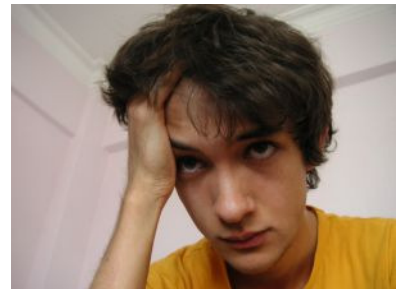


Illness and the Mind

by Acarya Shankarsan'ananda Avt.

All over the world today, in matters of health and healing, both doctors and patients are aware of the fact that many, if not most of our diseases are actually psychosomatic, and that illness is inseparably linked to the state of our mind. The link between negative emotions and the onset of diseases has been confirmed again and again. In one study, 28 out of 32 multiple sclerosis (a serious progressive disease of the central nervous system) patients questioned, experienced tragic or stressful life situations just before the onset of their disease. This severe psychological stress was shown to have produced marked abnormality in their body's immune system. It has been estimated that more than half the people seeking the service of doctors actually suffer from emotionally caused illnesses. Stress, fear, frustrations and insecurity are known to be responsible for problems such as hyper-acidity, peptic ulcers, high blood pressure, heart attack and various mental diseases.



Today, conventional traditions of medicine are still unable to deal properly with mind related illnesses and the doctor advises his patient to go for a holiday, or try yoga. So how does the system of yoga deal with it? Yoga considers all aspects of human existence: physical, mental/emotional and spiritual. The physical yoga poses called 'Asana' helps to balance our hormone production and thus balance the emotions. Through the regular practice of Asanas, the functions of various organs are optimized and the nervous system gets strengthened. This enables us to become more resistant towards stress and be able to deal better with life's ups and downs. But another and often neglected aspect of yoga which is found highly beneficial in curing psychosomatic illnesses, is the regular practice of meditation.

Scientific experiments have shown that the response of the human organism to meditation is just the opposite of its reaction to stress and worries. Meditation relaxes the central nervous system, slows the heart rate, lowers the blood pressure as much as 20%, and slows the breathing to less than half its normal rate. As all the body's processes relax, the meditator experiences a state of profound rest. He or she then feels a heightened alertness and mental clarity, and the physical and mental efficiency after meditation is greatly enhanced. A regular meditator simply enjoys life more than before.

Meditation is a key to success in all spheres of existence, because those who are able to check the restless wanderings of their mind and focus their attention at will, can learn anything easily and achieve their desired goals in life.

