



Meditation for a Healthier Life

by Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj

This talk was given in Delhi, India, and at the National Institute of Health in Washington, DC, in July 1993.

A man having stomach pains went to visit his doctor to get some relief. The doctor questioned him about his symptoms, and then probed deeper, inquiring about whether he was having any trouble in his personal life or at his job. The man explained that he was worried about some incidents that had happened at work with his boss and his co-workers. The doctor asked if there was anything the man could do to change what had happened. "No," responded the man. "It is over with, but it continues to bother me." The doctor said, "Look, here. There is nothing you can do about the past. Why do you let yourself rerun this incident over and over again like an old movie. Put a close to the chapter and move on. You are upsetting yourself and your stomach over something you cannot change." The doctor prescribed some medicine, and advised him to forget the past to help expedite the cure of his stomachaches.

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For information and literature, contact:
Science of Spirituality Center

4S175 Naperville Rd.
Naperville, Illinois, 60563, USA
Phone: (630) 955-1200

Sawan Kirpal Ruhani Mission,
Kirpal Ashram,
Sant Kirpal Singh Marg,
Vijay Nagar, Delhi 110009, India.

Web: <http://www.sos.org>



The next patient the doctor saw was a woman who was complaining of migraine headaches. Again, the doctor noted her symptoms and asked her if there was anything in her life that was troubling her. The woman explained that she was worried about some decisions she had to make. She was afraid of making a wrong decision about her future course of action. Sensing that this was causing her headaches, he told her, "Look, there are at least two basic choices you can make about your future actions. You have a fifty-fifty chance of making the right decision. If you make a decision that turns out all right, there is nothing to worry about. If you make a decision that turns out wrong, you still have the option to rectify matters. In rectifying matters, you again have a fifty-fifty chance of making the correct decision. No decision is so irreversible that you cannot fix it. Instead of worrying about it, make a list of your options, make a counter-plan for each option, and then act. But worrying and fretting over what to do is not going to help. Analyze the situation, and then act. Then take each step as it comes."

When the doctor went home he thought about his patients. He realized how many of the illnesses he treated each day were caused by worry. People either worry about a past that they cannot change, or they worry about a future that has not yet happened. Many worry over problems they anticipate or fears that never materialize. That is why there is an expression, "Hurry and worry kill a man."

Many of our stress-related illnesses are due to problems that we face mentally, psychologically, or emotionally. One thing is certain in life: There are always going to be problems. There is Murphy's Law which says that if anything can go wrong, it will go wrong, and at the worst possible time! We have all experienced this happening in our own lives at one time or another. There does not seem to be anyone who has not experienced problems in life. Our day-to-day existence is filled with problems. Every time we solve one problem, a new one springs up. We may be struggling financially, trying to make ends meet. A day finally comes when we get a raise, and then we find our car has broken down, and the extra money has to go for repairs or for new car payments. When we settle that problem, someone in our family may fall ill. Along with that, we may find that we have a problem in our relationship with one of our coworkers. While that is being straightened out, our roof suddenly begins to leak, and we need repairs. After a while we begin to wonder if there will be a time in life when we can be free of problems. Nobody said that life was going to be easy or that everything was going to be perfect. The question is, how do we handle our problems? Do we face them as a challenge and try to solve them, or do we lay down and cry and fret and worry about them? In our age of advanced medical research we are learning that we compound our problems by worry and fretting because this added stress can make us physically sick. Thus, our original

problem is supplemented by physical ailments and disabilities which further hamper our ability to act.

We may think that we alone have been singled out for misfortune. But if we ask those around us, we find that everyone's lives are also filled with difficulties. It seems there is no end to problems. The pressures of life are so great that they affect us physically and mentally. We find that people undergo anxiety, fear, depression, and phobias. Offices of psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists are filled with normal, everyday people who cannot cope with life's struggles. They are unable to deal with their problems. They live in fear of economic disaster. They are trying to handle broken marriages and broken homes. Others have anxieties about loneliness or loss. Some are so disappointed in life they see no hope for the future.

The stress and tensions do not just affect our mind. Research has shown a connection between our mind and our body. Our state of mind can affect the health of our physical body. Thus, if our mind is positive and happy, we may feel physically better than when our mind is troubled and anxious. Our mental state can cause stress related illnesses.

Studies have shown that when we are angry or emotionally upset, chemicals released in our body that prepare us for "fight or flight." Since the norms in our society dictate that we deal with problems calmly and rationally, we tend not to "fight or take flight," and face the situation, keeping our feelings bottled up inside. The result is that it works on our physical body, causing stress-related diseases such as high-blood pressure, heart disease, breathing problems, digestive disorders, headaches, muscle pain, skin rashes, and other related problems.

The solution is not to let out our anger in the form of fighting back or running away. Those reactions can create still more problems for us in our relationships. We need to find some acceptable way to prevent the mental, emotional, and physical effects of stress which are making us ill.

In the last few years people have turned to meditation as a solution to the emotional and mental strains of life. Meditation has numerous benefits for our physical and mental well-being. It is safe, effective, and does not cost anything. Once we learn how to meditate, we carry within us a ready remedy which we can use at any time and any place.

Meditation is a process by which we concentrate at a point at which we can see and hear the inner Light and Sound and are transported on them to higher, spiritual realms. This experience has a profound effect on our physical, mental, as well as spiritual well-being. Like the young lad trying to straighten out a coil that

keeps recoiling, our problems in life will not go away. To think we can live life without difficulties is a mere pipe dream. But we can achieve a state of consciousness where we are not affected by these problems. Meditation helps us achieve that state.

The meditation process aids us at two levels. First, it helps us by bringing about physical relaxation. Second, it puts us in a state where we are absorbed in an enjoyable, blissful experience, and we became oblivious to the problems of the outer world.

How does meditation work? In meditation we select a pose in which we can remain calm and quiet. The process of meditation helps our attention focus on a point between and behind the two eyebrows, known as the single eye or the tenth door. In this way, we withdraw our attention from our outer body. The body then becomes as relaxed as it is in sleep.

Studies show that in meditation, our brain waves function at a frequency of 4-10 Hz. During these states, there is a sensation of peace and total relaxation. But this relaxation only records relaxation at the level of the mind and body. Through meditation on the inner Light and Sound we receive an added bonus. It puts us in contact with a current of Light and Sound, radiant energy coming from states beyond this physical world. It is a powerful current of divine love, consciousness, and bliss. This current is within each person and can be contacted at the third or single eye. It provides us with much more than physical relaxation. It bathes us in an intoxication stronger and more lasting than any external intoxication in this world. Our entire being - body, mind, and soul - experiences waves of ecstasy permeating through every part of us.

This experience arises from our innermost self, our soul, coming in contact with its own essence in the form of the current of Light and Sound. If we do a comparative study of the great scriptures and mystical writings of the world, we find that they say that the creative power that brought all the universes and all forms of life into being manifested itself as a current of Light and Sound. This stream that emanates from the creative Source was the force that brought everything into being. Our soul is a drop of that essence.

This creative power, the current which flows from it, and our soul are said to be all-love, all-consciousness, and all-bliss. As we live our daily lives, we are only aware of our body and mind. We are oblivious to our true nature, the soul. In meditation, when the body and mind are stilled, we become aware of our nature as soul. When the soul is withdrawn and collected at the third eye, it is at the contact point with the inner Light and Sound. When the soul meets the current it is magnetized to it. It is like a water droplet resting on a table top. If you run a stream of water across it, the drop will attach itself to the rivulet and merge in it. Similarly,

when our soul concentrates at the point where the current begins, at the third eye, it will be drawn to merge in it. We then start to travel on this current. Our soul rises above consciousness of the body and enjoys a journey into the higher realms.

This inner journey has been described by mystics and saints through the ages. Even today, we read accounts of people who have had near-death experiences. They left their body behind and entered a region of Light which enveloped them with a transcendent love, warmth, and knowledge.

In meditation we can practice this process easily and naturally. The experience is so exhilarating that it surpasses any thrill available in this world. It puts us in a state in which we become oblivious to the difficulties of this world. Our problems no longer have the same effect on us because we are in a state of so much enjoyment. We do not even want to be bothered by our problems. They disappear like waves in the sea. We are lifted high above the storm clouds and float in the sunny skies full of radiant inner Light.

When we return to our physical state of consciousness, we carry the vivid experience of our meditation with us. We still have the problems, but their effect on us is subdued for we are lost in the bliss we carry with us. Through the meditation experience, we can tap into this state again and again and become unaffected by our problems. We become detached from the suffering of life because we are connected with a sheet anchor or lifeline. We become permanently connected to the divine bliss within. With this inner support, we can then face our problems with a clear mind and find solutions. We are able to make more rational decisions because we see life from a higher angle of vision. The stress and strains of life are reduced. We are filled with a state of intoxication which has the effect of calming the mind. This in turn relaxes the body. Thus, our chances of stress-related illnesses decrease. Learning to meditate on the Light and Sound is like having a special retreat, a special place, where we can find relief from the problems of life. We can meditate any time of day. We can begin our day with meditation when we wake up to put us in a state of calm for the rest of the day. If we travel to work by bus or train, or we are driven by someone else, we can meditate on the way. At work we can meditate during our break or our lunch hour to give us a recharging. If we work at home, we can snatch away time for meditation. If we work away from home, when we return after a hard day's work, we can wipe away the tensions of the day by spending time in meditation. Many like to meditate at night before going to sleep because it is a calm, quiet time with less distractions and disturbances.

By reducing stress we also have a positive effect on those around us. If we are in a state of bliss from our meditation, we take life

more calmly. We do not react to others as much. We are better able to listen to their words in a more detached, even manner. Thus, we become more peaceful and nonviolent.

There is a beautiful story from the Indian tradition. There was once a princess named Laila who was always absorbed in the love and remembrance of her earthly beloved, Majnu. Once she was going to the mosque to pray. She was so lost in her thoughts of Majnu that she did not notice that she stepped on the prayer mat of a holy man. As soon as she had stepped on the mat, the holy man lumped up and began scolding her, for her sacrilegious act. She was startled out of her reverie by this commotion. He said, "How could you have committed such a disrespectful act, walking on the prayer mat while I was praying." She was apologetic and said, "I am sorry, but I was so lost in the thoughts of my earthly beloved that I did not notice where I was going." But then, with great wisdom she remarked, "O holy one, I just wonder that if I could be so lost in my worldly beloved that I did not notice where I was walking, how could you say you were lost in prayer and remembrance of God, the divine Beloved, and yet you could still notice me walking on your mat? If you were truly lost in His remembrance, you would not have noticed me at all."

This describes the condition we reach in meditation. We become so absorbed in the bliss and intoxication within that we do not notice the problems, troubles, and disappointments in life. We may go about our life in full awareness of everything that is happening and can function at an efficient, highly effective level, but our thoughts and feelings and emotions are not upset or unbalanced by life's stresses and strains. We are able to handle them in a calm, detached, even manner. As the great saint and mystic poet, Sant Darshan Singh Ji Maharaj put it in one of his verses:

*Teach me the art of life
Which makes one a stranger to the woes of the world, O
Cupbearer.*

Through meditation we can overcome life's stresses and strains and discover the key to relaxation and tranquility.

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4S175 Naperville Rd.
Naperville, Illinois, 60563, USA
Phone: (630) 955-1200

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