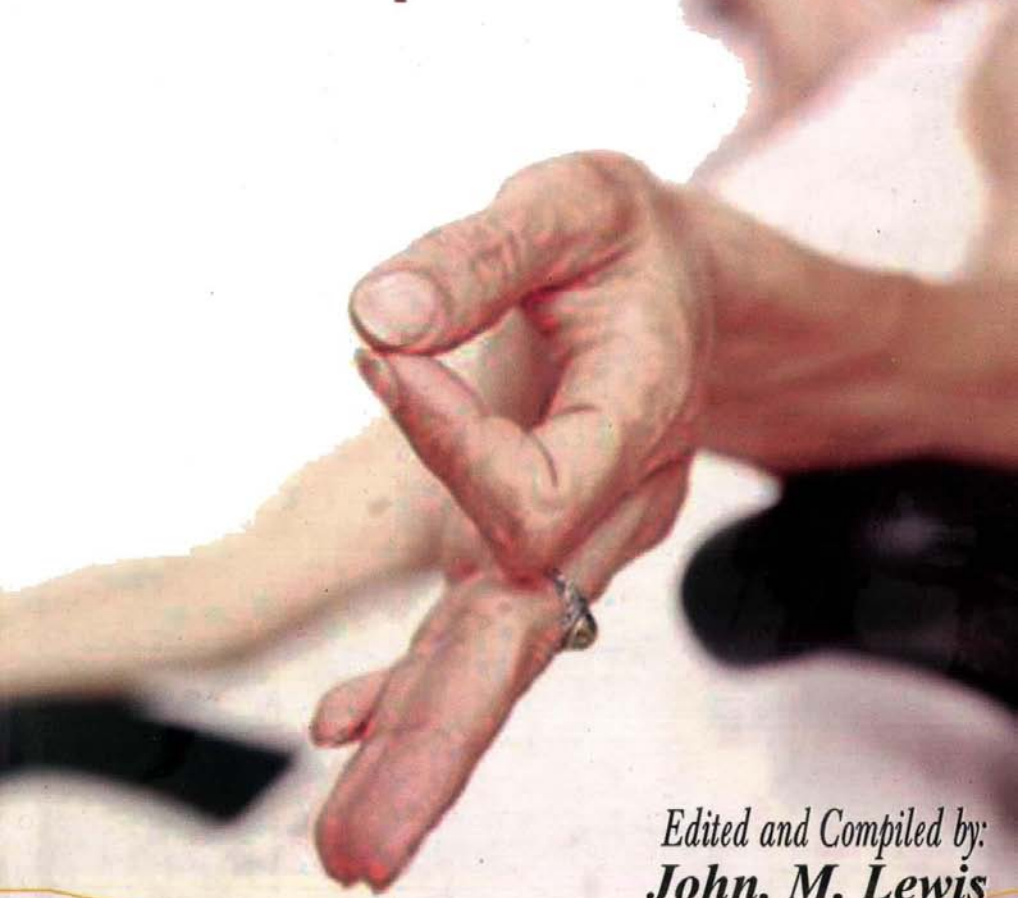




MEDITATION

Road To Spiritual Freedom



Edited and Compiled by:
John. M. Lewis

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ABHISHEK

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PREFACE

The pursuit of peace and happiness has been an unending quest for the human race since time immemorial. This calls for something that can alleviate the lacuna filling our fast paced lives today. The answer to this is: Meditation. Call it meditation, conscious relaxation, Tai Chi or Yoga; all of them aim at total relaxation of the human mind and body. The wonders of meditation are many and this manual tries to unravel the various branches and techniques of this ancient art.

Millions of people around the world have benefited from meditation and thousands are discovering it everyday. Transcendental Meditation and Vipassana are much popular in the western world. India, the ancient seat of meditation, is also waking up to its many uses. From curing diseases to prolonging life, meditation has given a new lease of life to many.

This manual provides you the science behind each meditation form and its techniques. Presented in an easy manner it takes you through the history and origin and varied benefits derived from it. Information pertaining to methods such as breathing, walking and sitting meditation has been provided in a step by step manner. Moreover, chapters have been included for more advanced learners.

A glossary of terms and some Do's and Dont's of meditation have been given for easy reference. Another attraction is the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

section that answers all your queries. Written in a simple and lucid manner this manual is designed to bring you the joys of meditation for a long and healthy life.

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Meditation: The Stress- buster

Why Meditate?

Meditation works. It really does and study has shown that regular practice of meditation reduces all kinds of stress. It can relieve everyday stresses like being stalled in traffic, earning a living, and raising children, as well as major ones like the loss of a job, chronic pain, or severe illness.

Besides helping you cope with stress, meditation can improve your health, unlock your creativity, and even slow down the ageing process. Now the question arises: How?

Stress is a major problem of our hectic lives. But first, it is important to understand the stress response. The stress response is the normal bodily response to threatening situations. Actually, it is a collection of automatic bodily changes that act to supercharge our physical abilities. Its aim is to enable us to act quickly and survive intense, short-term challenges, especially those requiring lots of physical effort and little thinking or reasoning.



Unfortunately, it doesn't take a truly life-threatening situation for us to feel threatened. A minor traffic jam, or an annoying employer (or employee) can do the trick. And once we perceive a threat, we tend to invoke the stress response. This means that with each of the many petty annoyances or worries of civilised life we are commanding our bodies to prepare for a life-or-death challenge.

Furthermore, as long as we focus on whatever is worrying us, the stress response will continue. Of course, our bodies are not designed to function at such a level for more than a short period of time, so there is a cost, especially if the stress response lasts for more than a few minutes.

For example, during stress, there are major changes in the blood supply. The heart beats faster and blood pressure rises. At the same time, the flow of blood is directed away from the internal organs and the skin so that it can flow to the muscles. In the brain, more blood flows to the areas that control muscle coordination. The brain also directs the release of chemicals designed to help the body cope with injury- For example, agents that make the blood clot more easily and agents that block pain and inflammation.

THE TROUBLE WITH STRESS

In a short-term, physical survival situation, these changes can be life saving. But prolonged high blood pressure combined with easily clotting blood is a deadly combination that can result in a stroke or heart attack. The substances that block pain and inflammation incidentally act to suppress the immune system. Another substance, *Corticotrophin Releasing Hormone*, appears to cause genetic changes in body cells that make them easy targets for infection. And these are only a few of the many negative side-effects of prolonged stress.

The side effects of stress do not become dangerous if stresses are infrequent and last for only a short time. However, disease and mortality statistics make it clear that long-term, unrelieved stress impairs your body's ability to fight disease. Even in the absence of disease, long-term stress acts to accelerate and intensify the effects of ageing. In fact, many of the symptoms of long-term stress are identical with the typical signs of ageing.

And then there are the short-term effects. For example, the redirection of blood to the muscles means that, for the duration of the stress response, digestion stops, leading to indigestion.

In the brain, changes in blood flow can literally make you act stupid. As blood is shunted to the cerebellum, the part of the brain that controls physical coordination, it is directed away from the cortex, or 'thinking' part of the brain. This means that we gain in short-term physical performance, but at the expense of the ability to think straight.

Of course, it doesn't help that most of today's threatening situations require little muscle, but lots of calm, clear thinking, often over a relatively long period of time- just the opposite of what our natural stress response is designed to provide!

In fact, what makes life so stressful these days is not its problems, but the mismatch between the problems and the way we respond to them. Focusing on the threatening aspects of a situation, it's impossible not to invoke the stress response. Aside from the negative physical effects, this way of responding literally makes the problem worse- since it interferes with your thinking ability. This is where meditation can help. During meditation you learn to control where you focus your attention. By teaching you to interrupt a negative focus, meditation gives you a break from stress. The resulting 'relaxation response' allows your body to repair the damage done by stress. At the same time, the improved blood supply to the 'thinking' part of your brain, gives a tremendous boost to your creative problem solving ability- exactly what you need to solve today's complex problems!



So, by interrupting the stress response, meditation allows your body to repair the damage before it gets out of hand, preventing unnecessary disease and premature ageing. It reverses the 'stupefying' effect of stress by restoring adequate blood flow to the creative parts of your brain, making you more able to cope with or even eliminate stress at its source.

WHAT IS STRESS?

To understand how you can reduce stress and therefore prevent disease, first we should define it. Stress is not a deadline to meet at work, a term paper, or even a traffic tie-up during rush hour. Stress is how we react, physically and mentally, to these experiences.

Some days we're better at it; some days we're not. If we've slept well at night and wake up fresh and rested, we're apt to handle any demand during the day far better than if we run into it, headlong, on a Friday afternoon at the end of a long week.

Stress, then, can be understood to be any structural or material abnormality in the body (tight neck muscles, high blood pressure, tension, headaches, etc.) that is caused by overloading the machinery of experience, the senses.

IS STRESS THE SPICE OF LIFE?

Some say that stress is the spice of life. People who thrive on the continual stimulation of new challenges, new responsibilities, new pressures would hate to live without stress.

It's true that new opportunities and new challenges are essential for a fulfilling life. Eliminating stress from your life does not mean eliminating these challenges. Rather, it means eliminating their negative side-effects — chronic fatigue, anxiety, headaches, indigestion, insomnia, etc. — which severely restrict your capacity to be healthy, successful, and enjoy what you do.

HOW TO MANAGE STRESS?



How, then, can you live your life fully and not be victimised by stress?

There are many 'stress management techniques' available today that try to minimise stress by training people how to better organise their time, their responsibilities, and their work and home environments.

These techniques often give advice on how to avoid high-pressure situations, recommend mental imagery exercises, and advocate changes in lifestyle to reduce stress.

ARE THESE THE BASICS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT?

No. They may be helpful in their own right, but they are not the 'bottom line' on stress management.

WHAT IS THE BOTTOM LINE?

Rest. The very deep rest gained during 20 minutes of Transcendental Meditation allows the body to rejuvenate itself and throw off the accumulated stress and fatigue that has built up over years.



It helps to normalise high blood pressure, reduce high cholesterol levels, improve bronchial asthma, provide relief from insomnia — even improve reaction time and athletic

performance.

Without this rest, you can only hope to 'manage' stress and struggle to organise your schedule to cope with growing stress in life, not eliminate it.

DON'T MANAGE STRESS, PREVENT AND ELIMINATE IT

With this rest you don't just manage stress, you prevent new stress from accumulating today and you eliminate stress built up from the past. Research shows that you'll improve your health, increase your energy, and promote the clarity of your mind and the creativity and orderliness of your thinking. Then you'll be better prepared to meet all of the responsibilities in your life without creating more stress and strain and without reducing or shying away from any new commitment or challenge. At the same time you'll grow in the capacity to enjoy life to its fullest.

How To Meditate



More than anything, meditation is a **skill- the skill** of conscious, sustained attention. You already have part of this skill- what keeps you stressed is your ability to pay sustained attention to whatever is bothering you.

Of course, we pay attention to problems in order to solve them. The trouble is that we do so in a way that triggers our stress response, which, in turn, makes us less able to solve them.

Meditation will teach you how to focus our attention without triggering the stress response.

You begin by learning to focus on something non-threatening. This, in itself is relaxing, and will reverse the effects of stress. But, in addition, this practice will teach you how to interrupt

and correct stress-producing thoughts- even when you are not meditating.

Many people who meditate regularly feel that its benefits go well beyond the relief of stress. They feel that meditation has enabled them to connect with an inner source of wisdom and meaning- a connection that has greatly enriched their lives.

Here's how to begin:

1. Choose a time when you will not be disturbed for at least 15 minutes.
2. Choose a time when your body is not actively digesting food- just before breakfast or dinner is good; so is the period just after exercise. If the exercise is strenuous (jogging, etc.), be sure to cool down first.
3. Find a comfortable position- sit up straight in a chair, or cross-legged on the floor with a pillow under your bottom, etc. sit any way that will allow you to relax without putting you to sleep. It's fine to fall asleep after meditating, but falling asleep during meditation may cheat you of some of its more potent benefits.
4. Soften the lighting- A candle provides an ideal level of light, and a focus as well.
5. Choose a focus. This is the key to successful meditation, because it is your mind's response to the act of focussing that allows you to interrupt stress. Almost anything will work- a flower, a word, the sounds of nature, or the rhythm of your breath. A candle flame works especially well.

Whichever you choose, the idea is to let your mind rest on that one thing until you notice your attention has strayed (which it will do surprisingly fast). Once you realise your mind

has wandered, gently bring it back to the focus once again...and again...and again.

At first, you will be amazed at how little control you have over this mind of yours. But if you persist, it will learn to focus for longer and longer periods, and as it does, you will begin to feel a growing sense of peace.

6. End your meditation gently. If you wish to meditate for only a certain length of time, try to use a visual cue, like a clock or a watch placed in your line of vision. A small chanukka candle makes a useful timer- each one burns for about one hour. Avoid the use of buzzers or other noisy signals.

Once you have decided to stop meditating, 'come back' slowly. Just sit for a few moments and look around. Enjoy the time it takes your mind to realise it's free to start its worry-tapes up once again. As you practice, you'll find it takes your mind longer and longer to slip back into 'worry-mode'.

GETTING STARTED

Now let's put these steps to work and imagine how a typical meditation session might go. Suppose it's late afternoon, no one else is around, or you've arranged to have someone cover any incoming calls or child-care crises for the next 20 minutes. You've found a quite comfortable place, softened the lighting and are ready to go. Let's say you've decided to use a candle as a focus. You sit facing the lit candle. Now, allow your eyes to rest gently on the flame, watching it the way you would a fire. If your eyes begin to tire, let them close or half close but keep the image of the flame clear in your mind's eye. Then open your eyes as soon as they feel rested.

Let the candle flame become your world. Explore its entire

landscape. You'll be amazed at how complex it is. At some point, you may realise your mind has wandered. When that happens, simply notice it and renew your focus on the candle.

It's important that you avoid any self-criticism here; meditation is about regaining your ability to simply be. There is nothing to be achieved except to get out of your own way and let your bodymind find its way from stress to bliss. And it will; all you have to do is provide the time.

Speaking of time, continue this cycle of focus, wander, notice, and refocus until about 15 minutes have passed. You can use a clock, the height of the candle, or any other non-disruptive method of keeping time, including your own internal clock. There's nothing sacred about 15 minutes, either, it's just that most people find they can have a decent meditative experience in that amount of time, and it's not an unreasonably long time to carve out of a busy day. If you find that 5 minutes or 45 minutes, works better for you, then by all means use that length of time. Sometimes people meditate for three minutes, sometimes for an hour.

More important than the time, is the experience of meditating, however long it lasts.

Also important, is how you transition back from meditation. As indicated earlier, a gentle return will prolong the benefits of meditation practice, allowing you to gradually extend a peaceful mindset into more and more of your day.

What if you prefer to choose a different focus, like a word, or your breath? The scenario would be the same, only the focus would be different. To focus on your breath; keep your eyes open or closed, and simply notice your breath as it goes in and out, perhaps mentally saying 'In' as you inhale, and 'Out', as

you exhale. Treat your mental wanderings the same way- notice them and then bring your attention back to your breath.



Were you are to choose a word, you would say the word mentally on each exhale. For this focus, most people choose a one syllable word that has a positive meaning for them ('Love', 'One', 'Peace', etc.). Again, you are the expert- if you want to use a three-syllable word, and say it out loud, that's fine. The important thing is to focus, and when you notice that your mind has wandered, bring it back gently, in a non-critical way.

One other thing, whatever focus you choose, it's quite possible that the first few times you meditate, you may feel no effects, beneficial or otherwise. This is perfectly normal. It can take a while for your body and mind to realise that this is a situation in which it can relax.

How often?

Like any skill, your ability to focus your attention will improve most quickly with frequent, regular practice. Two 15-20 minute sessions of meditation practice daily seem to work well for many people, but again, do what works for you.

RELAXATION THROUGH MEDITATION

The general preference would be to call meditation, relaxation – conscious relaxation, chosen relaxation. These are words that are more universally understood, more comfortable. Constantly working toward the goal of discovering one's own ability to reach a state of serenity, the person learns to meditate.

Meditating is actually easier than you might imagine. Most of us have dabbled in meditation by participating in conscious relaxation. Maybe during an exercise class or to manage pain at the dentist or anxiety before a test. We start by paying attention to our breathing. The practical effort to focus completely on our breathing takes our minds away from the 'mind clutter' that constantly tries to invade our mind and eliminate feelings that will lead to a time of calm. With repeated effort the goal of clearing your mind – to think of nothing, does occur and the process of meditation takes on its own energy. The result is - peace, serenity, calmness, eventually opening yourself to new insights.

MEDITATING FOR LIFE

Too much stress, stress reduction, chill out, let it go, detach –

familiar phrases to all of us. Our world is fast, fun and exciting. It is also challenging, trying, demanding and frightening. These two sides of our lives produce stress, emotional reactions, anxiety, worry and anticipation. Our bodies and minds can tolerate only so much of any of these. After a while, each of us reaches a saturation point and the results become uncomfortable at best; for some it may be unbearable, even unendurable.

No magic pill is available to eliminate these feelings. The reality is, as the wise old man said, the answer is inside all of us. To manage these universal concerns we must go inside ourselves. Among the steps we can take is the learning and practicing of meditation.

WHAT TO EXPECT

With time and faith in the commitment to practice frequently, (daily meditating is ideal), during your meditation time you may 'leave the moment'. A feeling of separation exists where the mind is clear, clean and blank. You will still hear sounds around you, but they will not interfere with your meditation.

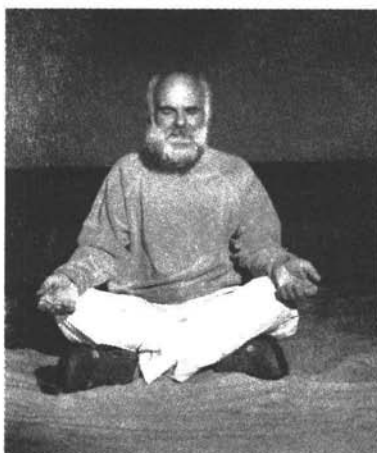
Sometimes you may weep — you may not even be aware of what is making you weep. It is your own emotions having a voice of their own. Sometimes you may feel a smile across your face — that is contentment showing itself. Sometimes you may fall asleep and awaken truly refreshed.

There is no right or wrong behaviour during your meditation. It is your time for you. Everyone deserves this kind of personal attention. This is a self-care activity; loving oneself! Teach it to your children instead of a time-out in their room or corner. Teach it to your friends, family, anyone

who will listen. We can share this gift and get back as we give. We are all better because of each person who meditates. The peace and joy felt by those who meditate enters the world for all of us as positive energy. From it the world is a better place. Imagine if we all practiced meditation!

THE IDEA OF MEDITATION

A. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS



The present widespread interest in the subject of Meditation is an evidence of a world need which requires clear understanding. Where we find a popular trend in any direction, which is one-pointed and steady, it may be safe to assume that out of it will emerge that which the human race needs in its onward march.

Meditation regarded by some as a 'mode of prayer' is, unfortunately, true. But it can be demonstrated that in the right understanding of the meditation process and in its right

adaptation to the need of our modern civilisation will be found the solution of the present educational impasse and the method whereby the fact of the soul may be ascertained – that living something which we call the ‘Soul’ for lack of a better term.

Down the ages there has been a steady progression of the evolving human consciousness, and a steady growth of awareness of nature, of the world in which we live, and an increasing grasp of the Whole, until now the entire world is knit together through the radio, the telephone and television. Humanity is omnipresent, and the mind is the main factor in the bringing about of this apparent miracle.

‘We have arrived at an understanding of the laws which govern the natural world, and some of those which govern the psychical. The laws of the spiritual realm, so-called, remain to be scientifically discovered and utilised. A few have known these laws and spoken to humanity about them.... Among these few who stand out as the eminent Knowers, are the Buddha, the Christ, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Meister Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, Spinoza – the list is long.



‘We are now beginning to ask the pertinent question: Is it not possible that many thousands now are at the point where they can co-ordinate the brain, the mind and the soul, and so pass through the portal of mental awareness into the realm of light,

of intuitive perception, and the world of causes? The Knowers say that we can, and they tell us of the way.'

B. CAN ANYONE, WHO HAS THE DESIRE, PROFIT BY AND MASTER THE TECHNIQUE OF MEDITATION?

...It should be remembered, at the outset, that the very urge itself to meditate can be taken as indicating the call of the soul to the Path of Knowledge. No one should be deterred because of a seeming lack of the needed qualifications. Most of us are bigger and wiser, and better equipped than we realise. We can all begin to concentrate at once if we so choose.

We possess a great deal of knowledge, mental power, and capacities, which have never been drawn forth from the realm of the subconscious into objective usefulness; anyone who has watched the effect of Meditation upon the beginner will substantiate this statement....

The results of the first step in the Meditation discipline, i.e., of Concentration, are often amazing. People 'find' themselves; they discover hidden capacities and an understanding never used before; they develop an awareness, even of the phenomenal world, which is, to them, miraculous; they suddenly register the fact of the mind, and that they can use it, and the distinction between the knower and the instrument of knowledge becomes steadily and revealingly apparent.

At the same time there is also registered a sense of loss. The old dreamy states of bliss and peace, with which the mystic prayer and meditation had dowered them, disappear; and, temporarily, they experience a sense of aridity, of lack and of an emptiness which is frequently most distressing. This is due to the fact that the focus of attention is away from the things of the senses, no matter how beautiful.

The things that the mind knows and can record are not yet registered, nor is the feeling apparatus making its familiar impacts upon the consciousness. It is a period of transition, and must be supported until such time as the new world begins to make its impression upon the aspirant. This is one reason why persistence and perseverance must play their part, particularly in the early stages of the meditation process.

One of the first effects of the meditation work is usually an increased efficiency in the daily life, whether lived in the home, the office, or in any field of human endeavour. Mental application to the business of living is in itself a concentration exercise and brings notable results. Whether we achieve final illumination or not through the practice of concentration and meditation, we will nevertheless have gained much, and greatly enriched our life; our usefulness and power will be enormously increased and our sphere of influence widened.

...Anyone who is not purely emotional, who has a fair education, and who is willing to work with perseverance, can approach the study of meditation with good courage. One can begin to organise one's life so that the first steps can be taken on the path towards illumination, and this organisation is one of the most difficult of steps. It is well to remember that all initial steps are hard, for the habits and rhythms of many years have to be offset. But once these have been taken and mastered, the work becomes easier.

To sum up, therefore, the answer to our question is as follows:

First: We accept the hypothesis that there is a soul, and that that soul can be cognised by the person who can train and control the mind.

Second: Upon the basis of this hypothesis, we begin to co-

ordinate the three aspects of the lower nature, and to unify mind, emotion and physical body into an organised and comprehended Whole. This we do through the practice of concentration.

Third: As concentration merges into meditation (which is the act of prolonged concentration) the imposition of the will of the soul, upon the mind, begins to be felt. Little by little the soul, the mind and the brain are swept into a close rapport. First, the mind controls the brain and the emotional nature. Then the soul controls the mind. The first is brought about through concentration. The second through meditation.

Out of this sequence of activities, the interested investigator will awaken to the realisation that there is a real work to be done and that the primary qualification needed is perseverance. The organisation of the thought life at all times everywhere, and, secondly, the practice of concentration, regularly, every day, at some set time, if possible, make for the one-pointed attitude, and these two together spell success.

C. THE MECHANICS OF THE MEDITATION PROCESS

The hypothesis upon which the theories here outlined are based might be expressed in the following propositions:

One: The centre of energy through which the soul works is the upper brain. During meditation, if effective, energy from the soul pours into the brain, and has a definite effect upon the nervous system. If, however, the mind is not controlled and the emotional nature dominates (as in the case of the pure mystic) the effect makes itself felt primarily in the feeling apparatus, the emotional states of being.

When the mind is the dominant factor, then the thought

apparatus, in the higher brain, is swung into an organised activity. The one who meditates acquires a new capacity to think clearly, synthetically and potently.

Two: In the region of the pituitary body, we have the seat of the lower faculties, when co-ordinated in the higher type of human being. Here they are co-ordinated and synthesised, and as we have been told by certain reputable schools of psychologists and endocrinologists here are to be found the emotions and the more concrete aspects of the mind (growing out of racial habits and inherited instincts, and, hence, calling for no exercise of the creative or higher mind)....

Three: When the personality, the sum-total of physical, emotional and mental states is of a high order, then the pituitary body functions with increased efficiency, and the vibration of the centre of energy in its neighbourhood becomes very powerful. It should be noted that according to this theory, when the personality is of a low order, when the reactions are mainly instinctual and the mind is practically non-functioning, then the centre of energy is in the neighbourhood of the solar plexus, and the man is more animal in nature.

Four: The centre in the region of the pineal gland, and the higher brain, are brought into activity through learning to focus the attentive consciousness in the head....

The various avenues of sense perception are brought into a quiescent condition. The consciousness of the real man no longer surges outwards along its five avenues of contact. The five senses are dominated by the sixth sense, the mind, and all the consciousness and the perceptive faculty of the aspirant is synthesised in the head, and turns inward and upward. The psychic nature is thereby subjugated and the mental plane becomes the field of man's activity. This withdrawal or

abstracting process proceeds in stages:

1. The withdrawal of the physical consciousness, or perception through hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell. These modes of perception become temporarily dormant, and the perception becomes simply mental and the brain consciousness is all that is active on the physical plane.

2. The withdrawal of the consciousness into the region of the pineal gland, so that the point of realisation is centralised in the region between the middle of the forehead and the pineal gland.

Five: When this has been done, and the aspirant is acquiring the ability so to focus in the head, the result of this process of abstraction is as follows:

The five senses are being steadily synthesised by the sixth sense, the mind. This is the co-ordinating factor. Later it is realised that the soul has an analogous function. The three-fold personality is thus brought into a direct line of communication with the soul, and...in time the one who meditates becomes unconscious of the limitations of the body nature, and the brain can be directly impressed by the soul, via the mind. The brain consciousness is held in a positive waiting condition with all its reactions to the phenomenal world utterly, though temporarily, inhibited.

Sixth: The high grade intellectual personality, with its focus of attention in the region of the pituitary body, begins to vibrate in unison with the higher centre in the region of the pineal gland. Then a magnetic field is set up between the positive soul aspect and the waiting personality which is rendered receptive by the process of focused attention. Then the light, we are told, breaks forth, and we have the illumined human

being, and the appearance of the phenomenal light in the head.

All this is the result of a disciplined life, and the focusing of the consciousness in the head. This is, in its turn, brought about through the attempt to be concentrated in the daily life, and also through definite concentration exercises. These are followed by the effort to meditate, and later—much later—the power to contemplate makes itself felt.

This is a brief summation of the mechanics of the process, and is necessarily terse and incomplete. The ideas have to be accepted tentatively, however, before there can be an intelligent approach to the meditation work.

Having formulated our hypothesis and accepted it temporarily we proceed with the work, until it proves false, or until our attention is no longer engaged. A hypothesis is not necessarily false because it fails to prove itself in the time we deem proper. People frequently give up their pursuit in this field of knowledge because they lack the needed perseverance, or their interest becomes engaged elsewhere.

However, we are determined to go forward with our investigation and give the ancient techniques and formulas time to prove themselves. We proceed, therefore, to comply with the first requirements and endeavour to bring to bear upon life a more concentrated attitude of mind, and to practice daily meditation and concentration.

If we are beginners, or are possessed of an unorganised mind, fluidic, versatile and unstable, we start in to practice concentration. If we are trained intellectuals, or have the focused attentiveness that business training confers, we need only to reorient the mind to a new field of awareness and begin truly to meditate. It is easy to teach meditation to the interested

business executive.

D. SOME PRELIMINARY SUGGESTIONS

FINDING TIME

It is advisable to set apart a certain time each day for this particular work. At the beginning fifteen minutes is ample time. Let us be truthful with ourselves, and recognise things for what they are. May it not be truly said, if anyone claims not to be able to find fifteen minutes out of the one thousand four hundred and forty minutes which constitute a day, that they are not particularly interested?

First of all, we shall endeavour to find time early in the morning for our meditation work. The reason for this is, that after we have participated in the happenings of the day and in the general give and take of life, the mind is in a state of violent vibration; this is not the case if the meditation is performed first thing in the morning. Then it is relatively quiet, and the mind can be more rapidly attuned to the higher states of consciousness.

Again, if we start the day with the focusing of our attention on spiritual things and on the affairs of the soul, we shall live the day in a different manner. If this becomes a habit, we shall soon find our reactions to the affairs of life changing and that we are beginning to think the thoughts that the soul thinks. It then becomes the process of the working of a law, for 'as a man thinks so is he'.

FINDING A PLACE FOR MEDITATION

Next, we shall endeavour to find a place that is really quiet

and free from intrusion. This does not mean quiet in the sense of freedom from noise, for the world is full of sounds; but free from personal approach and the calls of other people.

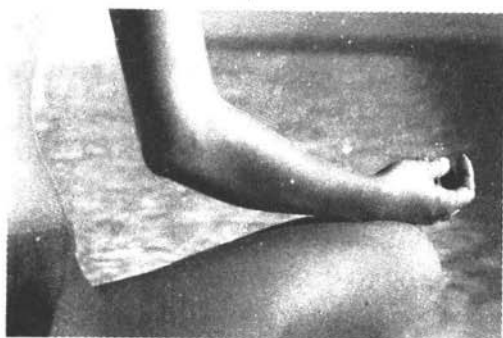
Aspirants to meditation sometimes talk much about the opposition they meet from their family and friends. In the majority of cases it is their own fault. People talk too much. It is nobody's business what we do with fifteen minutes of our time every morning, and there is no need to talk about it to our households, or to enjoin upon them that they must be quiet because we want to meditate.



If it is impossible to get a moment for morning meditation because of family commitments, let us find some time for it later on in the day. There is always a way to be found out of a difficulty, if we want a thing badly enough and a way that involves no omission of duty or of obligation. As a last resort, it is always possible to rise fifteen minutes earlier every morning.

E. THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

POSTURE



Having found the time and the place, we shall sit down in a comfortable chair and begin to meditate. The question then arises: How shall we sit? Is the cross-legged attitude the best, or shall we kneel, or sit, or stand? The easiest and most normal position is the best always.



The cross-legged attitude has been, and still is, much used in the Orient, and many books have been written on the subject. Some of the postures have relation to the nervous body and that inner structure of fine nerves, called by the Hindus, the nadis, which underlie the nervous system as recognised in the West.

The trouble with such postures is that they can lead to two

rather undesirable reactions; they lead a person to concentrate the mind upon the mechanics of the process and not upon the goal; and, secondly, they frequently lead to a delightful sense of superiority, that has its basis in our attempt to do something that the majority is not doing, and which sets us apart as potential knowers. We become engrossed with the form side of meditation; we are occupied with the Not-self instead of with the Self.

So let us choose that posture that enables us, the most easily, to forget that we have a physical body. This is probably for the Westerner the sitting attitude; the main requirements are that we should sit erect, with the spine in a straight line; that we should sit relaxed (without slumping) so that there is no tenseness anywhere in the body, and that we should drop the chin somewhat, so as to release any tension in the back of the neck. Meditation is an interior act, and can only be performed successfully when the body is relaxed, rightly poised and then forgotten.

BREATHING

Having attained to physical comfort, relaxation, and having withdrawn ourselves from the body consciousness, we next note our breathing and ascertain whether it is quiet, even and rhythmic.



A note of warning should be sounded here as to the practice of breathing exercises, except by those who have first given years to right meditation and to purification of the body nature. In the ancient teachings of the East, the control of the breath was only permitted after the first three 'means to union', as they are called, had been somewhat wrought out in the life, and then only under proper instruction.

The practice of breathing exercises has nothing whatever to do with spiritual development. It has much to do with psychical development, and its practice leads to much difficulty and danger. It is only here and there that, in the ancient days, the teachers picked a person for this form of tuition, and it was added to a training which had produced a certain measure of soul contact, so that the soul could guide the energies evoked by the breath for the furtherance of its objectives and for world service.

Therefore, we will do no more than see that our breathing is quiet and regular, and will then withdraw our thoughts from the body altogether and begin the work of concentration.

VISUALISATION AND THE CREATIVE USE OF THE IMAGINATION



The next step in the practice of meditation is the use of the imagination; we picture to ourselves the threefold lower man, aligned or in direct communication with the soul. There are many ways in which this can be done. We call it work in visualisation. It would seem that visualisation, imagination and will are three very potent factors in all creative processes. They are the subjective causes for many of our objective effects.

In the beginning, visualisation is mostly a matter of experimental faith. We know that through the reasoning process, we have arrived at an understanding that, within and beyond all manifested objects, there lies an Ideal Object or Ideal Pattern, which is seeking to become manifest upon the physical plane. The practice of visualisation, imagination and the use of the will are activities that are calculated to hasten the manifestation of this Ideal.

When we visualise, we use our highest conception of what that Ideal might be, clothed in some sort of material, usually mental, because we are not yet in a position to be able to conceive of higher forms or types of substance with which to envelop our Images.

When we make a mental picture, the mental substance of our mind sets up a certain rate of vibration, which attracts to itself a corresponding grade of mental substance, in which the mind is immersed. It is the will which holds this image steady and which gives it life. This process goes on, whether we are, as yet, able to see it with the mental eye or not. It does not matter that we are not able to see it, as the creative work is going on just the same. Perhaps at some time we shall be able to follow and consciously perform that whole process.

In connection with this work, at the stage of the beginner, some people picture the three bodies (the three aspects of the

form nature) as being linked with a radiant body of light, or they visualise three centres of vibrating energy receiving stimulation from a higher and more powerful centre; others imagine the soul as a triangle of force to which is linked the triangle of the lower nature linked by the 'silver cord' mentioned in the Christian Bible, the sutratma or thread soul of the Eastern Scriptures, the 'life-line' of other schools of thought. Still others prefer to preserve the thought of a unified personality, linked to and hiding within itself the indwelling Divinity, Christ in us, the hope of glory.

It is relatively immaterial what imagery we choose, provided that we start with the basic idea of the Self seeking to contact and use the Not-self, its instrument in the worlds of human expression, and vice versa, with the thought of that Not-self being impelled to turn itself towards its source of being. When this has been done we can continue with our meditation work. The physical body and the desire nature, in their turn, sink below the level of consciousness, we become centred in the mind and seek to bend it to our will.

CONCENTRATION

It is just here that we find our problem confronting us. The mind refuses to mould itself into the thoughts we choose to think, and rushes all over the world in its usual quest for material. We think of what we are going to do that day, instead of thinking upon our 'seed-thought', we remember some one we must manage to see, or some line of action which calls for attention; we begin to think of some one we love, and immediately we drop back into the world of the emotions and have all our work to do over again.



So we re-collect our thoughts and start afresh with much success for half a minute, and then we remember some appointment we have made, or some piece of business which someone is doing for us, and again we are back in the world of mental reactions, and our chosen line of thought is forgotten. Again we re-collect our scattered ideas and recommence our labour of reducing the wayward mind to submission. But with practice we eventually become able to hold a mental one-pointedness with some degree of effectiveness.

How is this condition achieved? By following a form or outline in our meditation work which automatically sets a ring-pass-not around the mind, and which says to the mind, 'thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.' We deliberately and with intelligent intent set the limits of our mental activity in such a form that we are forced to recognise when we stray beyond those limits. We know then that we must retire again within the sheltering wall we have defined for ourselves.

The sincere enquirer will find set out below a meditation form to help develop concentration:

F. MEDITATION TECHNIQUE

STAGES



1. The attainment of physical comfort and control.
2. The breathing is noted as rhythmic and regular.
3. Visualisation of the threefold lower self (physical, emotional and mental) as
 - a. In contact with the soul.
 - b. As a channel for soul energy, through the medium of the mind, direct to the brain. From thence the physical mechanism can be controlled.
4. Then a definite act of concentration, calling in the will. This involves an endeavour to keep the mind unmoving upon a certain form of words, so that their meaning is clear in our consciousness, and not the words themselves, or the fact that we are attempting to meditate.
5. Then say, with focused attention—

‘More radiant than the sun, purer than the snow, subtler than the ether is the Self, The spirit within me. I am that Self. That Self am I’.
6. Concentrate now upon the words: ‘Thou God seest me.’

The mind is not permitted to falter in its concentration on their significance, meaning, and implications.

7. Then, with deliberation, bring the concentration work to a close, and say again with the mind re-focused on the underlying ideas the following concluding statement:

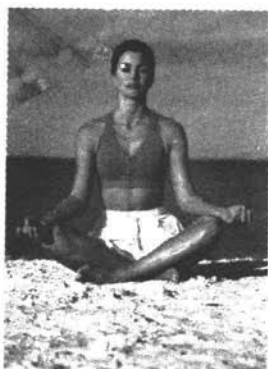
‘There is a peace that passeth understanding: it abides in the hearts of those who live in the Eternal. There is a power that maketh all things new; it lives and moves in those who know the Self as one.’

This is definitely a beginner’s meditation. It has several focal points in it where a re-collection process and a re-focusing method is employed.

This following of a form in meditation is necessary usually for several years, unless one has had previous practice, and usually even those who have arrived at the stage of contemplation test themselves out quite often by the use of a form in order to make sure that they are not dropping back into a negative emotional quiescent state.

There are many other meditation outlines which can bring about the same results, and many more that are for advanced workers. There are meditation outlines which are drawn up to produce certain specific results in particular people, but it is obvious that they cannot be included in such a booklet as this. A safe and general meditation form is all that is possible.

In all of them, however, the primary thing to bear in mind is that the mind must be kept actively occupied with ideas and not with the effort to be concentrated. Behind every word spoken, and every stage followed there must be the will to understand and a mental activity of a one-pointed nature.



In the sixth stage where the effort is made to meditate definitely upon a form of words, veiling a truth, there should be nothing automatic in the process. It is quite easy to induce in oneself a hypnotic condition by the rhythmic repetition of certain words. We are told that Tennyson induced in himself a heightened state of consciousness by the repetition of his own name. This is not our object. The trance or automatic condition is dangerous.

The safe way is that of an intense mental activity, confined within the field of ideas opened up by any particular 'seed-thought' or object in meditation. This activity excludes all extraneous thoughts, except those which the words under consideration arouse.

For the puzzled beginner, who is discouraged by the inability to think in this way, here is a suggestion:

'Imagine you have to give a lecture upon these words to an audience. Picture yourself as formulating the notes upon which you will later speak. Carry your mind on from stage to stage and you will find that five minutes will have gone by without your attention wavering, so great will have been your interest.'



The sequential method suggested above is a safe way for the beginner. There are others that will occur to the mind of the intelligent student. Whole worlds of thought are open over which the mind can range at will (note those words) provided they have a bearing upon the seed-thought and have a definite relation to the chosen idea upon which we seek to concentrate. It is obvious that each person will follow the bent of his own mind artistic, scientific or philosophical and for them that will be the line of least resistance.

G. THE RAJA YOGA METHOD OF MEDITATION

Patanjali was a compiler of teaching which, up to the time of his advent, had been given orally for many centuries. He was the first to reduce the teaching to writing for the use of students and hence he is regarded as the founder of the Raja Yoga School.

The date of the birth of Patanjali is unknown and there is a good deal of controversy upon this matter. Most of the occidental authorities ascribe a date between the years 820 B.C. to 300 B.C., though one or two place him after Christ. The Hindu authorities themselves, however, who may be supposed

to know something about the matter, ascribe a very much earlier date, even as far back as 10,000 B.C....

The Yoga Sutras are the basic teaching of the Trans-Himalayan School to which many of the Masters of the Wisdom belong, and many students hold that the Essenes and other schools of mystical training and thought, closely connected with the founder of Christianity and the early Christians, are based upon the same system and that their teachers were trained in the great Trans-Himalayan School.

The first step towards this unfoldment is concentration, or the ability to hold the mind steadily and unwaveringly upon that which the aspirant chooses. This first step is one of the most difficult stages in the meditation process and involves constant unremitting ability to keep bringing the mind back to that 'object' upon which the aspirant has chosen to concentrate. The stages in concentration are themselves well-marked and can be stated as follows:

1. The choice of some 'object' upon which to concentrate.
2. The withdrawing of the mind-consciousness from the periphery of the body, so that the avenues of outer perception and contact (the five senses) are stilled, and the consciousness is no longer outgoing.
3. The centring of the consciousness and its steadying within the head at a point midway between the eyebrows.
4. The application of the mind, or the paying of close attention to the object chosen for concentration.
5. The visualisation of that object, imaginative perception of it and logical reasoning about it.
6. The extension of the mental concepts which have been

formed from the specific and particular to the general and the universal or cosmic.

7. An attempt to arrive at that which lies back of the form considered, or to reach the idea which is responsible for the form.

This process gradually steps up the consciousness and enables the aspirant to arrive at the life side of manifestation instead of the form side. It begins however with the form or 'object'. Objects upon which to concentrate are of four kinds:

1. External objects, such as images of the deity, pictures or forms in nature.
2. Internal objects, such as the centres in the etheric body.



3. Qualities, such as the various virtues, with the intent to awaken desire for these virtues and thus to build them into the content of the personal life.

4. Mental concepts or those ideas which embody the ideals lying back of all animated forms. These may take the form of symbols or of words.

It is the realisation of the necessity for 'objects' in concentration that originated the demand for images, sacred sculptures and pictures. All these objects entail the use of the lower concrete mind and this is the necessary preliminary stage. Their use brings the mind into a controlled condition so that the aspirant can make it do whatever he or she chooses.

The four types of objects mentioned above carry the aspirant gradually inwards, enabling the transfer of consciousness to be made from the physical plane into the etheric realm, from thence into the world of desire or of the emotions, and so into the world of mental ideas and concepts.

This process, which is carried on within the brain, brings the entire lower nature into a state of one-pointed coherent attention, leading to a concentration of all the mental faculties. The mind then is no longer scattering, unsteady and outgoing, but is fully 'fixed in attention.'... This clear, one-pointed, still perception of an object, without any other object or thought entering into one's consciousness is most difficult of achievement, and when it can be done for the space of twelve seconds, true concentration is being achieved....

Meditation is but the extension of concentration and grows out of the facility one achieves in 'fixing the mind' at will on any particular object. It falls under the same rules and conditions as concentration and the only distinction between the two is in the time element.

H. THE NEED FOR CARE IN MEDITATION

ENERGY follows thought

The fundamental law governing all meditation work is the ancient one formulated by the seers in India centuries ago, that 'energy follows thought'. From the realm of ideas (or of soul knowledge) energy pours through; ...it seeps little by little into the dense minds of men and women, and to it can be traced all the forward movements of the present time, all organisation of general welfare and of group betterment; all religious concepts and all outer knowledge of the Causes which produce objectivity...



Every form, whether it be the form of a sewing machine, of a social order or of a solar system, can be posited as the materialisation of the thought of some thinker, or of some group of thinkers. It is a form of creative work...and all the work has been concentrated with energy of some type or another. The student of meditation must, therefore, remember that he is always working with energies, and that these varying energies will have a definite effect upon the form nature.

It will be apparent, therefore, that those who are learning to meditate must endeavour to do two things:

First: They must learn to 'bring through' into the mind and then interpret correctly what has been seen and contacted, and later transmit it correctly and accurately to the attentive and pressional brain.

Second: They must learn the nature of the energies contacted

and train themselves to utilise them correctly. A practical illustration of this can be given here. We are swept by anger or irritation. Instinctively we begin to shout. Why? Emotional energy has us in its grip. By learning to control the energy of the spoken word we begin to master that particular type of emotional energy.

In these two ideas of right interpretation and right transmission, and of right use of energy, the whole story of the meditation work is summed up. It becomes apparent also what is the problem confronting the student, and why all wise teachers of the technique of meditation urge upon their pupils the need of care and slow procedure.

THE PROS AND CONS OF MEDITATION

True servers of the race and those who have contacted the world of the soul, through meditation, have no time for platitudes; ...they are not interested in the good opinion of any person, incarnate or discarnate, and care only for the approval of their own soul, and are vitally interested in the pioneering work of the world. They will do nothing to feed hatred and separateness or to foster fear....They will fan the flame of love wherever they go; they will teach brotherhood in its true inclusiveness, and not a system which will teach brotherhood to a few and leave the rest outside.

They will recognise all people as sons of God, they will not regard one race as better than another, though they may recognise the evolutionary plan and the work that each race has to do. They will, in short, occupy themselves by building up the characters of people, and not waste their time in tearing down personalities, and dealing with effects and with results. They work in the world of causes, and enunciate principles.

PROBLEMS OF OVER-STIMULATION

Students frequently complain of over-stimulation and of such

an increased energy that they find themselves unable to cope with it. They say that, when attempting to meditate, they have an inclination to weep, or to be unduly restless; they have periods of intense activity wherein they find themselves running hither and thither serving, talking, writing and working....Others complain of pains in the head, of headaches immediately after meditating, or of an uncomfortable vibration in the forehead, or the throat. They also find themselves unable to sleep as well as heretofore.



They are, in fact, over-stimulated. These troubles are the troubles of the beginner in the science of meditation and must be dealt with carefully. Rightly handled, they will soon disappear, but if they are ignored they may lead to serious trouble. The earnest and interested aspirant, at this stage, is so anxious to master the technique of meditation, that he ignores the rules given...in spite of all the teacher may say or the warnings received.

Instead of adhering to the fifteen minutes formula...the aspirant endeavours to force the pace and does thirty minutes; instead of following the outline, which is so

arranged that it takes about fifteen minutes to complete, the effort is made to hold or prolong the concentration as long as possible...forgetting that at this stage of the training the objective is to learn to concentrate, and not to meditate. This results in a nervous breakdown, or a spell of insomnia, and the teacher gets the blame and the science is regarded as dangerous. Yet all the time, the meditator is the one in fault. When some of these primary troubles occur, the meditation work should be temporarily stopped, or slowed down....

In mental types, or in the case of those who have already some facility in 'centring the consciousness' in the head, it is the brain cells which become over-stimulated, leading to headaches, to sleeplessness, to a sense of fullness, or to a disturbing vibration between the eyes or at the very top of the head. Sometimes there is a sense of blinding light, like a sudden flash of lightning or of electricity, registered when the eyes are closed, and in the dark equally as in the light.

When this is the case, the meditation period should be reduced from fifteen minutes to five, or meditation should be practised on alternate days, until such time as the brain cells have adjusted themselves to the new rhythm and the increased stimulation. There is no need for anxiety, if wise judgment is used....

In emotional types, the trouble is first sensed in the region of the solar plexus. The student is prone to irritation and to anxiety and worry; also, particularly in the case of women, there may be found a disposition to cry easily. Sometimes there is a tendency to nausea, for there is a close relation between the emotional nature and the stomach, as is evidenced by frequency of vomiting in moments of shock, or fright, or intense

emotion. The same rules apply as in the first set of cases: common-sense and a careful and slower use of the meditation process.

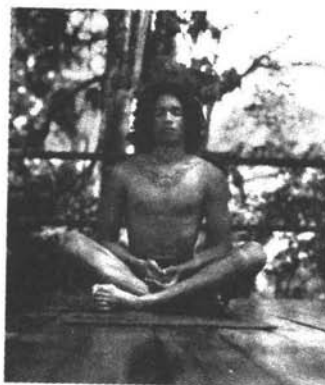
OVER-SENSITIVITY

Another result of over-stimulation might be mentioned. People find themselves becoming over-sensitive. The senses work overtime and all their reactions are more acute. They 'take on' the conditions, physical or psychic, of those with whom they live; they find themselves 'wide open' to the thoughts and moods of other people.

The cure for this is not to lessen the meditation periods, these should be continued as per schedule, but to become more mentally interested in life, in the thought world, in some subject, which will tend to develop the mental capacity. Focused attention to life and its problems, and some potent mental occupation will affect a cure. A rounded out development is needed always, and a trained mind should accompany growth in the spiritual life.

SEXUAL STIMULATION

...So many people, and particularly men, find that the animal nature requires attention when they begin to meditate. They discover within themselves uncontrolled desires, plus physiological effects which cause them acute trouble and discouragement. A person may have a high aspiration and a strong urge towards spiritual living and yet have aspects of the nature still uncontrolled.



The energy that pours in during meditation pours down through the mechanism and stimulates the entire sex apparatus. The weak point is always discovered and stimulated. The cure for this situation can be summed up in the words: control of the thought life and transmutation....

The eastern teaching tells us that energy, usually directed to the functioning of the sex life, has to be raised and carried to the head and throat, particularly the latter, as it is, we are told, the centre of creative work. To put it in western terms, this means that we learn to transmute the energy utilised in the procreative process or in sex thoughts and use it in the work of creative writing, in artistic endeavour, or in some expression of group activity....

Transmutation is not surely the death of an activity or a cessation of functioning on any level of consciousness for the sake of a higher. It is the right utilisation of the various aspects of energy wherever the Self feels they should be used for the furthering of the ends of evolution, and the helping of the Plan....

The aspirant to the life of the spirit conforms not only to the laws of the spiritual kingdom but to the legalised customs of the age and time. The physical every-day life is, therefore, regularised so that others recognise the morality, the uprightness and the correctness of the aspirant's presentation to the world. A home that is based upon a true and happy relation between a man and a woman, upon mutual trust, co-operation and understanding, and in which the principles of spiritual living are emphasised, is one of the finest aids that can be given to the world at this time.

MEDITATION UPON THE CENTRES



It might be well also...to refer to the dangers to which many are liable if they respond to the appeal of teachers for pupils to 'sit for development'. They are then taught to meditate upon some centre of energy, usually the solar plexus, sometimes the heart, curiously enough never the head.

Meditating upon a centre is based upon the law that energy

follows thought, and leads to the direct stimulation of that centre and the resultant demonstration of the particular characteristics for which these focal points scattered throughout the human body are responsible. As the majority of people function primarily through the collected energies that lie below the diaphragm (the sex energies and the emotional energies) their stimulation is most dangerous.

In view of this, why take risks?...Why not learn to function as the spiritual man from that point, so quaintly described by the Oriental writers, as 'the throne between the eyebrows', and from that high place control all aspects of the lower nature, and guide the daily life in the ways of God.

THE NEED FOR COMMON SENSE

The dangers of meditation are largely the dangers of our virtues, and therein lies much of the difficulty. They are largely the dangers of a fine mental concept that runs ahead of the capacity of the lower vehicles, especially of the dense physical...the absolute necessity is for the occult student to have a virile common sense for one of his basic qualities, coupled with a happy sense of proportion that leads to due caution and an approximation of the necessary method to the immediate need. To one therefore who undertakes wholeheartedly the process of occult meditation:

- a. Know thyself.
- b. Proceed slowly and with caution.
- c. Study effects.
- d. Cultivate the realisation that eternity is long and that that which is slowly built up endures forever.

e. Aim at regularity.

f. Realise always that the true spiritual effects are to be seen in the exoteric life of service..

g. Remember likewise that psychic phenomena are no indication of a successful following of meditation.

The world will see the effects and be a better judge than the student himself. Above all, the Master will know, for the results on causal levels will be apparent to Him long before the man himself is conscious of any progress.

FORMS of MEDITATION



The calming mental exercises of meditation are a proven antidote for stress, tension, anxiety and panic. Meditation is also a scientifically verified way to reduce high blood pressure and relieve chronic pain. Many people find it helpful for headaches and respiratory problems such as emphysema and asthma.

HOW THE TREATMENTS ARE DONE?

Meditation is a deliberate suspension of the stream of consciousness that usually occupies the mind. Its primary goal is to induce mental tranquillity and physical relaxation. There

are many different approaches to meditation, each with its own specialised techniques. However, all have a few requirements in common:

- A quiet environment where you won't be disturbed
- A comfortable position, usually sitting in a straight-backed chair
- A point of focus for your mind



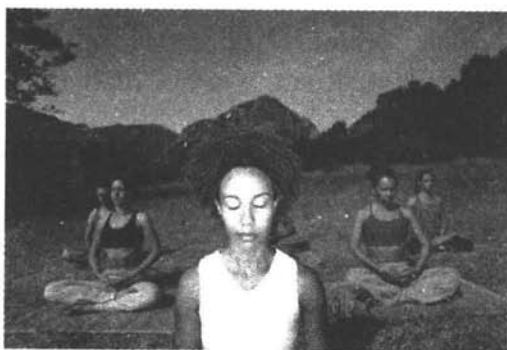
Most people take lessons in meditation, but it's possible to teach yourself, using books or videos and applying some basic principles. At the outset, whatever the form of meditation, you need to wear comfortable clothes and assume a sitting position. Most people choose to sit in a straight-backed chair, although some find it comfortable to sit in the classic meditating position, cross-legged on the floor. Either way, the spine should be vertical. Slow, rhythmic breathing is a necessity in all forms of meditation, although each approach has a different way of achieving this. As you sit quietly and breathe rhythmically, you must focus on something—it may be your own breathing; or an image such as a religious symbol, a flower, or a candle; or a word or phrase repeated rhythmically. This word or phrase is

called a mantra.

If you catch your mind wandering, try to refocus on the image or mantra you're using. Most people find that, as they gain practice, their random thoughts diminish, and the meditative state becomes more natural and instinctive.

Approaches to meditation fall into three major categories:

Transcendental Meditation (TM). This is the most common form of meditation in the western world. It involves mental repetition of a mantra, usually a Sanskrit sound provided by the instructor. TM practitioners sit upright in a straight-backed chair with their eyes closed, and meditate for 15 to 20 minutes twice a day, morning and evening.



Mindfulness Meditation. An outgrowth of a Buddhist tradition called *vipassana*, this form of meditation focuses on the present moment. A favoured technique in mindfulness meditation (shared with other forms) is the body scan, in which you move your focus through the body, from the tips of the toes to the top of the head, paying particular attention to any areas that cause pain or suffer from a medical problem (for example, the lungs for asthma, the pancreas for diabetes, the heart for heart disease). The body scan is usually done while lying down.



Breath Meditation. This technique calls for concentration on respiration, the process of inhaling and exhaling. In other respects it is similar to TM and other forms of meditation.

No matter which approach you adopt, each session typically takes 15 to 20 minutes, once in the morning and again in the evening. Advocates recommend scheduling your sessions for the same times each day, before rather than after eating.

WHAT TREATMENT HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH

By relaxing the body and calming the mind, meditation seeks to alleviate the harmful effects of tension and stress—factors that are known to aggravate a number of medical conditions. Although meditation has its roots in Eastern religious practices, its health benefits are independent of its spiritual aspects. Each practitioner can bring his or her own beliefs and world view to the meditative experience.

Meditation has measurable effects on the pattern of electrical impulses flowing through the brain. Studies with an electroencephalograph (EEG) show that it boosts the intensity of the alpha waves associated with quiet, receptive states to levels not even seen during sleep. When practiced for an

extended period of time, meditation has been found to reduce oxygen consumption, slow the heart rate, and bring down blood pressure.

Devotees of meditation often claim that it improves their memory and other mental abilities, protects them from disease, and reduces their use of alcohol and drugs. Studies have found that meditation can reduce or reverse cardiovascular disease; improve the ability to cope with chronic illness; reduce anxiety, panic, and fear of open spaces; and relieve mild depression, insomnia, tension, headache, irritable bowel syndrome, and premenstrual syndrome.

Pain relief is another of meditation's more successful applications. While it can't completely eliminate discomfort, it does help people cope by reducing their tension and anxiety. For instance, the deep breathing exercises taught in childbirth classes are a form of meditation that helps women cope with the pain of labour and delivery.

Who should avoid this therapy?

Some people may be temperamentally unable to achieve the tranquillity of meditation, and unsuccessful attempts may actually aggravate their stress and anxiety. Meditation can also prove counterproductive for people who are working on strengthening ego boundaries, releasing powerful emotions, or working through complex relationship problems.

What side effects may occur?

For a few people, meditation can provoke the very problems it's supposed to defeat: fear, anxiety, confusion, depression, and self-doubt. During the first ten minutes of meditation, as

you unwind into a state of deep relaxation, it's possible for unsettling thoughts to pop up, disrupting relaxation. The problem is most common among beginners, but occasionally crops up in the more experienced.

HOW TO CHOOSE A THERAPIST?

There is no licensing or certification procedure for teachers of meditation, and no central directory of practitioners. The transcendental meditation method has a number of 'universities' around the country. However, if you want to avoid the expense of a 'university education', there are plenty of other options available. Some hospitals, clinics, or private practices maintain relationships with meditation instructors and may be able to refer you to one. Holistic health centres can also provide referrals, as can many of the books on the market.

WHEN SHOULD TREATMENT STOP?

If you find that meditation is *increasing* your anxiety or depression, or that it just doesn't feel right, it's a good idea to stop. (Some people find one approach more comfortable than another, so you might want to try another technique before giving up on meditation entirely.)

If, on the other hand, meditation yields the tranquillity and relaxation for which it's intended, it can be continued for a lifetime.

SEE A CONVENTIONAL DOCTOR if...

Although meditation can provide significant relief from anxiety and stress-related conditions such as high blood pressure, it's more of a coping tool than a curing tool. See a conventional

doctor for any continuing medical symptoms—such as headaches, shortness of breath, fatigue, or chronic pain—that may have prompted you to try meditation.

YOGA

The age-old set of exercises known in the West as ‘yoga’ offers a significant variety of proven health benefits. It increases the efficiency of the heart and slows the respiratory rate, improves fitness, lowers blood pressure, promotes relaxation, reduces stress, and allays anxiety. It also serves to improve coordination, posture, flexibility, range of motion, concentration, sleep and digestion. It can be used as supplementary therapy for conditions as diverse as cancer, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, migraine, and AIDS, and helps to combat addictions such as smoking. It is not, in itself, a cure for any medical ailment.



HOW THE TREATMENTS ARE DONE?



Yoga exercises are usually conducted in group classes, although

private instruction is also available in many areas. You should wear loose, comfortable clothing to the class, and should bring a 'sticky' mat with you to prevent slipping during the exercises. No equipment is needed, although advanced students often use a strap to assist in leg stretches. The exercises are almost always performed in bare feet.

A typical session includes three disciplines: breathing exercises, body postures, and meditation. You may also be given advice on nutrition and lifestyle. Many proponents feel morning is the best time to practice yoga, but classes are offered throughout the day and evening. It's advisable to avoid eating for 1 hour before class.

Each session usually begins with a set of gentle warm-up exercises. The teacher will then ask you to focus on your breathing, and may take you through several breathing exercises. At the very least, you'll be asked to breathe through your nose, evenly through both nostrils. Then it's on to the yoga postures, a series of poses that typically must be held for periods of a few seconds to several minutes. Unlike the routine in calisthenics or weight training, you will not be asked to repeat postures more than three times, and some will be done only once.

Some of the postures, such as shoulder rolls or neck stretches, will probably be familiar to you, while others may seem extremely complicated or even contorted. The goal is to mildly stretch all the muscle groups in the body, while gently squeezing the internal organs. To balance the muscle groups, the postures follow a specific order.

As you assume the various postures, you'll be asked to move gently, without jerking or bouncing. Breathing techniques remain important. You'll need to focus on exhaling during

certain movements and inhaling during others. Likewise, as you hold certain postures, you may be instructed to inhale through one nostril and exhale through the other. You'll be allowed to rest after every three or four postures, and at the conclusion of the exercises, there's usually a period of rest or meditation. You should remain comfortable throughout the session, and should leave with both body and mind relaxed.

Treatment time: Classes usually last 45 minutes to an hour, but experts stress that even short sessions can be beneficial if you make them a regular routine.

Treatment frequency: Classes may be taken once a week, or more often, as desired. Your teacher will probably ask you to practice new positions at home, and will encourage you to run through at least a portion of the yoga routine each day. Regular practice, even if brief, is recommended for the best results.

WHAT TREATMENT HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH

Although the yoga we know today is practiced mainly for its health benefits, it is rooted in Hindu religious principles some 5,000 years old. Derived from the Sanskrit word for 'union', the term yoga refers to far more than exercise. In fact, it encompasses a variety of disciplines designed to ultimately bring its practitioners closer to God. *Dynana yoga*, for instance, seeks union through meditation, while *jnana yoga* entails the study of scriptures and *karma yoga* calls for selfless service to God and mankind.

The exercises we now call simply 'yoga' are actually *hatha yoga*, a discipline intended to prepare the body for the pursuit of union with the divine while raising the practitioner's awareness of creation to a higher, keener state. Through controlled

breathing, prescribed postures (called *asanas*), and meditation, hatha yoga seeks to enhance the *prana*, or life force, that resides in the body and achieve a state of balance and harmony between body and mind. Each of these three disciplines contributes to the search for union in its own unique way:

Breathing. The life force *prana* is believed to enter the body through the breath, and much of hatha yoga is concerned with helping you control your breathing properly. Shallow, hurried breathing is believed to inhibit the life force, and affect mind and body adversely. Deep, slow breathing is encouraged.

Postures. Some yoga postures are intended to stretch and strengthen muscles, others to improve posture and work the skeletal system, while others aim to compress and relax the organs and nerves. The underlying purpose is to perfect the body, making it a worthy host for the soul.

Meditation. Meditation supplements and reinforces the disciplines of *hatha yoga*, focusing the mind and relaxing the body. Closely linked with focused breathing, it aims to produce a quiet, calm frame of mind. Many people find that it reduces stress and increases energy. The interplay of this and the other two facets of *hatha yoga*, and the quiet, considered repetition of each, is considered key to achieving yoga's benefits.





Despite its use of physical exercises, yoga is perhaps most closely related to the mind-body family of therapies, which includes meditation and biofeedback. Research shows that, like other mind-body practices, yoga produces measurable physiological changes in the body, including a decrease in the respiratory rate and blood pressure, and an alteration in brain-wave activity reflecting increased relaxation. Yoga has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, both immediately and over time, and is often recommended to relieve the pain and anxiety of chronic illness. When practiced regularly, it promotes relaxation and enhances the sense of well-being. It also improves physical fitness and circulation, and some advocates say it improves memory. When combined with a low-fat diet and moderate aerobic exercise, it has been found to reverse the build-up of plaque in the coronary arteries—and the more it's practiced, the greater the improvement.

Although yoga's effects are unquestionable, scientists still don't know exactly how it produces them. Some speculate that, like other mind-body therapies, it works largely by relieving stress. Others suggest that it promotes the release of endorphins, the brain's natural pain killers. The Office of Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health has several studies underway

to clarify the matter. In the meantime, yoga continues to be practiced by some six million people in the United States.

WHO SHOULD AVOID THIS THERAPY?

Avoid yoga completely if you've had a recent back injury or surgery. Check with your doctor first if you have arthritis, a slipped disk, heart disease, or high blood pressure. (Although yoga tends to relieve high blood pressure, certain postures must be avoided. Be sure to alert your instructor to the problem if you decide to proceed.)

Although some postures are not recommended during pregnancy, special classes are available for expectant mothers. Some experts also warn against strenuous postures during menstruation, and when you are ill with a cold or infection.

WHAT SIDE EFFECTS MAY OCCUR?

At the outset, you may suffer some stiffness while your body adapts to the postures. When done properly, however, yoga is not stressful or tiring, and any stiffness should be short-lived and minor.

HOW TO CHOOSE A THERAPIST

Each yoga instructor has his own style, and classes range from mildly taxing to extremely strenuous. To make sure you'll be comfortable with the teacher's approach, ask to observe a class before you sign up. You should select a program that will leave you rested and relaxed, not totally exhausted.

WHEN SHOULD TREATMENT STOP?

You may continue yoga as long as it is helpful to you. Many

people who find yoga beneficial continue to practice it for life.

SEE A CONVENTIONAL DOCTOR if...

Yoga can alleviate a variety of chronic conditions, but it won't cure an acute medical problem. You should continue to see a doctor for regular check-ups and treatment.

Be sure to call the doctor immediately if the exercises cause any new symptoms, such as unusual headaches, muscle cramps, dizziness, or severe pain in your back, legs, or joints.

Tai chi

CONSIDER THIS THERAPY for:



More of a fitness regimen than a 'therapy', Tai Chi is gaining popularity in the United States as an aid to good health, especially for older adults. This slow, graceful Chinese exercise program pays dividends in increased strength and muscle tone, enhanced range of motion and flexibility, and improved balance and coordination. In clinical trials, it has also shown an unquestionable ability to reduce blood pressure and heart rate.

Many who practice tai chi find that it also offers a variety of 'quality of life' benefits such as improved concentration, an increased sense of well being, decreased feelings of stress, more energy, improved posture and better circulation.

HOW THE TREATMENTS ARE DONE?



Tai chi exercises encompass a set of 'forms.' With names like 'Grasping the Bird's Tail' and 'Wave Hands Like Clouds', each form consists of a series of positions strung together into one continuous movement, including a set beginning and end. A single form may include up to 100 positions and may take as long as 20 minutes to complete. The forms can be performed anywhere at any time, but for maximum health benefits, tai chi experts recommend setting aside the same time every day.

To learn the forms, you'll need to attend classes with a tai chi instructor, typically someone who has mastered the Chinese martial arts. No special equipment is necessary, although comfortable loose-fitting clothing and flat shoes or socks are recommended.

In each weekly session, you'll be drilled in the positions that make up the various forms. You may find it hard to remember

all the movements at first, but like ice skating and bike riding, they become easier with practice. The object is to achieve coordinated, fluid, whole-body movement, even though you may only move one part at a time.

You'll begin by assuming the basic tai chi position: standing with your feet parallel and shoulder-width apart, your knees bent slightly, your head slightly lifted, and your spine straight. Your shoulders should be somewhat rounded and your arms should hang loosely at your sides as you prepare to move into a position.

As you go through each sequence, your knees should remain slightly bent, with all movement originating from the waist. This area of the body located just below the navel is known as your 'tantien'. In Chinese philosophy, it's considered the centre of the body's 'chi' or vital energy. By focusing on this centre as you practice the deep breathing and slow movements of tai chi, you can expect to experience a heightened awareness of your entire body.

First: Calm down. Think of tai chi only.

Second: Eliminate any exertion.

Third: Be consistent in movement and speed.

Fourth: Practice truly and precisely. Study the movements you make.

Fifth: Persevere. Practice for the same amount of time at the same hour each day.

Most people who practice tai chi say they feel they've had a 'work out' after an hour-long session, even though they may have never raised a sweat. However, you're unlikely to feel the same type of fatigue you might expect from such exercises as

jogging. Instead, you'll probably feel a sense of sustained energy and tension relief. Some practitioners claim that the flowing nature of tai chi so enhances the circulation that they feel warm and invigorated for the rest of the day.

Treatment time: Classes take 60 minutes. An average tai chi form can be performed in 7 to 10 minutes, once it is mastered.

Treatment frequency: Tai chi may be performed every day or periodically throughout the week. Daily practice is recommended.

WHAT TREATMENT HOPES TO ACCOMPLISH

Like other forms of traditional Chinese medicine such as qigong, tai chi is founded on a belief in *chi* (also spelled *qi*), a vital force thought to flow through the body along certain channels, or 'meridians'. It also reflects an attempt to harmonise the two opposing forces of Yin and Yang, universal principles that incorporate such polar opposites as male and female, light and dark, active and passive. All tai chi movements, for example, are pairs of opposites such as left and right or thrust and yield.

Practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine believe that tai chi improves health by breaking up blockages in the flow of chi, thus re-establishing balance in the body's supply of vital force.

Especially for older adults, who face a decline in muscle strength, flexibility, and range of motion, tai chi offers all of the following:

- Its slow, deep breathing increases relaxation and concentration.
- Some of the basic movements—putting full weight on the

lower leg, alternating from one leg to another, stepping backward and forward and from side to side—help to strengthen muscle and bone, while improving balance and thus preventing falls. (Nearly 30 percent of those over 65 sustain at least one fall. About half of these falls result in serious injuries, mostly fractures of the hip or wrist.)

- Moving the head, eyes, and body together helps to recalibrate the inner ear—the body’s balance centre.
- Natural extension of the body during tai chi helps encourage correct posture.
- Tai chi’s low-intensity movements have an aerobic affect on the heart and vascular system.
- Focused attention on movements encourages mental alertness, while relaxing body and mind.

Researchers still aren’t sure exactly which of these effects is responsible for tai chi’s documented ability to reduce heart rate and blood pressure, but studies indicate that it’s clearly more effective than ordinary aerobic exercise. One study also found that, among older individuals, mastering tai chi can reduce the risk of falling by nearly 50 percent.

Who should avoid this therapy?

Tai chi is a safe and effective method of exercise and relaxation for almost everyone, young or old, athletic or not. Although the exercises are generally performed while standing, and there is a lot of emphasis on shifting weight from one leg to another, the movements can be adapted to permit participation even by those using wheel chairs or walkers. The forms are flexible enough to allow each person to perform to his ‘personal best’. An instructor may encourage a young athlete to flex deeply in

the knees, for example, while suggesting that an elderly person perform only a partial equivalent of the movement.

WHAT SIDE EFFECTS MAY OCCUR?

There are no known side effects of tai chi.

HOW TO CHOOSE A THERAPIST?

While many books and videos are available about tai chi, most advocates recommend taking a class with an experienced teacher who can help ensure that your movements and posture are correct.

Many tai chi classes are offered at community centres or health clubs. Instructors in these venues are typically experienced enough in the exercises to be able to teach them successfully. However, for training at a more advanced level, you'll need to seek out one of the tai chi masters who generally teach at a specialised school of tai chi.

There is no national certifying organisation for tai chi instructors, although even instructors at community centres are expected to adhere to a professional set of standards and ethics. When choosing an instructor, you'll therefore need to draw your own conclusions. Make your decision according to the following guidelines:

- Choose an environment that appears clean and safe, and one in which you feel you can learn.
- Ask how long the facility has been operating.
- Make sure the program and format meets your scheduling needs.
- Observe a class before joining or paying for it; watch and

listen to the instructor:

WHEN SHOULD TREATMENT STOP?

The health benefits of tai chi are associated with the exercise itself and won't persist if the practice is stopped. Tai chi is therefore best regarded as a lifelong preventive strategy to improve and maintain health while promoting relaxation and a calm outlook.

However, if for any reason the movements are painful or trigger an old injury, stop exercising and consult your doctor. You may also want to discuss the problem with your instructor to see if the exercise can be modified.

SEE A CONVENTIONAL DOCTOR if...

Although tai chi promises to strengthen the heart and reduce high blood pressure, it is not a substitute for a doctor's care. When starting tai chi, you should not, for instance, discard your blood pressure medication until your doctor thinks it's safe to do so. In some cases, medication will still be needed, though perhaps at a reduced dosage.

If you are out of shape or have significant health problems, you should check with your doctor before starting the exercises. Be quick to check with your doctor, too, if symptoms of stress, depression, or pain continue to trouble you, or begin to get worse.

If you are using tai chi strictly as a relaxation exercise, you'll still need to see a doctor if you develop any physical problems such as sprains or strains. Although such injuries are highly unlikely, it is always possible that you may trigger an old injury or over-exert your body.

Psychological Benefits of Meditation



Meditation can help most people feel less anxious and more in control. The awareness that meditation brings can also be a source of personal insight and self-understanding. Pic. Med 8

Handling Repressed Memories and Enjoying Life

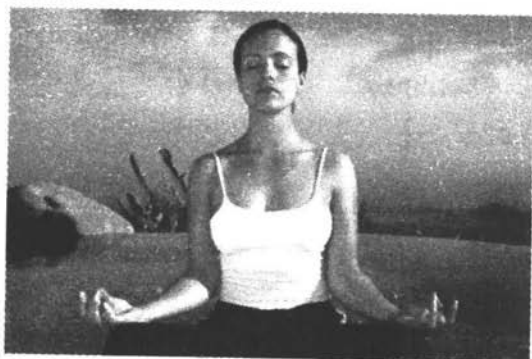
Meditation may lead to a breakdown of screen memories so that early childhood abuse episodes and other traumas suddenly flood the mind, making the patient temporarily more anxious until these traumas are healed. 'Many men and women tend to live in a state of perpetual motion and expectation that

prevents them from appreciating the gifts that each moment gives us'. 'We live life in a state of insufficiency, waiting for a mother to love us, for a father to be kind to us, for the perfect job or home, for Prince Charming to come along or to become a perfect person. It's a mythology that keeps us from being whole'.

DEPRESSION

Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and isolation are hallmarks of depression-the nation's most prevalent mental health problem. Meditation increases self-confidence and feelings of connection to others. Many studies have shown that depressed people feel much better after eliciting the relaxation response.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF MEDITATION



The longer an individual practices meditation, the greater the likelihood that his or her goals and efforts will shift toward personal and spiritual growth. Many individuals who initially learn meditation for its self-regulatory aspects find that as their practice deepens they are drawn more and more into the realm of the 'spiritual'.

ILLNESS IN GENERAL

Many of Nature's cures - acupressure, aromatherapy, biofeedback, exercise, heat and cold therapies, massage therapy, music therapy, tai chi and chi gong, visualisation, guided imagery and self-hypnosis and yoga incorporate elements of meditation.

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

There are many meditation techniques. Some of the techniques are quite simple and can be picked up with a little practice. Others require training by an experienced instructor. We will cover some of the simple techniques to get started.

In Christian spiritual training, meditation means thinking with concentration about some topic. In the Eastern sense, meditation may be viewed as the opposite of thinking about a topic. Here the objective is to become detached from thoughts and images and opening up silent gaps between them. The result is a quietening of our mind and is sometimes called relaxation response. In Christian mystical practice, this practice is called 'contemplation'.

When we look at the basic psychological procedure at the heart of **Eastern meditation** and **Christian contemplation**, we can understand why the following activities are relaxing:

PRAYER

- Lying back and listening to music on radio or record player



- Focusing attention, while sitting still, on a fishing rod float; rapt gazing at a loved person, object, or scene
- Fireside contemplation.

All these activities, and many more, involve staying still and passive attention to something.

FOUR ELEMENTS BASIC TO TRADITIONAL MEDITATION

There are four elements basic to most traditional meditation. These elements are:

- A quiet place to meditate,
- A comfortable or poised posture,
- An object for attention-awareness to dwell upon,
- A passive attitude.

A QUIET PLACE



The best environment for the practice of meditation is similar to that most conducive to lying down or sitting to progressively relax the body muscles. Sit in a quiet place with minimum distractions. Later, you may be able to meditate well

in places where more is going on: launderettes, railway stations, doctors' or dentists' waiting rooms, on trains and buses, and so on.

A COMFORTABLE OR POISED POSTURE



Assuming a certain posture has been central to many meditation techniques. Classic postures, integral to Hatha Yoga, are given in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, which codify ancient yogic healing practices. Other postures appear in the Kum Nye holistic healing system of Tibet, in Islamic prayer, and in Gurdjieff movements. Posture is considered very important in Zen Buddhist practice.

A sitting posture is better for meditation than lying down. This is because lying down is the normal sleep position and meditation lying down could easily lead to sleep. If you are not a person who easily goes to sleep during the day, you may like to meditate in a semi-reclining position on a sofa or large armchair with the back of your head supported. In traditional meditation postures, however, the back is normally kept erect, though not rigidly upright. This is called poised posture. The right attitude for meditation may itself be described as poised: alert yet also relaxed. Poised posture promotes the right state

of attention-awareness for successful meditation.

In the East, the cross-legged postures, with head and back in vertical line, are considered ideal for meditation. In classic Lotus posture, the legs are crossed with feet on thighs, and imparts the right feeling of poised sitting for meditation. These postures are difficult and even painful at first for those who are not familiar with them. We will describe two traditional oriental postures, viz., half lotus and lotus posture and an easier posture called Burmese posture. For those who prefer to do the meditation sitting on a chair, we will describe a posture called Egyptian posture.

Full LOTUS POSTURE



BENEFITS

Provides the classical sitting position for meditation during longer periods of time without bodily movement.

Promotes very great elasticity of the ankles, knees, and legs because of the position which is required.

Note: The full lotus position is an advanced yoga position that requires considerable amount of practice to master. If you

cannot do half lotus position, you will not be able to do full lotus position.

How To Do Full Lotus?



1. In a sitting position, stretch your legs straight out before you.
2. Bend your right leg at the knee and bring it toward you so that you can take hold of your right foot with both hands.
3. Place your right foot on top of your left thigh. The right foot should be brought toward you as far as is possible so that eventually the right foot is touching the groin. In order to now complete the posture successfully, the right knee will have to rest on the floor.
4. Bend your left leg at the knee and bring it toward you so that you can take hold of your left foot with both hands.
5. Place your left foot on top of your right thigh. The left foot should be brought in as far as possible so that eventually the left heel will also touch the groin. Both knees should eventually rest on the floor. Sit in this position as long as you want.
6. When your legs grow tired, stretch them straight out before you and gently massage your knees. Then repeat the position by reversing the legs so that the left leg is drawn in first and

the right leg is on top.

Half Lotus Posture

Benefits

- Relaxes the entire nervous system,
- Lessens the tension and stiffness in the ankles, knees and thighs and
- Provides a comfortable sitting position for resting the mind for meditation.



Half Lotus sitting position had been used for meditation from time immemorial.

How To Do It?

1. In a sitting position, stretch your legs straight out before you.
2. Bend your left leg at the knee and bring it toward you so that you can take hold of your left foot with both hands.
3. Place your left foot so that the sole rests against the inside of the right thigh. The heel of your left foot should be drawn in as far as possible.
4. Bend your right leg at the knee so that you can take hold of your right foot with both hands.



5. Place your right foot in the fold of your left leg. Drop the right knee as far as possible toward the floor. Rest your hands on your knees. Sit in this position as long as needed.
6. When your legs grow tired, stretch them straight out before you and gently massage your knees. Then repeat the position by reversing the legs so that the right leg is drawn in first and the left leg is on top.

BURMESE POSTURE



This is a simpler posture to master. Here, the legs are not crossed but the knees are spread and stay down, and the legs are folded and the feet pulled back in front of the pelvis with one foot in front of the other. The 'cupped' hands rest at the tops of the thighs or on the heels. It is essential to have a firm cushion to sit on and a folded rug or blanket below that to prevent pain in the feet and ankles. The buttocks should be pushed out a little to bring the back into easy uprightness.

SITTING ON A CHAIR, EGYPTIAN POSTURE

You can also practice meditation sitting on a chair. Find a chair that will allow you to sit upright and have the back of your head supported. Placing a cushion against your back can ensure

poised posture in sitting upright in some chairs in which otherwise poised sitting would be difficult. You can meditate, however, on a simple straight-backed chair by sitting in poised posture. With hands on thighs, this may be called Egyptian posture. A good placing of the hands for meditation is to 'cup' them limply in your lap, with thumbs touching, with your wrists at the tops of your thighs.

REALMS of MEDITATION

Mindfulness, no mind, concentration, breath focus, chanting or awareness, there are various ways to meditate, the goal of all is the same, to achieve a state of peacefulness and serenity.



CONSCIOUS BREATHING

Sit comfortably with your back straight. If need be sit with a backrest. Your legs can be crossed comfortably or lay them straight before you. If you can find someone who can lead you through the exercise it may be easier, especially the first time around.

The place and room you choose must be quiet and clean. Perhaps you could play soft instrumental music especially designed for meditation. This is however not essential. Allow

yourself to breathe naturally, especially focusing on the area where the breath enters your nostrils.



If a sensation arises, watch it with your minds, eyes, as the breath goes in and out slowly, calmly. Do not control your breath. Just be aware of this sensation of the air passing in and out of the nostrils. Let thoughts arise and pass away do not get caught in your thoughts. Your whole body should be relaxed, face relaxed, shoulders easy, the belly easy. Do not constrict any part of yours body. If the mind tends to run away, gently pull it back.

If - Pain arises in parts of your body simply notice it and watch it going. Surrender to the process of breathing. Feelings arise, thoughts arise. Your mind may 'plan', may 'judge', may 'reject', may 'condemn'. Be aware, of these but do not get caught in the content of your thoughts. For they arise and shall also pass, as waves rise and fall, and you remain the ocean calm and silent beneath. Conscious breathing makes the body and mind one. It calms both. It brings you to an awareness of the present moment, the only moment which is truly real. Anxiety comes from memories of the past and thoughts of the future. With conscious breathing you will learn to live in the moment.

GURU MANTRA

If the guru has gathered spiritual power as a result of his realisation or meditation, some of this power accrues to the mantra.

If the disciple repeats the mantra continuously the power of the Guru is invoked in such a way that it helps the disciple to progress on the path of meditation.

NAMA JAPA is the PRACTICE OF REPEATING GODS NAME- E.G. *RAM RAM, HARI OM, SHRIRAM* IS ALSO THE PRACTICE OF REMEMBERING GOD'S NAME AND FORM. COMPLETE SURRENDER TO THE DEITY WHOSE NAME IS REPEATED IS ESSENTIAL. ONLY AFTER SUCH SURRENDER IS THE NAME OF GOD COMPLETELY WITH THE MAN.

The ultimate step in Namajapa is identification of the name with the self-your Self. At this stage, name and form drop.

In the Bible is said 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God'.

Mindfulness



Mindfulness is a process of meditation. It is the principle that underlies conscious breathing, mantra repetition. Mindfulness

is Awareness, Awareness of what? Awareness of your mind, and body. How do we begin to be mindful? Mindfulness is a technique and to achieve it is simple -practice it right now. And watch how it subtly changes you. If we begin to do all our physical acts with full awareness, then the identification with the physical gets broken-

If you lift one hand upwards with all attention you will free yourself apart from the hand-because the one who lifts is different from that which is lifted. As you become aware of the processes of the physical body you will begin to understand the movements of emotions within you, you will become aware of their presence. Then you can be free of them.

MEDITATIVE Lifestyle



Make meditation a part of your lifestyle, your daily routine. Conscious breathing is the way to begin making meditation underlie all your activities.

Breathing in, calm your body and feel your breath. Breathing out, relax and smile. Breathing in, live in the present moment. Breathing out, know it is the only moment in which you are alive for the next moment is not in your hands. When the breathing is calm and peaceful so is the mind and so is the body and so is the heart. As you relax your mind and body, unclench your fists, loosen your legs and feet, relax your stomach, automatically your mind will relax too. Remember this is the present moment, the only moment which is real and available to you right now, it may have been made from the past and may contain seeds of the future but it is above all the only moment in which you can make the changes you want to in your life.

THE MEDITATIVE STATE

The meditative state means continuous awareness of the actions and interactions that are going on in the body, mind, senses and feelings. A meditative state goes beyond a structured meditative practice. By practice we are able to stop the activity of thought and experience a state of no thought. But when we come out of the practice we are again confronted with the experience of conflict, stress etc. To deal with them we must develop a meditative attitude in the performance of action, a meditative lifestyle.

Actions are physical, mental or emotional. Meditative attitude means finding that inner stability and strength where actions and reactions are witnessed. That is the concept of *drashta* (the seer) *Dhrasta* is seeing the process of life in the physical, mental and psychic realms, to be in a constant state of observation and awareness. When we reach this stage then our journey into spiritual life has truly begun. Where and how do we begin?

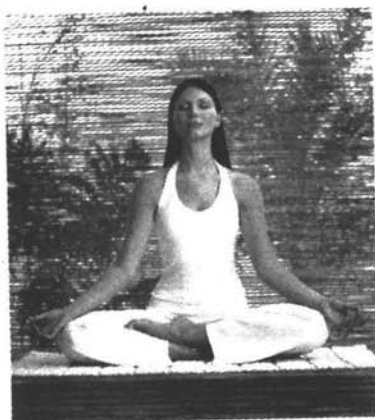
A SAMPLE SADHANA

Mouna - observe silence from 6.00 p.m. to 6.00 am. Total silence. Continue your normal activities but maintain silence, awareness, observation. When walking be aware of walking, when thinking be aware of what you are thinking. You should be alert in total silence.



Surrender to the process of breathing. Feelings arise, thoughts arise. Your mind may 'plan', may 'judge', may 'reject', may 'condemn'. Be aware, of these but do not get caught in the content of your thoughts. For these arise and shall also pass, as waves rise and fall, and you are the ocean calm and silent beneath. Conscious breathing makes the body and mind one. It calms both. It brings you to an awareness of the present moment, the only moment which is truly real. Anxiety comes from memories of the past and thoughts of the future. With conscious breathing you will learn to live in the moment.

MINDFULNESS of BREATHING MEDITATION



In this method we use our breath as an object of awareness. We follow the physical sensations of the breath as it flows in and out of the body.

This meditation practice isn't a breathing exercise. We allow the breath to flow naturally and are simply aware of it. So there is no control over the breath.

One of the first things we learn when we try to do this meditation practice is how distracted our minds are! All sorts of thoughts and feelings flow into our awareness, and then we find we've forgotten all about the breath. This is a good thing

to learn. If we don't know this we can't do anything about it.

Most of what comes into our minds is not very useful, and often it's actually bad for us. For example we find ourselves worrying or getting angry, or putting ourselves down.

The simple principle behind this meditation practice is that if we keep taking our awareness back to the breath — over and over again — then our mind gradually quiets down and we feel more contentment.

Usually we do this with the eyes shut, to minimise distraction.

You'll need to know how to sit effectively, so you can either go to the meditation posture guidelines or, if you already know how to sit, then go directly to the meditation practice.

MAKING CHOICES

But there's another important opportunity available to us at the point when we regain our awareness. We can choose not only what we do (taking our awareness to the breath), but how we do it. There can be a strong temptation to beat ourselves up over having been distracted. Of course if we do that then we're going straight back into an uncontrolled, unaware state of distractedness — we undermine ourselves or get annoyed. A more creative response is that we take our awareness back to the breath with as much kindness, and patience, and gentleness as we can. Instead of giving yourself a hard time about having been distracted you can congratulate yourself on having regained your awareness.

When you're taking your awareness back to the breath, bear in mind that your mind is a miraculous and precious thing. Carry your awareness back to the breath in the same way, as you would pick up a young kitten in order to return it to its

mother. Try and be that gentle and that kind. Your mind has a natural tendency to wander, just like a young, inquisitive animal. So there's no point in being harsh with yourself.

HOW TO DO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

'Mindfulness practice is simple and completely feasible. Just by sitting and doing nothing, we are doing a tremendous amount.'

In the last column we discussed why mindfulness is essential to spiritual practice, for no matter what spiritual tradition we follow, we must have a mind that is able to stay in the present moment if our understanding and experience is to deepen. Now we would like to talk about some aspects of the actual mindfulness practice.

An important point is that when we are in a mindful state, there is still intelligence. It's not as if we blank out. Sometimes people think that a person who is in deep meditation doesn't know what's going on—that it's like being asleep. In fact, there are meditative states where you deny sense perceptions their function, but this is not the accomplishment of shamatha practice.

CREATING A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT

There are certain conditions that are helpful for the practice of mindfulness. When we create the right environment it's easier to practice.

It is good if the place where you



meditate, even if it's only a small space in your apartment, has a feeling of upliftedness and sacredness. It is also said that you should meditate in a place that is not too noisy or disturbing, and you should not be in a situation where your mind is going to be easily provoked into anger or jealousy or other emotions. If you are disturbed or irritated, then your practice is going to be affected.

BEGINNING THE PRACTICE

People should meditate frequently but for short periods of time—ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes. If you force it too much the practice can take on too much of a personality, and training the mind should be very, very simple. So you could meditate for ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes in the evening, and during that time you are really working with the mind. Then you just stop, get up, and go.

POSTURE



The Buddhist approach is that the mind and body are connected. The energy flows better when the body is erect, and when it's bent, the flow is changed and that directly affects your thought process.

People who need to use a chair for meditation should sit

upright with their feet touching the ground. Those using a meditation cushion such as a zafu or gomden should find a comfortable position with legs crossed and hands resting palm-down on your thighs. The hips are neither rotated forward too much, which creates tension, or tilted back so you start slouching. You should have a feeling of stability and strength. So when you begin a meditation session, you can spend some initial time settling into your posture. You can feel that your spine is being pulled up from the top of your head so your posture is elongated, and then settle.

The basic principle is to keep an upright, erect posture. You are in a solid situation: your shoulders are level, your hips are level, your spine is stacked up. You can visualise putting your bones in the right order and letting your flesh hang off that structure. We use this posture in order to remain relaxed and awake. The practice we're doing is very precise: you should be very much awake even though you are calm.

GAZE

For strict mindfulness practice, the gaze should be downward focusing a couple of inches in front of your nose. The eyes are open but not staring; your gaze is soft. Try to reduce sensory input as much as you can. Just try to work with the mind and the more raise your gaze, the more distracted we're going to be. It's as if you had an overhead light shining over the whole room, and all of a sudden you focus it down right in front of you. You are purposefully ignoring what is going on around you.

BREATH

When we do shamatha practice, we become more and more familiar with our mind, and in particular we learn to recognise the movement of the mind, which we experience as thoughts. We do this by using an object of meditation to provide a contrast or counterpoint to what's happening in our mind. As soon as we go off and start thinking about something, awareness of the object of meditation will bring us back.

As you start the practice, you have a sense of your body and a sense of where you are, and then you begin to notice the breathing. The whole feeling of the breath is very important. The breath should not be forced, obviously; you are breathing naturally. The breath is going in and out, in and out. With each breath you become relaxed.

THOUGHTS

Everyone gets lost in thought sometimes. Just try to be as unbiased as possible. Mind will be wild and we have to recognise that. We can't push ourselves. If we're trying to be completely concept-free, with no discursiveness at all, it's just not going to happen.

So through the labeling process, we simply see our discursiveness. We notice that we have been lost in thought, we mentally label it 'thinking'—gently and without judgment—and we come back to the breath. When we have a thought—no matter how wild or bizarre it may be—we just let it go and come back to the breath, come back to the situation here.

What we are talking about is very practical. Mindfulness practice is simple and completely feasible. And because we are working with the mind that experiences life directly, just by sitting and doing nothing, we are doing a tremendous amount.

Walking Meditation

Even though meditation practices offer us a way to re-centre and settle into a focused, quiet state of mind and body, for some people the process of doing a sitting meditation creates anxiety. For these people, rather than bringing pleasure and relaxation, focusing inside is an uncomfortable experience, and may activate fear instead of calm. When we've been hurt as children, or struggle with anxiety or panic for any reason, we often learn to ignore or push away awareness of what was going on inside ourselves. By definition, most meditation asks us to focus on being aware of our awareness - just the opposite of what we may have done historically in an effort to feel safe and comfortable in our own skin.

There is tremendous benefit in learning to be comfortable with your own internal world, so an important question is how to begin to develop that comfort. When we are able to be more conscious of our



ongoing thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and urges, we learn that awareness of what's going on inside us generates the possibility of choice. With an increased capacity to choose how we want to be and respond in each moment, we have an opportunity to move through the world with a greater sense of mastery, empowerment and safety. But, awareness in and of itself is only awareness.

When we learn to fend off awareness of our own internal world, we are likely to disown parts of ourselves, or feelings, that cause us discomfort, whether we intend to or not. We become frightened of our own thoughts and emotions. We learn ways not to know what's going on in and around us. We avoid spending time with ourselves in ways that would allow us to move towards a greater sense of wholeness. It's within a context of wholeness - of being able and willing to experience the positive and not-so-positive aspects of ourselves - that we can feel safer in our present-day world. Paradoxically, as we allow ourselves to come to know those things that frighten us about ourselves, we develop greater resilience and internal strength. We tap into an increased ability and willingness to be aware of what's going on in the world around us, as well as our internal responses to these events and situations. Rather than hiding from awareness, we discover that safety and balance emerge from embracing it.

The following meditation offers you a way to go inside and feel grounded at the same time. Rather than sitting and experiencing the quiet, this is a walking meditation. It is a variation on a popular and often-used meditation practice found in a number of traditions. It offers you an opportunity to ground yourself in the bottoms of your feet and to focus your attention on your sensory awareness in this moment.



You can do this meditation indoors or out, depending on what's available to you. Your focus will be on the contact your feet have with whatever surface is under you. Allow whatever amount of time you have available.

If you can, spend 20 minutes or so doing this meditation. If you find it stressful to focus at all, then five minutes would be enough. The key thing is to give yourself an opportunity to discover that it's safe, today, right now, to be aware of yourself and what's moving through your experience. If you're someone who enjoys sitting meditation, doing a walking meditation offers an alternative way of engaging your practice.

GETTING STARTED

- Begin by deciding where you're going to walk - someplace where you won't be disturbed. Be sure you have on comfortable shoes and clothing and that you have set aside whatever time you need to do this meditation
- Take a few moments to focus your attention on the bottoms of your feet. Feel how your feet make contact with the surface under you.
- Remind yourself that your feet support your body and the surface under you supports your feet. There's no effort here. Just be aware of the support available to you.

- Now, slowly take a step forward. As you do, notice how you lift one foot and, as you move forward, the foot still on the ground begins to roll forward, as well, and you naturally shift your weight. Do this slowly enough so that you can feel the various elements of taking a step.
- Pay attention to how your other foot touches the ground as you move into the step. Very slowly, simply allow the step to unfold and notice the movement of your body. Do this in whatever way allows you to keep your balance comfortably. The point here is not to get anywhere. It's to be aware of each element of your steps, to bring awareness to the process of walking mindfully.
- As you walk, also notice your surroundings, the colours, shapes, textures, smells. Allow into awareness whatever arises, and invite yourself to refocus on the bottoms of your feet and the steps you're taking if you find that your mind has drifted away from the meditation.
- Also notice your breathing. Notice how it feels to settle your awareness in your belly, as well as in the bottoms of your feet. Become aware, as well, of the palms of your hands and your fingers. Your goal is to be present in your body as you notice your experience of walking slowly in this moment.
- If you notice any feelings or thoughts arise, whether you experience them as comfortable or uncomfortable, name them - 'thought', 'feeling' - and then let them just keep moving through. Notice that if you will allow it, every thought, feeling, and sensation that arises naturally moves through and moves on. It's the nature of all the contents of consciousness to keep moving if you allow them to.
- When you have walked for the time you allowed, stop and take a moment to notice how you feel, physically and

psychologically.

- As you come back to everyday activities and awareness, notice what happens if you continue to inhabit yourself the way you did during your walking meditation.

BENEFITS OF WALKING MEDITATION

At our meditation retreats, yogis practice mindfulness in four different postures. They practice mindfulness when walking, when standing, when sitting, and when lying down. They must sustain mindfulness at all times in whatever position they are in. The primary posture for mindfulness meditation is sitting with legs crossed, but because the human body cannot tolerate this position for many hours without changing, we alternate periods of sitting meditation with periods of walking meditation. Since walking meditation is very important, I would like to discuss its nature, its significance, and the benefits derived from its practice. Walking meditation is integral to the continuous development of mindfulness.

It was the Buddha himself who first taught walking meditation. In the *Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*, the Buddha taught walking meditation two times.

Let us now talk specifically about the practice of walking meditation. If you are a complete beginner, the teacher may instruct you to be mindful of only one thing during walking meditation: to be mindful of the act of stepping while you make a note silently in the mind, 'stepping, stepping, stepping', or 'left, right, left, right'. You may walk at a slower speed than normal during this practice.

After a few hours, or after a day or two of meditation, you may be instructed to be mindful of two occurrences: (i) stepping, and (ii) putting down the foot, while making the

mental note 'stepping, putting down'. You will try to be mindful of two stages in the step: 'stepping, putting down; stepping, putting down'. Later, you may be instructed to be mindful of three stages: (i) lifting the foot; (ii) moving or pushing the foot forward; and (iii) putting the foot down. Still later, you would be instructed to be mindful of four stages in each step: (i) lifting the foot; (ii) moving it forward; (iii) putting it down; and (iv) touching or pressing the foot on the ground. You would be instructed to be completely mindful and to make a mental note of these four stages of the foot's movement: 'lifting, moving forward, putting down, pressing the ground'.

At first yogis may find it difficult to slow down, but as they are instructed to pay close attention to all of the movements involved, and as they actually pay closer and closer attention, they will automatically slow down. They do not have to slow down deliberately, but as they pay closer attention, slowing down comes to them automatically. If yogis want to pay closer attention to the movements of lifting, moving forward, putting down, and pressing the ground, they will automatically slow down. Only when they slow down can they be truly mindful and fully aware of these movements.

Although yogis pay close attention and slow down, they may not see all of the movements and stages clearly. The stages may not yet be well-defined in the mind, and they may seem to constitute only one continuous movement. As concentration grows stronger, yogis will observe more and more clearly these different stages in one step; the four stages at least will be easier to distinguish. Yogis will know distinctly that the lifting movement is not mixed with the moving forward movement, and they will know that the moving forward movement is not mixed with either the lifting movement or the putting down

movement. They will understand all movements clearly and distinctly. Whatever they are mindful and aware of will be very clear in their minds.

As yogis carry on the practice, they will observe much more. When they lift their foot, they will experience the lightness of the foot. When they push the foot forward, they will notice the movement from one place to another. When they put the foot down, they will feel the heaviness of the foot, because the foot becomes heavier and heavier as it descends. When they put the foot on the ground, they will feel the touch of the heel of the foot on the ground. Therefore, along with observing, lifting, moving forward, putting down, and pressing the ground, yogis will also perceive the lightness of the rising foot, the motion of the foot, the heaviness of the descending foot, and then the touching of the foot, which is the hardness or softness of the foot on the ground. When yogis perceive these processes, they are perceiving the four essential elements (in Pali, *dhatu*). The four essential elements are: the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, and the element of air. By paying close attention to these four stages of walking meditation, the four elements in their true essence are perceived, not merely as concepts, but as actual processes, as ultimate realities.

Let us go into a little more detail about the characteristics of the elements in walking meditation. In the first movement, that is, the lifting of the foot, yogis perceive lightness, and when they perceive lightness, they virtually perceive the fire element. One aspect of the fire element is that of making things lighter, and as things become lighter, they rise. In the perception of the lightness in the upward movement of the foot, yogis perceive the essence of the fire element. But in the lifting of the foot there is also, besides lightness, movement. Movement

is one aspect of the air element. But lightness, the fire element, is dominant, so we can say that in the stage of lifting the fire element is primary, and the air element is secondary. These two elements are perceived by yogis when they pay close attention to the lifting of the foot.

The next stage is moving the foot forward. In moving the foot forward, the dominant element is the air element, because motion is one of the primary characteristics of the air element. So, when they pay close attention to the moving forward of the foot in walking meditation, yogis are virtually perceiving the essence of the air element.

The next stage is the movement of putting the foot down. When yogis put their foot down, there is a kind of heaviness in the foot. Heaviness is a characteristic of the water element, as is trickling and oozing. When liquid is heavy, it oozes. So when yogis perceive the heaviness of the foot, they virtually perceive the water element.

In pressing the foot on the ground, yogis will perceive the hardness or softness of the foot on the ground. This pertains to the nature of the earth element. By paying close attention to the pressing of the foot against the ground, yogis virtually perceive the nature of the earth element.

Thus we see that in just one step, yogis can perceive many processes. They can perceive the four elements and the nature of the four elements. Only those who practice can ever hope to see these things.

As yogis continue to practice walking meditation, they will come to realise that, with every movement, there is also the noting mind, the awareness of the movement. There is the lifting movement and also the mind that is aware of that lifting.

In the next moment, there is the moving forward movement and also the mind that is aware of the movement. Moreover, yogis will realise that both the movement and the awareness arise and disappear in that moment. In the next moment, there is the putting down movement and so also the awareness of the movement, and both arise and disappear in that moment of putting the foot down on the ground. The same process occurs with the pressing of the foot: there is the pressing and the awareness of pressing. In this way, yogis understand that along with the movement of the foot, there are also the moments of awareness. The moments of awareness are called, in Pali, *nama*, mind, and the movement of the foot is called *rupa*, matter. So yogis will perceive mind and matter rising and disappearing at every moment. At one moment there is the lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting, and at the next moment there is the movement forward and the awareness of that movement, and so on. These can be understood as a pair, mind and matter, which arise and disappear at every moment. Thus yogis advance to the perception of the pairwise occurrence of mind and matter at every moment of observation, that is, if they pay close attention.

When yogis understand the conditionality of all movements, and that these movements are not created by any authority or any god, then they will understand that they are created by intention. They will understand that intention is the condition for the movement to occur. Thus the relationship of conditioning and conditioned, of cause and effect, is understood. On the basis of this understanding, yogis can remove doubt about *nama* and *rupa* by understanding that *nama* and *rupa* do not arise without conditions. With the clear understanding of the conditionality of things, and with the transcendence of doubt about *nama* and *rupa*, a yogi is said to

reach the stage of a 'lesser *sotapanna*. '

A *sotapanna* is a 'stream-enterer', a person who has reached the first stage of enlightenment. A lesser *sotapanna* is not a true stream-enterer but is said to be assured of rebirth in a happy realm of existence, such as in the realms of human beings and *devas*. That is, a lesser *sotapanna* cannot be reborn in one of the four woeful states, in one of the hells or animal realms. This state of lesser *sotapanna* can be reached just by practicing walking meditation, just by paying close attention to the movements involved in a step. This is the great benefit of practicing walking meditation. This stage is not easy to reach, but once yogis reach it, they can be assured that they will be reborn in a happy state, unless, of course, they fall from that stage.

When yogis comprehend that mind and matter arise and disappear, they understand that mind and matter are impermanent. When they see that they are impermanent, they next understand that they are unsatisfactory because they are always oppressed by constant arising and disappearing. After comprehending impermanence and the unsatisfactory nature of things, they observe that there can be no mastery over these things; that is, yogis realise that there is no self or soul within that can order them to be permanent. Things just arise and disappear according to natural law. By comprehending this, yogis comprehend the third characteristic of conditioned phenomena, the characteristic of *anatta*, the characteristic that things have no self. One of the meanings of *anatta* is no mastery — meaning that nothing, no entity, no soul, no power, has mastery over the nature of things. Thus, by this time, yogis have comprehended the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena: impermanence, suffering, and the non-self nature of things — in Pali, *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anatta*.

Yogis can comprehend these three characteristics by observing closely the mere lifting of the foot and the awareness of the lifting of the foot. By paying close attention to the movements, they see things arising and disappearing, and consequently they see for themselves the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self nature of all conditioned phenomena.

Our effort in walking meditation is to see our movements as closely as the camera sees them, frame by frame. We also want to observe the awareness and intention preceding each movement. We can also appreciate the power of the Buddha's wisdom and insight, by which he actually saw all of the movements. When we use the word 'see' or 'observe' to refer to our own situation, we mean that we see directly and also by inference; we may not be able to see directly all of the millions of movements as did the Buddha.

Before yogis begin practicing walking meditation, they may have thought that a step is just one movement. After meditation on that movement, they observe that there are at least four movements, and if they go deeper, they will understand that even one of these four movements consists of millions of tiny movements. They see *nama* and *rupa*, mind and matter, arising and disappearing, as impermanent. By our ordinary perception, we are not able to see the impermanence of things because impermanence is hidden by the illusion of continuity. We think that we see only one continuous movement, but if we look closely we will see that the illusion of continuity can be broken. It can be broken by the direct observation of physical phenomena bit by bit, segment by segment, as they originate and disintegrate. The value of meditation lies in our ability to remove the cloak of continuity in order to discover the real nature of impermanence. Yogis can discover the nature of impermanence directly through their

own effort.

After realizing that things are composed of segments, that they occur in bits, and after observing these segments one by one, yogis will realize that there is really nothing in this world to be attached to, nothing to crave for. If we see that something which we once thought beautiful has holes, that it is decaying and disintegrating, we will lose interest in it. Even modern physicists know this idea well. They have observed, with powerful instruments, that matter is just a vibration of particles and energy constantly changing — there is nothing substantial to it at all. By the realization of this endless impermanence, yogis understand that there is really nothing to crave for, nothing to hold on to in the entire world of phenomena.

Now we can understand the reasons for practicing meditation. We practice meditation because we want to remove attachment and craving for objects. It is by comprehending the three characteristics of existence — impermanence, suffering, and the non-self nature of things — that we remove craving. We want to remove craving because we do not want to suffer. As long as there is craving and attachment, there will always be suffering. If we do not want to suffer, we must remove craving and attachment. We must comprehend that all things are just mind and matter arising and disappearing, that things are insubstantial. Once we realise this, we will be able to remove attachment to things. As long as we do not realise this, however much we read books or attend talks or talk about removing attachment, we will not be able to get rid of attachment. It is necessary to have the direct experience that all conditioned things are marked by the three characteristics.

Hence we must pay close attention when we are walking, just as we do when we are sitting or lying down. I am not trying to

say that Walking meditation alone can give us ultimate realization and the ability to remove attachment entirely, but it is nevertheless as valid a practice as sitting meditation or any other kind of *vipassana* (insight) meditation. Walking meditation is conducive to spiritual development. It is as powerful as mindfulness of breathing or mindfulness of the rising and falling of the abdomen. It is an efficient tool to help us remove mental defilements. Walking meditation can help us gain insight into the nature of things, and we should practice it as diligently as we practice sitting meditation or any other kind of meditation. By the practice of *vipassana* meditation in all postures, including the walking posture, may you and all yogis be able to attain total purification in this very life!

SITTING MEDITATION



Classic sitting meditation is a vital part of all meditation traditions and has taken many forms, some more effective than others. Some traditional approaches demand that the student sit motionless for hours on end, as if becoming a human statue is the only key to enlightenment. A more scientific approach does not make the human body our enemy, but rather works with our natural physiology to allow more intense meditation with less effort and discomfort. Masochism is not an effective path to self-realisation.

Begin by finding a relatively quiet place to meditate where you will not be disturbed. All forms of classic sitting meditation should be done in silence with no background music. You can sit cross-legged Asian style on a meditation pillow on the floor

or use the recliner chair method described below. Eyes may be fully open, half open, or slightly open, letting in just two small slits of light. Meditating with eyes fully closed is fine as long as the room remains brightly lit so that enough light passes through the eyelids to keep your brain alert. Meditating with eyes closed in a darkened room presents fundamental physiological problems.



When you sit quietly with your eyes closed in darkness your brain interprets this situation as a signal to start shutting itself down for sleep. Sleep inducing hormones such as melatonin are released at the same time your circulation and heart rate are reduced due to lack of movement. You feel swept away on a sea of quiet relaxation. This pleasant experience may be light sleep state hypnosis, not meditation at all, and thus do you no more good than taking a nap. Meditation means that you are relaxed as if sleeping but your consciousness is fully and intensely awake. Therefore, as previously stated, if you meditate with your eyes closed the room must remain very brightly lit so that a significant amount of light passes through the eyelids.

THE SIT-STAND METHOD

Another defence against sleepiness is to break up your meditation into three fifteen minute sessions that are easy for your body to tolerate. Sit quietly for fifteen minutes, then stand for two minutes, then sit for another fifteen minutes, then stand for two minutes, then sit for a final fifteen minute session. This 49 minute technique can be done once, twice, or three times a day for intense practice. You can time yourself by making a tape recording with the sound of a bell or a gong to let you know when to stand up, sit down, and begin and end the meditation.

This technique largely eliminates the problem of cramps, soreness, and numbness in legs often experienced by students attempting to sit for longer periods of time than the body was naturally made to sit. The standing breaks increase blood circulation which helps wakefulness. Comfort is maintained and we avoid the light sleep state hypnosis problem mentioned earlier.

The transitions between sitting and standing in this method are an opportunity to practice meditation in action. Normally, unless we are physically ill, our waking lives are spent in motion and activity. Meditation must not be thought of as something that is done only in a physically rigid state far removed from the world of work and play. The goal is to become meditative continuously so that your very being becomes cosmically conscious, permanently and irrevocably. When you stand up and sit down during these meditation sessions, feel the inner flow of meditation continue. Observe that your body is moving but your basic existential identity remains the same.

THE RECLINER CHAIR METHOD

As previously mentioned, sitting for long periods of time in the traditional Asian cross legged position is uncomfortable for most Western students of meditation. This physical discomfort, which does nothing in itself to aid meditation, can be entirely eliminated through the use of a recliner chair. The Recliner Chair Method is actually the most healthful method of sitting as it avoids blocking vital blood circulation to the legs, yet has 100% of the benefits of sitting on the floor in the full lotus position with back held rigidly straight. The Recliner Chair Method highly recommend as the first choice sitting method for all Western students of meditation. Students who cannot comfortably sit for 20 minutes on the floor are often able to sit a full hour or even longer without back pain, numbness, or leg cramps using the Recliner Chair Method.

Energy in the second body (see The Seven Stages of Consciousness) is constantly being washed out through our hands and feet. This loss can be stopped by locking the hands and feet together, thus creating a closed loop of energy that builds up over time. The conserved energy is needed to strengthen the second energy body and push you higher into meditation. Contrary to popular belief, sitting with the back rigidly straight does nothing to aid meditation. The energy that rises up the back during meditation sessions is like water in a garden hose. If you gently bend the hose into a mild arch the flow of water will not be affected in any perceptible way.

With this method you sit in a recliner chair with the soles of your feet pressed against each other and your legs relaxed, knees pointed out to the sides of the chair. Shoes must be removed. You can practice this method barefoot or wear socks for warmth. A better alternative to socks is to drape a towel or

light blanket over your feet to keep them warm, which allows direct skin to skin contact. Hands can be locked together, laying comfortably in your lap, or pressed against the centre of your chest, one on top of the other, on the centre of the emotional heart. This method of sitting can be used in conjunction with any of the sitting meditation techniques described on this Web page and usually eliminates the need for the sit-stand method described earlier.

WHAT do you do while SITTING?

The most basic approach to meditation is to relax, let go, and do nothing. Surrender to the moment and watch yourself as a silent witness. If thoughts come to mind, then observe the thoughts without adding to them by your active participation. Be a detached and passive observer and simply feel your most basic fundamental being. This inherently immense being has been respectfully called the ground of being.

C HAPTER

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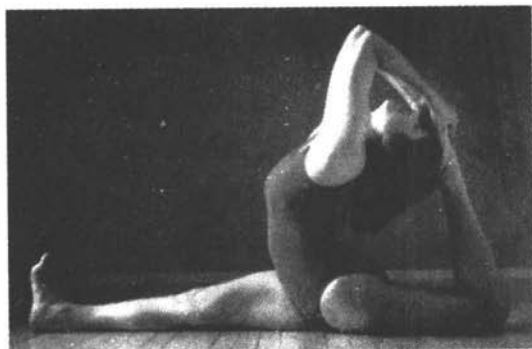
YOGA



WHAT IS YOGA?

Any one of several paths of spiritual discipline intended to lead a person to deliverance from samsara and the realisation of moksha—i.e., to at-onement with ultimate reality. Specifically, it means a 'yoking' of the self by spiritual discipline, a method of training designed to lead to union of the human spirit with ultimate reality and release from the limits of the individual ego. Also called margas (paths to salvation). Normally, following yoga involves apprenticeship to a guru (spiritual teacher or guide).

YOGA POSTURES



INTRODUCTION

Yoga Sutra defines asana as that which is comfortable and easy, as well as firm. It is a dynamic position, in which the practitioner is perfectly poised between activity and non-activity, being doing and 'being done by' the posture. A corresponding mental balance exists between movement and stillness. Yoga teaches that each posture reflects a mental attitude, whether that attitude be one of surrender, as in a forward bending asana, or the strengthening of the will, through backward bending postures, or the creation of a physical prayer or meditation with the body, as in the practice of padmasana (lotus posture). A posture or asana can be used for rejuvenating specific organs and glands as well as the spine.

There are about eighty-four asanas commonly used by yogis. We can, however, get sufficient benefits from a dozen of them. We will only present some of the more important ones here. If you want to learn more, there are many excellent books available that goes deeper into these asanas.

ORIGIN OF ASANA NAMES

Many of the asanas have animal names, such as the fish posture and the cobra posture. This is because yogis devised their asanas partly by observing how animal instincts work in the wild. When animals are sick they would only eat certain herbs and grasses. Similarly, they would stretch and contract muscles in various postures instinctively.

Yogis also observed how animals relaxed. Cats, especially, are experts in relaxation. On awakening from sleep, they instinctively stretch, arch the spine in both directions and then relax.

Asanas are also based on a sound knowledge of human anatomy and physiology. Yogis knew that placing the body in certain positions would stimulate specific nerves, organs and glands.

HOW THE ASANAS WORK

The asanas are based on five principles.

1. The use of gravity. The inverted postures such as the headstand, shoulder stand and the reverse posture take advantage of gravity to increase the flow of blood to the desired part of the body; in the headstand to the brain, in the shoulder stand to the thyroid gland and in the reverse posture to the gonads (sex glands)
2. Organ massage. The position of the asana causes a squeezing action on a specific organ or gland, resulting in the stimulation of that part of the body.
3. Stretching muscles and ligaments. This causes an increase in blood supply to the muscles and ligaments as well as relaxing

them. It also takes pressure off nerves in the area.

This stretching is involved in all the asanas, since it has such a beneficial effect on the body.

4. Deep breathing. While holding the yoga posture we breathe slowly and deeply, moving the abdomen only (abdominal or low breathing). This increases the oxygen and prana supply to the target organ or gland, thereby enhancing the effect of the asana.

5. Concentration. As well as breathing slowly and deeply, we also focus our attention on the target organ or gland. This brings the mind into play, and greatly increases the circulation and prana supply to the organ or gland.

WHAT ASANAS will do for you?

There are three very essential prerequisites for vitality and rejuvenation: a healthy central nervous system (brain and spine), healthy glands and healthy internal organs.



HEALTHY CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM (BRAIN AND SPINE)

Nerves from the brain and spine go to every tissue in the body

and therefore the health of every tissue in the body depends upon the health of the brain and spine.

The headstand causes an increase in circulation to the brain, which stimulates the brain's nerve cells. This results in increased vitality and improved brain function (intelligence and memory).

Since the nerves from the spine go to all the organs and glands of the body, a healthy spine obviously plays an important role in vitality and rejuvenation. In fact, the spine is more critical to our well-being than the brain, since the brain is well protected by the cranium or skull bone. Where the spinal nerves leave the spine and pass through the intervertebral foramina is a very vulnerable area. If a vertebra is slightly out of place, it may cause the nerve to be 'pinched' in the intervertebral foramina. The spinal nerves do not have protection against mechanical insults as the brain does.

The ancient yogis fully understood the vulnerability of the spine and the tendency for slight spinal misalignments to occur. They also knew that if the spine was kept flexible by yoga asanas there would be much less chance of spinal misalignments. Some of the asanas will even correct some minor misalignments.

If you do nothing to improve your spine's flexibility as you get older, your spine will deteriorate further and the spinal nerves will be increasingly impinged upon. This will lead to further deterioration of your organs and glands, until eventually their actual structure becomes diseased. We call this organic disease. At this stage, not only is their function impaired, but their cells are actually dying. If the condition is too advanced, it is irreversible. It's at this stage that many people go to doctors and are told that they have, for example, cancer

of some particular organ. The cancer has not appeared overnight; in reality it has been developing for many years.

HEALTHY ENDOCRINE GLANDS

The most important are the pituitary, pineal, thyroid, adrenal, pancreas and sex glands. The pituitary and pineal glands are situated in the brain, the thyroid is in the neck area, the adrenals and pancreas in the solar plexus area and the sex glands in the pelvic region.

The function of these glands is to secrete powerful hormones which control your growth, weight and size. They also determine your metabolism, vitality, sexual vigour and emotional state.

Since the pituitary and pineal glands are situated in the brain, the headstand has a powerful effect on them.

Thyroid gland problems are very common and often go undiagnosed until the symptoms are very obvious. The shoulder stand is specific for the thyroid gland and will prevent and help cure thyroid gland problems.

The hormones secreted by the sex glands are important not only for sexual virility but also for sparkling eyes, smooth skin and a warm personality. The reverse posture stimulates the sex glands and therefore the production of the sex hormones.

The adrenal glands produce a variety of hormones such as adrenaline and cortisone that are important in controlling your stress and immunity. The twist posture is a powerful stimulant to the adrenal glands, causing them to release extra energy to boost your vitality level.

The correct functioning of the pancreas is vital to our health.

The pancreas, secretes two hormones, called insulin and glucogen, which help to balance the body's sugar level. If the pancreas is not working properly, diabetes may develop. Diabetes is a serious disease, since complications such as blindness, heart attacks or strokes may occur. To help prevent diabetes, it is recommended that you follow the nutritional principles outlined here, especially by avoiding concentrated sugar foods.

HEALTHY INTERNAL ORGANS

As well as having a dramatic effect on the brain, spine and glands, most asanas also benefit the internal organs by massaging and stimulating them. These results in healthier internal organs that will function better and last longer.

As an example, the stomach lift raises the diaphragm, which massages the heart from below. This strengthens the heart muscle, resulting in better circulation and less chance of heart disease.

HEALTHY DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

Even if we eat the most nourishing food, it still has to be digested and assimilated properly and the toxins have to be eliminated efficiently. As we get older the digestive system functions with gradually reducing efficiency. The asanas result in an improved blood and nerve supply to the digestive and eliminative systems, which in time will get them functioning at peak efficiency.

The stomach lift massages the digestive organs, as well as contracting and stretching them.

HEALTHY JOINTS

The stretching of the joints in asanas causes the secretion of a lubricant called synovial fluid. This is released into the joints and keeps them supple, as well as removing waste products. The result is to reduce stiffness, which will prevent arthritis or improve it if you already have the condition.

HEALTHY SKIN

Stretching of the skin during the asanas causes stimulation of the skin cells. This results in firmer, healthier skin which won't sag or wrinkle.

WHEN TO DO THE ASANAS

It's best to do the asanas in the early morning or the early evening before the evening meal. Never exercise on a full stomach. Before exercising, wait at least three hours after eating a main meal, about one hour after eating a light snack such as a piece of fruit and about half an hour after drinking juices. After finishing the asanas, wait about a quarter of an hour before eating.

The best time to do the yoga postures is about one hour after getting up or in the early evening. Wait about 15 minutes before eating. Don't exercise immediately after getting out of bed, since you'll be too stiff. Wait at least one hour. It's not advisable to do the asanas before bed, since their stimulating effect may prevent you from getting to sleep easily.

WHERE TO DO THE ASANAS AND WHAT TO WEAR?

Make sure you have good ventilation in the room where you exercise. Use a thick rug or about an inch thick firm foam.

Don't do them on the bed since it's too soft, or on the floor without some padding, since that would be too hard.

Wear loose clothing, since tight clothes will restrict the circulation to some areas of the body. This would defeat one of the purposes of the asanas, that of increasing the circulation to various parts of the body.

BASIC TECHNIQUE

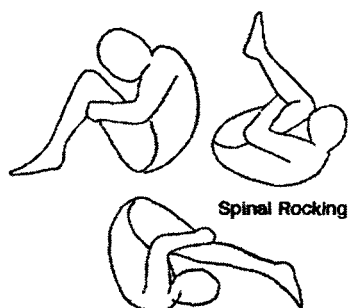
- Slowly, with no strain
- Breathe slowly and deeply with the abdomen only. When inhaling, push out; when exhaling, let it return
- Concentrate on the main organ or gland (with your eyes closed)
- Be regular - aim to do the routine six times a week.

THE SPINAL ROLL OR ROCKING EXERCISE

This is an excellent exercise to overcome the drowsiness and stiffness that one feels on waking in the morning. As you do this exercise, you will feel an invigorating sensation from your vertebrae getting a good massage. It will limber up your spine and keep it in a flexible and youthful condition. It is invaluable for those who are using yoga to dodge old age. It will also help you to sleep soundly. Thus, it is a good prescription for insomnia.

You may feel a little clumsy and awkward the first day when you do this exercise. Some people feel like losing their balance and falling down. In a few days you will feel accustomed to the rocking action and will start enjoying it. At that time you can combine rocking with deep breathing. Inhale while rocking

backwards and exhale while returning forward.



TECHNIQUE

1. Sit down at the end of the exercise pad to make sure that your back will not hit the hard floor. Draw up your knees, and bend your head down. Put your hands under your knees. You can join your hands or not depending on what is easy on you.

2. Keeping your spine rounded, gently swing back and forth, imitating the swinging motion of a rocking chair. Don't straighten your spine as you will roll backward or you will find yourself lying flat on your back, unable to swing forward again. Don't roll back too far on your neck. Don't try doing the rocking exercise too slowly either. Imagine you are a rocking chair in motion. Feel for the massaging action on your spine. Enjoy the fun.

HINT

Straighten your knees just as you swing backward and then immediately bend them again as you swing forward. Don't pause after you have swung back but simply continue the to-and-fro movement. Otherwise you may get 'stuck'.

TIME

Do this exercise four or six times, then lie down to relax until your breath returns to normal again. Take a few deep breaths while still lying on the floor.

BENEFITS

1. Makes the spine more flexible and youthful.
2. Massages all the vertebrae in the neck and spine.
3. If done in the morning it helps to overcome the drowsiness and stiffness that people often feel on waking up.
4. It's also very beneficial just before sleep.
5. The massaging action on the spine tends to relax the whole nervous system and establishes a better connection between the central nervous system and the rest of the body.

THE STOMACH LIFT, ABDOMINAL LIFT (UDDYANA BANDHA)

This is considered one of the very essential yoga exercises and is practiced not only for its physical values but also for the way it influences our psychic development.

TECHNIQUE

The stomach lift really consists of two separate exercises.

First exercise. While standing with your feet about a foot apart and your knees slightly bent, lean forwards a little from the waist and place your hands just above your knees.

Inhale deeply by pushing your abdomen forwards, and then exhale by pushing your stomach in. Don't take another breath;

instead, push in your stomach even more, so that it becomes hollow, and hold your breath for about ten seconds.

Second exercise. Do the same as above but, instead of holding your Stomach in after exhaling, rapidly push your stomach in and out ten times without taking another breath.

Stand up straight and resume normal breathing.

BENEFITS

1. This asana massages and tones up the internal organs in the abdominal area.
2. It also massages the heart, making it a stronger, more effective pump. Your circulation will improve and you will have less chance of having a heart attack.
3. It relieves constipation, gas, indigestion and liver trouble.
4. It tones up the nerves in the solar plexus region.
5. It reduces abdominal fat and strengthens the abdominal muscles.
6. It helps the correct functioning of the adrenal glands and sex glands.
7. It develops spiritual force.

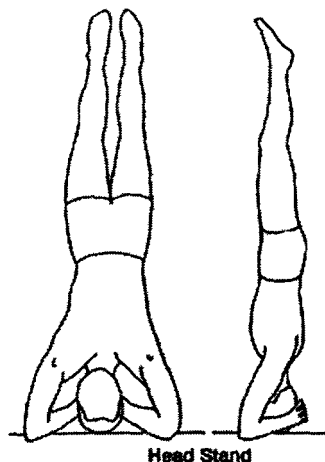
ABDOMINAL LIFT FOR INTERNAL CLEANSING

Take several glasses of water, at room temperature, with about a quarter of a teaspoon of salt per glass, and then do the contracting and relaxing movements several times in standing, sitting, and lying position.

Caution

Don't do this exercise if you have a hernia or serious heart or abdominal problems.

THE HEADSTAND (SHIRSHASANA)



This posture may look like imposing to those who haven't attempted it. Nevertheless, it is an extremely powerful asana. It is called the 'king of asanas' because of its overall effect on the whole body. For beginners, it is better to start this in a corner so that you can practice it without the fear of falling down.

TECHNIQUE

You must use extra padding for the headstand, so use a folded blanket or some extra foam on top of your yoga mat. Don't use a pillow, since it's too soft.

If you don't feel very confident about going straight into the headstand, try stage 1 first. Once you are confident with stage 1, you can go on to stage 2, which is the standard headstand.

If you wish to try it on your own, place a pillow lengthwise

behind your head, in case you fall over backwards.

STAGE 1 (FOR BEGINNERS)

1. Put your yoga mat into a corner, kneel down in front of it and place your interlocked fingers in the corner close to the walls.
2. Put your head into the hollow of the palms, rise off the knees and take a step or two towards the corner.
3. Lift one leg and place it in the corner against the wall. If you are a little unsure, ask a friend to hold the leg and put it in the corner. Now, just kick the other leg up. Stay there for about 15 seconds, trying to remain relaxed.
4. To come out of the headstand, just lower one leg at a time. Again, if you feel unsure, ask your friend to hold one of your legs while you lower the other.

Start off in the headstand for about 15 seconds. Increase the time by 15 seconds every week until you are doing three minutes.



STAGE 2 (THE STANDARD HEADSTAND)

1. Kneel down on your yoga mat. Interlock the fingers of your hands and place them and your forearms on the extra padding

on the yoga mat. Keep the elbows fairly close together.

2. Place the back of your head into the hollow of the palms (not on the palms or fingers). Rise up off your knees and take a step or two towards your head.

3. Inhale, and slowly raise the legs until they are vertical. Keep your back straight and try to relax. Breathe slowly and deeply from the abdomen.

4. Concentrate on the brain or the pineal gland between the eyebrows.

5. To come down, bend your knees and lower one leg and then the other. As for the beginners' stage, start off in the headstand for about 15 seconds and increase the time by 15 seconds every week, until you are doing three minutes.



BENEFITS

1. The headstand increases circulation to the brain, which causes improved brain function (intelligence and memory) and increased vitality and confidence.

2. It improves many ailments, such as nervousness, tension, fatigue, sleeplessness, dullness, fear, poor blood circulation, bad memory, asthma, headaches, constipation, congested

throat, liver or spleen, for female disorders, the initial stages of eye and nose troubles, and general lack of energy, vitality or self confidence.

3. It stimulates four of the most important endocrine glands - the pituitary, the pineal, the thyroid, and the parathyroid glands that are responsible for our very existence, for they keep the body mechanism in good working order. Pituitary gland is called the master gland of the body. As a consequence, the practice of the headstand helps us to get relief from many of our troubles, physical as well as mental, or to prevent them. It has a very beneficial effect on the whole body.

4. It promotes hair growth by increasing circulation to the scalp.

5. It helps to put the spine into correct alignment.

6. It restores the position of vital organs by reversing gravity.

7. The quality of sleep is improved. Poor sleep is often due to an excess of nerve impulses from the reticular formation to the cerebral cortex in the brain. The headstand causes an increase in circulation to the neck, which stimulates the baroreceptors in the neck. This calms the reticular formation down, causing reduced nerve impulses to the cerebral cortex. This results in a peaceful, deep sleep.

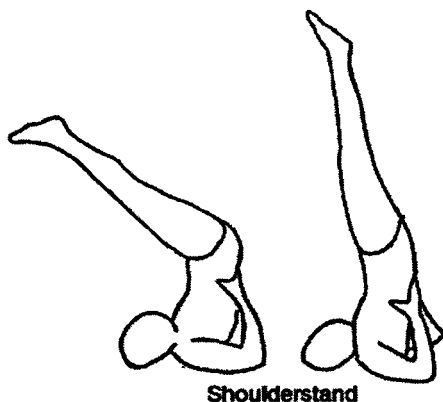
TIME

Do the headstand for fifteen seconds at first, adding fifteen more per week. The maximum time for it should not be more than twelve minutes, if it is done in conjunction with other exercises.

CAUTION

1. Don't do the headstand if you have high or low blood pressure. First get your blood pressure normal by natural means such as good nutrition, aerobic exercise and the other asanas. Even just giving up salt and taking garlic daily (tablets or in cooking) will cause a substantial reduction in your blood pressure.
2. Atherosclerosis (blocked blood vessels) and any history of strokes are also contraindications to doing the headstand. You must improve your circulatory system first, before attempting it.
3. If you have any serious eye diseases, ask your eye specialist's advice about doing the headstand.
4. Avoid this exercise if you are suffering from constipation, when the stool is excessively dry, if you have pus in your ears, if you are suffering from chronic nasal catarrh, or from very weak eye capillaries. Avoid this exercise if you have an organically defective pituitary, pineal or thyroid gland.
5. If you suffer from a neck injury or advanced arthritis in your neck, again you must improve your neck condition first. See your chiropractor, follow the nutritional principles in this book and do the other asanas to improve your neck. If you have a serious neck condition and you wish to get the benefits of the headstand, you can purchase an inversion apparatus, which gives you all the benefits without compression of the neck. In fact, this equipment produces traction of your neck, so your neck condition will actually improve.

THE SHOULDER STAND (SARVANGASANA)



Next to the headstand, this posture is considered one of the best asanas. It is often seen being practiced in many gymnasiums, beauty salons, and health clubs. But without the deep breathing with this exercise, it does not have much therapeutic value and will not be considered a yoga posture.

This asana is sometimes called a 'candle' because the body is kept straight as a candle in this posture.

This asana is equally important for both men and women. It can be tried by persons of all age levels.

TECHNIQUE

1. Lie flat on your back. Inhale deeply while raising your legs and spine until the toes point to the ceiling.
2. The body rests on the shoulders and the back of the neck. The body is supported by the hands, which are placed on the centre of the spine between the waist and the shoulder blades.

Keep your spine and legs straight.

3. Breathe slowly and deeply with the abdomen and concentrate on the thyroid gland. On a male, the thyroid gland is located behind the Adam's apple. For women, it is located in the same area that is a few inches above the sternal notch (hollow of the neck where the neck joins the rest of the body.) or approximately half way up the neck from the sternal notch. Stay in this position for about two minutes.

4. To come out of this posture, just bend your knees, curve your back and slowly return to lying on the floor while exhaling. First bend your knees, put the palms on the floor, then curving the spine, gradually unfold it the way one unrolls a carpet. When your entire back touches the floor, straighten the knees, take a deep breath and slowly lower your legs to the ground while breathing out.

5. If you wish, you may go straight into the next posture (the 'reverse posture') instead of lying down.

BENEFITS

1. The main benefit of the shoulder stand is to get the thyroid gland working at peak efficiency. It's the thyroid gland which is mainly responsible for your correct weight and youthful appearance.

2. The shoulder stand also regulates the sex glands.

3. It vitalises the nerves, purifies the blood and promote good circulation, strengthens the lower organs and helps them to stay in place.

4. It gives a healthy stretch to the neck muscles.
5. It is beneficial for people suffering from poor circulation, constipation, indigestion, asthma and reduced virility.
6. This pose is especially recommended for women after childbirth and for those suffering from painful menstruation, other female disorders, and seminal weakness.

TIME

Retain this position for fifteen seconds to six minutes, adding fifteen seconds per week.

CAUTION

Do not try this exercise if you are suffering from organic disorders of the thyroid gland. Be very cautious if you are suffering from chronic nasal catarrh.

THE REVERSE POSTURE (VIPARITAKARANI MUDRA)

The yoga asanas or postures are supposed to give strength, while mudras or gestures are supposed to give balance and steadiness.

According to yoga, within the human body, 'The sun dwells at the root of the naval (the solar plexus) and the moon at the root of the palate', In the reverse posture the position is reversed and the sun is raised above the moon.

TECHNIQUE

1. Lie on your back. Raise your legs and back, supporting your body by placing your hands under your hips. Make sure

your legs are vertical and your toes pointed.

2. Close your eyes. Breathe slowly and deeply from the abdomen and concentrate on the gonads (sex glands). In the male, these are in the testis, and in the female in the ovaries. Stay in this position for about two minutes.

BENEFITS

1. This posture is known as the restorer of youth and vitality. It is supposed to keep the glands, organs, and skin in a youthful condition, to banish premature wrinkles, and prevent untimely ageing.

2. The reverse posture produces optimum functioning of the sex glands.

3. It has a beneficial effect on the thyroid gland.

4. It produces vitality and rejuvenation due to stimulation of the sex glands and the thyroid gland.

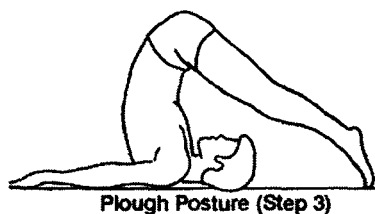
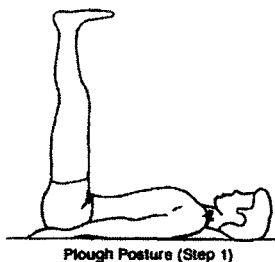
5. This posture is especially recommended for women who suffer from female disorders, irregular or painful periods and physical or mental discomforts during menopause. It restores the manly vigour.

6. According to the yogis, this posture prevents premature ageing and removes facial wrinkles. The headstand and shoulder stand also have this effect.

TIME

At first, keep this posture for a few seconds at a time, gradually increasing its duration to about ten minutes.

THE PLOUGH POSTURE (HALASANA)



This is one of the basic yoga postures.

TECHNIQUE

1. While in the reverse posture, bring both legs over your head until the toes touch the floor behind your head. Try to keep your knees straight. Stretch the hands out towards your feet.
2. Breathe slowly and deeply from the abdomen and concentrate on the spine, especially where you feel the stretch taking place. Stay in this posture for about one minute.
3. To come out of the posture, just slowly uncurl the spine. Don't worry if you can't straighten your knees. In fact if you're a beginner, it will be virtually impossible for you to do this unless you do it later in the day. As the weeks go by, your spine will become more flexible and you will eventually be able to straighten your knees.

BENEFITS

1. This is the best posture for making the spine flexible. It stretches the spine as no other exercise can, opening up the spinal discs and stretching most of the spinal muscles and

FORWARD BEND



ligaments. This makes this posture very beneficial if you suffer from back or neck stiffness or arthritis in these areas. It also prevents these conditions. Since this posture rejuvenates the spine, and because the spinal nerves go to all parts of the body, it helps to rejuvenate the whole body.

2. It benefits the thyroid gland, liver and spleen, stretches and pulls the vertebrae.
3. Good for people suffering from stiffness, obesity, muscular rheumatism, enlarged liver and spleen, constipation, indigestion, and arthritis.

TIME

Retain the posture for five seconds at first. Gradually increase to four minutes by adding five seconds per week. Repeat from two to four times, adding one time every fourteen days.

CAUTION

If you have not flexed up with other exercises before, do not attempt right away the final stages of this posture unless you

have a naturally very flexible spine. Otherwise, do not try to touch the floor with the toes for a few days. Do not force the toes any lower than the spine will allow comfortably. Otherwise, you will injure the right muscle and the pain may last a few weeks! Please be very careful.

The Forward Posture, Forward Bend Posture, Hands-and-Feet Posture (Padahastasana)

We will describe this posture in a modified manner incorporating visualization and relaxation. Executing yoga postures are like meditation. If you execute it with full awareness, relaxation and visualization, you can get the maximum benefit out of it.

TECHNIQUE

1. Breathe normally as you stand with feet solidly on the ground. Allow all muscles to relax. Close your eyes. Be aware of your body. Feel the sensations associated with the contact of your feet with the floor.
2. Visualise the posture you are going to practice. This is a form of mental tuning.
3. Inhale, then exhale while you slowly bend forward. Lean forward until you can touch your knees, calves, ankles, or feet. Do the movement slowly and in a relaxed manner. From the start to the final position, the movement should be slow, fluid, continuous, and mindful. Do not force the stretch. Remain bent over for approximately five seconds, or as long as feels comfortable, while holding onto that part of your body as you gently breathe into your back.
4. Do not bounce up and down. Allow yourself to bend over farther after your breath has helped your back muscles to

stretch out. You may feel some trembling in your body. Allow that trembling to happen. Practice with full awareness and concentration, moment to moment.

5. Be aware of the sensations and the feelings the posture develops in different parts of your body, especially in the areas of your back and legs. Feel the movement of your belly.

6. Concentrate on a focal point of this posture. This can be your hamstring muscle, muscles of your back, the first chakra, relaxation aspect of your muscle, or a spiritual aspect such as visualizing humility. Just relax into the posture. Be aware of your feelings and sensations.

7. Inhale. Return to an upright position by bending your knees slightly and stacking your vertebrae up one at a time. Let your head be the last part of your body to come back into position. Be aware of and feel the changes in your position and in your spine as you slowly straighten to an erect position. Be aware of the sensations in your body and muscles. Relax.

8. Repeat two to four times.

BENEFITS

1. The forward posture stimulates organs and glands in the abdominal region, such as the kidneys, liver and pancreas.

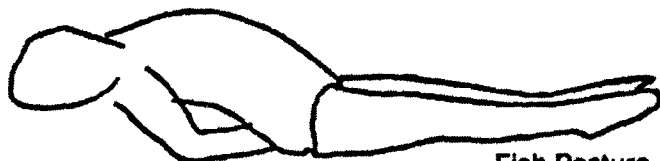
2. It tones the abdominal muscles and stretches the hamstring muscles of the thighs.

3. It is very beneficial for cases of constipation, low back pain and sciatica. In fact, this posture is a specific for constipation.

THE FISH POSTURE (MATSYASANA)

TECHNIQUE

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and arms at your side.



Fish Posture

2. Arch your back as much as you can while raising it off the ground by pushing the floor with your elbows. At the same time, throw your head backwards, resting the crown of your head on the floor. Use your forearm and elbows to support you.

3. Expand your chest. Breathe deeply with the abdomen and concentrate on the thyroid gland.

4. Stay in this position for about one minute. Slowly come back to the starting position.

BENEFITS

1. The fish posture normalises the function of the thyroid, pituitary, pineal and adrenal glands. It limbers and stretches the neck, strengthens and tones the nervous system, the kidneys, the stomach and intestines, the pelvic organs, and the nerves connected with the sex functions.

2. This is the only posture in this sequence which bends the spine (including the neck) backwards. This is essential, to counteract the preceding asanas which bend the spine forwards. The result is to give a healthy stretch to the muscles and ligaments of the spine in the opposite direction.

3. This posture benefits people with asthma.

NECK EXERCISES

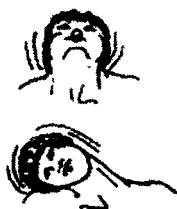
The neck is given special attention by the yoga practitioners, since they realise that it plays a large role in health and vitality.

The neck is important for two main reasons. Firstly, since the nerves from the neck go to the eyes, ears and brain, a spinal misalignment in the neck can cause vision and hearing problems, as well as problems such as headaches and poor sleep. Secondly, since major blood vessels pass through the neck to the brain, a neck misalignment can put pressure on the blood vessels and reduce the blood flow to the brain. This is a very common cause of chronic fatigue.

Just drop your head forward, then rotate it several times. If the rolling goes smoothly without any grinding or crackling noises you have nothing to worry about; if it doesn't, better try the neck exercises at once.

TECHNIQUE

Sit on the floor with your legs crossed and keep the hands on the knees. If you prefer to sit on a chair, choose a hard one, otherwise you will find it difficult to keep your back straight, which is essential.



NECK ROLL

Relax the whole body. You should be conscious of it only from the neck up-the rest should remain motionless and as unstrained as if you were sitting tinder water up to the neck.

1. Now close your eyes and effortlessly and gently let your head drop forward and backward, then again forward and backward. Do each exercise four times to begin with. Later on you can increase the number to six or more. When dropping the head backward keep your facial muscles relaxed; the lips should part slightly when the head is thrown back.

2. In the next exercise, you first turn your head to the extreme right and return it to normal position; then turn to the extreme left and return to normal again. Repeat four times. Turning the head to the sides contracts the muscles, returning to normal position relaxes them.

3. In the third exercise you bend your head to the right as if someone were pulling your right ear towards the right shoulder, and straighten the head, bend it to the left and straighten again. Repeat four times.

When bending the head to the side, don't lift the shoulder, and don't tilt the head either-let it move only from its upright position into an almost horizontal one, otherwise there will be very little pull in the neck. This pull should be strongly felt in the left side of the neck when the head is bent to the right, in the right side when the head is bent to the left.

4. The next exercise resembles the neck movements of a turtle, for you should literally 'stick your neck out' as far as you can, then draw it back again. In doing so, you will make a gliding movement forward with your chin, as if trying to reach far out with it and thus to lengthen the neck. Here the pull will be felt in the back of the neck on both sides between the ears as

well as in the middle. Repeat this exercise four times.

BENEFITS OF THE NECK EXERCISES

- Improve vitality, sleep, vision and hearing
- Prevent headaches, since the nerves and blood vessels in the neck go to the head and brain

CAUTION

A lot of books include the neck roll exercise, in which the neck is rotated around clockwise and then anti-clockwise. This exercise is not recommended, since it jams the side joints of the neck, which can cause inflammation.

CORPSE POSE (SAVASANA)



The Corpse Pose is an excellent posture that can be used between poses that allows total relaxation. Simply let the muscles relax, feel the circulation of prana throughout the system and be attuned to cosmic energies. This pose can also be practiced any time when one requires a few minutes of total rest and relaxation.

TECHNIQUE

Lie down on your back, in a quiet place. Place the arms beside

the body, palms upturned. Keep heels slightly apart. Breathe slowly and deeply, feeling a sense of calm relaxation come over your whole body. Concentrate on loosening all tensions.

The following variation will increase your ability to relax:

1. Slowly inhale through the nostrils (always breathe through the nostrils during yoga, since the tiny hairs strain out impurities) and tense the ankles, feet and toes. Hold the breath while you tighten the muscles. Exhale and relax.
2. Slowly inhale and contract the kneecaps, calves, ankles, feet and toes. Hold and tighten. Exhale and relax.
3. Slowly inhale, contracting all the muscles of the abdomen, pelvic area, hips, thighs, kneecaps, calves, ankles, feet and toes. Hold the breath and tighten the muscles. Exhale and relax.
4. Inhale. Tense the neck, shoulders, arms and elbows, wrists, hands and fingers, chest muscles, down to the toes. Hold and tense. Exhale and relax.
5. Inhale and contract the scalp, the tiny muscles of the face, the forehead; squint the eyes, wrinkle the nose and mouth, tighten the tongue, constrict the throat and tighten the whole body. Hold and feel the terrible tension. Exhale and relax. Now, let the strain melt into the floor. Feel heavy. Enjoy the support of the floor. Sense the tingling of fresh circulation, the new muscle tone and emotional calm.

BENEFITS

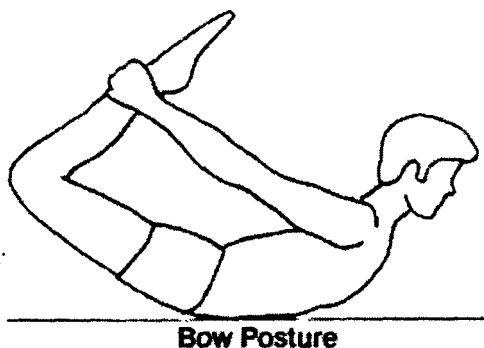
Stimulates blood circulation and exercises inner organs.

1. Alleviates fatigue, nervousness, neurasthenia (a general worn-out feeling), asthma, constipation, diabetes, indigestion,

insomnia, lumbago.

2. Teaches mental concentration

Bow (DHANURASANA)



TECHNIQUE

1. Begin lying down on the stomach, reach back and grasp the ankles. Inhale.
2. Lifting legs, head and chest, arch the back into a bow. Retain breath, then exhale and lie flat.
3. Repeat three or four times.

MORE ADVANCED

While in the Bow position, rock back and forth, then from side to side. Slowly release and exhale.

BENEFITS

Massages abdominal muscles and organs.

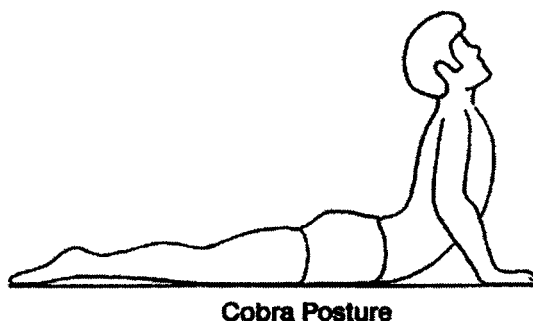
1. Good for gastrointestinal disorders, constipation, upset stomach, sluggish liver.

2. Reduces abdominal fat.

WARNING

Not for persons suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, or cases of thyroid or endocrine gland disorders.

Cobra (BHUJANGASANA)



This is a basic yoga posture. It is very easy to do especially if your back is not too stiff and rigid.

TECHNIQUE

1. Turn over on the stomach and place the hands on the floor beside the pectoral muscles.
2. Place the hands, palms down, under the shoulders on the floor. Inhaling, without lifting the navel from the floor, raise the chest and head, arching the back. Obtain as complete a stretching of the body as possible.
3. Retain the breath, then exhale while slowly lowering to the floor. Rest, and then repeat two to seven times.

You will note that this pose complements the Shoulder Stand and provides stretch to the spine in the opposite direction.

TIME

Keep the pose for two seconds, gradually increasing to ten seconds. Do it from two to seven times, adding one time every 14 days.

BENEFITS

Affects the adrenal glands, sending them a richer supply of blood.

1. Tones ovaries, uterus and liver.
2. Muscles of the back, abdomen and entire upper body are strengthened by the practice of the Cobra Pose.
3. Aids in relief and elimination of menstrual irregularities.
4. Relieves constipation.
5. Limbers spine.
6. People suffering from gas after meals will find this pose very useful.
7. Excellent for slipped discs. It adjusts displacements in the spinal column and tones the sympathetic nerves.
8. Beneficial for back ache due to overwork or long hours of standing.

WARNING

Not recommended if you are suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia or hyperthyroid.

When bending the body backwards, be sure not to make any violent jerks, as this may injure rigid muscles.

LOTUS POSE (PADMASANA)**Padmasana**

This is probably the most well known pose routinely used by Buddha and is a very popular meditation pose. This is not always easy for Westerners to master. It may take time for the ligaments to become extended so that the Lotus Pose is comfortable. If one cannot master the Lotus Pose, any of the other seated poses will do quite well for the purpose of meditation. Start slowly and acquire proficiency over a period of time. This is one of the basic yoga postures.

TECHNIQUE

1. Keep the right foot on the left thigh
2. Start bouncing the right knee. If the bouncing knee easily touches the floor, then bend the left knee, take hold of the left foot with both hands, gently glide it over the crossed right leg and place it on the right thigh.
3. This will give symmetrical placement of the legs and you are in lotus position.
4. The hands should be kept on the knees with palms open, and the thumb and second finger of each hand should touch

forming a letter O.

BENEFITS

1. This is an extremely good pose for meditation and concentration.
2. It has a calming effect on the mind and the nerves.
3. This pose keeps the spine erect.
4. Helps develop a good posture
5. Helps keep the joints in flexible condition.

PERFECT POSE, ACCOMPLISHED POSE (SIDDHASANA)

One of the most popular meditation postures is Siddhasana. The Sanskrit name means 'Perfect Pose', because one attains perfection in Yoga by meditating in this position. Siddhasana is useful to learn, since it is used as the practice seat for some of the pranayamas and the mudras. The positions of the legs and the hands also contain the body energies by closing the circuits and allowing awakened vital forces to remain in the system during meditation practice.



Siddhasana

TECHNIQUE

1. Sit down with both legs outstretched.
2. Bend the left knee and place the sole of the left foot against the right thigh so that the heel touches the perineum.
3. Bend the right knee and put the right heel against the public bone.
4. Keep hands with palms open if done between sunrise and sunset; otherwise reverse the palms.
5. The spine should always be held erect.

This is Siddhasana. Once this has been mastered, it is truly a comfortable position for meditation practice.

YOGA MUDRA, THE STOOP (Symbol of Yoga)

The practice of this posture is considered very important for its spiritual value in the higher stages of Yoga training when the pose is maintained for as long as one hour or more. The physical effect of the Yoga Mudra is mainly internal purification, as it helps keep our system clean by promoting a good elimination. To do the Yoga Mudra you must first sit down in the Lotus Posture.

TECHNIQUE

1. Sit up straight, keeping both legs crossed tailor fashion. Clench your fists and place them on both sides of the abdomen, a little below the navel.
2. Take a deep breath, and while exhaling bend forward as low as you can, firmly pressing the fists against the abdomen.

TIME

Stay in this position from five to ten seconds, holding your breath, then slowly straighten the back, returning to the original posture. Eventually you should increase the time to three minutes, adding one second per week.

BENEFITS

1. The Yoga Mudra is an excellent exercise for people troubled by constipation, as it increases the peristaltic movements of the bowels.
2. It strengthens the abdominal muscles, tones up the nervous system and the colon, and massages the pelvic region.
3. It helps men to overcome seminal weakness.
4. In the higher stages of training it helps the awakening of the Kundalini.

CAUTION

If you suffer from constipation, you should practice the Yoga Mudra very gently. Always release the posture slowly, without any jerking movement.

Lie down and rest before doing the next posture.

THE BODY-RAISING POSE (AROHANSANA)

TECHNIQUE

1. Start by lying flat on the floor.
2. Interlock your fingers and place your hands behind your

head, just above the neck.

3. Take a deep breath, and simultaneously raise your head, shoulders and legs off the floor, keeping the knees straight.

4. Maintain this posture for a few seconds while holding the breath, then exhale while slowly returning to the original position.

TIME

Repeat this posture once more. Increase the number of times, very gradually, from two to eight.

BENEFITS

This is an excellent exercise for strengthening the abdominal muscles, the pelvic region, the back and the shoulders. It helps reduce abdominal fat and relieves constipation.

CAUTION

This posture is rather strenuous and should not be done by women suffering from serious female disorders

BENDING-FORWARD POSTURE (HASTAPADDASANA)

In Hastapaddasana, 'hasta', means hand, and 'pada', foot. Thus, in this case the English name of this asana is not a literal translation.

TECHNIQUE

1. Stand straight, keeping the feet together and the arms hanging loosely along your sides.

2. Inhale deeply and raise the arms above the head with elbows straight.
3. Exhale while bending forward until you can grasp your toes with your hands.
4. Get hold of the big toe by hooking it with the second and third fingers from inside and the thumb outside. If you cannot reach the toes, get hold of the ankles or calves.
5. When exhalation is completed, press your head to your knees, keeping the knees straight.
6. Hold this pose for a few seconds, then return to standing position and take a deep breath. Repeat this exercise twice.

TIME

Hold this position for two to ten seconds. At first do it only twice but gradually increase up to five times.

BENEFITS

1. The Bending-Forward Posture is a very invigorating exercise.
2. It gives lightness to the body, does away with sluggishness and with abdominal fat and relieves constipation and gas.
3. It also gives a good pull to the sciatic nerves and hamstrings.

CAUTION

This posture should be done slowly, without any jerkiness. After finishing it you can lie down for a moment, if you wish, or proceed with the next posture.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

WHAT TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION IS?



Transcendental Meditation is a simple, natural, effortless, easily-learned mental technique practiced for 15 to 20 minutes twice daily, sitting comfortably with the eyes closed.

To elaborate:

- **Simple** — Transcendental Meditation is not difficult or complicated; it is a simple procedure.
- **Natural** — there is no manipulation or suggestion, such

as in hypnosis.

- **Effortless** — Transcendental Meditation is easy to practice and requires no ability to concentrate or control the mind.
- **Easily learned** — anyone beginning from age 10 can learn Transcendental Meditation easily.
- **Mental technique** — it requires no physical exercises, special postures, or procedures.
- **Practiced for 15 to 20 minutes twice daily** — Transcendental Meditation is practiced for 15 to 20 minutes: once in the morning before breakfast, to start the day with alertness and energy, and once again in the afternoon before dinner, to eliminate the accumulated stress of the day and as a basis for an enjoyable evening and a good night's sleep.
- **Sitting comfortably** — no awkward or cramped positions are necessary to practice Transcendental Meditation. You can practice the technique anywhere — in your office after work, riding the subway, sitting in a plane, or even in your car parked at a highway rest stop. But it is usually practiced in the comfort of your own home.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION?

During Transcendental Meditation the mind settles down to a silent, yet fully awake, state of awareness — pure consciousness. At the same time the body gains a unique and profound state of rest and relaxation.

To understand the experience of the mind and body settling down during Transcendental Meditation, we'll take two common occurrences.

Excited mind: It's Friday, 2:00 p.m. It's been a busy day and

a long week. You're late for an appointment. You race to your car only to realise that you've forgotten your keys. You find your keys, and then you have to battle traffic and road construction before finally making it to your appointment — only to discover that you've left behind some important papers. Your mind is speeding, and your heart is pounding.

Settled mind: It's Sunday afternoon and you're heading home from a long weekend vacation, rested and refreshed. You feel contented, relaxed, and happy. Your mind is alert, calm, clear. You begin to think of new ways to make things better at work and at home — good, practical ideas.

Both of these experiences — of greater and of lesser excitation of mind and body — are already very familiar to us.

Now what does TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION do?

Transcendental Meditation is a systematic technique that allows mental activity to settle down to a silent state of awareness where the mind is calm, collected, yet fully expanded, fully awake.

Transcendental Meditation allows the mind to experience pure consciousness easily, effortlessly, and enjoyably. At the same time, extensive scientific research has shown that while the mind settles down during Transcendental Meditation, the body gains a state of profound rest and relaxation that is far deeper than any other technique of meditation or relaxation produces.

What are the benefits of this experience?

Pure consciousness is the source of the unlimited creativity and intelligence of the mind. Research has shown that the twice

daily experience of pure consciousness during Transcendental Meditation makes the mind more alert, creative, and intelligent throughout the day.

And the deep rest provided by Transcendental Meditation eliminates the build-up of stress and tension, improves health, and provides the basis for more dynamic, productive and satisfying activity.

NOT ALL REST IS EQUAL

Rest eliminates stress. The deeper the rest, the better. The rest gained during a night's sleep is sufficient to eliminate some of the stress and fatigue that comes from a full day of activity. But obviously a night's sleep, no matter how deep, isn't enough. We may feel better the next morning, but all too often we don't feel completely refreshed, completely free from the fatigue of the day — and days — before.

But something is missing. Despite our best efforts, stress clings to the nervous system and builds up day after day, year after year. Butterflies in the stomach from pre-exam nerves at age 16 can turn into stomach ulcers, high blood pressure, or premature aging, at age 40 — all from too many years of too much worry.

WHAT IS MISSING? VERY, VERY DEEP REST.

Recreation or a vacation may be relaxing, but they don't provide the depth of rest necessary to eliminate accumulated stress. Because of this, the benefits are short-lived. (Recall your first day back at work after a week-long vacation. Within a few hours it feels like you never left.)

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Deep Rest Eliminates Deep Stress

Transcendental Meditation provides very deep rest — which is exactly what the body needs to eliminate the very deeply-rooted stress that sleep or a vacation never touch.

In one stroke of Transcendental Meditation, the mind and body are rejuvenated. Then you can play tennis, work in the garden, read a book, or go fishing, because you enjoy it, and not because you are trying to cope with an ever-increasing amount of stress in life.

ARE ALL MEDITATION AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUES THE SAME? ARE ALL THEIR BENEFITS EQUAL?

No. Four major ‘meta-analyses’ have been published that compare findings of hundreds of scientific studies on Transcendental Meditation and all other forms of meditation and relaxation. The studies show clearly that Transcendental Meditation is far more effective in reducing anxiety, improving psychological health, increasing self-actualisation, and reducing cigarette, drug, and alcohol misuse.

PRACTICAL TECHNIQUE FOR HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND SUCCESS

For a long, long time meditation has been considered the domain of recluses. For people with families and jobs, meditation, at its best, was seen as a momentary refuge from the demands of living; at its worst, an escape from life.

Transcendental Meditation is neither. It is a practical, proven technique for developing more energy, creativity, and intelligence — for awakening the unlimited potential of mind

and body and enjoying greater health, happiness, and success in life.

WHAT TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION IS NOT?

Transcendental Meditation is not a religion, a philosophy, or a lifestyle. Nor does it involve any codes of conduct or moral training, a value system, belief, or worship. To elaborate:

Transcendental Meditation is not a religion — it's a technique. Millions of people of all religions, including clergy, practice Transcendental Meditation. It supports all religions because it releases stress and purifies the mind, body, and emotions of the person who practices it.

Transcendental Meditation is not a philosophy — it's a simple, mechanical technique. Turning on a light switch is a technique; it involves no philosophy. Using a lever to move a large rock is a technique; it involves no philosophy. And Transcendental Meditation is a scientific technique because it is universally applicable, repeatable, and verifiable by anyone, anywhere.

Transcendental Meditation is not a lifestyle — it's a technique. You don't have to change your lifestyle in order to start Transcendental Meditation. Just learn it, practice it, and enjoy the benefits.

IS THERE TIME?

We have to be practical when it comes to time. Every day there are pressures, deadlines, and responsibilities to meet. There's a business deal to close, children to send off to school, a term paper to write. And tomorrow will probably be even busier.

So is it practical to take time to consider developing mental

potential— much less do something about it — when there's so much to accomplish with so little time?

Perhaps intuitively we've always known that we weren't using our full potential in life, but due to the pressing demands on our time and energy today, we've had to put these considerations off until tomorrow — or to a distant future.

Is this being practical? Hardly.

If There's a Choice

Psychologists and psychiatrists estimate that we use between 5% and 10% of our mental potential. And there are days when even that figure may seem generous.

If you had a choice, wouldn't you prefer being able to draw upon more of your creativity and intelligence to resolve a problem at work, or organise your household, or take a test at school?

What could be more practical than having a clear, organised mind; or the ability to learn quickly and remember things accurately; or the capacity for broad comprehension along with the ability to focus sharply, for long periods of time?

Nothing could be more practical, and therefore nothing is more important than developing full mental potential — and using it.

How do you UNFOLD MENTAL POTENTIAL THROUGH TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION?

Quite naturally. You simply gain access to the unlimited reservoir of energy, creativity, and intelligence that is located at the most settled, silent, fully awake level of your mind — the source of thought.

To understand how this is possible and to see how simple and natural it is, first we'll start with a few common experiences in daily life.

Excited Mind/Settled Mind

Two business professionals are reviewing the draft of a transaction over lunch at a crowded restaurant.

A high school student is working on a calculus problem with the television on.

Neither the business professionals nor the student are finding much success. Why? There is too much noise. Where there is more noise, there is more confusion. Where there is more silence, there is more order, more intelligence.

So the business professionals meet later in a quiet conference room to complete the details of the transaction, and the student goes to his room to study.

Whenever we have something important to do, like study for a class or work out a business deal, or whenever we have something important to say, like a heart-to-heart talk with a family member or a close friend, we try to find a quiet place. Because when the mind is allowed to settle down, it naturally gains in clarity, comprehension, and decisiveness.

THE PURPOSE OF TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

What is the purpose of Transcendental Meditation? Just this: Because of the constant demands on your time and energy, it's not often that you can get away to a quiet place for a long period of time. And even if you're able to get away, then because of the build-up of stress and tension, it can take a long while before your mind really begins to settle down.

What you need is a way to develop the ability for your mind to always remain clear and settled, a way to use the full potential of your mind at all times — even in the midst of the most hectic activity.

That's the purpose of Transcendental Meditation. It's a simple technique that allows the active mind to settle down — and continue settling down— until it reaches its own perfectly calm, collected state, where the body is deeply rested and the mind is silent, unbounded, and fully awake.

Transcendental Meditation is also very practical. It can be practiced anywhere at any time.

AND EXACTLY WHAT IS THIS MOST SETTLED STATE?

It's the full potential of consciousness — a silent reservoir of unlimited creativity and intelligence found deep within your mind. And this reservoir, as we'll see later, is the same as the source of unlimited creativity and intelligence found deep within nature itself.

MIRROR GAZING, EYE GAZING AND CATHARTIC DANCING MEDI- TATION

MIRROR GAZING

Some students find the use of a mirror virtually doubles the power of their meditation sessions. Sit in front of a mirror and gaze into the reflected image, setting your focus just above the head so that you view the wall behind you. Looking directly at the face or eyes may be too intense an experience for many students and may lead to silly concern about personal appearance. Using this technique one only views the physical body as a shadowy peripheral silhouette. Continue gazing for twenty minutes, allowing the eyes to deeply relax their focus.

Enjoy the mirror gazing for twenty minutes, then stand for two minutes, maintaining the heightened awareness as you change position. Then resume sitting in quiet meditation for a further twenty minutes with eyes almost totally closed, allowing in just two slits of light. This mirror gazing technique takes forty two minutes, but may be extended to one full hour if desired, with eyes open and eyes closed sections remaining equal.

Do not practice this mirror gazing method no more than once a day to avoid eyestrain. Strong meditation techniques are medicine and you should not overdose on any one particular method. Combining the mirror gazing technique with the self-inquiry incantation previously detailed can increase its effectiveness tremendously.

Mirror gazing is a form of *tratak*, the ancient yogic practice of fixing one's gaze at an object with total intensity. You may practice *tratak* by staring at a candle's flame, a distant tree, the picture of an enlightened teacher, or any object that is pleasant to view. While practicing *tratak* one must be motionless and allow yourself to become totally absorbed in the object you are viewing.

Eye Gazing

To do this technique you must have a partner of the opposite sex, preferably someone you love. It is similar to the mirror gazing technique described above except you that look into the eyes of your loved one. Sit together, staring softly into your partners eyes for twenty minutes. Then stand silently for two minutes. Then sit in quiet meditation with eyes almost totally closed for a further twenty minutes. This technique can readily lead to romantic intimacy so pick your partner carefully.

CATHARTIC DANCING MEDITATION

Cathartic Dancing Meditation is a cosmic powerhouse that can be used by students in good health with a normal cardiovascular system. As it is a physically strenuous exercise, one should get a complete physical examination by a competent doctor before experimenting with this technique. Explain the method to your doctor and ask if it would be physically

dangerous for you to do. He won't understand your motives for wanting to do it but he can tell you if he thinks your body and heart can safely handle it. As with jogging or mountain climbing, you must practice this method at your own risk.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation is similar to Rajneesh Dynamic Meditation but is simpler, easier to do, and is more likely to keep you interested month after month, year after year. Neither method is really new. Sufis, Druids, and countless other esoteric and tribal cultures have used similar techniques for centuries. Most students will benefit from doing Cathartic Dancing Meditation daily for a period of between one and five years. After five years it has usually done its job and the student can then concentrate on the more subtle methods.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation changes you from head to toe and benefits all the other meditation methods you practice. It also helps develop a powerful hara center. People are reluctant to bring up the subject of kundalini because of the common misrepresentations of its manifestations. For your information, however, this physically vigorous meditation method is the most powerful kundalini awakening technique. Cathartic Dancing Meditation has three stages and lasts for forty minutes.

STAGES of CATHARTIC DANCING MEDITATION

Stage #1 (ten minutes) Start by standing with your eyes closed and breathe deep and fast through your nose continuously. If you are only physically capable of doing deep breathing for five minutes, then reduce the length of the first stage without feeling guilty. Remember that you are doing this method to help your meditation, not to physically injure yourself. Allow your body to move freely as you breathe. You can jump up and down, sway back and forth, or use any physical motion

that helps you pump more oxygen into your lungs.

Stage #2 (twenty minutes) The second stage is a celebration of catharsis and wild and spontaneous dancing. Totally let go and act as an ancient human being dancing in tribal celebration. Energetic, nonverbal background music is recommended. African tribal drum music works especially well. You may roll on the ground and do strange spontaneous body movements. Allow the body to move within the limits of not hurting yourself or others. For once in your life screaming is encouraged. You must act out any anger you may have in a safe way, such as beating the earth with your hands. All the suppressed emotions from your subconscious mind are to be released. If at anytime during the second stage you feel that your energy level is starting to decline, you can resume deep and fast breathing to give yourself a boost.

Stage #3 (ten minutes) This stage is complete quiet and relaxation. Flop down on your back, get comfortable, and just let go. Be as if a dead man totally surrendered to the cosmos. Enjoy the tremendous energy you have unleashed in the first two stages and be a silent witness to it. Observe the feeling of the ocean flowing into the drop. Become the ocean.

This spontaneous dancing meditation technique is intended to grow with the student and change as the student changes. After a few years of vigorously practicing this method, the first two stages of the meditation may drop away spontaneously. You may then begin the meditation by taking a few deep breaths and immediately go deep into the ecstasy of the third stage. If practiced correctly this method is health giving and fun.

Almost all Westerners are head oriented and emotionally repressed. For us a chaotic, spontaneous, and emotionally

cleansing technique like Cathartic Dancing Meditation is vital for serious progress to be made quickly. The physical benefits of this technique obviate any need for hatha yoga or traditional kundalini yoga methods. We strongly recommend that Cathartic Dancing Meditation and/or Rajneesh Dynamic Meditation techniques only be used in combination with traditional quiet sitting meditation methods. While the active meditation methods can be very helpful, they are not complete systems in themselves. If you rely on active meditation techniques alone you will only be doing half of the internal work that needs to be done.

ADVANCED MEDITATION TECH- NIQUE

TOTAL AWARENESS

This advanced method is recommended for those students who have practiced the other described techniques long enough to gain a feeling of floating bodilessness. In the beginning it should only be used during formal sitting meditation sessions. Latter on, after you have gained some progress with this method, you can use an evolved version of this meditation while engaged in any activity that does not require thinking or your full attention. For example, you can practice it while walking in a safe location away from highway traffic.

Begin this method by sitting with eyes fully open. Softly gaze at a blank wall, or more preferably, look out a window at a distant vista. With the mind's eye (the eye of consciousness behind your body's purely physical eyes) define your field of visual consciousness as a circle. Imagine the top of your field of consciousness as the 12 o'clock position on a clock and the bottom of your field of consciousness as the 6 o'clock position. With your mind's eye, not your physical eyes, slowly sweep your attention clockwise from the top 12 o'clock position

down to the 6 o'clock position, then on to the 9 o'clock position and then back up to the 12 o'clock position. Repeat this process in the counterclockwise direction. Mentally strain to observe the very outer edges of your visual field of consciousness where the light of consciousness turns into the darkness of empty space. Go on repeating this process until you feel you have had enough.

This is a powerful awareness exercise, not an eye exam, and that is why it is recommended only for students with a number of years of experience in meditation. After practicing this method for some time one can begin to transform the method into one of sudden expansion of awareness. You can gain the ability to perceive the complete 360 degrees of the outer edges of your consciousness in one jump. This feels like stepping back, literally out of your own mind, and looking back into your mind from a close and friendly distance. You become identified with the void and space around the flame of consciousness and this makes the flame grow even brighter. This truly esoteric method is difficult to fully explain and there are aspects of it that you will have to learn on your own through practice.

One discovers from this technique that our visual field of consciousness is roughly football shaped with greater width than height. This is because our brains evolved out of a need to look for food and danger more on the horizontal axis than on the vertically axis. To survive you need to be aware of what is on your right and left more than what is directly below your feet or above your head. This powerful awareness method has a deprogramming effect that allows one to appreciate the play of existence as an ever-changing drama. You feel as if you are in it but also out of it and beyond it.

STANDING CHI KUNG

TAOIST MEDITATION



This exercise comes in five, ten, fifteen, and twenty-minute versions, each version going a little deeper than the previous one. You shall be informed at the end of each five-minute period, and whenever you decide you want to stop you can just take a brief walk around the room to stretch your legs.

Find a comfortable and convenient place to stand, with your feet about shoulder width apart and parallel, and start to feel the support of the Golden Cord holding you up from the top of your head, held by *Kuan Yin*, the Chinese Goddess of universal compassion. Just allow your body to relax and hang off that cord. Allow *Kuan Yin* to do the work of holding you up, just trust her to do her job.

Allow the weight of your body, and any tension in your body, to start to drain out, starting from your head, through your face, your neck, your shoulders, your arms, your wrists, your hands, your torso, your belly, your pelvis, your thighs, your knees, your ankles, your feet, all the way down into a reservoir three feet under the ground.

Allow even your feet to relax, with your weight going down into the ground just forward of the heels, so the front parts of your feet don't have to exert any force on the ground, and can sit easy and relaxed on the ground, kind of like the webbed feet of a duck.

Feel your pelvis like a bowl full of water.

Breathe - take a lot of energy into your body with your breathing. You can use one of the patterns described in Exercise 1 or any other pattern that works for you.

Now imagine strings attached to your wrists, held by *Kuan Yin*, the Chinese goddess of compassion.

In a few moments you will feel her lifting up your wrists by these strings. And as she lifts up your wrists, allow the shoulders to relax and open as much as they can. One good way to do this is to imagine all the joints of the shoulders expanding, just a little more space in all the joints of the shoulders, as if every bone in the shoulders is getting just a little further apart from all its neighbors.

[2 sec pause] Now feel her slowly lifting up your wrists using those strings, till your wrists come to about the height of your heart.

[8 sec pause]

Have your palms facing your body at around the height of

your heart, so that there's a round space between your arms and your body, as if you were hugging somebody. By the way, one of the Chinese names of this position is 'Hugging the tree.' You can even do this while really hugging a tree if you want to.

Allow the shoulders and elbows to roll down and back, making more space, as if opening your arms to hug somebody, greeting a long-lost friend, opening your arms, saying 'AAAAh! good to see you!'

This is the end of the five-minute version.

PHASE 2

Start to use the breath to soften the chest. Every time you breathe out, let the chest go just a little more, let go of the old, stale air.

The energy you let go of from the chest can sink down into your belly and the small of your back. Every time you breathe out, energy sinks down into your belly and lower back.

Relax into the position more and more. Your pelvis is a comfortable chair and the rest of your body is just sort of plonked down inside it, relaxing in it the way you would in an easy chair.

Let every part of your body be as relaxed as it can be given the position you're in. The shoulders and elbows are as soft as they can be, just hanging from the body and from the strings holding up your wrists.

Relax your legs, like a mushy suspension system on an old American car. If your legs relaxed any more, you'd just collapse in a heap on the ground. As your legs relax more you may

start to feel tremor; if you do, it's a healthy sign, just allow it to happen by itself.

There's a soft place where the top of your spine meets the base of your skull, called the 'Jade Pillow'. As the Jade Pillow expands, you may notice a slight change in your mental attitude; you may even notice that your normal personality is not there in quite the usual way.

You may perceive things differently; you may feel a little spacy. Just relax into the feeling, that different feeling. It's a letting go of control of the body, and also a letting go of control of the mind.

Another way to open this place is to imagine a pivot for your head running through your temples. Imagine your head tipping a little by itself, so that your chin goes down and in a little, and the back of your head goes forward and up. Don't do that, just notice it happening by itself.

As you stand here, you can feel an aura extending about nine inches away from your body in every direction. Your presence filling the air to a distance about nine inches away from your body, away from your legs, away from your arms, your head, your torso. It's like that figure of the Michelin man, made out of tires, everything very fat, very expanded, very blown up from within.

Imagine a chain attached to your tailbone going down a thousand feet into the earth. And at the end of that chain is a heavy weight, a heavy steel ball, that you can feel like an anchor in this position.

[DING] This concludes the ten-minute version.

PHASE 3

Feel a connection between your fingertips, like an electrical spark gap between the two hands. Perhaps you can feel a tingling like electricity ready to flow across. Use the outbreath to send energy to the fingertips.

The energy pathways to your fingers will open as the *Chi* flows through them, in the same way that small kinks in a hose straighten out when the water starts to flow through that hose.

If you're feeling any kind of tension, stress, or strong sensation anywhere in your body, perhaps in a shoulder or a thigh muscle or a place in the middle of your back every time you breathe out, and send the energy of your breath, your *Chi*, to that place. Send your love along with the breath; let that place know that you love it and you care about it. You can think of what you're sending as oxygenated blood, if you wish, that's clearing away lactic acid, or as *Chi* opening up a meridian, or just the energy of your attention and your awareness that is, perhaps for the first time in a while, starting to feel that place, feel exactly what's happening there, understand what's going on.

In any case, know that whatever you do is healing, healing for that place.

Sometimes in this posture, there are places that you held tight for a long time, where you start to feel the tightness. Feeling the tightness is the first step to letting the tightness go. Just allow it to be the way it is, send it your love, send it the energy of the breath, send it the *Chi*, send it the oxygenated blood. When that place is ready to let go, it will. [SHORTEN, REWRITE?]

Allow every place in the body to be exactly the way it is, send it your *Chi* on the outbreath, send it your love. Bring your awareness to any place in the body that asks for it, notice exactly

what your sensations are without interpreting or judging them. Notice exactly where you are having the sensation and what the sensation is, but without attempting to label it, for example, as painful or pleasant.

Just let go of control of the body to the maximum possible, just stand here and relax into the experience of standing here. Make sound if you feel to. Keep the Jade Pillow at the back of the neck open. Allow your body to do whatever is most comfortable for it.

Recheck all the fundamentals of the position. Recreate the golden cord holding you up from the top. Sink the weight one more time down through the body through the feet to that reservoir three feet under the ground. Relax your chest. Use the breath to relax it even more, sinking the energy down into your belly and your lower back.

Can you still feel your legs very soft and relaxed, like the suspension system on an old American car? Can you still feel the openness at the back of your neck and the Jade Pillow? Can you still feel your arms soft and round as if hugging someone or something?

This ends the fifteen minute version.

PHASE 4

If you've stood here this long, you don't even have to do the exercise right any more. Just be willing to allow what needs to happen, and allow your body to do what it needs to do to heal itself. The suggestions earlier on may help for most people, but your body is special, and it knows much better than you consciously do what it needs to do to heal. Be ready to be surprised by what your body does and willing to go along

with it, take it as an adventure, even if your mind finds it wrong, unfamiliar, or strange.

This position always works. In the long run, it's easier to relax in this position than it is to stay tense. If you stand here long enough the mind and the body are going to let go. The more you can relax and stay present, the quicker and more enjoyable that process is going to be.

How much you can enjoy standing here, how much pleasure you can get out of the breathing, out of the sensations in the body, out of the feelings that you're having, and the changes that are going on.

This is what's happening right now, how much can you enjoy it? And how willing can you be for the process to work itself through? How much can you enjoy what's happening with your body, your mind, and your spirit right now? And how willing can you be for it to change, in the next moment and the next and the next?

Relax into the position as if you're going to be here for a while longer, so you may as well relax- there's nothing to wait for, so you may as well take a break, sit down inside your own body like a comfortable chair.

Take a few seconds to notice exactly how you are breathing.

[10 sec pause]

Check through your whole body, starting at the top of your head, feeling each place in your body, noticing how it is, noticing the state of the muscles. Don't be too quick to relax anything or change anything, just notice it as it is; if it relaxes by itself that's fine.

This ends the twenty-minute version of standing Chi Kung.

HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT ARE BENEFITED BY MEDITATION

DRUG ADDICTION

The Transcendental Meditation technique has proven to be a successful coping strategy in helping to deal with drug addiction, a useful tool in Psycho-Neuro-Immunology (PNI) by helping to control the immune system, and an effective manager of stress and pain.

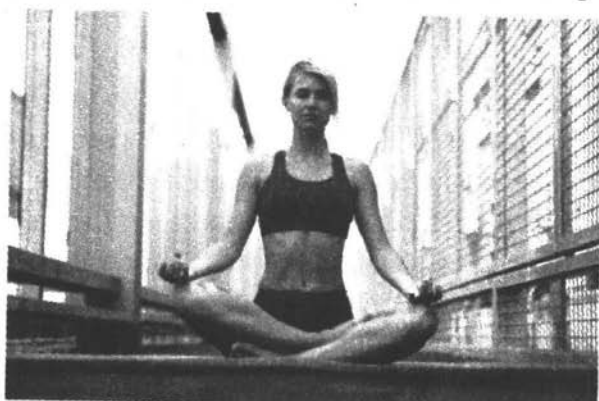
PROLONGING LIFE EXPECTANCY

A strong link has also been established between the practice of TM and longevity. Only two factors have been scientifically determined to actually extend life: caloric restriction and lowering of the body's core temperature. Meditation has been shown to lower core body temperature.

STRESS CONTROL

Most of the people who get on meditation do so because of its beneficial effects on stress. Stress refers to any or all the various pressures experienced in life. These can stem from work, family,

illness, or environment and can contribute to such conditions as anxiety, hypertension, and heart disease. How an individual sees things and how he or she handles them makes a big difference in terms of how much stress he or she experiences.



Research has shown that hormones and other biochemical compounds in the blood indicative of stress tend to decrease during TM practice. These changes also stabilize over time, so that a person is actually less stressed biochemically during daily activity.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Chronic pain can systematically erode the quality of life. Although great strides are being made in traditional medicine to treat recurring pain, treatment is rarely as simple as prescribing medication or surgery.

Anxiety decreases the threshold for pain and pain causes anxiety. The result is a vicious cycle. Compared with people who feel relaxed, those under stress experience pain more intensely and become even more stressed, which aggravates their pain. Meditation breaks this cycle.

Meditation may not eliminate pain, but it helps people cope

more effectively.

CANCER AND OTHER CHRONIC ILLNESS

Meditation and other approaches to deep relaxation help center people so they can figure out how they'd like to handle the illness and proceed with life. A psychiatrist who uses meditation with cancer patients, studied seventy-three patients who had attended at least twenty -sessions of intensive meditation, and wrote: 'Nearly all such patients can expect significant reduction of anxiety and depression, together with much less discomfort and pain. There is reason to expect a 10 percent chance of quite remarkable slowing of the rate of growth of the tumor, and a 50 percent chance of greatly improved quality of life.'

HEART DISEASE.

Meditation is a key component of Ornish therapy, the only treatment scientifically proven to reverse heart disease.

High blood pressure.

TM reliably reduces blood pressure in meditators, he taught the relaxation response to 36 people with moderately elevated blood pressure. After several weeks of practice, their average blood pressure declined significantly, reducing their risk of stroke and heart attack.

Infertility

Couples dealing with infertility may become depressed, anxious and angry. To help them cope, a psychologist taught the relaxation response to one group of infertile couples. Compared with a similar group of infertile couples who did

not learn deep relaxation, the meditators experienced less distress-and were more likely to get pregnant.



RESPIRATORY CRISES

Asthma, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) all restrict breathing and raise fears of suffocation, which in turn makes breathing even more difficult. Clinic show that when people with these respiratory conditions learn breath meditation, they have fewer respiratory crises.

PREMENSTRUAL SYNDROME (PMS), TENSION HEADACHES

Meditation can ease physical complaints such as premenstrual syndrome (PMS), tension headaches and other common health problems.

Meditation gives people a psychological buffer so that life's hectic pace doesn't knock them out. Practicing meditation is like taking a vacation once or twice a day. When you nurture yourself, you accrue tremendous spin-off benefits.

For example, when you are under high stress, it can worsen symptoms of PMS because stress can cause the muscle tension associated with PMS complaints such as fatigue, soreness and

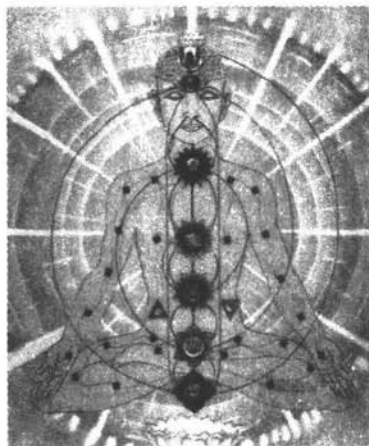
aching. On the other hand, when you meditate regularly, you dramatically reduce your body's response to stress, and that can ease the discomfort associated with PMS. The results may not be apparent for several months. You will probably need to meditate regularly for several months before your body responds positively.

INSOMNIA

Meditation can also improve ulcers, and insomnia, among other stress-related conditions. Eighty percent of the people who use meditation to relieve insomnia are successful.

Meditation can help prevent or treat stress-related complaints such as anxiety, headaches and bone, muscle and joint problems. Meditation also provides an inner sense of clarity and calm, and that, in itself, may help ward off certain illnesses.

Glossary



Chakras

Chakra is Sanskrit for wheel. Chakras are subtle energy centers located in our Etheric body.(see energy bodies) When these subtle energy centers are perceived, they look like wheels of light. There are seven major chakras, and several minor ones. The seven major chakras are located at intervals along the spine, some opening out toward the front of the body like cones.

Energy bodies

Energy bodies are composed of energy that is subtler than

our physical body. These are (starting with the most dense):

Vital-Etheric body...supplies energy for the physical body, and forms the energy template on which the physical body is built.

Emotional or Astral body...for feeling emotion and experiencing the astral plane in dreams and between incarnations.

Mental body... for the various thinking functions and tuning into the mental plane for inspiration.

Light body or Spiritual body...for experiencing the higher spiritual worlds.

Mantra

Mantras are words of power, used as objects of meditation. Mantra is from the sanskrit root 'man'- to think, and 'tra'- to liberate; thus, to liberate from thought.

The sound of a mantra has a vibration designed to produce a specific effect. By attuning to this vibration when we meditate on a particular mantra, that effect is produced in our lives.

Although mantra is an Indian word, these words of power have been used in the mystical practices of almost all cultures.

ATTENTION

Is not concentration. It is a state of mind in which the mind is ever learning not accumulating knowledge nor relying on past knowledge. Pay attention completely, and 'newly' and without fear .

AWARENESS

Is that state of mind which observes something without any condemnation, or acceptance, no like or dislike. In awareness there is only the present no past no future. More the choiceless awareness, less is the degree of grasping.

ATTACHMENTS

Conclusions, material or of ideas and beliefs, self- absorption, gratifying addictions, dependence.

CONDITIONING

Any form of accumulation either of knowledge, or experience, any form of ideal, any projection of the mind, any determined practice to shape the mind.

INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence is not intellect, intelligence is feeling with reason, reasoning with feeling. Action emanating from a unity of the mind and heart.

Mind

The mind is our total awareness or consciousness, a total way of our existence, the whole process of thinking.

Mindfulness

When there is clear attention, when there is watching not wanting.

REALITY

Reality is in what is, as the answer to a problem is in the problem, so reality is in what Is.

TIME

Not chronological time or time by the watch. But physiological structure of time-a movement from what is to what should be. To be timeless is to remain in "what is" only.

TRUTH

Truth is not accumulated, truth is found from moment to moment.

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is not wisdom it is another's understanding and lacks depth. It is wisdom but captured into words.

WISDOM

Our natural state of being is the wisdom mind or Buddha nature. When you understand your mind-it is wisdom. Wisdom precedes knowledge.

FEAR

Fear is non-acceptance of what Is.

LOVE

A feeling of continued bliss

OBSERVING

I am the observing, I am the observed.

ALONENESS

Is not Loneliness when we free ourselves from the social structure of greed, envy, ambition, arrogance, achievement, status, we are completely alone.

RELIGION

It is not a chant, it not the puja, it is not a ritual, it is not worship it is not in the reading, It is an everlasting feeling of goodness.

GOD

Truth/ Reality which is known only to a mind which is not confused, not conditioned but is unlimited.

FREQUENTLY Asked QUESTIONS (FAQs)

How often should you meditate?

Optimum results come from daily practice - once or twice daily. However, you may choose to meditate on an as-needed basis.

How long should your meditations be?

If you are just beginning meditation and wish to practice regularly, it's best to start meditating 10 to 15 minutes once a day. After a while, you may want to increase that to 20 minutes once a day, or 10 minutes twice a day.

MERE MEDITATION IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER. Why is this?

Meditation taps into some very powerful inner energies. These energies are very healing and uplifting, but it takes some time to acclimate to their higher frequency, and is best done gradually.

Also, these higher energies tend to catalyse some degree of emotional and physical detoxification... a release of stored

negative energies. This may be particularly noticeable when you are first beginning to meditate (during or outside of meditation). If this initial detoxification is accomplished gently, you are more likely to continue the practice of meditation.

Generally the experiences when one begins to meditate are quite enjoyable. People often report feeling more peaceful, positive, loving and centered in daily life. Many experience new insights and greater clarity.

How do you know when your meditation time is up?

When you think that your designated time is up, open one eye and peek at the clock. This won't bring you all the way out of meditation. If there is still time left, close your eye and continue. You can also set a watch alarm or musical alarm, or place a wind-up kitchen timer under a pillow.

What time of day is best to meditate?

Any time of day is good. It is best to have a specific time that is your meditation time. At first, though, you may find it helpful to experiment with various times to see if one particular time of day consistently produces more enjoyable meditations. If you are having trouble finding time to meditate, do it first thing in the morning.

What should you be experiencing when you meditate?

The possible experiences when meditating are unlimited. They can range from extraordinary to ordinary; from blissful to boring; from peaceful to troubled from astounding insight to incredible nonsense; There may be periods of no thought and periods of myriad thoughts; you may feel energy flowing

or energy blocked; you may feel tired and foggy or quite alert. All of these experiences are alright and perfectly normal. The point is to accept whatever occurs in meditation.

Meditation experiences tend to be based on cycles of 'clearing' and 'clarity.' During periods of clearing - when we are releasing accumulated psychic toxins - experiences tend to be more thought-filled and not seem very deep. At times when there is less clearing, there tends to be more clarity and depth, and fewer thoughts. It is important to remember that both poles of this cycle are necessary and valuable parts of a larger process of profound growth and transformation.

At times in meditation you experience a state that feels a lot like sleep, but it's not exactly sleep. What is it?

This state of consciousness has been called 'Yogi Blackout' or 'Yoga Nidra'. You have slipped into a deep state of awareness, but your inner senses are not alert enough at that time to experience this clearly. With continued meditation you will gain more clarity at this level of consciousness.

Do's AND DONT's of Medita- tion

THINGS TO DO, THINGS TO AVOID, AND THINGS TO CONSIDER

Work in groups when possible as group energy can multiply the energy of an individual many times over.

Remember that meditation is an escape to reality, not an escape from reality. Avoid any guru or group that asks you to deny truth.

Don't limit yourself to just one teacher. The single guru approach can lead to cult thinking with its small mindedness and us vs. them syndrome.

Hatha yoga can make you more energetic and fit for long meditation sessions, but do not take it too seriously or become obsessed with extreme gymnastics. The easy and basic *hatha* yoga exercises work best. Extreme *kundalini* yoga exercises that involve fast breathing in bizarre positions may be dangerous and are not recommended. Men should never sit with their heels pressed behind the testicles, as some yogis instruct, as this practice is unhealthful and can cause sterility.

Having a separate room used exclusively for meditation can be very helpful. It is possible to build up a vibration in a room so that the moment you enter it your mind becomes silent and ready to go deeper.

Avoid fads and complicated philosophies that give your mind more to think about. Meditation is a step beyond the thought process. No philosophy can adequately describe man's place in the universe. Concentrate on meditation in this moment and not on ancient scriptures. Many old scriptures were written by madmen and fools and have gained respect from society simply because they are so old and dusty.

It is essential to maintain a nutritionally adequate diet without becoming a food fanatic. Most people find that a semi-vegetarian diet supplemented with dairy products and eggs is generally best for meditation, but not essential. If you have a medical problem like hypoglycemia, you may have to eat meat just to survive. Even the Atkins high fat, high protein diet is perfectly compatible with meditation.

Food should not be made the fundamental basis of your spiritual practice. Adolf Hitler was a vegetarian yet his diet did not save his soul or make him non-violent. Most Tibetan lamas and Asian Zen monks eat meat, so obviously meat consumption is not a serious obstacle to cosmic consciousness. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that a vegetarian diet extends lifespan or improves health. To the contrary, nations with the highest longevity rates, such as Japan, Sweden, and Australia, are all populated by avid meat eaters.

Fasting is a waste of time and will weaken you physically. Like taking LSD, fasting creates strangely entertaining short term experiences but produces no long term benefits and can cause permanent neurological damage. When you fast your body

literally feeds upon itself. If your brain needs protein for repair work, your body will be directed to eat away its own muscles, or worse, your own peripheral nerve cells. People fast because their heads feel cluttered with thoughts and they hope planned starvation will purify their minds. The human body is made of mud, water and dirt, so the idea of a perfect, spiritually purified physical body is misguided. The way to end the cluttered feeling is to change the way your brain and energy body functions, and this can only be accomplished through meditation techniques.

Solitary meditation retreats of longer than 7 days duration is not recommended. To maintain health one must eat a balanced diet and get rigorous physical exercise every day. To maintain full brain function one must also get mental exercise through interaction with other human beings and through problem solving. If you meditate in isolation for months or years your body and brain will become reconditioned and atrophy. You may develop strange hallucinations and delusions and come back physically weaker with a measurably lower IQ.

Avoid drugs and alcohol. Drugs are not an effective path to enlightenment, but they are a quick path to misery and insanity.

Have sex when you wish and do not force celibacy upon yourself in the hopes it will lead to enlightenment. To meditate one must be in a very natural and relaxed state of mind without repression or tension. Celibacy can only be of value if it occurs spontaneously without effort or thought. The majority of famous Eastern gurus who have claimed celibacy publicly have practiced intercourse privately. Why make sex a big secret and why have two faces? Many fully enlightened humans have had sexual relations even after enlightenment. There is no direct relationship between abstinence and spirituality.

Do practice choiceless awareness (one object vision, mindfulness, etc.) throughout the day. Meditation must become as continuous and spontaneous as breathing.

Don't make meditation a competition and drop any hidden agenda you may have to use it to control others. Legitimate motives for meditation are the desire for tranquillity and ecstasy, freedom from suffering, and the pure adventure of self-exploration.

Don't turn your meditation into a business. People who make a profit from intercourse have turned something beautiful into something ugly. Those who make money from meditation have transformed a noble path into a sordid back alley. Whether you are a sexual prostitute or a spiritual prostitute, the fundamental quality of your mind is the same.

Be completely honest and have just one face, not two.

Don't take the anti-method teachings of J. Krishnamurti and U.G. Krishnamurti seriously. Both great men, but generally poor teachers, were talking about themselves when they said that methods are not needed. They lost the need for technique after enlightenment, but both practiced methods before they attained.

One of the most dangerous thoughts you can have is to think that you have lost your ego!

For every action there is a reaction, not just in theoretical physics but in ordinary human life as well. When you create positive actions you will eventually reap positive reactions for yourself and for others. In this way what we call ethics and morality are woven into the very fabric of the universe right down to the subatomic level.