

## Treatment of Tuberculosis by Yoga

**Anirudh Kumar Satsangi\***

*Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Deemed University, Dayalbagh, Agra, India*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Anirudh Kumar Satsangi, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Deemed University, Dayalbagh, Agra, India.

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Tuberculosis is a fatal disease which is caused by bacterial infection. Although the percentage of patients suffering from the infectious disease in general has fallen down considerably as per data available from WHO Report 1999, the tuberculosis is still a great threat to human life. The extraordinary thing about it is that the human body can deal with the tubercle bacilli in more than ninety nine out of a hundred cases without showing any marked symptoms of illness.

Probably every adult has imprisoned a few tubercle bacteria in small deposits of calcium salts in the lung or in the lymphatic glands of the abdomen. They cannot harm us from there and we cannot do anything to them. However, there are people who are unable to encapsulate tubercle bacilli, or who cannot do so adequately. These people are in danger of contracting T.B.

We become ill or not depends upon the number of bacteria which attach us and upon our power of resistance against them. Severe illness, starvation and hardship can weaken the human body to such an extent that its power of resistance i.e. immunity against T.B. is reduced.

Almost all healthy adults in a large town have had T.B. in a quiet way and in many cases are immune for the rest of their lives, provided this immunity is not weakened by ill-health, poor diet, or serious over work.

Two things are important rather essential for infectious disease.

Firstly a human body which is "ready" for illness (i.e. whose resistance is low), and secondly, a sufficient number of microbes. If we imagine that in an auditorium a shower of microbes rains evenly down on a hundred people for a whole hour, thirty people would be completed unaffected, fifty would become slightly ill, and twenty seriously ill. This has nothing to do with the virulence of germs, but only with the powers of resistance or readiness for illness of the individual people. Increased virulence or numbers of germs would, of course, alter the percentage. Practice of meditation and yoga increases our immunity and power of resistance. Performing Havan or Yagna definitely lowers down the virulence or numbers of germs.

T. B. is a long-drawn-out pneumonia (inflammation of the lung). A research study conducted by an American Psychologist reveals that there exists positive correlation between depression, pneumonia and influenza. Severely depressed patients suffer from infections more often than the average persons. His study indicates lymphocytes from the depressed patients responded much less than those from the normal persons when exposed to agents that induce proliferation (Miller, 1999).

Experiments conducted on animals demonstrate that the size of thymus gland, which is essential for the normal development of immunological functioning, gets reduced under stress situation.

The aim of medical science is the attainment of optimum physical and mental wellness of the individual. We make efforts to achieve this objective through preventive, promotive and curative aspects of health and wellness.

Preventive measures are concerned with the prevention of occurrence of disease so that the all-round wellness of the individuals do not disturb. As our living conditions and general standard of hygiene improve, the percentage of people liable to contract T.B. will rapidly drop. Performance of havan or Yagna for the purification of the environment in which we live, is one such preventive measure.

Scientific experiments on havan or agnihotra or small scale Yagna have revealed that they help reduce the levels of sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide in air and bacteria count in air and water.

Very little attention has so far been paid to the promotive aspects of health and well-being of the individual. Organisers of the 88th Indian Science Congress deserves congratulations for including Yoga and Meditation for discussion as a prominent aspect of healthcare. The emphasis of Yogic Practices is largely on the improvement and promotion of positive health of the body and mind, although some Yogic methods are also recommended for curative purposes. Yoga is a perfect promotive aspect of holistic health.

The word “Yoga” is perhaps older than the system of philosophy. In the Shvetashvatara Upanishad (II, 12-13), the qualities of a yogi, whose body shines with the fire of yoga, have been described, and it is said that disease, old age, and do not come to him, and further that his body becomes supple and healthy, his mind devoid of greed, and full of peace and satisfaction.

There are many versions of Meditation and Yoga i.e. Integral Yoga, Royal Yoga, Sahaj Yoga, Surat Shabd Yoga, Transcendental Meditation and Zen etc.

Practices of meditation and yoga strengthen the immune system and resistance power of the body. Many scientific studies have been conducted worldwide in this regard. A study of 2000 people who practice transcendental meditation over a five year period found that only half the number of people who meditates ended up in hospital compared to those who did not.

In another study, carried out by Dr. H.K. Sahib (1986) an immunologist from Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow, India, it was found that yogis, who practice meditation were less prone to infectious even if they lived in places exposed to malarial, bacterial and viral contaminants as compared to individuals afflicted by nervous disorders. His study further reveals that a person who is usually depressed is more susceptible to infectious disease. During this study it was found that endorphin (a body made tranquilizer) was stimulated during meditation and this substance had a strong influence on the body's immune system. Thus a communication link exists between the nervous and immune system.

Any kind of stress, physical or mental, brings about conditions which are not conducive to normal optimal functioning of autonomic nervous system, gradually resulting in the sympathetic dominance. This may result in gradual rise in blood pressure, acceleration of heart rate, respiratory changes, gastrointestinal changes even resulting ultimately in ulcers and various other changes indicative of imbalanced increase in sympathetic activities. The yoga practice including meditation tend to bring about a better balanced equilibrium between the sympathetic and parasympathetic activities. If we can shift the balance even slightly towards the parasympathetic dominance, we will able to achieve desired results of individual wellness.

I have so far given a brief description of preventive and promotive measures of health care system. Curative measures are adopted when a disease particularly T.B. is diagnosed. At this point of diagnosis the body chemistry is completely disturbed, preventive and promotive measures can't help much. Although practices of meditation and yoga may help in curing the disease but its action is very slow and deterioration in physical health is very fast. To correct the body chemistry we need chemicals (drugs) from outside as prescribed by a physician. Preventive and promotive measures may no doubt support this therapy. Holistic Health Care is recommended to enhance the effectiveness of medication.

A question may arise, why holistic health care is needed? A recent research report published in New England Journal of Medicine, December 2000 causes concern for future. The report says “the risk of developing an antibiotic- resistant infection rose by about a third from 1995 to 1998. The latest warning that antibiotics are losing their effectiveness due to overuse.

Extensive use of antibiotics in both people and animals is breeding new generations of bugs that withstand antibiotics, drugs that revolutionized medicine when they were introduced in the middle of 20th century. The new study focused on *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, the most commonly identified cause of meningitis, pneumonia and middle ear infections in the United States. The finding illustrated that the risk of developing an antibiotic-resistant bacterial infection rose substantially between 1995 and 1998 from 9% to 14% (Whitney C., *et al.* 2000)”.

Such reports support the idea for developing holistic health care system so that traditional therapeutic system may not lose its effectiveness. I end up by quoting WHO Report - "The World Health Report 1999 - Making a Difference" - the next two decades will see dramatic changes in the health needs of the world's population.

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