infinite consciousness. The most difficult part is to be able to drive and manipulate its mass density, as it is energy expanding to Infiniteness and to Oneness. I was oscillating from one world to another, as if my body was like a house where the central electrical system had blown up and where an unknown little candle had started up on its own. What was this Life-Force that is capable of switching different vibrational frequencies with complete authority over our life-survival process?

At the hospital, an MRI showed that I had experienced a cerebral oedema (water in the brain). It took me a few years to completely recover, and to learn what I had to learn. The first thing I learnt was to accept the invisible handicap I had (for almost a year I would not be able to remember what I was doing, or speaking about...) The Mother says that, "The work consists of changing the conscious basis of all the cells (5)." During those years of recovery I very much remembered that specific moment of floating into the Divine, and I recalled where the Mother said, "The body suddenly finds itself outside of all habits, all actions, reactions, consequences, and then, it's like a marvel, and then it disappears. It's so new that each time we feel we're at it, the consciousness has a moment of panic (6)." In those moments of panic when the synopsis was not working properly, I learnt about

patience and about humility, as my *raison d'être* used to be the non-profit organisation I had created, all the structure which had fallen apart with the accident. Then came gratitude, gratitude to witness how the body and mind could regenerate, how I was being helped by so many people: then perseverance, courage, progress. In the back of my mind was the will to infuse this experience to people, but how?

So five years ago, *Yoga Nidra* came to me! Since then, in my attempt to remain a simple vehicle, I have been using this fabulous Tool of the Mother and implementing the 'Twelve Qualities' into *Yoga Nidra* during sessions at the *Unity Pavilion* in Auroville and at SAICE (*Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*). During those sessions, like a miracle, I feel collective Peacefulness expanding into Oneness. "Always there is the need to love, to know and to fight!"

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Veronik Menanteau is a visual artist, writer and Yoga Nidra teacher alternating between Paris and Auroville, India.

Body, the Occult Agent

Nolini Kanta Gupta

Abstract

The body is the world in microcosm and, if truly destined and attuned to the supreme Consciousness, can reflect and determine massive shifts on a world-scale.

The body has an individuality of its own. It is an organised formation and acts as a whole in each and all its parts. The human body is, *par excellence*, such a formation; for it is moved and controlled by the consciousness which overshadows or informs it, which is its master, whose will it executes scrupulously.

The body is an epitome of the world. It encases within its frame the whole world, particularly the earth — earth itself being an epitome of the world — on a miniature scale, the *mikros* reproducing all the features and characters of the *makros*.

Such being the case, a wholly conscious body governed and inspired by the supreme Consciousness lives and moves in the cosmic rhythm: not only does it register in itself the world happenings, but also possesses an active power to control and even to change those happenings by its individual movement. We may imagine the body to be a kind of map or chart of the earth. Each spot

on the earth is represented by a particular spot — a certain group of cells, for example — in the body. If the consciousness ruling the body concentrates itself upon that point and induces a change there, a corresponding change can be brought about automatically on a larger scale in the part and conditions of the earth with which it is connected. Thus without going out and moving about, without being the “man on the spot” to know things “at first hand”, one can, sitting, in one’s room, by switching on a key, as it were, in one corner of the body, set in movement a whole process of happenings in a particular region of the earth. By a conscious re-disposition of a few cells in your body, you can bring about a desired change in world circumstances. The body is thus a control room for the consciousness in respect of happenings upon earth. Naturally, any body cannot do that, but only a body destined and trained for that purpose.

A body, in this way, becomes the instrument,

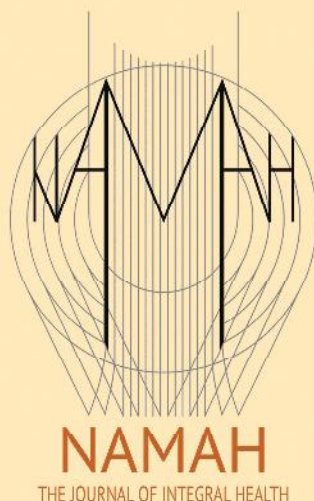
a lever for producing mighty changes and creations upon earth. This conception of the occult potency of the body is at the basis of the rite or institution of sacrifice that was a characteristic feature of the old-world society. Iphigenia was offered as a victim to avert the wrath of the gods and bring victory to the Greeks. Sometimes an animal replaced the human victim and served the same purpose and in the same way. And in a higher sense — indeed in the highest sense — a body can sacrifice itself in such a

way — wholly and integrally — as to bring about a corresponding integral reversal or revaluation in the physical world. A human being that makes of himself a holocaust — burns himself out at the altar of the Divine — keeping nothing for his own sake, living for the Divine alone, by calling down the divine will in himself, brings into the earthly life too a divine presence and transformation. A total physical sacrifice results inevitably into a total expression and embodiment of the Divine in the Physical world.*

* Nolini Kanta Gupta. *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Volume 3*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust; 1972, p. 245-6.

The Divine is present in the very atoms of our body.

The Mother



Quarterly.

Printed by Swadhin Chatterjee and published by Pradeep Narang on behalf of Sri Aurobindo Society.

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Puducherry and published at



Sri Aurobindo Society. No. 11, St. Martin Street, Puducherry, 605 001.

Managing Editor : Vijay Poddar.

ISSN No. 0971-684-X

Regn. No. 53869 / 93

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