



Spirituality and Total Health

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and
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Introduction

The Institute for the Study of Human Awareness encourages individuals to know and understand themselves in the manner of the Socratic theme of “Know Thyself”. This knowledge permits us to understand others and the world in which we live. The institute provides resources which lead to the investigation and discovery of one’s real self.

These publications are compilation of taped lectures by Ishwar C. Puri. Due to the varied formats and lecture subjects, some information may be repeated. We hope that you would experience the love as if you were there, and we invite you to experience the reality of your being.

Spirituality and Total Health

For the sake of our discussion, let me define three terms in order that we may understand one another. Please consider food, man, and man's evolution. What is food? Food sustains us physically, but there is food to sustain us mentally as well. There is also food to nourish us spiritually and there is a relationship between these foods. Any food that we take for our physical well-being, to sustain the human physical body, is not effective unless the food that we take for our mind and that which we take for the soul is also effective.

We may continue eating all sorts of food, but the absorption of that food as nutrients in the body is conditioned by the foods we take for the mind and for the soul. One cannot, for example, ignore the body and physical health and expect to attain higher levels of awareness in meditation. Further, when something goes wrong with our body, we find that one of three things has occurred—we have taken the wrong kind of food, we have not given the body proper exercise, or we have failed to sustain regular and healthy practices.

We have been able to analyze our food needs through the process of a simple examination of the biochemistry of the

human body and the metabolic changes that take place when we grow, when we consume energy to work, and when we decay by aging. These three processes of growth, consumption of energy and that of aging, all require food. Food is used to replace the cells which are needed either for the extra build-up necessary for growth, for the replacement of those consumed, or is needed when cells are decaying and dying out.

We have a very remarkable structure in this human body consisting of so many kinds of tissue, bones, ligaments, skin, flesh, blood, and other lymphatic fluids—it would be difficult to think that a single food could provide for all of the needs of the varied parts of the human body. Surprisingly, the human body has a set of digestive devices or organs built into it which convert food of one kind into another, as required by different parts of the body.

We are quite satisfied if we consume sufficient carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals and vitamins. These nutrients can be broken up by the internal organs into different cell structures that either adds to the existing physical structure, or they replace the worn-out or decaying ones. Thus we try to achieve a balance in our food by the consumption of what we ingest. Our foods are based upon the needs of the body and our

manner of lifestyle—which creates certain deficiencies as we use up the various nutrients in the body. These nutrients are absorbed into the body tissues by virtue of a mechanism of cell replacement, circulatory system of the blood and the lymphatic and sympathetic systems to take the nutrients to any part of the body where they are required.

The metabolic process of growth insures that the building blocks of proteins are placed in proper position and that they assume the structure of the molecules which are needed at that particular location; thus, if we require more skin cells, the metabolic process will see to it that the protein is converted into skin tissues and placed at the right location in the body. The same is true for bone tissue and other body elements. It is very efficient, but somewhat complicated system that sustains the human body.

As the nutrients travel within the body, they encounter some problems. For example, if we take in too much nutrition, a congestion is created and when we do not take enough nutrition, a deficiency is then created. Should we take a wrong composition of nutrients, an imbalance will then result. So, you see that we can have a surfeit of food, a deficiency of food, and an imbalance. When you have a surfeit of one item of food and

an imbalance of another, you create yet another type of imbalance.

The body imbalances need not be only between the broad categories of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins, but imbalances can also occur within these broad groupings. The most vulnerable group for an imbalance is the proteins. Proteins are absorbed in the form of amino acids and the amino acids are absorbed directly into the blood stream through capillary vessels of the intestines. The proteins are then transported to the liver for distribution to other parts of the body as required. There are 20 amino acids and about 55 amino compounds which are active in the protein food that we take. Some of these amino acids, by their deficiency, can make the protein itself imbalanced; for example, we find that some common proteins found in corn and in the cereals we take are deficient in amino acid lysine. Therefore, although we take in excessive protein, the effective protein absorbed in the system is so much less because of the deficiency of this amino acid lysine.

On the other hand, we can take in excessive lysine, in which case the other protein amino acids become deficient. Some of the sulphur-bearing amino acids which are required

only in trace amounts are very effective in small quantities in making the rest of the protein molecules assimilable in the human system. Thus an imbalance is required, not only between different nutrient we take in, but within each grouping of nutrients.

There is more to be said regarding proteins. Proteins can be derived from a number of sources, including both vegetable and animal sources. The large numbers of vegetable proteins available to us in lentils, beans, peas and seed pulses are very good, but they have individual characteristics which make them difficult to be fully assimilable to us. Properly treated, these proteins are very good nutrients for the human system, as they are light, easily digested, natural, and compatible with the human body. The vegetable protein sources correspond to our human body nutrient requirements and our digestive system. Moreover, vegetable protein foods correspond to the size and shape of our teeth and the human jaw movement for our ingestion.

In the course of time, man has changed his choice of foods. He has further changed his eating habits because of a wish to acquire new taste other than the natural vegetarian food sources. Animal protein even if they are fully modified,

are harder to digest, harder to assimilate, and not natural food to man. In the creation around us, we have living beings that are better designed to ingest or consume animal foods. The lion and the tiger, for example, are both designed to eat animal foods. Their teeth, digestive systems, and entire body physiology and anatomy are based upon the natural food of the lion and tiger being non-vegetarian. It is not, then, the size of the animal that determines whether it is vegetarian or carnivorous. Nature has distributed all living things into categories and further divided them by the kind of food that they will require. Man clearly comes within the category of a vegetarian being and, therefore, his body is designed to receive vegetarian proteins.

The next term that we should identify is that of man himself. Man consists of, not only the physical body which requires food, but also of the nervous system, the sensory perceptions and mental structure of the brain, and the spirit. Thus man can be divided into three categories: the physical man and his body, the mental man with his mental and sensory perceptions, and the spiritual man which is the soul of man, the origin of his consciousness and life. Man cannot

be regarded as a mere physical being and certainly not so in the matter of his food.

What is food for thought is as important as what is food for the human body. An unhealthy mind can readily affect a healthy body. Any man who has terrible thoughts is unable to properly digest good physical food for the body. A man who is happy, cheerful and joyful is able to digest even difficult foods and absorb them into his system. Man must get adequate food for his mind and adequate food for his senses. This is how people perceive lovely sights, come to joy and cheer, use their mind and intellect fully, and are able to absorb their food better. Those who see misery and ugliness and are themselves depressed and unhappy will have a difficult time even digesting good food.

The spiritual man is, of course, the Controller of the other two. The spiritual man is what makes man alive and conscious. It is only life that provides metabolic movement. If a man is not alive, he obviously does not have any metabolism—there is no growth, no replacement of cells. The moment a man dies and no longer has the spirit of life within him, he has lost the growth process. The very structure of the cells which was sustaining further intake and nutrition

becomes dead and does not allow any more food to be absorbed into the system. Thus, life or consciousness is the force that gives vitality to man and makes food assimilable. The man who is spiritually wide-awake will get the most from his food. A small amount of food will provide him with all of the nutrition that he needs because his capacity to absorb the nutrients in food has enlarged considerably. People who have reached higher levels of spiritual awareness find that they need to eat very little in order to get all of the nutrition that they require. The metabolic process alters according to the degree of awareness that a person has acquired. So when we speak of man and food, we must not forget that we speak of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual man. In order of importance: the spiritual man determines what the mental and physical man can eat, the mental man determines how much the physical man can eat, and the physical man determines the quantities of proportions of nutrients to be consumed.

Evolution is the third term we are now considering. Evolution is the progressive development of man from the lowest form of being to the highest. Darwin proved that through natural selection and evolution, man can be created

from plant-like beginnings. Through progressive genetic selection, a plant undergoes a transformation to a higher species and its intelligence grows. The composition and structure of plants, fish, fowl, animals, and the human being differ basically. We find that in the case of plants, the bulk of their structure consist of water. In the case of some of the higher species of reptiles such as snakes, we find that there is hardly any water, but that there is a much greater critical heat requirement compared to the plants. Reptiles rely on a sustaining vital heat level and in a more solid substance. If you study the birds and other flying creatures, you will find that their bodies are composed more of air and other gaseous material and that they have much less water or vital heat requirements. In mammals of the four legged variety, we find that they have more or less of each of these elements equally distributed in their bodies. Progressively higher, as in the case of the human body, these four elements of body structure are distributed equitably. The human being, of course, possesses even higher faculties—such as the use of free will, logic and reasoning.

The oriental system of analysis of all of creation has been able to divide creation into its constituent elements.

Creatures with the one predominant element of water would be plants. Creatures with two predominant elements would be reptiles with heat and solids or birds with solids and air. Creator with three of the elements would be some of the larger birds like ostriches or the smaller mammals. Those with all four elements are the bigger animals such as dogs, horses, etc. These are only rough classifications, but the only creature with five developed elements—those of solids, liquids, gases, heat, and of reasoning—is man. This is not a classification by chemical elements, but merely a classification by the elements of their form. As it is, this classification corresponds strikingly in a very coincidental way to the degree of intelligence of these beings. It is noticed that if there are more than one of the five elements present in a living being, it has more intelligence than one with fewer elements. All of the four-legged animals have more intelligence than reptiles, birds, or plants. It is man with all five elements who has the best composition of all. He has the composition in which he not only has an intelligence much higher than all other creatures, but also has an extremely unique character because of the fifth element of reasoning.

Darwin proved that we have evolved from the plant to animal kingdom and then into mankind. He has shown, further, that this is a process of natural selection and evolution over a period of time. The philosophers of the orient have been saying the same thing for thousands of years. It was Darwin who made the mistake of thinking that man's advent upon this earth occurred only once and only very recently—not more than two hundred and fifty thousand years ago. Since Darwin, further research upon the existence of man has shattered this assumption.

Anthropology Professors Louis and Mary Leakey have worked and studied man's history for more than thirty five years. They first discovered fossil and tool evidence to show that man existed upon this earth more than one million years ago. Their extensive work in East Africa produced fossil remains of man's early existence dating back to fourteen million years ago. Since then, work done by their son, anthropologist Richard Leakey, and his colleagues has now established that man existed on earth more than twenty million years ago. Potassium-argon testing of fossil and tool evidence bears this fact out.

In other words, man has not come upon this earth only recently. One possible explanation to reconcile Darwin's point of view with that of the Leakeys discoveries would be that there were several series of evolutions—each time evolving more rapidly than other species. This is very plausible because, even today, there exist many of the plants and other lower form of life which existed in the beginnings from which man evolved. If it were but a one-time evolution, all of these other life forms would have also evolved or would have been destroyed while man continued to evolve. We would then have been left with only the top few species of life. The fact that we still have the co-existence of the final product man with the earliest plants shows that there must have been a series of evolutions.

This, too, is my belief—that man has always existed on this earth and has come from various strands of evolution. Darwinian evolution only explains a part of the physical man. His theory only hints at the possibility that the physical brain of man also increased his intelligence while in the development stage. It does not **really** account for the development and evolution of intelligence as such. If intelligence itself evolved, then the process need not have

been through the genes which we associate with the evolution of the physical body. The physical body took characteristics from its ancestors through genes, the genetic vehicle which carries the pattern of the wisdom of the cells in any body. That a creative intelligence itself is evolving independently of the physical body is a very great discovery. It would seem to suggest that consciousness, or the ability to be intelligent, persists beyond the physical form and is itself in a process of evolution.

There is now so much new evidence of reincarnation, of people remembering previous lives, of people foreseeing the future, and of life after death that it is difficult to reject the evidence. Even scientifically, the empirical evidence coming to us is that man, in consciousness, persists beyond his human body. Not only man, but every living thing seems to persist—and the intelligence goes beyond the living physical form. If this is so, then evolution is not merely the development of a higher form of physical life from a lower form. Evolution would also include the development of a higher form of intelligence from lower forms of intelligence—and the two can be coterminous. Indeed, a higher form of intelligence would normally take the shape

and form of a higher physical being—thus, the two go together. It is as if there is a being who is conscious, intelligent and is growing up utilizing various forms and bodies just as man changes his clothing as he grows in size. As a child, he would use smaller clothing and use larger clothing as he outgrows the smaller. Similarly, as consciousness gains its weight and height in its creative intelligence, it changes bodies from the plant kingdom on up until it eventually reaches the human form. This combination of evolution, of both creative intelligence and of the physical form, is what makes the study of evolution so fascinating. If we do not study both aspects of evolution, we are missing a very important point in the story of evolution.

We have now defined the three terms of food, man, and evolution. You can see that they are very closely related. Food, too, has changed according to the needs of the living being—the needs of the physical form at different stage of evolutions. Let us first take notice that in this universe life subsist upon life. There is no living being that does not exist except by virtue of extinguishing other living things. If life subsists upon other life, then obviously the very process of growth is becoming the food for another living thing and the

annihilation of life. The process of growth is being used as food for other living beings. Man, endowed with reason, has been built to take vegetarian foods but, being endowed with reason and free will, he sometimes choose to take unnatural foods. He also chooses to take very unnatural lives! Man was created for a particular and natural function. When he does not perform the natural functions, he leads a most unnatural life and even consumes unnatural foods. This unnatural food creates consequences for which man suffers. That's why, in spite of the fact that all living things have their periods of pain and pleasure, it is only man who can suffer such intense mental pain even when he is having pleasure, even when there is no external, physical pain. It is only man who can create mental pain for himself and suffer without nature providing him any stimulus for such pain. Other animals will only suffer pain or pleasure depending upon the environment in which they are placed. Only man has this unique quality of living unnaturally and of creating pain and suffering for himself where none exists. This unnatural behavior of man arises from his eminence in the scale of evolution because he chooses his actions and his food.

When man relies excessively upon the development of his mind and mental man is predominant, he is likely to act unnaturally. The mental man has a tendency to prefer a variety of pleasure and is not content with one state of being. He likes to resist the environment and to analyze and break into pieces whatever he finds; therefore, his natural tendencies, because of his mind, make him do unnatural things. The mental man cannot live in harmony with his environment—it is unnatural to the mind to live in harmony with its environment. This environment is the very property that has been given to the spiritual side of man, the soul of man. The soul of man has been created to live in harmony, in synthesis, in totality with the environment. If man uses the higher awareness of the soul, he will live in harmony and he will overcome the mind. A man who is developed spiritually will have no problems and will not act unnaturally. He will act naturally!

Unnatural food for man is non-vegetarian food. When a man consumes meat foods, he is acting against nature. When he consumes meat foods, he not only makes all of his systems function unnaturally, he also loads up his system with less digestible food. He brings to his system cholesterol

and digestive problems. Soon, he loads up the human system, with an adverse effect upon his mental and spiritual self. The food that a man takes is directly related to the subconscious mind of man. When food is consumed by extinguishing life of a higher order than that of plants, it affects the subconscious mind to the extent that it vicariously accepts the responsibility for extinguishing that life. In that position, man becomes guilty and, in guilt, he punishes himself and therein loses his capacity to concentrate his attention. The man who consistently takes vegetarian food has a much better power of concentration than the man who has been taking non-vegetarian foods. This can easily be verified by experimentation. I have had occasion to test this out on a very highly developed spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in addition to many yogis and others who have challenged the need to take vegetarian food for meditation. I did not present so much of an intellectual debate on the merits of food for those who wished to do spiritual and meditational practices—I simply put them to the test. They were asked to try meditation with the two kinds of food—vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Those who were serious in their meditative efforts turned vegetarian after their experience with the effects of the different foods. The

intake of food affects the mental and spiritual man and affects the evolution of intelligence. This is the true relationship between food, man, and evolution.

Eastern philosophy has offered an explanation for everything. The explanation it offers for ill health that exists in spite of proper food and of proper thoughts in the mind is the result of their karma. The law of karma suggests that, though you may be doing everything right, you might have something in a past life that is now affecting your body—your body may now be suffering because of past karma. Karma is of three kinds. The first is the karma that we are born with - which is called our fate, destiny, or Pralabdh karma. The second is that of Kriaman or the actions that we now perform that will become Pralabdh karma at a later time. The third is Samhita karma or the reserve karma which cannot be figured or dealt with in one lifetime and become stored as reserve karma.

Our present and past actions are responsible for experiences of pain and pleasure in this world today. When we have a problem here, we sometimes wonder if it is because of a present action or a past action. The test of whether it is fate or because of something caused by us in

this life is to look upon the difficulty to see if it was spontaneous. If what is happening now is occurring without our current thought, premeditation, or deliberation, it is a result of a previous life action or Pralabdh karma. If we are thinking about it now and then deciding, it is present action and, therefore, it is present or Kriaman karma. In the present action, there will always be the experience of having to decide between certain options and alternatives and that decision causes the present action. If our problem is not the result of either Kriaman or Pralabdh karma, then it must be Samhita or reserve karma.

To achieve total health with the proper food, mental outlook, and balance, how then can we rid ourselves of the karmic effect? It is possible if one can find a true Master who can take our attention beyond the realm of the mind, beyond time and space, and into the region of the soul. It is then that such a Master takes the responsibility for the stored Samhita karma. When the Master initiate us, our stored karma disappears and the Master takes us under his care. He also takes responsibility for the reserve karma in order that we may continue in this role with our physical bodies. If the reserve karma is not allowed to play its role or affect our

destiny, we would normally lose the body—which is sustained here by good and bad karma. Should we not have a body, we could not then be seekers nor could we rise to any higher level of awareness. In order to sustain the body and to be a seeker and reach higher levels of awareness, we need destiny or previous karma. The existence of Pralabdh karma should be welcomed, and we should proceed through it with a sense of gratitude. Very few people will express gratitude for pain and problems that come to them by saying, "This pain or difficulty is keeping me down here and that is why I can become a seeker of God." It is not wholly true that one must have painful experiences in order to seek God. It is partly true because we remember God best when we are in trouble. When we are conscious of God over a long period of time, we can then have pleasant karma, too, and remember God by thanking Him. These are kinds of karma that are necessary to sustain this body and use it for God-realization.

There is a method whereby we can get rid of pain or reduce it considerably. Pain can be reduced by raising our level of awareness in meditation behind the third eye center. When our human consciousness is not scattered and upon the body, the feeling of pain lessens. If our consciousness is

scattered, we will feel more pain. I am suggesting a very difficult thing because if the body is in pain, one cannot concentrate attention behind the third eye center, yet if one can concentrate one's attention behind the eye center, one can relieve the pain. So where do we begin? For this, we need what is called the grace of the Master. With his grace, we can get the pain reduced to a level where we can easily bear it. It has been said that even the hanging of a person can be reduced to the pain level of a pin prick if there is grace. So, with grace, we can overcome the pain of karma and go through Pralabdh easily.

When we talk of the physical body, we talk of balance. We require balanced food, balanced diet and vitamins, balanced life—a life of moderation without excess or extremes. Similarly, with karma we require a balance. We are not required to give up everything, but to simply balance matters. It is this balance that is the key to life. There must be a balance between the inner and the outer experiences as well. We must have the inner experiences, and yet we must balance this with our outer experiences and not neglect our responsibilities. This balance affects our total health and well-being. When we look about us, we find that everything

in nature is in balance. This principle of negative and positive, or of balance, is required in order that they don't destroy each other. One cannot take a view in life that is so extreme as to renounce or reject something in order to get something else. To suppress something is like putting a snake in a basket and then covering it up, thinking that the snake is no longer there. Every time you again open the lid, the snake will come out and try to bite you with even greater venom than before. We cannot control our body or our mind by suppressing it—this will only create ill health. Even our attachments cannot be abandoned or suppressed. The truth is that only a new attachment can create detachment from the former. If we wish to escape from this world of karma, life and death, ill health and problems, we must attach ourselves to another world. If we are not attached to another higher world, at least we can find the Master who is attached to the higher world and, thereby, detach ourselves from this world. It is this detachment that helps us overcome the karma, acquire no new karma, and rid ourselves of the illnesses of this body.

Any new actions or Kriaman karma creates more pain for ourselves. We can avoid new karma by doing everything in the name of the Master. If we make no decisions, but let

the Master make the decisions and show us the way, we will have no new Karma. Now, if we can reduce pain with the grace of the Master, create no new karma, and also get our Samhita destroyed by initiation, there is nothing left to keep us here and we can return to the home of our Father. I have made it sound simple, but actually we are confronted with the problem of obtaining the Master's grace. Is there a method or way to acquire his grace, or is it entirely his will? How do we receive his blessing grace and good will? The answer is that we can get his grace by doing that which pleases Master.

The Master is constantly making things clear to us with regard to what it is that he wants us to do. We can either please our own minds or we can please the Master. He uses circumstances around us to convey to us what it is that we should do. He uses chance happenings, coincidence and circumstances to give us the chance to please him. If we follow our mind in decisions, it is our mind we are pleasing; if we follow circumstance and use our intuition, we please the Master. It is as simple as that. We cannot always recall our debts from past lives, so karma brings them back to us with coincidence and with circumstance. Maintain a balance

and do not create new karma. Take life as a drama without putting your mind and attention to it; instead, let your attachment to the Master bring you the assurance of wellness and total health.

When man evolves to a higher intelligence and looks into his own soul and ask for love instead of hatred, asks for intuitive knowledge of the totality instead of the analytical dissecting of knowledge, and ask for the beauty of life instead of ugliness in the individual incidents of life, he will ask for vegetarian food. I look forward to the day when this great country will realize what is happening and will implement programs to develop the real spiritual man.

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Ishwar Puri is an international traveler and lecturer on a wide variety of subjects. Each of his eloquent presentations is made without reference to notes and includes art, religion, human relations, science, philosophy, human awareness, consciousness, and many other subjects. The lectures are motivating, enlightening, and reflects the highest flight of philosophy and human understanding.

As founder and principle speaker for the Institute for the Study of Human Awareness, Ishwar Puri continues to donate to others his time and activities through this non-profit organization.

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