

**PREKSHA DHYANA :  
SELF-AWARENESS  
BY RELAXATION**

**ACHARYA MAHAPRAJNA**

**“SCIENCE OF LIVING” SERIES—VII**

**PREKSHA DHYANA :  
SELF-AWARENESS BY  
RELAXATION**

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## **Publisher's Note**

In publishing this booklet, it is hoped to bring to the reader, in simple language, some of the truths, already known to the ancient philosophies, and now known to modern science.

### **Age of Tension**

In this age of technology, industrialisation and over-urbanisation, we are constantly subjected to tremendous stresses and tensions. These, in turn, produce psychosomatic diseases like hypertension, insomnia, and various types of heart diseases. In desperation, people take to drinking and dangerous drugs which give temporary relief, but create more serious problems. The remedy does not lie in drugs or fantasy, but in the process of catharsis and development of the inherent powers.

Philosophy teaches us to realize that our existence is functioning in duality, i.e. there is a spiritual self within a physical body. Science is also proving that life's processes for man lie almost wholly within himself and are amenable to control. The control has to be exercised by the power of the spiritual self, and that inherent potency can be developed by knowing how to live properly, which includes eating, drinking and breathing properly as well as thinking properly.

### **What is Prekshā-Dhyān?**

Prekshā-dhyān is a technique of meditation for attitudinal change, behavioural modification and intergrated development of personality. It is based on the wisdom of ancient philosophy and has been formulated in terms of

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modern scientific concepts. We hope that the synthesis of the ancient wisdom and the modern scientific knowledge would help us in achieving the blissful aim of establishing amity, peace and happiness in the world by eradicating the bestial urges such as cruelty, retaliation and hate.

The different methods of *preksha* (i.e. perception) include *shvās-prekshā* (perception of breathing), *sharīr pre-kshā* (perception of body), *chaitany-kendr-prekshā* (perception of psychic centres), etc. All these are methods of ultimate transformation in inner consciousness. Here, there is no need to sermonize for adopting virtues and giving up evils. When one starts practising perception, one experiences himself that he is changing, that anger and fear are pacifying, that one is getting transformed into a 'righteous person.'

Our series on "Science of Living" includes tracts on various facets of *Prakshā-dhyāna*.

In this booklet, we have extensive discussion regarding *Kāyotsarg* i.e. total relaxation of the body accompanied by full awareness of the real self. What is relaxation? How does it differ from meditation? Can relaxation become meditation? What is the *raison d'être* of relaxation? What benefits could be derived from relaxation? It is necessary to know the answers to these questions both with a scientific and philosophical background.

Relaxation is a pre-condition of meditational exercise. It can be called the first phase of meditation. To steady the mind, one must first suspend all voluntary motion of the body, observe complete silence and slow down the rate of respiration. These are essential preconditions of meditation. When the body attains and maintains a motionless state, and the mental process of speech is also halted, mental concentration and meditation will naturally follow.

Relaxation plays an important role in treatment of physical and mental diseases. When a bone is broken, the

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affected part is put in a plaster, thus giving it a compulsory motionless state. Doctors know that for the broken bone to mend properly, the relative motion of the broken parts must be stopped. Similarly, when one consults a psychiatrist, he is asked to relax on a couch. When the patient is thoroughly relaxed, the doctor can reach his subconscious mind and know the root cause of the problem.

Finally, *Kāyotsarg* is a simple but important tool for not only physical and mental health but also (and this is the real purpose) for emotional health and integrated development of personality.

### **Benefits of Preksha-Dhyan**

Preksha may appear to mean different things to different people because it contributes to increase physical, nervous as well as spiritual energies.

On physical level, it helps each bodily cell to revitalize itself; it facilitates digestion; it makes respiration more efficient and improves circulation and quality of blood.

On mental level, it proves to be an applied method to train the mind to concentrate; it cleans and relaxes the mind; it offers a way to treat serious psychosomatic illnesses without drugs; it is an efficient tool for ending addictions and other bad habits; it reveals to one the mysteries of his mind by the realization and the real experience of the inner consciousness which includes the sub-conscious and the unconscious.

On emotional level, the strengthening of conscious reasoning controls reactions to environmental conditions, situations, and behaviour of others : harmonization of the functioning of nervous and endocrine systems results in control and ultimate eradication of psychological distortions.

On spiritual level, firm control of the reasoning mind, regulation and transformation of blood-chemistry through

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proper synthesization of neuro-endocrinal secretions, and production of dispassionate internal vibrations lead one to attain the power to control the mind and to become free from the effects of the external forces compelling one to lose equanimity.

### **No Theological Dogma**

Præksha-dhyan can be learnt and practised by any-body without distinction of caste, colour, country and creed. There is no communal or theological bias, nor does it insist on any particular theological belief.

Though the process is not very difficult to learn and practise, it is essential to learn the technique through experienced and trained teachers. Normally a ten-day retreat (training camp) is a suitable means to acquire proper training.

### **Review of Results**

During the last 15 years, more than 100 training camps have been organised and more than 13,000 persons have been oriented in this technique. Amongst them, are scientists, doctors, engineers, professors, teachers, government servants and other intelligentsia, besides the general public. Police Department, Education Department and others have taken part in the special courses organised by Tulsi Adhyatma Nidam. More such courses are being planned for different disciplines, professions and work areas. Over and above those who have been trained in these camps, thousands of others have practised prekshā dhya and have been benefited thereby. While many of them have restored their physical health, hundreds of others have been cured of mental tensions, hypertension and other psychosomatic diseases.

For all this, we are grateful to Yugapradhana Acharya Shri Tulsi and his successor-designate Yuvacharya Shri

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Mahaprajna for their constant guidance and efforts in this direction.

These two great spiritual saints have truly blessed the entire human race with the boon of preksha-dhyana, and we are confident that all and sundry will be benefited by learning and practising this universal and easy-to-learn technique of preksha-dhyana.

Three permanent training centres have been established viz. 1. Tulsi Adhyatma Nidam at JainVishva Bharti, Ladnun, (Rajasthan) 2. Adhyatma Sadhana Kendra at Mehrauli, New Delhi. 3. Tulsi Sadhana Shikhar at Rajsamand (Rajasthan).

1 May, 1993

**Jethalal S. Zaveri**  
Advisor  
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# Introduction

## Tension in Daily Life

We live in the age of tensions and because we are confronted with more and more situations that produce stress, increasing numbers of people at younger ages are suffering from hypertension which results in high blood-pressures, heart-attacks and premature deaths. Everywhere we are cursed with colour war, communal strife and religious riots; politicians endeavour to make our life miserable with missionary zeal; atomic weapons continue to pile up threatening the very existence of humanity, but our most precious anxiety involves more common problems of daily life such as the daily commute in a congested city, rising cost of living, unabating shortages of daily necessities, polluted air and water. These and many other insoluble difficulties appear to have been built into our daily life.

Scientific and technological development has brought supersonic speeds for travelling. It has consequently created conditions which make unprecedented demands on our physiological organs as well as mental equipments. The fast rate of living needs tremendous expense of energy and results in sapping of vitality. Overacting needs higher rate of respiration and the energy metabolism is overloaded.

The existence of mental stress as a part of modern living has been universally accepted. Frequent stressful situations affect us, not only psychologically, but also undermine our physical health.

If one can learn to stop all muscular activity and breathe slowly and scientifically, he can save himself from

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many difficulties. In this age of overactivity, conscious relaxation is a panacea for many maladies and problems. Overactivity and unbroken restlessness produce mental upsets and somatic diseases. The only safe remedy is conscious relaxation and deliberate suspension of all bodily movements.

### **Remedy for Psychosomatic Diseases**

Today eminent doctors—specialists and general practitioners alike—have realised that relaxation is a powerful tool both for healing and maintaining good health. Irrefutable scientific proofs, now available, show that consciously achieved total relaxation can cure and prevent any number of diseases which are caused by tension and stress. Hypertension (chronic high blood-pressure), heart-attacks, nervous break-downs, peptic ulcers are all caused by mental tensions.

*Kāyotsarg*—Relaxation literally means ‘abandonment of the body coupled with high degree of conscious awareness.’ In practice, it is conscious suspension of all gross movements of the body resulting in negligible nerve current, demagnetisation and total relaxation of the skeletal muscles and drastic reduction of metabolic activities. This physical condition results in relieving mental tensions also. Muscular relaxation is always the first step to health and its importance cannot be overemphasized.

### **Precondition of Meditation**

*Kāyotsarg* is an essential pre-requisite for all types of meditation. Meditation is a deliberate mental exercise for steadying and concentrating the mind either in perception or thought. But before the mind can be steadied, the body has to be kept absolutely still and motionless, and this can only be done by the release of tensions by relaxation.

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So long as there is mental tension and the nerves are taut and highly strung up, how can one expect to perform meditation?

Tension is a fit condition for agitation, restlessness and evil thoughts. Seeds of mental restlessness are sown in the fertile land of tension and here they germinate, flower and bear fruits. It is, therefore, essential to remove tension. *Kāyotsarg* does just this—removes mental tension, nervous tension and emotional tension.

Apart from meditation, *Kāyotsarg* may be practised daily. Stressful situations are a part of modern life-style and occur regularly. The response of the body to a stressful situation is the triggering of the 'flight or fight' mechanism resulting in high- blood-pressure etc. But one can neither fight nor run away from the common problems of the modern life. Modern life-styles are most unlikely to change for the better. To avoid more injurious effects of daily stress daily practice of relaxation is essential. If one learns and practises systematic relaxation every day, he would remain relaxed, calm and unperturbed in any situation. Physically, it is more restful than sleep, and is the most harmless and direct antidote to psychosomatic maladies resulting from tension. Spiritually, in this process, the lifeless body is cast off, while the consciousness soars upwards freed from and outside its material shell.

*Kāyotsarg* means perfectly motionless state of the body. Meditation is not merely steadiness of mind. Most yogāchāryas and learned philosophers consider only mental steadiness and concentration as meditation. But the Jains prescribe threefold steadiness—physical, vocal and mental. Just as steadiness of mind is meditation, so is the steadiness of the body. Maintaining a motionless state of the body is physical meditation and is an essential base and prerequisite of all other meditational exercises. As long as there is any physical movement, meditation is out of question. Steadiness of mind requires steadiness of breath and the latter

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is acquired only with physical immobility. Hence the most important element of the basic meditational pre-requisite is the physical immobility. *Kāyotsarg* is motionless state of the body.

Mental concentration follows physical motionlessness. A practitioner must first learn the technique of relaxation. One who has mastered this technique, would be able to achieve mental steadiness in due course. Relaxation should be total, i.e. the whole body is completely relaxed and free from tension, and there is no stiffness anywhere in the body. All skeletal muscles are relaxed and demagnetized. Muscular tension and fatigue result from stiffness. This, in fact, is the first lesson. For an average person it is very important to master the technique of relaxation.

Auto-suggestion is the basic principle of the technique of relaxation. In practice, the body is mentally divided into small parts and each part is relaxed, in turn, by auto-suggestion until the entire body is free from tension. It should be noted that this technique is not hypnotism. In hypnotism, suggestions of another person are accepted subconsciously and the process expends great deal of vital energy both from the hypnotist and his subject. *Kāyotsarg* is not hypnotism and there is no loss of vital energy.

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# I

## Relaxation : Scientific Version

### Modus Operandi of Stress

Learning stress-management is one of the most important lessons for remaining healthy. Relaxation is practised to counteract the ill effects of stress. To understand the meaning of relaxation, we must first know what stress is. The word 'stress' comes to us from Physics where it means "pressure exerted upon parts of a body". When stress results in deformation of the body, it is known as strain. Thus, in our case, stress (and strain) would mean deformation of our comforts. It can display itself as a tightness, an anxiety or an irrational fear. Under stress we feel irritable, getting easily upset or angry and as stress increases, we may begin to feel that we simply can't cope any more.

Any condition that needs behavioural adjustment is stressful condition. Dr. Hans Selye, an international authority on stress, defines stress as "the rate of wear and tear of the body". He shows that cold, heat, rage, drugs, excitement, pain, grief, even joy, all elicit the stress mechanism in the same way. If the stress is physical, such as excessive cold, the skin density changes, the blood vessels at the surface contract and the breathing changes. Whenever one encounters a psychological stressful situation, an elaborate innate mechanism is automatically put into action. This mechanism involves (1) hypothalamus—the remarkable portion of the brain which integrates all functions of the body which are not normally controlled by the conscious mind, (2) pituitary gland, which is called master of the endocrine system because it regulates the other glands, (3) adrenal gland, which secretes

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## Relaxation : Scientific Version

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adrenalin and other hormones to keep the body tense and alert, and (4) sympathetic component of the autonomic nervous system which is responsible to ultimately prepare the body for 'fight or flight'.

### **Physiological Conditon**

The physiological conditions which are brought about by the integrated action of the above are :

- (a) Blood-supply to the digestive system is curtailed; digestion slows down or is halted.
- (b) The salivary glands dry up.
- (c) Respiration rate increases; breathing becomes faster or gasping.
- (d) The liver releases some of the store of blood-sugar and it is carried to the muscles of the arms and legs.
- (e) The heart beats faster to pump more blood where it is most needed and blood-pressure rises.

All these and many other complex changes occur to generate extra quantities of electrochemical and hormonal energy which enables us to act quickly. The energy goes to the muscles even when there's nothing that needs to be done and gets bound up in the muscles as tension. When the emergency conditions have subsided, we have what is needed to bring us back to a balanced, tensionless state. It is the concern of the other component of the autonomic nervous systems—the parasympathetic—to resume normal activity and restore peaceful conditions. The parasympathetic nervous system is designed to work in close harmony with and balance the sympathetic nervous system. The activating of the parasympathetic is meant to happen naturally after the emergency is over. Its response balances the sympathetic by returning the chemistry to normal and relaxing the tense muscles. The sympathetic is action-oriented and aggressive; the parasympathetic is restoring and passive. When both function normally, there is a see-saw action which reflects in our body as

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rhythmic cycles of action and rest. When the equilibrium breaks down, we have dangerous tension. Since the modern life styles keep us always on the go, the restoring apparatus—the parasympathetic seldom gets a chance to operate fully. That is, our muscles and nerves hardly ever return to its natural condition.

### **Disorders of Tension**

All animals including human beings possess this innate mechanism and its response which prepares one for fight or flight is involuntary. When stressful situation regularly recurs, the stress-mechanism is repeatedly activated. If the physiological conditions described above persist over a long time or frequently recur, serious disorder would occur. Thus, if blood-pressure remains high and blood-vessels constricted it will result in heart-attacks or strokes; if the impoverished blood-supply to stomach is prolonged, there will be digestive disorders; if the breathing is prolonged at a high rate, it may result in asthma etc., sustained muscle-tensions will bring aches and pains in the head, back, neck and shoulders. Besides these, chronic tension may also bring feelings of panic which is irrational fear and which can be not only frightening but also crippling. Tense, nervous and anxious modern man is driven inexorably into stress, because his constant state of anxiety prevents him from coping up with the relentless demands of modern life. There is plenty of evidence now to show that tension may play a significant part in promoting or triggering off a great many illnesses. If we are to solve successfully the problem of stress, we have to find a way of allowing the parasympathetic to function efficiently, so that it can establish the equilibrium and harmony which has been destroyed.

### **Causes of Tension**

From the above, one must not conclude that tension is entirely evil. A certain amount of tension is essential for achievement. It is the continuity and the high degree of

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tension that causes the trouble, impairs performance and leads to exhaustion and illness. Amongst the causes of sustained and inappropriate high level of tension are sudden changes in one's life style. Drs. Holmes and R. Rahe have quantified a number of life style changes such as the death of a spouse. Some of the changes and scores listed by them are :

Death of spouse	100	Retirement	45
Divorce	73	Sexual problem	39
Injury or Illness	53	Change in work	29
Marriage	50	Change in living condition	25
Dismissal from work	47	Change in eating or sleeping habits	16

The list is not complete and all points listed are not relevant to every one. If the score was over 300, there was likely to be serious illness, while a score of over 100 indicates that remedial measures should be taken. Obviously, one 'change' at a time would be easier to cope with. However, life is not so simple and if one has to meet several changes simultaneously, adjustment of reaction by remedial measures such as exercise and relaxation is necessary.

### **Cure is also Inherent**

Modern life styles are most unlikely to change for the better. Sure, we have developed pharmaceutical wonder drugs in the form of tranquilizers, which give a temporary relief. In the long term, however, the medicine itself creates more serious problems than the original disease. The question is : Are we then destined to be doomed by our environmental conditions or are we capable of adapting ourselves so as to avoid, at least, the more injurious effects of the daily stress?

Fortunately, we possess and can activate the innate mechanism which produces physiological conditions, which are diametrically opposite to the fight or flight response. Nobel Laureate, Swiss Physiologist Dr. Walter described this response as a protective mechanism against overstress, promot-

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ing restorative processes and called it 'trophotropic response'. Dr. Herbert Benson, M.D., has termed this reaction as 'relaxation response'.

It is possible to train ourselves to activate, by auto-suggestion, the protective mechanism and to influence our reaction to stress. The increased secretion and output of adrenaline can be normalised and the sympathetic dominance counterbalanced by increased parasympathetic activity. Then the muscles relax and the abdominal wall loses its tightness. Regular practice of total relaxation is a potent remedy for the dangerous diseases of the modern times.

### **What is Relaxation?**

Practice of relaxation is the direct and harmless way of relaxing tension. One cannot hope to enjoy peace, health or happiness so long as one is under the insidious influence of tension, inspite of possessing amenities and luxuries of life. Anybody who, after learning the technique, practises systematic relaxation everyday for 30 to 45 minutes, would not only remain relaxed and unperturbed in any situation, but greatly enhance the efficiency and quality of his work.

For proper appraisal of relaxation, we must know the muscular functions. Muscles contract with lightning speed when stimuli are applied to the connecting nerve. Skeletal muscles allow us action of movement at will. To understand the action of movement, the muscle may be compared to an electro-magnet and the nerve which stimulates it to action to an electric wire which connects it to the brain.

During sleep, very little current circulates in the nerves, and the muscles are almost demagnetised. Most of the muscles are relaxed and limp except those which are necessary for reasons of security and survival. When one is resting, a weak current flows through the nerve, barely magnetizing the muscles which are in a quiescent state. Whenever one moves or is engaged in some physical activity, the current increases in response to the order from the brain, activating the electro

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magnets—the muscles contract, the arm bends or the fist clenches. The number of minute motors set in motion is proportional to the intensity of the effort.

All the three states, described above, normally occur many times a day. The fourth state, abnormal yet frequent, is the state of hypertension. Perpetually tightened jaws, clenched teeth, frowning brows and hardened stomach-muscles are some of the visible signs of this state. In this state, the electro-magnets are over-magnetized by a strong current, leaving muscle-groups in a state of permanent contraction, quite often unnecessarily. This results in a colossal waste of nervous and muscular energy, because there is a constant leakage of current. The amount of energy thus wasted will depend upon the number of motor muscles activated, rather than on their size or strength, because the nervous impulse needed to contract a small facial muscle is practically the same as a large leg muscle. Thus the total loss of energy will be proportional to both the number of motor nerves and the strength of current, flowing in each of the conductor wires. Every day millions of old, useless and dead cells are replaced by young, healthy ones in all our tissues except nerves. Nerve cells are never renewed or replaced. Their number keeps on decreasing as we get older. If we injure them by, for example, overwork in the form of mental stress, they are lost for ever, leaving behind irreparable gaps. Now, by conscious and voluntary action, it is possible to switch off the current to the muscles, more efficiently than in sleep. Actually our sleep is seldom refreshing because the unresolved problems of the daytime intrude at night and we tend to work them out at a deeper level. Thus our sleep hardly serves its function of relaxing us. In total relaxation, on the other hand, the flow of current may be reduced to almost nil and the output of energy to the minimum.

### **Eradication of Tension by Relaxation**

Relaxation, if properly done, can relieve tension and fatigue more effectively in half an hour than many hours of

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indifferent sleep. It is an exercise of the mastery of conscious will over the body by the technique of auto-suggestion. Will, however, is not the tyrant with dictatorial powers, cracking the whip, but as gentle and patient as a loving mother with an obstinate child. In other words, relaxation can never be acquired by force, constraint or violence. In time, relaxation could become a habit, not a mechanical one, but an effortless conscious way of life. One can remain relaxed under the most exasperating conditions. Whatever one may be, one is relaxed, neither tense nor frowning with worry.

### **Colossal Healing Power of Auto-suggestion**

In ancient times, both man and animal had the instinct to guide them to whatever they needed to keep them healthy. But while the animal retained the faculty, man, with the progress of civilization gradually lost the instinct. Somebody, however, in the community did retain enough ability to consult his instincts and was usually accepted as the healer.<sup>1</sup> Apart from nature-healing, diet, medicinal herb, bone-setting, minor surgery etc., he also used faith-healing in which he made the patient to relax and gave suggestions.

Thus technique of suggestion (and auto-suggestion) is the most ancient psychotherapy known to mankind. Almost every culture has, in its own way, while exploring the higher state of consciousness, stumbled upon this technique. Each culture, again, has tried to explain these states in accordance with its own beliefs. We are told by researchers that all known primitive cultures had various forms of this process as part of their religious activities. Throughout history, a strong element of similarity kept running through all these forms and the most basic factor had always been relaxation and suggestion which was used to heal the sick. Evidence of such procedures used in Egypt over three thousand years ago are found to be very similar to the modern ones. In the middle ages, faith-healing through touch and prayer became the major role of priests.

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1. E.g., also called witch doctor in African community.

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In modern age, Franz Mesmer, an Austrain doctor who is considered to be the first to give recognition to the importance of systematic suggestion, developed a technique of mass healing. "Mesmerism", as the technique began to be called, spread all over the world and survives to this day in one form or another. James Braid recognised the technique as psychotherapy and renamed it as hypnosis (Greek word for sleep).

Later on earnest and selfless efforts by Jacque Liebeault of Nancy School in France, developed many applications of the technique that have become some of the foundations of modern psychotherapy. An important theoretical result was that suggestibility was natural, healthy and a normal element of everyday behaviour.

The technique gained great acceptance during world wars and ultimately was given recognition by both British Medical Association as well as the American Medical Association. Today more and more doctors as well as psychologists use hypnosis in their practices.

Auto-suggestion or self-hypnosis may be seen as a special kind of hypnosis in which the patient himself controls the process. Some researchers have established that all hypnosis is actually self-hypnosis in some fundamental way. Actually, during the late 1800's, Berlin Institute's renowned Brain Physiologist, Oscar Vogt found that some of his hypnotic subjects were able to "put themselves into a state which appeared very similar to deep relaxation", and reduced their fatigue, tension and headaches. Thus definite clinical value of self-hypnosis was established long ago, but in the early 1900's Emile Coue' began to popularize conscious auto-suggestion and the phrase "Day by day in every way, I am getting better" became his landmark.

It has been established by experimental data that various types of body-changes which occur during the process, can be measured. Recent studies have shown that

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beneficial changes occur in blood sugar level, white blood cell count and EEG. Medical, psychological and psychic literature is full of results of research studies anecdotal evidence and stories about many cases which seem to employ one fundamental technique : auto-suggestion or self-hypnosis.

The successful application of this psychotherapy involves four basic factors (1) Motivation (2) Relaxation (3) Concentration and (4) Visualization.

Firstly one must be properly motivated. Anybody who is keen to achieve something (health, desirable virtue), by the technique of auto-suggestion is more likely to get the desired result.

Secondly, the success of the exercise of auto-suggestion will greatly depend on totally relaxed (tensionless) and motionless state of the body. It is essential for the practitioner to reach the subconscious portion of his mind and this is possible only when he is under deep relaxation and without any mental tension.

Thirdly the practitioner must not be distracted during the exercise. The customary practice of thinking in a rather scattered fashion must be abandoned. Just as the scattered energy of sun can be focussed into a single point by a lens to give tremendous power, so also can our mental energy be focussed by concentration.

Finally, the practitioner must visualize the desired result. Visualization has tremendous importance for achieving the goal. The practitioner, for instance, can visualize his white blood cells (which comprise the immune system) fighting and destroying the infection producing microbes.

Auto-suggestion is the basic principle of the technique of relaxation. Each part of the body is relaxed, in turn by coaxing auto-suggestion.

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## Postures and Exercises : Aids to Relaxation

Activity, is also essential to healthy life. It aids and improves blood circulation in the muscles which benefit from movement. Almost every set of muscles has an antagonist—one group relaxing as the opposing group contracts.<sup>1</sup> If a set of muscles is held tight and tense in static contraction (i.e. without movement) for long periods, the circulation is impeded. There will be an accumulation of fatigue products, mainly, lactic acid, (which is normally cleared away by the flow of blood) and it is this that leads to pain, stiffness and fatigue. Good circulation is, therefore, necessary to reduce the effect of accumulation of lactic acid in the muscle. Rhythmical exercise, by the alternate contraction and relaxation of muscles, will improve circulation and mitigate pain and fatigue.

Maintenance of correct posture is an important key for keeping the muscles relaxed. Our body is engaged in a constant struggle against gravity, and so habitual wrong postures would produce chronic strain in the muscles. In correct standing position the head is held high and balanced easily on the neck, neither bent on one side nor jutting forward. The abdomen is held in and the chest is allowed to expand freely. The shoulders should not sag forward, and arms hang freely. Good posture is not a stiff military “standing to attention” but a relaxed position. Correct sitting position is similar, with the spine and neck in a straight line, not stiff but relaxed. Do not sit slumped with your back stooping. Do not stoop or hunch your shoulders as you work. Deviation may result in backaches and even deformities. In driving, your back must be adequately supported.

### Golden Silence

Would you believe that a public speaker uses a great deal more nervous energy than a labourer, doing a lot of

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1. The biceps and triceps provide an instance of muscular antagonism. While the biceps is contracted, the triceps is relaxed, and vice versa.
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strenuous work with his muscles, does. This is because the total amount of nervous energy required is proportional to the number of motor units<sup>1</sup> and not the size of the muscles. Almost equal amount of nervous impulse is necessary to contract a small facial or vocal muscles as a large leg muscles. Thus a stenotypist who puts a large number of small muscles to work expends much more energy than a blacksmith; an orator uses more than a labourer does. That is why silence is so valuable in conserving and preventing the avoidable waste of energy.

What happens when you speak? An idea which forms in your mind, must first be instantly translated into words with accurate grammar and syntax. In order to allow you to speak, precise orders must be sent out to the muscles of the vocal cord to contract, relax and vary the amount of air used. Contractions of the muscles of tongue, lips, and face require thousands of small motor nerves, each expending its own quota of energy, to participate in the act of speaking. In fact, a speech lasting perhaps a couple of hours may completely exhaust an average person. You can prevent this colossal waste of energy only by observing SILENCE.

But it is not enough to stop speaking aloud. Total silence really means that the mental process of speech must also be halted as this can be exhausting as a loud talk in terms of nervous energy. This is because almost every motor unit named above, except the vocal, has to go through the same notions as are necessary for loud speech. Thus internal silence is as essential as the external or vocal silence.

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1. A motor-unit is of composed muscle and the nerve-tissues innervating it.

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## II

# Relaxation : Philosophical Version

In the preceding chapter we discussed the scientific version of what stress, strain and tension are. In this chapter, we shall discuss the philosophical version.

### Three Types of Tension

Three types of tension are :

1. Muscular tension
2. Mental tension
3. Emotional tension.

Everybody suffers from these three types of tension, and relaxation is a harmless and useful antidote to counter their injurious effect. Half an hour's systematic total relaxation is equivalent to two hours' sleep in terms of rest and recovery of the muscles. Perhaps more.

Today every man is a victim of tension. He has no peace of mind and is always restless. When he is physically tired, he seeks relief in sleep or rest. Rest and sleep are good antidotes for muscular fatigue. Thus it is not difficult to identify muscular tension and also its remedy—rest and sleep.

On the other hand, while we know how to use our mental equipment, we do not know how to give rest to it. We know how to think but seldom do we know how to switch off the process of thinking. It is difficult to halt the train of thoughts because we are not aware of the process of mental rest.

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Overloading the mental faculty is the main cause of mental fatigue and tension. Overthinking causes mental disorder and many people suffer from this disorder because they keep the delicate equipment active whether it serves any purpose or not. Constant use of the faculty is a way of life for them.

A simple way of giving rest to mind is to learn living in the *present*. We live more in the *past* or *future* and very little in the *present*. We constantly indulge either in the memories of the past or are busy with the planning for the future. We are very much enmeshed in the new-work of unnecessary memories, and thus, there is little time for living in the present. To live in the present is unloading the mind of the burden of the past and relieve it from mental tension.

The third type is emotional tension which is worst of all.

Intense craving to possess pleasant and desirable, intense grief for loss of dear ones or property, intense desire for getting rid of some unpleasant or undesirable infliction—all these produce emotional tension. Desire for retaliatory violent action also produces emotional tension. An incident of confrontation in the past may continue to fester for years and one is overwhelmed with a desire for violent retaliation.

Continuity of a high degree of muscular tension is a problem of the present times. Mental tension is far more serious than this! But emotional tension is the most difficult and pernicious of all. It produces dangerous psychological distortions and bestial behaviour. The only remedy is systematic meditation. Emotional tension, produced by bestial urges of retaliation etc., can be relieved by regular practice of 'Preksha'. If 'Preksha' is adopted as a way of life, one acquires not only physical and mental goodness but also psychical goodness by eradicating all evils from one's thought, speech and action.

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## **Kāyotsarg—Physical Meditation**

Every human being possesses four dynamic faculties—body, breath, speech and mind. Being intrinsically dynamic these are perpetually in action and radiate energy waves in the surrounding space. The dynamic nature of these faculties sustains life and the forces regulating their activity are not external but intrinsic. Besides, the energy waves radiated by one interact with those radiated by others. Thus we are all inter-connected, inter-related and inter-dependent. Nobody is absolutely independent. Relative independence is realised by periodically inactivating, at least partially, the above faculties, and meditation is the tool for achieving this. Acquisition of maximum mental steadiness is meditation. Motionless body is physical meditation or *Kāyotsarg*. Conscious, slow, deep and rhythmic breathing is meditation of breath. Internal and external silence and steadiness of mind are vocal and mental meditations respectively.

No living being can realise absolute motionlessness. The basis of the bodily movement is the muscular system. There are three types of muscles :

- (i) Skeletal or voluntary muscles
- (ii) Smooth internal muscles
- (iii) Cardiac muscle—heart.

Only the first type i.e. muscles of the head, trunk and limbs are voluntary muscles. Their action or inaction is voluntary i.e. controlled at will. The other muscles such as those of intestines, blood-vessels, uterus etc. act involuntarily or automatically and we have no conscious control over their action. The action of heart is initiated within itself. So when we speak about the immobilisation of the body, we refer to the inaction of the voluntary muscles only. The movement of limbs is voluntary and can be stopped at will. Thus, the first step in a meditational exercise is to adopt a specific posture and then remain motionless in that posture. This is an essential prerequisite condition for meditation.

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The internal muscles—heart, intestines etc. continue their action throughout the meditation session. The activity of the brain and the autonomic nervous system also continues. Thus, inspite of the motionless state of the body and steadiness of mind, the sense-organs and other sensory out-posts continue to transmit sensations to the brain and the latter continues to process these into perceptions. This is the primary stage of meditation.

Higher states of immobilisation of the body can also be achieved, but these are difficult to describe and mostly beyond language. Roughly we can divide these stages into three types : profound, more profound and most profound.

In the highest stage of motionlessness, agitation, and excitement, all activities—voluntary and automatic—cease altogether.

### **Relaxation—Simulating Death**

*Kāyotsarg* is simulation of death. Two conditions are essential—(i) total cessation of voluntary movements that is relaxed condition (near total demagnetized state) of all skeletal muscles, and (ii) extremely slow rate of respiration as if the system has stopped working. Total relaxation is when there is an acute perception of this state which is neither imagination nor auto-suggestion but a real experience. The body is forgotten and cast away. It is further characterized by an actual experience of floating outside one's body and this is 'death' while living. Everybody has to leave his body when death occurs but the real experience of casting away one's body and be alive is a good achievement. Our real existence is neither body nor respiration. It is far beyond them. When the body is virtually lifeless and the respiration is all but stopped, it is the 'death' of the body which can be cast off. The essence of this exercise is the actual awareness of the truth that the conscious element is not identical with the inert body. The self-awareness is so real that the material shell of the body is forgotten.

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## Awareness of the Self

From the above it is clear that total relaxation is that condition in which the separateness of the body and the soul is no longer a belief but a real experience. The awareness of the real self apart from the body, apart from the tribulations, apart from the emotions and excitement is the real purpose of *Kāyotsarg*.

The consciousness<sup>1</sup>, the SELF, is neither the body, nor the desires nor the sleep nor the primal urge. This realisation by actual experience is the first step towards emancipation. And the process of self-awareness begins with cessation of body-movement, discipline of the limbs, speech and sense-organs.

In fact, the process of self-awareness does not commence until all voluntary movements are totally stopped and the gravity is freely allowed to do its pull on the body. Thus motionlessness of the body is the main gate to self-realisation. After stopping the action of the skeletal muscles,

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1. Conscious element, common as it is to all living beings, is still a perfect mystery to science. The physical world in which the experiences of sense-organs occur does not constitute the sole area for the operation of living organism at all levels of its existence. Man, in all countries, in all ages and at all stages of culture, has sought to penetrate into other regions of consciousness that lie outside the scope of the normal faculties. There are other levels, not so far amenable to explanation in scientific terms, of which it is possible to have first-hand experience. Man functions at several levels, and at each level a different fact of his multifrom existence is brought into operation. There is his body, the tangible part of him, that everyone accepts. The Greeks called the body 'soma', and equated it with a shell within which a non-material element lay encased. This element animates and vitalizes the inert mass of bone and flesh, enabling man to function on the physiological level, an ability he shares with other living organisms. When he reasons, another aspect of his personatity is revealed. But he also responds to higher levels of consciousness and aspires to achieve a state that he recognizes, however dimly, as greater and purer than himself. This is what we mean by saying that he has a soul. It is difficult to define and distinguish precisely between such terms as the 'soul', the 'spirit', the 'psyche' (Greek), '*ruha*' (Jewish), '*ruh*' (muslim) *ātman* (Hindu), *jīva* (Jain).

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the next step is to suspend the action of the more subtle internal smooth muscles, But as long as the flow of vital energy is active and the wandering of the mind continues, total staticity of the body cannot be realised. All subtle as well as gross movements of the body are caused by the haphazard flow of vital energy and the scattered activity of the mind. If the stream of vital energy and the flow of thoughts are canalised and turned towards self-awareness and self-realisation, the muscles will calm down. This is because the impulses, which activated and excited the muscles and which were generated by mental unsteadiness, are no longer available. Once the body is totally motionless, it can be cast off, and the purpose of *Kāyotsarg* fulfilled.

### **Cast off the Body and Realize the Self**

*Kāyotsarg* is not merely relaxation of the muscles but actual experience and awareness of the real, non-material self, quite apart from the material non-self i.e. body. Total relaxation is essential and precedes this experience—the body is only a shell and the SELF can free itself from this.

State of total relaxation is the state of 'seeing' and 'knowing' and leads to self-realisation.

### **Physical Body-the Scapegoat**

*Kāyotsarg* is the process to search and find the root-cause of all miseries and sufferings. The gross physical body is the medium for perception of suffering or its manifestation but not its root cause. The root cause is the subtlest body called *karma-śarīra*.<sup>1</sup> In the state of *Kāyotsarg* one is able to detect and identify the root cause of mundane suffering. And once this truth is known, there is a fundamental change in the attitude towards the gross body.

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1. *Karma-śarīra* is the coded record of one's past deeds. It operates under the law of action and reaction, cause and effect. The law of *karma* is immutable.



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The real enemy—the tyrant, the progenitor of all worldly suffering, is the *karma-śartra*. But until this truth is discovered, it is the poor gross body which bears the brunt of the wrath of the sufferer. In reality, the gross body is our ally and not the enemy; at least it could and should be made an ally in the war against the real enemy. Once the elusive real enemy is identified, all efforts must be made to liquidate it. And the gross or physical body could be our ally rather than an opponent in the war. Until this truth is realised, one does not befriend and cooperate with the physical body. The first action of alliance with the physical body is to relax it and make it free from all tensions and stresses.

To perpetuate its existence, the enemy—the *karma-śartra*—has made elaborate preparations. Survival of the enemy is the state of bondage for the spiritual SELF and the death of the enemy is emancipation of the SELF. It is understandable that the interest of the enemy—*karma*—is to perpetuate the state of bondage. Having enmeshed him in its clutches, it will resort to every means to keep him enslaved. The first line of its attack is to control the functioning of the physical body—unfortunately not recognised as an ally by spiritual self—and its strategy is to keep the body in perpetual agitation, tension and motion.

Delusion, agitation and motion are potent weapons in the armoury of the enemy. It deludes and continues the delusion so that the spiritual self is unaware of its own separate existence.

Tension produces vibrations, shock-waves in the form of primal-drives, urges and impulses. The smoke-screen of the turmoil of agitation is so effective that the enemy is unseen and unrecognised. The delusion of the spiritual self is unbroken and the assertion of its authority nullified. Self-awareness is impossible under the bombardment of waves of excitation and emotion. If there was no motion, if the turmoil was somehow stopped and the calm of motionlessness achieved the spiritual self would undoubtedly become aware of his our

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existence and strive for his freedom and emancipation. It is clear from the above that turmoil produced by the *karma-śarīra* is not only a plan of defence for survival but also a very potent weapon of attack. If one desires to defeat the enemy and win the war, it is obvious that the turmoil of motion is to be stopped. And *Kāyotsarg* is the right strategy in this direction.

When all bodily movements are stopped, the shockwaves boomerang on the enemy and shock it. The calm of motionlessness is a direct hit and it trembles for the first time. A serious breach has been created in its fortifications. The practitioner's motionlessness and subsequent self-awareness explodes the conceit of the enemy and it trembles. Its lines of assault fall in large numbers. Its armament becomes useless and the defeat commences.

Can one doubt about one's own being? Can one be uncertain regarding the independent and eternal existence of the spiritual self? The doubts are because there is agitation and turmoil. All the IFs and BUTs and arguments arise out of turmoil. In the darkness of sophistries and behind the smokescreen of arguments, the question of self-awareness gets side-tracked and grave doubts about one's own being arise.

If the arguments and sophistries did not raise their heads and if the agitation and turmoil which spur all these did not exist, there would never be any doubt or uncertainty about the separate and independent existence of the spiritual self.

Sophistry conceals the reality and hides the truth. When sophism overwhelms man's mind, truth deserts the mind and becomes unrealisable. And the root-cause of all this is the agitated state (of the physical body) spurred by *karma-śarīra*. The primary purpose of the turmoil is to sustain falsehood, superstition and ignorance and keep man away from wisdom.

Another result of turmoil is to prevent man from becoming aware of his misery. Misery is there but he is not aware

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of it. He sometimes admits the existence of misery, he suffers, he experiences unhappiness but he forgets so soon and so easily that he believes in its non-existence. All this is because of the delusion produced by turmoil. One is not aware of his suffering, his weakness, his impatience and his ignorance because he is deluded by the turmoil.

The first offensive in the war against the enemy is steadiness by relaxation, eliminating turmoil and agitation of the body. Keeping perfectly still, stopping all voluntary movements is an essential part of this exercise.

But this is just the beginning. Total relaxation, though essential, is not all. It is only 25 per cent of the exercise. The balance three-quarter part consists of forbearance and fearlessness.

### **Forbearance**

This virtue is a constituent of *kāyotsarg*. It is the first of four main gates of self-realization. It means to bear with fortitude. It is an important component of *Kāyotsarg*. Having stopped all voluntary movements and totally relaxed the muscles, the practitioner is now prepared to bear anything that happens. If there is pain in the limbs, he bears it stoically; if the body aches, he bears. If it is raining, let it rain. If there is a storm raging, let it rage. Some infliction may come from external environment and some from internal one. All are welcome. Endure, bear stoically and with fortitude, without flinching, without agitating and without disturbing the motionlessness of the body and self-awareness. Nothing to worry—this freedom from anxiety is also *Kāyotsarg*. One who has not developed the virtue of forbearance cannot experience total relaxation. Slight body-ache and the tension returns, muscles contract and posture changes. A fly or a mosquito can disturb the motionless state of the body; the turmoil returns. Even a noise in the vicinity may cause the head to turn and encroach on the steadiness.

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Forbearance, thus, is essential for self-awareness. Without it the material shell of the body cannot be cast off.

**Fearlessness (*abhaya*)**

Development of forbearance brings fearlessness. Cowards can never win any war; shedding off cowardice is the first prerequisite of declaring war against the enemy and total fearlessness carries one to the final victory (over the enemy).

The spritual self never knows any fear and is entirely free from it. Realisation of self-awareness necessitates freedom from fear. Without it neither relaxation nor self-awareness is possible.

Relaxation is freedom from fear. Self-awareness is casting off the material shell of the body without fear.

Freedom from anxiety (for the body) may appear easy enough but is not so easy. 'It is my body' or 'I am the body'—identification of the self with the body creates anxiety and fear. In fact, it is inherent in the identification. Only when one realises by actual experience that the spritual self is non-material, and has an independent existence, separate from the material body, can he be completely free from fear and anxiety. Self-realisation and self-awareness are great steps forward for total freedom from fear.

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### III

## Raison D'Etire of Relaxation

### (A) PHYSICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL

#### Hypertension—a Disease with No Symptom

Ordinarily, no symptoms are associated with high blood pressure for many years. The insidiousness of hypertension lies in its covert, seemingly harmless nature, which can end in permanent damage to the heart or brain or at worst, in sudden death. Death of heart or brain tissue occurs directly as well as indirectly, through the development of what is commonly known as hardening of the arteries.<sup>1</sup> When hardening of the arteries does develop, the target is usually one of the three vital organs : the heart, the brain, or the kidneys.

High blood-pressure or hypertension requires the heart to pump blood at higher pressures, thus making the heart work harder and placing an excessive strain on the heart. It is very dangerous because it also increases the rate of development of hardening of the arteries. It is caused by the deposition of the blood clots, fats and calcium on the inside walls of the arteries, making the normally soft elastic arteries to become hard, inelastic and partly or completely blocked. This blockade may lead to dire consequences.

The risk of developing atherosclerosis or heardening of the arteries is directly related to the level of blood-pressure. The higher your B.P., the greater the risk. If the arteries to the heart, called coronaries, are blocked, death of heart cells is inevitable and a heart-attack follows. If

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1. The technical name of the disease is atherosclerosis.

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the arteries to the brain become obstructed, strokes may occur. Thus continuous high blood-pressure or hypertension is the indirect cause of major causes of death : heart-attack and stroke.

Causes for 90 to 95 percent of hypertension called essential hypertension, are not known. Stress is a generally accepted explanation of the disease. Though it is commonly accepted that anger, fear or anxiety play an important role in causing hypertension, the subject has been inadequately studied by the medical profession. Stressful<sup>1</sup> situations which can be defined as situations leading to continuous behavioural adjustment may underlie the development of hypertension which cannot be explained.

It is natural to question whether we know how to check the dangerous results that inevitably follow the hypertension. Is there an innate physiological response that is diametrically opposite to the stress mechanism?

The answer is yes. We do possess an innate response to counter the effects of stress response. When activated, this can positively reduce the blood-pressure without any drug. The victims of hypertension can be taught to trigger the protective mechanism and lower their blood-pressure. The use of the technique of relaxation described in the next chapter is not only a therapy to lower the blood-pressure but that it has been part of the cultures of man throughout the ages.

As stated earlier, the risk of developing the hardening of the arteries is directly proportional to the level of blood pressure and anything that lowers B.P. without injurious side-effects is beneficial. Anti-hypertensive drugs inhibit the activity of the sympathetic nervous system thus lowering the blood-pressure. But the drugs could create dangerous side-effects and may create more serious problems. Relaxation is a safe way to lower the blood-pressure by the same means as

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1. See Chapter 1 for discussion on stress.

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some anti-hypertensive drugs. Regular exercise of relaxation is of great value since it has none of the pharmacologic side-effects present with the drugs. It also substantiates the hypothesis that hypertension in most cases is due to stressful situations that require behavioural adjustment and can be alleviated by behavioural means alone.

By far the most appealing use of relaxation lies in its preventive aspects. It serves as a natural way to counteract the sympathetic dominance. This means that it should be useful in alleviating other emotional upsets where increased sympathetic activity is a factor. For instance, relaxation is useful in alleviating various anxiety states and in treating some of the cardiac problems.

Another important area of the therapeutic use of the practice of relaxation is prevention of abuse of drugs, alcoholism and smoking. Marijuana, Hashish, LSD, narcotics, hard liquor and smoking are some of the dangerous drugs which can shatter the user's health. Regular practice of relaxation together with meditational exercises of Prekshā Dhyān system lead to giving up of the addiction. In fact it can provide a natural non-chemical alternative to fulfil the basic motivations behind drug abuse. The profound feelings of pleasure which accompany meditational practice can be much higher than the high or low of drugs.

## (B) PHILOSOPHICAL

Jain Yoga philosophy lays great emphasis on the frequent performance of the exercise of relaxation (*Kāyotsarg*). It is an essential routine of an ascetic's life. Whenever an ascetic goes a kilometer or more from his place of sojourn he must perform the exercise on his return. Every time he comes back from an outdoor chore, relaxation is necessary. As soon as he wakes up normally or after undergoing some bad dream, he must perform relaxation. The duration of exercise varies from occasion to occasion and is measured in number of breath—25, 50, 100, 500 or 1000 breaths.

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Besides being an essential rerequisite for meditation, the exercise of *Kāyotsarg* is performed for the following purposes.

### **For Self-Realisation**

Necessity and emphasis on the performance of relaxation is laid down because that is the only way one can hope to communicate with one's subconscious self. So long as there is turmoil in the body, i.e. the muscles and nerves are tense and taut, one cannot reach the subconscious level. Now *Kāyotsarg* can be performed in both directions, i.e. from outside to inside or from inside to outside. In other words, it can be from relaxation to self-awareness or from self-awareness to relaxation. In the former, first steps are to (i) stop all voluntary movements, (ii) relax the skeletal muscles of the limbs, trunk and head, (iii) stop speaking, and (iv) discipline the sense-organs. Once the total steadiness is achieved, self-awareness and self-realisation follow. In the latter case, self-awareness precedes the relaxation. The conscious mind is completely withdrawn from external environment and seeks the separate being of the spiritual self. The body is forgotten as soon as even a glimpse of the spiritual self is realised. The self-awareness progresses and finally the body becomes limp, relaxed and cast off automatically.

The conventional performance is, however, outside to inside. Cessation of voluntary movements of the body and speech brings about the discipline of sense-organs. The normal attraction of sensuous pleasure vanishes or is drastically reduced. The state of total relaxation is achieved and self-awareness—the journey to self-realisation—commences.

### **For Conservation of Energy**

Why is the practice of this exercise prescribed on several occasions and so often? What is the purpose behind this? One of the reasons is to save colossal waste of nervous energy in muscular action, in speech and in thought. Fre-



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quent relaxation can stop the waste, and the energy which would have been wasted futilely could be utilised purposefully. In particular, it can be used for attaining higher levels of consciousness.

Energy saved from being wasted can be accumulated, stored, and utilized to reach higher standards of meditation. Relaxation is a simple means of stopping the unnecessary waste of energy. In total relaxation, every tissue, each cell is prevented from being overloaded and the energy from being wasted. An essential condition of relaxation is slow, deep and regulated rhythmic breathing. In relaxation, metabolism slows down and need for oxygen is reduced drastically.

### **For Attitudinal Change**

Spiritual science prescribes a complete process for development of an integrated personality. Understandably, the process is divided into several stages, and the very first stage specifies relaxation.

It changes nasty, old and deep-rooted habits and attitudes. Relaxation is an instrument for transmuting psychological distortions. He, who does not practise relaxation, cannot hope to effect attitudinal change. Protagonists of self-hypnotism have also prescribed auto-relaxation which is equivalent to total relaxation. Be it attitudinal change or treatment for a disease, relaxation is the remedy.

### **For Mental Health**

For maintaining mental health, peace and balance of mind is essential. Peace of mind is the result of mental purity and mental purity accrues from stabilizing the body. More stabilized the body, cleaner the mind. The mental uncleanness is the result of mental excitation, agitation and turmoil, and unless the body is stabilised, mental turmoil cannot be eliminated. Motionless state of the body

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is the prerequisite for slow and silent respiration, silence and peace of mind. Unnecessary memories of the past and planning for the future continue to encroach on the present (work in hand) and vicious cycle of thoughts keeps the mental equipment in constant turmoil. Pre-requisite and pre-condition for preventing all the mental uncleanness is relaxation. Once the body is relaxed and made motionless, all the above afflictions vanish and the more advanced stages of the process of spiritual uplift are easily attainable.

### **For Easy Solution to Problems**

Whenever one is faced with a problem, he has to work out a solution. He has to sit down calmly in solitude, relax the body, purge his mind of all other matters and think and concentrate on the problem in hand. And flash, there comes the solution. Thus everybody in this world, during the course of his life, must resort to relaxation from time to time. But for a practitioner of meditation and one who aspires to tread the path of spiritual life, it is a must; if he does not practise relaxation regularly, he will not make much headway in the direction of spiritual progress.

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## IV

# Technique of Relaxation

### Relaxation-technique

Do you sit quietly and at ease for ten or even five minutes or do you continually fidget, shift your legs, rub your neck and do a dozen other movements called 'nervous habits'? Every movement, no matter how slight, involves a nerve impulse and every nerve impulse brings on some muscular contraction. Thus there can be no mental relaxation without the physical and no physical relaxation without the mental.

Before we take up a discussion on actual technique of relaxation, let us be clear about what relaxation is not and what it is? Firstly it is not a change of occupation, a play or a pleasant hobby enabling you to indulge in likable occupation to get away from a tiring routine. Gardening, knitting, painting, reading etc. are called recreations. In a way they are steps in the right direction but they merely substitute one form of activity for another. Recreation cannot substitute true relaxation which is 'doing nothing' when mind does not tick and muscles do not work.

Tension is the main problem—it is a stumbling block in the way to achievement. Whether you are an average human being or champion in some field, regular relaxation will give you a better chance of success in life.

Technique of relaxation can certainly not be mastered in the first lesson. But if you are willing to learn and try, you will possibly master it one day. In fact the technique is quite easy to learn and not difficult to practise. Moreover, even if you are unable to master it for sometime, you will feel the benefits of your efforts and will make you more confident.

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And now let us discuss the actual technique of relaxation and self-awareness.

It is essential to adopt a comfortable posture for performing the exercise or relaxation. The posture could be a standing, sitting or lying-down, but for beginners it is advisable to adopt a lying-down posture. Before lying down, however, create a suitable mental state and atmosphere for the exercise. Standing up, recite loudly : "It is essential for me to relax to get rid of the physical, mental and emotional tensions and I shall devote myself wholly to the exercise of relaxation." Having thus resolved, try to set aside your worries. Take a deep breath and stretch yourself fully, taking your arms above your head and standing on your toes. Do this three to four times. Then lie down and repeat the stretching operation again three to four times. Relaxation is an exercise of non-activity which is its basic principle. Don't think that you are going to *do* something, but let yourself go. This is essential. Now you are ready to start the practice of relaxation.

Lie down on a folded blanket on the floor on your back, legs slightly apart (about ten-twelve inches between the heels), arms gently alongside the body, palms turned up and eyes softly closed. The head must be laid very carefully on the floor so that there is no tension in the neck. If this is not comfortable, a folded towel may be kept under the neck. Later, do without it. It is essential that the head and neck be perfectly comfortable before proceeding further. Any cramping of neck may cause failure. Having achieved the position of maximum comfort, do not change it throughout the exercise. By following direction carefully, an intelligent adult can teach himself to relax by auto-suggestion. The breathing should become calm, slow and rhythmic but not necessarily deep. The stomach rises and falls rhythmically and silently without effort. Having regulated your breath forget it, and commence stage by stage relaxation of every muscle in each part of the body from the toes in the feet

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to the top of the head. The body itself will remain entirely motionless (except for the slight rise and fall of the abdomen) and the Conscious Will will slowly move over every part, patiently persuading it to relax. This is the age-old technique of auto-suggestion.

Proceed in small steps, beginning with the toes of the right foot, working systematically upwards in each limb, in turn. Relax the toes, instep, heel and upto the ankle joint of the right limb. Move upwards in small steps from joint to joint i.e. from the ankle to the knee, relaxing the calf muscles and then from the knee to the hip joint relaxing the thigh muscles and the buttocks. Now repeat the same process with the left limb. Both the limbs from waist downwards are now relaxed and lifeless. In the next stage, relax the muscles of the lower abdomen at the hip, around the waist and at the base of the spine; then abdominal walls in the front and back up to the hip. Now relax all the internal organs inside the abdominal cavity, viz. kidneys, intestines, spleen, pancreas, stomach and liver. Next, relax the chest muscles round the rib cage in the front as well as the back. The lungs and the heart inside the chest cavity have already been slowed down adequately. Having relaxed the whole trunk upto the top of the chest and collar bone, proceed to relax each arm in turn, first the right and then the left, from the fingers and thumb to the shoulder. Move upwards in small steps from joint to joint, first the thumb and fingers, then the palm upto the wrist, then from wrist to the elbow and from elbow to the shoulder and shoulder blades. This brings, upto the neck. In the next stage relax the muscles i.e., the top of the back the neck and the throat.

We have now come to a slightly more difficult part of the exercise. It is comparatively easy to relax the large skeletal muscles of the trunk and limbs, but because of our tightlipped posture, it is more difficult to relax the facial muscles. However, we have to proceed with the work with confidence and patience. Begin with relaxing the jaws; allow the lower jaw to fall without opening the mouth. Inside the

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mouth, the teeth must be unclenched and the tongue becomes limp. Next come to the facial muscles which surround the lips, mouth, nostrils and the cheeks. Then relax each ear in turn and come to the eyes. Eyelids are gently closed over the eyeballs without pressing them. Each eye is meticulously relaxed in turn. Now move over to the forehead and temples. Finally relax the whole scalp from right to left and back to front, upto the top of head. Having gone over the whole body, from feet to head, the operation may be repeated, as in the meantime some muscles might have recontracted. This second round will be much quicker than the first, followed by a third if necessary. It should be remembered that the auto-suggestion is followed by an experience of relaxation in each portion of the body. The next stage is to recognize the stage of relaxation. Having remained completely motionless, the first sign of relaxation is the sensation of gravity. Do not fight against the force of gravity, let it pull at your trunk and limbs which become heavier and heavier. Let the shoulders sink down. When the whole body has become relaxed, there is an acute perception of the stage of relaxation which is no longer auto-suggestion but a real experience. Once this stage is reached, the body is forgotten and the consciousness reveals its separate existence.

When the relaxation exercise is over, you have to recall the muscles and nerves to their normal state of working. Do this by allowing your Conscious Will to go over each part of the body from head to feet, breathing regularly and consciously.

### **Duration**

For relieving tension and fatigue, fifteen/twenty minutes of relaxation is sufficient. For a successful meditational session, no fixed duration can be prescribed. The practitioner has to look to his convenience and the purpose of the exercise. Sometimes it is necessary to continue the exercise for hours.

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The physiological mechanism behind this feeling is the drastic reduction of the current flowing in the connecting motor nerves. While the muscles were being coaxed to relax, by auto-suggestion, less and less current flew in the connecting motor nerves. Ultimately, the whole motor mechanism became passive and reposed. This was followed by their counterparts, the sensory nerves which are responsible for transmitting sensation to the brain. Thus, while conscious self was quite wakeful and alert, the body—physical self—was gradually becoming bereft of consciousness, giving a realistic experience of the detachment of the non-material consciousness from its material counterpart. Total relaxation is characterized by an actual experience of floating outside one's body, and this definitely is not auto-suggestion or hypnosis but realisation of a real fact.

Reverting to the physiological shell, almost all the nerve cells are revitalized. They are enjoying a much needed recess period, free from the burden of controlling the household chores of movements and transmission of sensations to the brain. No wonder, then, that a short period of relaxation can invigorate more efficiently than a long period of restless sleep. And this brings up a question of relationship between relaxation and sleep. It must be quite clear from the above that going to sleep while practising relaxation is quite contrary to the purpose of the exercise. Relaxation may, however, be practised before going to sleep ending in peaceful slumber.

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## Benefits of Relaxation

Any wise person, before undertaking an exercise, will think about its result. A practitioner (being wise) will also do the same. He would like to know what are the benefits accruing from the exercise of relaxation. It is a reasonable expectation. Many benefits on various levels accrue from this exercise. In this chapter we shall discuss briefly what one may expect to get on physical, mental and spiritual levels. In particular, we shall discuss :

- (i) Relief from tensions,
- (ii) Concentration,
- (iii) Development of 'Knowing and Seeing',
- (iv) Realization of spiritual self, and
- (v) Development of wisdom.

### Four Stages

In the first stage of relaxation, one learns to keep still and stop all voluntary movements. The turmoil due to restlessness vanishes and an acute sense of relaxation and relief from tension is experienced. There is some improvement in psychosomatic diseases such as hypertension and in due course this becomes measurable.

In the second stage of relaxation some further benefits accrue :

- \* There is soothing effect on the nervous system.
- \* Changes in the electric activity of the nervous system and brain take place (soothing alpha waves may be produced at will).



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- \* Rate of metabolism slows down and the need for oxygen is drastically reduced.
  - \* Control is established on the involuntary or smooth internal muscles. The level of excitation of these muscles is reduced and they are less tense.
  - \* Operational efficiency increases.
  - \* There is an increase in the capacity for bearing environmental changes such as heat, cold etc.
  - \* Alertness sharpens the intellect.
  - \* Concentration is easily achieved.

In the third stage, self-awareness increases and the physical body remains in the background. The subtle body is clearly identified and sometimes can be separated from the gross body. Perception is more acute and is considerably more than the normal five senses.

In the fourth and final stage, the separateness of the body and spiritual self is complete. Self-awareness is constant and without hindrance.

### **Relief from Tension**

The most obvious and measurable benefit accruing from relaxation is elimination of tension. Anybody who practises regular relaxation will get rid of his tensions in a short time and would remain relaxed, calm and unperturbed in any situation. It not only relieves tensions but revitalizes the organism. Gone is the heaviness and congestion, and the practitioner feels that he is floating above the ground. The feeling of lightness of the body is not so important. More significant is the relief from mental load and heaviness. Regular practitioner never suffers from mental disorders.

### **Freedom from Turmoil**

Our body is constantly agitated and in turmoil. Electric impulses keep the muscles magnetized and contracted. There is no rest. Relaxation starts when there is suspension of all movements. The whole body is inert and static.

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We have a voluntary nervous system and an autonomic nervous system. First we inactivate the voluntary nervous system and stop all voluntary movements of the skeletal muscles. As the practice continues and the muscles begin to relax and drain out the tension, turmoil dies down and in due course is completely gone. When the control on the voluntary nerves is firmly established, the autonomic nerves also calm down. The vital activities of the body are the province of autonomic nervous system and are not generally under voluntary control. But as the relaxation progresses, these activities also calm down. Breathing slows down and the number of breaths per minute is considerably reduced. The heart-beat and the circulation of blood also slow down. Rate of energy-metabolism is reduced and the need of oxygen is drastically cut down. All the needs and necessities of the organism are reduced to a minimum and an unprecedented peacefulness prevails in the absence of turmoil.

### **Revitalization of the Organism**

On the physical level, benefits of relaxation are obvious and measurable. The sensory nerves are always loaded with the continuous task of collecting and despatching information. Motor nerves are similarly engaged in transmitting messages from the brain to the muscles, glands and other tissues and producing action. The work is tiring and there is no respite. Relaxation provide much needed rest to the nerves and neurons. They are free from the load of their onerous duties. The rest gives them a chance of recuperating. The flow of vital energy saved from being wasted in producing tension now revitalizes and rejuvenates every tissue and cell. There is no wonder, therefore, that relaxation can relieve fatigue more effectively in a few minutes than hours of indifferent sleep. It will also be clear from the above that sleep, during exercise of relaxation, is considered a distraction. However, relaxation may be performed just before retiring for the night to get a more restful sleep.

Those who risk heart diseases because of high blood pressure can strengthen their resistance capacity by practising

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relaxation. A hundred electronic factory<sup>1</sup> workers, in risk of developing heart diseases because of their high blood pressure, cholesterol level or smoking habits, were given an hour's relaxation session, once a week for eight weeks. Their B.P. decreased significantly. Three years later these workers had maintained lower blood pressure and had suffered fewer incidence of heart diseases than in a control group of patients who had not received treatment.

### **Perception of Subtle Phenomena**

Practitioner of *preksā* meditation should be familiar with the order of meditation exercise. The very first step of the meditation session is relaxation and stability of the body. This is the pre-requisite of all techniques. Stability and relaxation leads to perception of breathing, perception of body and perception of thought. Only when one is able to maintain the motionless state of the body, one can perceive the subtle sensations of the body and, can know what is happening at organic levels and what is happening at cellular level. The functioning of the nervous system and endocrine system, transmission of electric impulses from nerve to nerve, interaction of hormones and neuro-hormones and the effect of neurotransmitters on certain regions of the brain are all perceived under deep relaxation. As the regular practice develops, the depth of relaxation, acuteness of perception increases. As higher levels of consciousness are reached, the perception transcends the sensory field and opens the gates of ESP (extra-sensory-perception).

### **Self-awareness**

When the turmoil of the body ceases and one achieves total motionlessness, there is an acute state of self-awareness. The body is forgotten and the spiritual SELF reveals its separate existence.

This is neither imagination nor auto-suggestion but a real experience. This feeling is unprecedented. The separate exist-

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1. 'Case history' related at the Inaugural Conference of British Holistic Medical Association held in London in September 1983.

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ence of spiritual self was either derived or believed to be so but never actually experienced.

Let us try to understand the process which brought out this experience. As soon as the skeletal muscles were relaxed, the current flowing in the connecting nerves came to almost zero. The entire motor mechanism became passive and reposed. Very soon its counterpart—the sensory mechanism followed suit. Thus while the spiritual self was quite wakeful and alert, the physical self was gradually becoming bereft of consciousness giving a realistic experience of the separateness of the non-material spiritual self from its material counterpart. The experience is characterized by an actual feeling of floating outside one's body. This is self-awareness leading to self-realisation.

### **Perception of Aura**

Everything—living and non-living—is surrounded by its aura, the envelop of its electro-magnetic radiation. This is normally invisible to naked eyes. The aura of a living being is interaction of material and psychic radiations. In the profound state of relaxation, the aura becomes perceptible. This perception is partly sensory and partly extra-sensory.

When the motionless state is perfect, the ingress from external environment is minimal. In this state, the consciousness transcends the physical body and becomes aware of the activities of the subtle inner body. The awareness of the subtle body affects attitudinal change.

### **Development of Wisdom**

Wisdom constitutes discernment of material from non-material, body from soul, and the physical self from the spiritual self.

Discernment is not mental nor imaginary but real. The process can be illustrated by :

- (a) Separation, by churning, of cream or butter from whey :—This is cream and this is whey.
- (b) Separation, by crushing, of oil from oil cake :—Here is oil and there lies the oil cake.

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- (c) Separation, by melting in a furnace, of gold from dross :—Here is pure gold and there lies the dross.
- (d) In the same way separation of the self from the non-self :—Here is SELF and there lies the body. This is wisdom.

Body is material, self is non-material. Body is perishable, self is eternal. The separation is real when wisdom develops. It is a great achievement. And the benefit accrues from *Kāyotsarg*, i.e. self-awareness by relaxation. The realistic evaluation of the body, the physical body, an ally of the spiritual self in his war against the *karma-śarīra*, is possible only under relaxation.

### **Wisdom of Abandonment**

When the wisdom is fully developed, the capacity for abandonment also develops. Abandonment is then painless whether it is of the body or the sensuous pleasures or the family or the wealth. The capacity is so high that anything can be cast off like a shell at any time without any suffering because there is no attachment. When the capacity for abandonment is fully developed, there is full awareness of the SELF all the time. I am spiritual self and all the rest are just non-self, associated but not identical.

Wisdom is different from intelligence in that the latter is replete with likes and dislikes. This is pleasant and that is unpleasant. Wisdom transcends the duality of like and dislike—attachment and aversion. Equanimity and tranquillity take the place of the like and dislike. The benefit derived from relaxation is substitution of intelligence by wisdom.

As wisdom matures, intelligence takes a back seat and transcendence of gain-loss, pleasure-pain, criticism-adulation, life-death, and such other dualities is natural and effortless. The dualities are replaced by a single entity, equanimity and bliss.

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