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ON “POSITIVE THINKING (IN YOGA AND LIFE)”

Sources

- (1) Applying the Power of Positive Thinking. Brother Bhaktananda. “How-to-Live” Series n. 1984. Self-Realization Fellowship (also: “APPT”)
- (2) Scientific Healing Affirmations. Theory and practice of concentration. Paramahansa Yogananda. Self-Realization Fellowship (also: “SHA”)

Contents

The following are some considerations from public sources on positive thinking and its role in yoga and life.

From the teachings of Brother Bhaktananda, past Self-Realization Fellowship monk.

All life - everything in creation – is made of thought. But because the consciousness of most people is attuned primarily to the physical aspect of life, it is hard for them to believe that material things – trees, stones, their bodies – are all composed of ideas. However, if they would look deeper, they would see that matter is essentially energy, and energy is essentially thought. [Since ancient times, the sages of India have taught that the physical world is composed of particles of thought, chopped and divided by the delusion of maya (literally, “the measurer”) into the objects we experience in the material world. The discoveries of modern physics parallel this idea in an interesting way. Fritjof Capra, Ph.D., author of The Tao of Physics, writes: “Atoms consist of particles, and these particles are not made of any material stuff. When we observe them, we never see any substance; what we observe are dynamic patterns continually changing into one another – a continuous dance of energy...The theory of quantum mechanics reflects the impossibility of separating the scientific observer from the observed phenomena...It implies, ultimately, that the structures and phenomena we observe in nature are nothing but creations of our measuring and categorizing mind.” [APPT, 7-8]

Paramahansa Yogananda has explained to us that the whole world originated in the mind, the consciousness, of God. The Creator condensed, or “froze” [lowering the rates of vibrations, EN], His thoughts into patterns of protons, electrons, atoms, and molecules that form the material creation. And Paramahansaji said that each one of us also is a creator, like God, for we are made in His image. He has given us the power of thought – that is our instrument of creation. [APPT, 8]

[...] The millions of thoughts we think over the years “chisel” our most important creation – our life. That is why positive thinking is so important. [APPT, 9]

Have you ever wondered why each person is different from everyone else – in looks, in health, in abilities, and so on? It is because we all think differently, and whatever we think

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tends to manifest. You see, God has given us not only the mind and the power to think, He has also given us free choice to think and create in whatever way we want. If we think in a negative way, we will eventually create disease, poverty, unhappiness, and all sorts of difficulties in life. But if we think in positive terms, then we will be healthy, successful and happy. It's as simple as that. It all stems from our thinking. [...] When we continually think in a certain direction, a pattern or blueprint is formed in the astral world – the realm of subtle energies from which our material world is condensed. And if we persist in thinking in that way, the pattern will eventually manifest here on earth – whether in the body, the mind, or our spiritual life. [...] Therefore, to be optimistic and have faith in God and oneself is the proper way to use the mind. [...] “If you have a positive attitude, you will realize that mysterious forces come to your aid to fulfill your desires.” These “mysterious forces” are the subtle astral energies that are activated by the power of thought. [APPT, 9-12]

A negative attitude limits us in whatever we try to do. [...] That is the way we are sometimes: tied down by doubts and all sorts of negative thoughts, ideas, and attitudes. These convince us that we can't improve our situation. But we can. All we have to do is change to positive thinking. [...] In your work or career, success comes by thinking in a positive way. Individuals who do not succeed may not be thinking strongly enough of the goals they want to achieve. Or they may be thinking, “When I get more ‘pull’ with the right people, then I'll be prompted to a higher position.” But the real power behind success is not “pull”, but positive, creative thinking, and working hard to materialize those thoughts. [APPT, 12-14]

In reality, we are perfect individuals. We are pure. It is by accepting negative thoughts that we convince ourselves we are suffering. Practicing affirmations is an excellent way to strengthen the mind and keep it positive, so that we can outwardly manifest what we really are: divine souls. [If you find it hard to have a positive attitude, if you have doubts, or if your mind is always dwelling on some disease or something else negative, then read Paramahansaji's *Scientific Healing Affirmations*, or *Metaphysical Meditations*, or *Whispers from Eternity*. Master gave those affirmations to help us strengthen our minds so that we can develop a positive attitude. Those affirmations are statements of truth. And the truth is that we are divine being – we are above disease and every form of limitation.] [APPT, 15-16]

Practice of affirmations is the mental way of cultivating a positive attitude. There is also the spiritual approach, which is to develop faith in God. When we trust in God, we come to see that he is always with us. And by being optimistic and positive, we become receptive to His help. To develop this faith, we must meditate morning and night, and practice the presence of God during the day, so that the mind is always on Him. [...] Master used to say, “In the power of thought lies the kingdom of God.” Thinking of God creates a divine vibration within us, which automatically banishes all negativity. Be aware of Spirit; this is the greatest factor in keeping the mind positive. [APPT, 17-18]

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This taught us a valuable lesson: *Don't speak or think anything that is negative.* [APPT, 19]

Positive thinking and healing are strictly interwoven as taught by Paramahansa Yogananda in his book "Scientific Healing Affirmations".

Man's word is Spirit in man. Spoken words are sounds occasioned by the vibrations of thoughts; thoughts are vibrations sent forth by the ego or by the soul. [...] Man's words should represent not only truth but also his definite understanding and realization. Speech without soul force is like husk without corn. [SHA, 2]

Words saturated with sincerity, conviction, faith, and intuition are like highly explosive vibration bombs, which, when set off, shatter the rocks of difficulties and create the change desired. Avoid speaking unpleasant words, even if true. Sincere words or affirmations repeated understandingly, feelingly, and willingly are sure to move the Omnipresent Cosmic Vibratory Force to render aid in your difficulty. Appeal to that Power with infinite confidence, casting out all doubt; otherwise, the arrow of your attention will be deflected from its mark. After you have sown in the soil of Cosmic Consciousness your vibratory prayer-seed, do not pluck it out frequently to see whether or not it has germinated. Give the divine forces a chance to work uninterrupted. [SHA, 2-3]

Nothing is greater than Cosmic Consciousness, or God. His power far surpasses that of human mind. Seek His aid alone. But this counsel does not mean that you should make yourself passive, inert, or credulous; or that you should minimize the power of your own mind. The Lord helps those who help themselves. He gave you will power, concentration, faith, reason, and common sense to use when trying to rid yourself of bodily and mental afflictions; you should employ all those powers while simultaneously appealing to Him. As you utter prayers or affirmations, always believe that you are using your own but God-given powers to heal yourself or others. Ask His aid; but realize that you yourself, as His beloved child, are employing His gifts of will, emotion, and reason to solve all difficult problems of life. [SHA, 4-5]

The subconscious idea-habit of disease or health exerts a strong influence. Stubborn mental or physical disease always have a deep root in the subconsciousness. Illness may be cured by pulling out its hidden roots. That is why all affirmations of the conscious mind should be impressive enough to permeate the subconsciousness, which in turn automatically influences the conscious mind. Strong conscious affirmations thus react on the mind and body through the medium of the subconsciousness. Still stronger affirmations reach not only the subconscious but also the superconscious – the magic storehouse of miraculous powers. [...] All affirmations, in order to reach the superconsciousness, must be free from uncertainties and doubts. Patience and attentive, intelligent repetitions are wonder-workers. [SHA, 7-8]

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Lord Jesus said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4). The “word” is life energy or cosmic vibration. The “mouth of God” is the medulla oblongata in the posterior part of the brain, tapering off into the spinal cord. This, the most vital part of the human body, is the divine entrance (“mouth of God”) for the “word” or life energy by which man is sustained. In the Hindu and Christian scriptures, the Word is called, respectively, Aum or Amen. [SHA, 9]

It is that Perfect Power alone that heals; all external methods of stimulation only cooperate with the life energy and are valueless without it. [SHA, 9]

Imagination, reason, faith, emotion, will, or exertion may be used according to the specific nature of the individual – whether imaginative, intellectual, aspiring, emotional, volitional, or striving. Few people know this. [SHA, 10]

If the mind can produce ill health, it can also produce good health. Mind power has developed the different parts of the body; the mind supervises the manufacturing of physical cells and can revitalize them. [SHA, 11]

Will, or imagination, or reason, or emotional power cannot of themselves effect physical healing. They act only as different agents, which, according to the varying temperaments of individuals, may stimulate the life energy to cure an ailment. In a case of paralysis of the arm, if the will or imagination is continuously stimulated, the life energy may suddenly rush to the diseased nerve tissues and heal the arm. [SHA, 12-13]

The repetition of affirmations ought to be firm and continuous, that the strength of the will or reason or emotion be sufficient to stimulate the inactive life energy and to redirect it into normal channels. One should never minimize the importance of repeated, ever deeper efforts. In planting, success depends on two factors: potency of the seed and suitability of the soil. Similarly, in healing disease, the essentials are the power of the healer and the receptivity of the patient. “Virtue (that is healing power) had gone out of him.” (Mark 5:30) and “Thy faith hath made thee whole” (Mark 5:34): such Biblical sayings show that both the power of the healer and the faith of the sick person are required. [SHA, 13]

Great healers, men of divine realization, do not cure by chance but by exact knowledge. Fully understanding the control of life energy, they project a stimulating current into the patient that harmonizes his own flow of life energy. During a healing they actually see the psychophysical laws of Nature working in the tissue of the ailing man and bringing about the cure. [SHA, 14]

Persons of lesser spiritual attainment also are able to heal themselves and others by visualizing and directing an influx of life energy to the affected part of the body. [SHA, 14]

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Instantaneous healing of physical, mental, and spiritual diseases may occur. The accumulated darkness of ages is dispelled at once by bringing the light in, not by trying to chase the darkness out. [SHA, 14]

One cannot tell when he is going to be healed, so do not try to set an exact time limit. Faith, not time, will determine when the cure will be effected. Results depend on the right awakening of life energy and on the conscious and subconscious state of the individual. Disbelief immobilizes the life energy and prevents the perfect working of this divine doctor, body builder, and master mason. [SHA, 14-15]

Effort and attention are essential to attain the degree of faith or will power or imagination that will automatically impel the life energy to affect a cure. Desire for or expectation of results weakens the force of true belief. [SHA, 15]

Without one's use of will and faith, the life energy remains asleep and inoperative. [SHA, 15]

It takes time to revivify a weakened power of will, faith, or imagination in a patient suffering from a chronic disease, because his brain cells are subtly grooved with thoughts of illness. As it may take a long time to form a bad habit of disease consciousness, similarly some time may be required to form a good habit of health consciousness. [SHA, 15]

In the use of thought as medicine, you should be careful that you are not neutralizing right thoughts by wrong thoughts. To be active and successful, a thought must be impregnated with such will power that it will resist the opposition of contrary thoughts. [SHA, 15-16]

Truth is the power in affirmation. [SHA, 16]

Thoughts have to be understood and applied rightly before they are effective. Ideas first enter man's mind in a crude or undigested form; they need to be assimilated by deep reflection. A thought without soul conviction behind it has no value. That is why persons who use affirmations without comprehending the truth on which they are based – man's inseverable unity with God – get poor results and complain that thoughts have no healing power. [SHA, 16]

In his mortal aspect man is a triune being. He longs for freedom from all varieties of suffering. His needs are: 1. Healing of bodily diseases. 2. Healing of mental or psychological diseases such as fear, anger, bad habits, failure consciousness, lack of initiative and confidence, and so on. 3. Healing of spiritual diseases such as indifference, lack of purpose, intellectual pride and dogmatism, skepticism, contentment with the material side of existence, and ignorance of the laws of life and of man's own divinity. It is of paramount importance that equal emphasis be given to the prevention and cure of all three kinds of disease. [...] When a man has destroyed the mental bacteria of intolerance,

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rage, and fear, and has freed his soul from ignorance, he is unlikely to suffer from physical disease or mental lack. [SHA, 17-18]

To prevent physical disease. Obedience to God's laws is the method for avoiding bodily ills. [SHA, 18]

To prevent mental disease. Cultivate peace, and faith in God. Free the mind from all disturbing thoughts and fill it with love and joy. Realize the superiority of mental healing over physical healing. Banish bad habits, which make life miserable. [SHA, 21]

To prevent spiritual disease. Spiritualize the body by destruction of the consciousness of mortality and change. The body is materialized vibration and should be cognized as such. The consciousness of disease, decay, and death should be removed by scientific understanding of the underlying unifying laws of matter and Spirit, and the delusive manifestation of Spirit as matter, of the Infinite as finite. Firmly believe that you are created in the image of the Father and are therefore immortal and perfect. Even a particle of matter or a wave of energy is indestructible, as science has proved; the soul or spiritual essence of man is also indestructible. Matter undergoes change; the soul undergoes changing experiences. Radical changes are termed death, but death or a change in form does not change or destroy the spiritual essence. [SHA, 22]

Disease is generally considered a result of external material causes. Few people realize that it comes through the inaction of the life force within. [SHA, 23]

When the cell or tissue vehicle of the life energy is seriously damaged, the life energy withdraws from that place and trouble consequently starts. [SHA, 23]

Medicine, massage, and electricity merely help to stimulate the cells in such a way that the life energy is induced to return and resume its work of maintenance and repair. [...] The best methods [to heal] are those that help the life energy to resume its internal healing activities. [SHA, 23]

Acquiring power over life energy. On the other hand, mental cure is superior to all methods of physical cure because will, imagination, faith, and reason are states of consciousness that actually and directly act from within. They furnish the motive power that stimulates and directs the life energy to accomplish any definite task. [SHA, 25]

Autosuggestion and various affirmations are useful in stimulating the life energy; but because a practitioner often employs such purely mental methods without consciously working with the life energy, thus failing to establish any physiological connection, they are not invariably efficacious. A cure is certain if psychophysical techniques are combined with the power of will, faith, and reason to direct the life energy and to reach the superconscious mind. In that blissful state of Reality, one comprehends the inseparable unity of matter and Spirit and solves all problems of inharmony. [SHA, 25-26]

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The nature of creation. Matter does not exist in the way we usually conceive it; nevertheless, it does exist as cosmic delusion. To dispel delusion requires a definite method. You cannot cure a drug addict in a moment. Material consciousness possesses man through a law of delusion, and he cannot banish it except by learning and following the opposite law, that of truth. Spirit, through a series of processes of materialization, became matter; hence matter proceeds from and cannot be different from its cause, Spirit. Matter is a partial expression of Spirit, the Infinite appearing as finite, the Unlimited as limited. But since matter is only Spirit in a delusive manifestation, matter per se is nonexistent. [SHA, 27]

Consciousness and matter. At the start of creation, the hitherto unmanifested Spirit projected two natures – one, consciousness, and the other, matter. They are Its two vibratory expressions. Consciousness is a finer, and matter a grosser, vibration of the one transcendental Spirit. Consciousness is the vibration of Its subjective aspect, and matter is the vibration of Its objective aspect. Spirit, as Cosmic Consciousness, is potentially immanent in objective vibratory matter, and manifests Itself subjectively as the consciousness present in all forms of creation, reaching Its higher expression in the human mind with its countless ramifications of thoughts, feeling, will, and imagination. The difference between matter and Spirit is in the rate of vibration – a difference of degree, not of kind. [...] Through the power of maya, cosmic illusion, the Creator has caused the manifestations of matter to appear so distinct and specific that to the human mind they seem unrelated in any way to Spirit. [SHA, 27-29]

Thought is the subtlest vibration. Within the gross vibration of flesh is the fine vibration of the cosmic current, the life energy; and permeating both flesh and life energy is the most subtle vibration, that of consciousness. The vibrations of consciousness are so subtle that they cannot be detected by any material instrument; only consciousness can comprehend consciousness. Human beings are aware of the myriad vibrations of consciousness issuing from other human beings – expressed by word, act, look, gesture, silence, attitude, and so on. Each man is stamped with the vibratory signature of his own state of consciousness and emanates a characteristic influence on persons and things. [...] Man's ego (the sense of I-ness, the distorted mortal reflection of the immortal soul) cognizes consciousness directly; and cognizes matter (the human body and all other objects in creation) indirectly, through mental processes and through sense perceptions. [SHA, 29-30]

Maya or cosmic illusion. The phenomenal world operates under maya, the law of duality or oppositional states; it is thus an unreal world that veils the truth of the Divine Oneness and Unchangeableness. Man in his mortal aspect dreams of dualities and contrasts – life and death, health and disease, happiness and sorrow; but when he awakens in soul consciousness all dualities disappear and he knows himself as the eternal and blissful Spirit. [SHA, 31-32]

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“Wisdom is the greatest cleaner”. (Swami Sri Yukteswar) [SHA, 33]

Through maya and man’s consequent ignorance of his soul, human consciousness is isolated from Cosmic Consciousness. The mind of a man is subject to change and limitation, but Cosmic Consciousness is free from all restrictions and is never involved in experiences of duality (death and life, disease and health, fleeting sorrow and fleeting joy, and so on). In the Divine Mind an unchangeable perception of Bliss is ever present. [SHA, 33-34]

The process of liberating human consciousness consists in training it by study, affirmations, concentration, and meditation to turn its attention away from the vibrations of the gross body with its ceaseless fluctuations of thought and emotion, and to feel the subtler and more stable vibrations of life energy and of higher mental states. [SHA, 34]