



The Hindu Prayer Book

For Patients, Caregivers and Chaplains

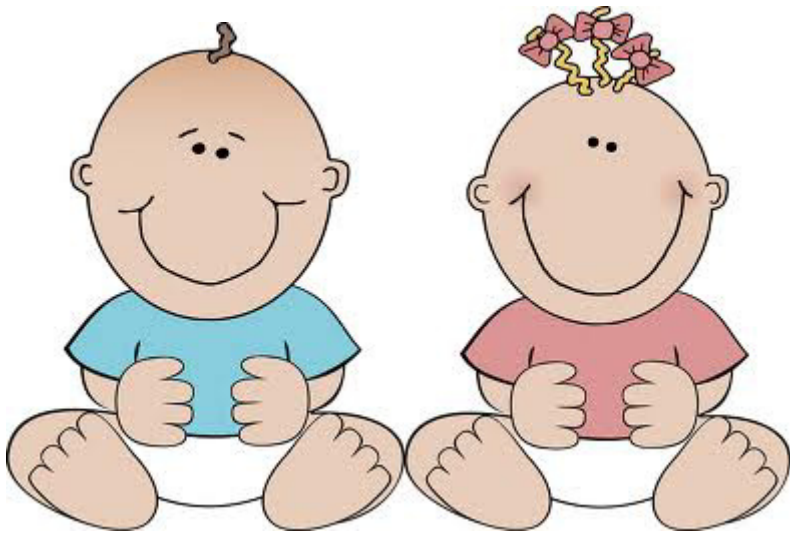


Spiritual pathway from pain to peace (Shanti)

Hindu Mandir (Temple) Executives' Conference (HMEC)
2012

*"Health is the greatest gift,
contentment the greatest wealth,
faithfulness the best relationship."*

- Buddha



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Preface

Throughout the long journey of our life, we go through many experiences. Some are joyous, and some bring us pain. All our life events weave a beautiful tapestry, which makes us who we are. Both joyful and stressful events eventually serve to make us stronger, and cement our relationships with our near and dear ones.

There are stressful times in our lives, when a loved one is gravely ill. The support of one's friends and family go a long way in making this time easier for us. One's faith also plays an important role in mitigating stress.

Followers of the Hindu tradition, also known as Sanatana Dharma (The Eternal way) have, for millennia, sought answers and solace in the Vedas and the Upanishads, which are the central philosophical texts of Hinduism.

The Vedas hold that suffering is a normal part of life. They suggest that we accept suffering just as readily as we accept happiness. The Upanishads compare life to walking through a garden in full blossom. The garden has plants with beautiful flowers, but with sharp thorns.

Hindus embrace the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"; the whole world is one family. Giving and caring is built into the philosophy and lifestyle. Support is available in many different ways, whether it is through family, friends, or religious leaders like Hindu priests and chaplains.

However, most Hospital Chaplaincy departments do not have a Hindu chaplain, or even a priest as a consultant. This booklet is developed under the auspices of the Hindu Mandir (Temple) Executives' Conference (HMEC), in cooperation with Hindu Temples of North America, with the objective of providing some comfort and spiritual guidance at a time when you or your loved one is ill or recovering from an illness or condition.

Giving and Caring

Indisposition, illness, loneliness and need for care of any kind is an integral part of our modern-day living. Sooner or later, each one of us will face our physical limitations during the challenging journey of our life.

Our own illness or the illness of a loved one is a time of great stress in our lives. Such times give rise to countless anxieties, and may challenge our very core faith, and test our beliefs.

Throughout this emotional and spiritual time, you may feel overwhelmed by the events unfolding in your life. Feelings of helplessness may engulf you. These feelings are completely normal. Our hope is that this book will help guide you on your spiritual path, so that you can better equip yourself with the tools you will need to negotiate this journey.

In this book, references to spiritual care as opposed to religious care is intended to highlight the fact that Hindu Dharma (Sanatan Dharma) is not a religion but are guiding principles in the spiritual journey of a person.

Hindu Religion is the name that is commonly used to describe 'Sanatan Dharma.' 'Sanatan' means 'forever living, or, that which will never be destroyed', and Dharma means that which sustains you. The followers of Hindu Dharma are on a never-ending quest to perform the rightful duties in life.





**Life Situations: Coping
with Illnesses**

Coping with Illnesses

Illnesses can cause a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions. Whether the cause is from a genetic disease, lifestyle choice, or environmental injury, illnesses interrupt our life. In the worst situations, they can cause permanent disabilities, surgeries, and even death.

Many people may experience illnesses that lead to hospitalization. Hospitalizations can be a time of extreme hardship. You may feel sad, scared, and angry about your illness, or frustrated that you cannot complete household responsibilities. Constant running back and forth between home and hospital can lead to extreme tiredness.

Nervousness or anxiety about your loved one is a normal feeling. Other worries may include difficulty completing routine tasks at home or work, difficulty sleeping, or worries about accessing appropriate medical care.

All of these thoughts and emotions are natural. The timing or causes of illness can vary, but each situation raises concerns about healing and suffering.

In these situations, it is important to recognize that help is available both inside and outside of the health care system.

It is advised that you get the help you need, however best you need it. Whether you prefer an allopathic physician, homeopathic practitioner, Ayurvedic doctor, or other healer, you should treat your illness as best as possible. Without treatment, your illness can deteriorate, cause other medical problems, worsen your mood, and even affect your relationships.

Medical illnesses can also cause emotional and behavior problems. The most common problems are sadness and nervousness, what psychiatrists often call “depression” and “anxiety.”

These are normal responses to illnesses. In fact, most people realize that these negative emotions get better as their illnesses are treated. However, depression and anxiety may not improve

in severe situations even if people have tried to help themselves. In those cases, it is helpful to talk to other people about this problem. These can be people close to us such as family, friends, or colleagues. They can be professionals within the health system such as psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, or social workers. They can also be religious healers, swamis, gurus, or others whom we trust.

The type of help offered may differ based on the source, and can include advice, counseling, medication, or spiritual practices. Getting help is important since negative thoughts and emotions can worsen our medical illnesses and even become illnesses on their own.

A Hindu viewpoint on health and sickness emphasizes certain points. The Law of Karma, which is the Law of Consequences, says that we alone are responsible for our lives. It reminds us that everything that is happening to us is a result of our past actions, even from lives that we cannot remember. A Vedantic perspective says that we may forget that our minds and bodies are attachments, our soul (atman) is the only reality, and that attachments cause suffering. We may need to train ourselves to remember that our minds and bodies are as temporary as the world around us. We may get sad, scared, and angry, questioning why we became sick.

Again, we may need to remember that though we do not always control our destiny, we have the freedom to choose our current actions. The right decisions will lead us to peace of mind, thus promoting improved healing.

Some methods of dealing with anxiety and depression are outlined in the next chapter. Methods such as prayer, meditation, or japa, can be very powerful tools and lead to long-lasting positive influences in our lives.



Prayer



What is Prayer?

Prayer is not some mystical communication with a “God” who is outside of us. It is simply speaking with our innermost thoughts. The objective of prayer is to provide solace; to be at peace with oneself and acknowledge that there is a greater power that can intervene on our behalf.

A prayer could be a wish for relief from some pain or suffering, or to address a want or a desire, whether for material objects or knowledge, or for strength to accomplish the task before us.

A prayer acknowledges duality – oneself as different from the Supreme Being. A prayer made with complete confidence in the Supreme Being, and with a sense of gratitude, is the highest form of prayer.

Prayer is a powerful tool which can bring you comfort and help you re-focus and re-juvenate you. Prayers can be to the Supreme Being, in any form you choose. The God of your choosing is your Ishta Devata (favorite God). He or she can be different for everyone. Whichever aspect of God you like becomes your Ishta Devata.

However, you may find your mind is too distracted to be able to pray. At such times, some concrete symbols may be helpful, such as a picture of a deity or a symbol such as Om. Prayers can be offered in different ways. We suggest one of many such ways:

Place the picture of the deity or symbol facing west in the person’s premises with the person facing the picture (and

hence east). Put the kumkum on his/her forehead. Chant a mantra.

Any prayer which suits you can be used. See the complete prayer with its meaning and significance in the Prayers section.

All prayers have their own vibrations, which help a person, whether in sickness or in good health. There are many types of prayers. From a simple one involving a short prayer with folded hands to an elaborate yagna, are all prayers. Whatever suits you best is the best prayer for you.

Several common universal Hindu prayers are included in the next chapter.

Mantra

A mantra is a potent sound that when articulated and pronounced properly will provide the desired effect.

A mantra can be a syllable like “Om” or a set of syllables or words such as “Om Ghum Ganapataye Namaha”.

The efficacy of a mantra is directly proportional to the sincerity with which it is chanted. The correct pronunciation of the Mantra is equally important. Pronounced correctly, it produces certain vibrations which resonate with one’s inner being and bring about positive feelings.

Each mantra has the power to deliver a set result. Chanting of mantras with the correct vibrations and devotion therefore is a guarantee of delivering a result.

Mantras are also supposed to be chanted over a period of time and for a specific number of times. For example you may chant a mantra for 108 times for 24 days or 108 time for a mandala (approx. 48 days) and so forth.

The actual result may start to fructify even during the prescribed period or occur after the prescribed period.

Unlike in prayer, the focus is on the Mantra itself, with the knowledge that it has the power to invoke the required supreme strengths for obtaining the result.

Japa

The Sanskrit word japa is derived from the root **jap-**, meaning “to utter in a low voice, repeat internally, mutter”. **Japa** is a spiritual discipline involving the systematic and meditative repetition of a syllable, phrase or word, or the name of a Divine Power. This may be a mantra, which may be spoken softly, enough for the practitioner to hear it, or it may be spoken purely within the reciters’ mind. Japa may be performed while sitting in a meditation posture, while performing other activities, or as part of formal worship in group settings.

In most forms of japa, the repetitions are counted using a string of beads known as a japa mala. This is usually made of Rudraksh or Tulsi beads, never plastic beads. The number of beads in the japa mala is generally 108, which has great significance in Hindu tradition. The bead string has one big bead called the Meru. During japa the bead string is held in the right hand and moved one bead after each mantra repetition. The bead movement starts

with the first bead after the Meru and ends in the Meru signifying end of one cycle (108) of japa.

Always acknowledgement of a greater and supreme power beyond oneself, a sense of gratitude and a feeling of oneness with the divine are most critical for the success of the Japa.

Meditation is another method of providing relief from stress and anxiety. The aim of meditation is to bring inner peace within ourselves in a positive and spiritual way. Through the practice of Meditation, we can train our minds to achieve a state of tranquility, without being disturbed by outside forces. Meditation helps in training and developing the strengths of the mind to achieve this peacefulness.

Some methods of meditation are given in the next chapter.





**Selected Prayers
Meditation**

In most Hindu homes the following five deities (Punch Devas) are worshipped:

1. Ganesh 2. Vishnu 3. Shiva 4. Shakti 5. Surya (Sun)

Prayer to Lord Ganesh

वक्र तुण्ड महाकाय, सूर्य कोटि सम प्रभः ।
निर्विघ्नं कुरु मे देव, शुभ कार्येषु सर्वदा ॥

Vakra-Tunda-Mahakaaya, Surya-Koti-Sam-Prabhah.
Nirvighnam-Kuru-Me-Deva, Shubha-Karyeshu-Sarvadaa.

O elephant headed and large bodied Lord, radiant as a thousand Suns, I ask for your grace so that this task that I am starting may complete without any hindrances.

Prayer to Lord Shiva

कर्पूरगौरं करुणावतारं संसार-सारं भुजगेन्द्रहारम् ।
सदा वसन्तं हृदयारविन्दे भवं भवानीसहितं नमामि ॥

Karpura-gauram Karunaavataaram
Samsaar Saaram Bhujagendra-haram,
Sadaa Vasantam Hridayaarvinde
Bhavan Bhawani Sahitam Namami

He who is fair like camphor, who is ever compassionate, by whose being the entire universe exists, around whose neck there is a garland of serpents, may he always live in my heart along with Bhavani, his consort. I bow down to him.

Prayer to Lord Vishnu

शांताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशं,
विश्वाधारं गगन सदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभांगम् ।
लक्ष्मीकान्तं कमलनयनं योगिभिर्ध्यानगम्यं,
वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैक नाथम् ॥

Shaantaakaaram Bhujagshaynam Padmanaabham Suresham,
Vishvaadhaaram Gagan Sadrisham Meghavaranam Shubhangam.
Lakshmi-kaantam Kamal-nayam Yogibhir-dhyan-gamyam,
Vande Vishnu Bhav-bhaya-haram Sarva-lokaika Naatham

I adore Lord Vishnu who is the embodiment of peace,
who lies on the Shesha serpent, whose navel is the
source of the Lotus, whose complexion is swarthy like
the clouds, whose body shines with heavenly beauty,
who is the beloved of Goddess Lakshmi, whose eyes are
like lotus, who is meditated upon by the yogis, who is
the remover of the fear of the world-process.

Prayer to Mother Shakti

या देवी सर्व भूतेषु मातृरूपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

Ya Devi Sarva-bhuteshu, Matri-rupenu-sansthitaa,
Namastasyae, Namastasyae, Namastasyae, Namaho-namah.

O Mother, who is present everywhere,
who is the embodiment of Power and Energy,
I bow to you, I bow to you, I bow to you.

Prayer to Sun (Gayatri Mantra)

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः, तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं
भर्गोदेवस्य धीमहि, धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।

Om Bhur-Bhuvah-Svah, Tat-Savitur-Varenyam,
Bhargo-Devasya-Dheemahi, Dhiyo-Yo-Nah-Prachodayaata.

Let us meditate upon the glory of Ishwar, who has created this universe, who is fit to be worshipped, who is the remover of all sins and ignorance. May He enlighten our intellect.

Early Morning Prayers

This prayer is usually said when arising in the morning.

कराग्रे वसते लक्ष्मीः, करमध्ये सरस्वती ।
करमूले तु गोविन्दः, प्रभाते करदर्शनम् ॥

Karaagre Vasate Lakshmeeh, Karmadhye Saraswatee.
Karamoole tu Govindah, Prabhaate kara darshanam.

The front of hands (i.e. finger tips) is ascribed to Laxmi (Goddess of wealth), the middle of the hands to Saraswati, and the root (i.e. part of hands near to the wrist) to Govinda (Krishna). Therefore, every morning one should respectfully have a look at one's hands (which symbolizes honest labor).

समुद्रवसने देवी, पर्वतस्तनमण्डले ।
विष्णुपत्नि नमस्तुभ्यं, पादस्पर्श क्षमस्वमे ॥

Samudra vasane Devi, parvata stana mandale
Vishnupatni namastubhyam, Paada sparsha kshamasvame.

O! Mother Earth, who has the ocean as clothes and mountains and forests on her body, who is the wife of Lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet.

Mahamrityunjaya Mantra

This prayer is usually said for fearlessness, and when a person is very ill. It is usually repeated three times at a minimum.

ॐ त्र्यंबकं यजामहे सुगंधिम् पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।
उर्वारुकमिव बंधनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मा अमृतात् ॥

Om, Trayambakam-Yajaamahe-Sugandhim-Pushti-Vardhanam,
Urvarukam-iva Bandhanan-Mrityoramukshiya-Ma-amritaat.

I worship the fragrant three-eyed one who nourishes all beings; grant me liberation from bondage in the same manner as a ripe cucumber naturally severs itself from the vine.

Peace Prayers

For general well-being of everyone, and to bring peace to the mind.

ॐ असतो मा सद् गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्माऽमृतम् गमय ॥

Om, Asato Maa Sad Gamaya;
Tamaso Maa Gytira Gamaya;
Mrityora Maa Amritam Gamaya

Lead me from the unreal to the real; from darkness (ignorance) to light (knowledge); and from death to immortality.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः । सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु । मा कश्चित् दुःखभागभवेत् ॥

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah; Sarve Santu Niraamayaah;
Sarve Bhadraani Pashyantu;
Maa Kashchida-Dukha-Bhaag-Bhaveta
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih

May everybody be happy. May everybody be free from disease. May everybody have good luck. May none fall on evil days.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

Om Purnamadah purnamidam,
purnat purnamudachyate,
Purnasya purnamadaya, Purna mevavashishyate

That is perfect. This is perfect. Out of perfect only perfect comes. Even after taking perfect out of perfect, that is perfect which remains.

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः
पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः
वनस्पतयः शान्तिविश्वे देवः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म
शान्तिः सर्वशान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः
सा मा शान्तिरेधि ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

Om, Dhyaoah Shaantih, Antariksha Shaantih,
Prithavi Shaantih, Apah Shaantih,
Oshadhayah Shaantih, Vanaspatyah Shaantih,
Vishvedevah Shaantih, Brahma Shaantih,
Sarvam Shaantih, Shaantih Eva Shaantih,
Saa Maa Shaantir-edhi.
Om Shaantih, Shaantih, Shaantih

Om. May there be peace in the sky and in space. May there be peace on land and in the waters. May herbs and food bring us peace. May all the personifications of God bring us peace. May God bring us peace. May there be peace throughout the world. May the peace be peaceful. May God give me such peace.

Geeta Shlokas (Verses from the Geeta)

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय, नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

Vāsānsi jīrnāni yathā vihāya, navāni grihanāti narō.parāni.
tathā śarīrāni vihāya jīrnā-nyanyāni sanyāti navāni dēhī.

- 2/22

Just as a man casts off his worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the soul (Atman) casts off its worn-out body and enters one which is new.

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

nainam chindanti śastrāni nainam dahati pāvakah.
na cainam klēdayantypō na śōshayati mārutah. - 2/23

Weapons cannot cleave the soul (Atman), fire cannot burn it. Water does not wet (or drown) it, nor does wind dry it.

Meditation Techniques

Meditation has been proven to be very effective in reducing anxiety. Studies show that it lowers oxygen consumption, decreases respiratory rate, increases blood flow and slows the heart rate. It leads to a deeper level of relaxation. It reduces anxiety by lowering the levels of blood lactate. It decreases muscle tension (any pain due to tension) and headaches.

The aim of meditation is to bring inner peace within our self and the world in a positive and spiritual way.

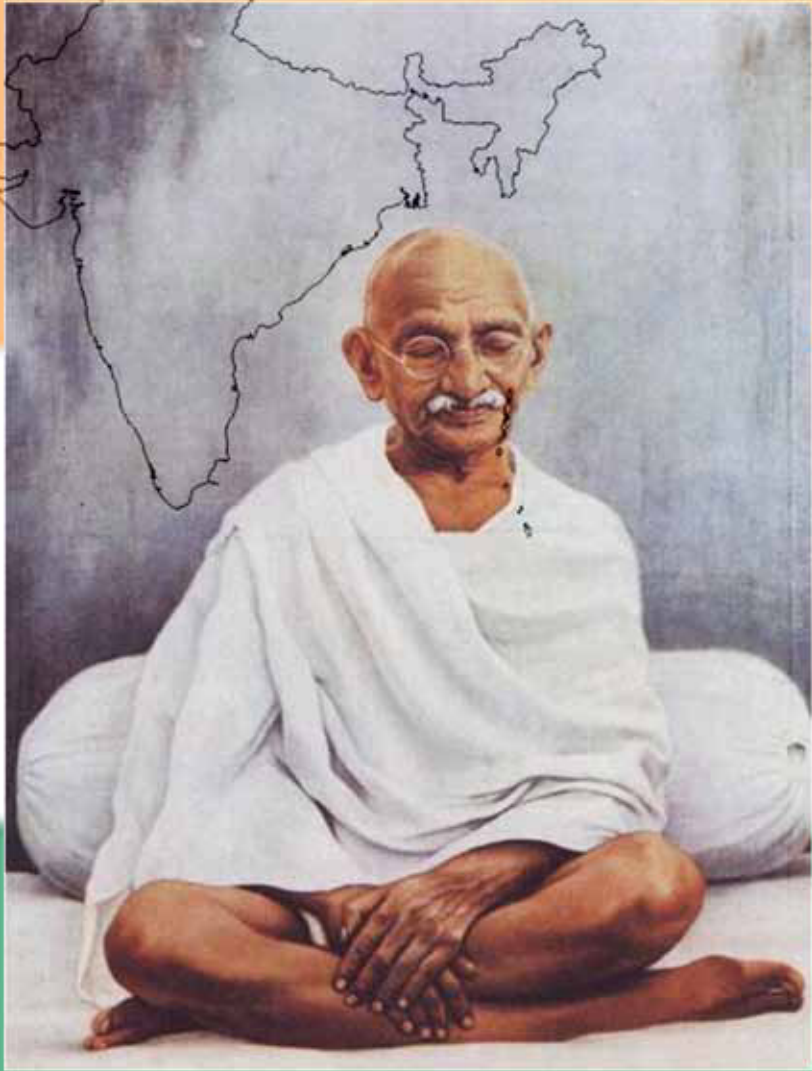
The practice of Meditation focuses our attention on our thoughts, actions, and present moments non-judgmentally. It helps and trains our mind from getting distracted by outside disturbances and enables us to focus our thoughts and relax the mind.

Sit in a cross-legged position (also called Sukh Asana). If that is not possible, sit comfortably in a chair with both feet planted firmly on the ground. Close your eyes. Breathe in deeply through your nose to the count of four. Then hold your breath till the count of four. Release your breath through your nose till the count of six. This makes one cycle. Continue in this manner for five minutes, or as long as you would like to.

Other forms of meditation focus on being aware of your breath, or counting your breaths.

There are many variations of this method. Concentrating on an object in your mind's eye helps in focusing your mind. Any object or God's image can become the object of your focus.





**Holistic Health Care:
Looking Forward**

Holistic Health

Congratulations on your successful return to good health! We wish you a speedy recovery.

Now that your illness is a thing of the past, it is time to look at old habits and lifestyles, and see what you can do to ensure that you never have to go back to the hospital.

Health is a dynamic concept. It is influenced by a host of forces both within and outside a person. Maintaining a balance among these forces can provide good health and wellness.

Lifestyle choices include what we eat, what we do each day and how we engage in our daily life. These choices can include risk behaviors such as a sedentary or passive life, eating habits, indulging in addictive substances, and non-committal sexual relationships.

As the old adage says, “you are what you eat.” Hindu tradition has always had a big emphasis on food and nutrition. In order to maintain optimum health, we need to examine our nutritional habits.

All foods are divided into three categories, according to Hindu tradition. They are Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic foods.

Sattvic foods are fresh, juicy, light, nourishing, and provide energy to the body without taxing it. The psyche (chitta) is brought to a centered state by sattvic foods, because they bring readily digestible and nourishing food materials to the system. Examples of sattvic foods are fruit such as oranges, apples, bananas, grapes, and mangoes that

are juicy (not pulpy). Wheat and barley are sattvic grains. Moong beans, yellow split peas, rice, leafy vegetables, squash, milk, and butter are very good. Almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds are also considered sattvic foods.

Rajasic foods are bitter, sour, salty, pungent, hot, and dry. These foods create sensuality, greed, jealousy, anger, conceit and irreligious feelings. Foods fried in oil, sweets sold in shops, spicy foods, salted bread, sodas, and all aphrodisiacs are rajasic in nature. Red peppers, hot spices, pickles, oils, dry and fresh ginger and sea salt are rajasic.

Tamasic foods consume a large amount of energy while being digested. They are dry, old, bad smelling, and/or unpalatable. Tamasic food increases pessimism, ignorance, laziness and doubt. Foods that are cold and stale or that have been obtained by violence are tamasic, as are those that make one dull and drowsy. Incompatible food combinations--like milk and vinegar, or radishes and honey--produce tamas in the body chemistry. When hot and cold foods are taken together, they become tamasic. Meat, fish, and eggs are tamasic foods. Leftover food is also tamasic.

When choosing what kinds of food to eat, all this should be kept in mind. The perfect diet is one that is light and nourishing, and easily digested.

These days there is a lot of controversy about genetically modified (GM) foods versus organic foods. It is best to consume foods that have no added chemicals or pesticides in them. When choosing foods, please educate yourself about the best kinds of foods to buy.

Along with the mind, the body should also be cared for. Going for walks is an ideal way to keep fit. Joining a gym is another good idea.

A good Yoga routine will also go a long way towards maintaining your health. Yoga not only keeps the body fit, it also keeps one centered and rooted in discipline.

And do not forget your mental health. A healthy mind contributes immensely to a healthy body. Keep your mind calm and unperturbed through meditative practices.

We hope that this holistic approach to health helps you incorporate the perspectives of body, mind and spirit into your life, and that you enjoy many years of continued good health.





Inspiring Stories

Buying a Miracle

A little girl went to her bedroom and pulled a glass jelly jar from its hiding place in the closet.

She poured the change out on the floor and counted it carefully. Three times, even. The total had to be exactly perfect. No chance here for mistakes.

Carefully placing the coins back in the jar and twisting on the cap, she slipped out the back door and made her way six blocks to the drug store with the big Red Indian Chief sign above the door.

She waited patiently for the pharmacist to give her some attention, but he was too busy talking to a customer. The little girl tried to get his attention without success. She twisted her feet to make a scuffing noise. Nothing. She cleared her throat with the most disgusting sound she could muster. No good. Finally she took a quarter from her jar and banged it on the glass counter. That did it!

‘And what do you want?’ the pharmacist asked in an annoyed tone of voice. ‘Can’t you see I’m busy? I’m talking to my brother from Chicago whom I haven’t seen in ages,’ he said without waiting for a reply to his question.

‘Well, I want to talk to you about my brother,’ the little girl answered back in the same annoyed tone. ‘He’s really, really sick....and I want to buy a miracle.’

‘I beg your pardon?’ said the pharmacist.

‘His name is Andrew and he has something bad growing inside his head and my Daddy says only a miracle can save him now. So how much does a miracle cost?’

‘We don’t sell miracles here, little girl. I’m sorry but I can’t help you,’ the pharmacist said, softening a little...

‘Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn’t enough, I will get the rest. Just tell me how much it costs....’

The pharmacist’s brother was a well dressed man. He stooped down and asked the little girl, ‘What kind of a miracle does your brother need?’

‘ I don’t know,’ she replied with her eyes welling up. I just know he’s really sick and Mommy says he needs an operation. But my Daddy can’t pay for it, so I want to use my money..’

‘How much do you have?’ asked the man from Chicago.

‘One dollar and eleven cents,’ she answered, barely audible.

‘And it’s all the money I have, but I can get some more if I need to.’

‘Well, what a coincidence,’ smiled the man. ‘A dollar and eleven cents---the exact price of a miracle for little brothers.’

He took her money in one hand and with the other hand he grasped her mitten and said ‘Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother and meet your parents.

Let's see if I have the miracle you need.'

That well-dressed man was Dr. Carlton Armstrong, a surgeon, specializing in neuro-surgery. The operation was completed free of charge and it wasn't long until Andrew was home again and doing well.

Mom and Dad were happily talking about the chain of events that had led them to this place..

'That surgery,' her Mom whispered, 'was a real miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost?'

The little girl smiled. She knew exactly how much a miracle cost...one dollar and eleven cents...plus the faith of a little child.

In our lives, we never know how many miracles we will need.

A miracle is not the suspension of natural law, but the operation of a higher law.

What goes around, comes around

One day a man saw an old lady, stranded on the side of the road, but even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her. Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help her for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe; he looked poor and hungry.

He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill which only fear can put in you.

He said, 'I'm here to help you, ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm? By the way, my name is Bryan Anderson.'

Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Bryan crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tire. But he had to get dirty and his hands hurt.

As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down the window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was only just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid.

Bryan just smiled as he closed her trunk. The lady asked how much she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with her. She already imagined all the awful

things that could have happened had he not stopped. Bryan never thought twice about being paid. This was not a job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty, who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way.

He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone who needed help, she could give that person the assistance they needed, and Bryan added, `And think of me.`

He waited until she started her car and drove off. It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed for home, disappearing into the twilight.

A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home. It was a dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. The waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a stranger. Then she remembered Bryan.

After the lady finished her meal, she paid with a hundred dollar bill. The waitress quickly went to get change for her hundred dollar bill, but the old lady had slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. The waitress wondered where the lady could be.

Then she noticed something written on the napkin.

There were tears in her eyes when she read what the lady wrote: `You don't owe me anything. I have been there too. Somebody once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here is what you do: Do not let this chain of love end with you. ` Under the napkin were four more \$100 bills.

Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day. That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could the lady have known how much she and her husband needed it? With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard....

She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered soft and low, `Everything's going to be all right. I love you, Bryan Anderson. `

There is an old saying `What goes around comes around. ` Let this light shine.

Why do we have to read the Bhagavad Gita?

Since we cannot understand Sanskrit, what is the point of reading any shloka or text in Sanskrit?

Read on:

An old farmer lived on a farm in the mountains with his young grandson. Each morning Grandpa was up early reading his Bhagavad Gita. His grandson wanted to be just like him and tried to imitate him in every way he could. One day the grandson asked, "Grandpa! I try to read the Bhagavad Gita just like you but I don't understand it, and what I do understand I forget as soon as I close the book. What good does reading the Bhagavad Gita do?"

The Grandfather quietly turned from putting coal in the stove and replied, "Take this coal basket down to the river and bring me back a basket of water."

The boy did as he was told, but all the water leaked out before he got back to the house. The grandfather laughed and said, "You'll have to move a little faster next time," and sent him back to the river with the basket to try again. This time the boy ran faster, but again the basket was empty before he returned home. Out of breath, he told his grandfather that it was impossible to carry water in a basket, and he went to get a bucket instead. The old man said, "I don't want a bucket of water; I want a basket of water. You're just not trying hard enough," and he went out the door to watch the boy try again.

At this point, the boy knew it was impossible, but he wanted to show his grandfather that even if he ran as fast

as he could, the water would leak out before he got back to the house.

The boy again dipped the basket into river and ran hard, but when he reached his grandfather the basket was again empty. Out of breath, he said, "See Grandpa, it's useless!"

"So you think it is useless?" The old man said, "Look at the basket." The boy looked at the basket and for the first time realized that the basket was different. It had been transformed from a dirty old coal basket and was now clean, inside and out.

"Son, that's what happens when you read the Bhagavad Gita. You might not understand or remember everything in one reading, but with repeated reading, you will be changed, inside and out. That is the work of Krishna in our lives."

Billi Mat Palo!

A Swamiji was on his deathbed. His disciple, wanting a last lesson from him, went to him to get the benefit of his gyan (knowledge).

Swamiji simply said, “kabhi billi mat palo, (never keep a cat as a pet)” and then died.

The disciple was very puzzled. What kind of advice was this? He didn't understand. But he went to a small village, became a swami himself, and started living a life of austerity and penance in a small hut. There were some mice in his hut, which would gnaw holes in his dhoti. Poor Swamiji had only 2 dhotis, and that too were eaten away by the mice. So he got a cat, and the mice problem went away.

But the cat was always hungry, and needed milk. Swamiji didn't have any money to buy milk. Some people donated a cow to give milk for the cat.

The cow needed a lot of grass, so the townspeople gave him some farmland behind his hut, in order for the cow to graze on the grass.

But Swamiji spent his entire time caring for the piece of land. His prayers and tapas were disturbed.

The townspeople saw this, and wanted to help. They went to the swami and told him that there was a bal vidhva (young widow) in the town, they could ask her to help the swamiji out and do his seva. The swamiji agreed. So the Bal Vidhva started caring for the swamiji, his land, cow and cat.

After a while the townspeople came to the swami and said

that the bal vidhva spends a lot of time caring for him, and so her reputation is getting ruined, people are talking. She is innocent, only you can save her. Please marry her. So in order to save her reputation, the swamiji agreed to marry her.

After a few years, there were 4-5 children running around. They created so much noise that the swamiji was always getting disturbed in his tapas. Once he yelled at his wife to stop the children from making so much noise. The wife said, “they are children, of course they will make noise. If you didn’t want all this, why did you get married in the first place?”

Then the swamiji understood the teachings of his Guruji.

“Guruji ne kaha tha, kabhi billi mat palo” (Guruji had said, never keep a cat as a pet).

Everything happens for some good

In one of India's little kingdoms of long ago there lived a King who (like most of them) was fond of hunting in wild places. His Chief Advisor was a very intelligent man, and also a very optimistic one. He was famous for seeing the rosy side of things. In fact, so strong was his habit of finding good in everything that at times this annoyed his ruler.

One day when the King and his Advisor were on a hunting trip through a dense jungle which went on for miles, the King decided to have a fresh coconut for his breakfast, and, finding a coconut tree near at hand, with his sword cut down a coconut. But as luck would have it, his sword slipped in his hand and came crashing down on one of his toes, cutting it off! Limping over to his Advisor with loud shouts of pain, he was terribly shocked to hear the latter say, "Ah, that's wonderful!"

"What?!" yelled the King; "I cut off my toe and you say it is wonderful?"

"This is a real blessing," replied the Advisor. By now the King was furious, thinking the man was making fun of him.

"Take it from me," said his Advisor, "behind this apparent bad accident there is some good which we cannot now see." That was it! The King had noticed a dry well nearby, and being a strong man, he picked up his companion and just threw him into that well. Then he set out to limp back to his fortified town and castle.

This meant, however, walking through dense jungle, frequented by the wild tribes of those days, some of whom were headhunters. On his way the King met a band of those headhunters, who decided that, being royalty, he would make an excellent sacrifice for this month's festival. As you may imagine, the King did not feel at all honored by

this decision. The warriors carried him to the tribal priest. It was the duty of this priest to approve all of the offerings that were to be presented. The priest was most particular to see that the item to be offered to the gods was perfect in all respects. While anointing the King's body the priest noticed that he was lacking one toe.

"I am sorry," he told the King, "but we cannot use you after all for this holy sacrifice. The gods will not accept anyone who is not whole-bodied. You will have to go." Naturally the King was delighted and began hobbling away toward his palace. Aha! He thought, so his Advisor had been right -- there was indeed a hidden blessing behind that accident. As fast as his wounded leg would allow, he turned around and went back to the well where he had left his counselor. There he was, standing down in the well and whistling happily to himself.

Now the king managed to reach down far enough to grasp the hand of the Advisor and with great effort to pull him up. Then he apologized for having doubted him and having thought him a fool.

"Oh how sorry I am that I threw you in there," said the King as he dusted off his courtier. "I was taken prisoner by some wild native headhunters who were about to make me a sacrifice victim. Then they saw that my toe was missing, and let me go. And you foretold all this, in a way. Can you ever forgive me?"

"You need not apologize at all; it was a blessing that you threw me down the well and left me there."

"Now, how are you going to make something positive out of that?" queried the King.

"Well," said the other, "if I had been with you they would surely have taken me for their sacrifice."

A friend in need

Once upon a time there lived four friends in a forest. They were very different from each other; yet, they were best friends and always came to each other's aid when required. The friends were: a mouse, a crow, a deer, and a tortoise. This is a story of how these friends, who ordinarily would have been natural enemies, helped each other against their biggest enemy - Man, who was a hunter.

One day, the mouse, crow, and deer were gossiping under a tree. They suddenly heard a scream. It was their friend, the tortoise! He was trapped in a hunter's net.

"Uh oh!" exclaimed the deer fearfully, "what do we do now?"

"Do not despair" said the mouse, "I have a plan." And the tree friends huddled together and decided on their plan of action.

The deer ran towards the hunter who was close to the tortoise caught in the net. He reached there without the knowledge of the hunter, and lay down in his path as though dead. The crow flew towards the deer and acted as though he were pecking at the deer. The hunter picked up the net and started walking home, when he suddenly laid eyes on the wondrous sight of a dead deer. "Hey, here is a deer, all ready for me," he thought, and put down his net and walked towards the deer. The crow continued circling the deer, and flapping his wings furiously whenever the hunter tried to push him away. In the meantime, the mouse hopped to the tortoise and started chewing the threads of the net. As the crow kept the hunter at bay, the mouse freed the tortoise. As soon as the crow saw

that the tortoise was free, he let out a loud caw and flew away. The deer suddenly got up and ran! The hunter stood stunned and decided to go back to the tortoise, only to see that his net was torn, and the tortoise had escaped. "If only I hadn't been so greedy" he thought.

The four friends met again under the tree, and could not stop laughing at the trick that they had played on the hunter. Oh! What good friends they were, always there for each other!

Anger

“There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down.

He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, “You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there.”

A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one.

The Name of God is mightier than God Himself

Once, after Shri Ram returned to his kingdom from exile, a group of Sages started arguing about the superiority of God's Name over God Himself. Many opinions were given, yet they were not able to come to any conclusion, so they approached Sage Narad. Sage Narad requested a few days' time to give an answer to this question.

Sage Narad thought it best to seek Hanuman's help in solving the problem. He then approached Hanuman and requested Him to assist in the task, Hanuman agreed. Sage Narad told Hanuman, "Make some mischief that will enrage Shri Ram's Guru so much that He will order Shri Ram to punish you. Then leave the rest to me."

Hanuman at once started working on this task. As expected, Shri Ram's Guru became very angry at Hanuman and told Shri Ram, "Tomorrow morning you must punish Hanuman for the wrong that He has done. In front of the Sages and all the townspeople, you will aim your powerful arrows at Him so that all will witness and learn a lesson about what happens when one annoys the Guru." Shri Ram was surprised at His devoted servitor, Hanuman's behaviour. But He had complete obedience unto His Guru, so He accepted the Guru's instruction and went back to His palace with a heavy heart. In the meantime, Sage Narad told Hanuman to chant Shri Ram's Name when Shri Ram aimed the arrow at Him.

The next day dawned and all the Sages and townspeople gathered next to the river to witness the punishment that would be given to Hanuman. Shri Ram, with a very

heavy heart, aimed at Hanuman and let go His first arrow. The arrow headed straight for Hanuman, but changed direction at the last moment and fell to the ground without touching Him. Hanuman was standing with His eyes closed, deeply chanting Shri Ram's Name. All the arrows that Shri Ram aimed at Hanuman missed Him and went in different directions.

When all arrows were over, Shri Ram looked at His Guru, Who then asked Shri Ram to order the Divine weapon (Brahma-astra) that would not miss its target. At that point, Sage Narad interrupted the Guru, "O great Sage, You are great among the Gurus. By forgiving Hanuman You could give the best example of a loving and compassionate Guru." The Guru listened to Sage Narad's advice and forgave Hanuman.

When the incident was over, Sage Narad approached all the Sages gathered at the river. They had got their answer through this incident and unanimously agreed on the power of God's Name.



Useful Links, Websites

For Spiritual Information

www.arshavidya.org/home.html
www.hindunet.org
www.forumforhinduawakening.org

For Prayers

www.hindunet.org/day_as_hindu/prayers.htm
www.balagokulam.org/teach/shlokas.php

App Store (iPhone/iPad/iPod):

- Bhagavad Gita
- Aarti n Chalisa
- SunderKand
- Hanuman Chalisa
- Gita Widsom Cookie
- iPuja

For Yoga

YOGA RESEARCH FOUNDATION - www.yrf.org
www.abc-of-yoga.com/yoga-and-health/yoga-for-elderly.asp
www.ayurvedainpittsburgh.com

For Hindu Activities

www.vhp-america.org



“Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.”