

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 14

For 29 August 2010

Dear Friends

The name Deepak Chopra will be known to many of you. Some will have read his books. His father Dr Krishan Chopra was head of the Department of Medicine and Cardiology at a big hospital in New Delhi for 25 years. A sane, competent and compassionate man and scientist as his book “*Your Life is in Your Hands*” demonstrates. He tells the following story:

When Deepak was in his training as a doctor his professor arranged for a scientific experiment. He invited a wandering yogi (a Hindu holy man) to be the subject of the experiment. The yogi said Yes: He was placed in a wooden box especially made so that he could sit comfortably in the lotus position used by meditators. When he was settled the lid was nailed on the box. Next, it was lowered into a pit dug in the university grounds. Then the whole box was covered with soil—completely buried. It was left like that for 6 days. Workmen then came and unearthed the box and carefully opened it. All were keen to see what had happened. Once opened they found the yogi still in the same meditation pose. After a short time he stood up slowly and with his eyes still closed he was led to the physiology laboratory. First tests failed to detect a heart beat. Closer testing showed a very light fluttering of the heart. Tests of his breathing showed a level of oxygen consumption so reduced “that no known body process could account for it. The simple fact was that the meditating yogi had lived peacefully for 6 days under conditions that would have destroyed a normal mind and body in less than 12 hours.”

Sound impossible? There must have been some trick to it! Why have I told this ‘way out’ incident? None of us would want to attempt to do it. There’s no need for me to say “Don’t try this at home.”

First, this is not a one-off event. There are numerous authenticated accounts of similar events, and they all indicate certain common factors. Through years of disciplined breathing and meditation many saints and sages have learned the art of virtually shutting down the normal functioning of body processes such as heart and lungs. At the same time they have developed the ability to expand and continue their intake of the subtle life energy. For centuries this state of non breathing has been known as kumbhaka. Every time we pause between breaths or between inhale and exhale we are allowing the subtle energies of life energy, or holy spirit, or God Being, to permeate every cell in our body. Increasing our ability to do this effectively is a key factor in our ability to live each day more peacefully, and with greater energy and awareness.

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 30 August:	33:12-21	1 Cor 2:1-5	Luke 4:16-30
Tuesday 31 August:	145:10-17	1 Cor 2:10-end	Luke 4:31-37
Wednesday 1 September:	62	1 Cor 3:1-9	Luke 4:38-end
Thursday 2 September:	24:1-6	1 Cor 3:18-end	Luke 5:1-11
Friday 3 September:	37:3-8	1 Cor 4:1-5	Luke 5:33-end
Saturday 4 September:	145:18-end	1 Cor 4:6-15	Luke 6:1-5
Sunday 5 September <u>Pentecost 15</u>			
Ps 139:1-6,13-18; Jer 18:1-11; Philemon 1-21; Luke 14:25-33			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 6 September:	5:5-9a	1 Cor 5:1-8	Luke 6:6-11
Tuesday 7 September:	149:1-5	1 Cor 6:1-11	Luke 6:12-19
Wednesday 8 September:	45:11-end	1 Cor 7:25-31	Luke 6:20-26
Thursday 9 September:	139:1-9	1 Cor 8:1-7,11-end	Luke 6:27-38
Friday 10 September:	84:1-6	1 Cor 9:16-16, 22-end	Luke 6:39-42
Saturday 11 September:	116:10-end	1 Cor 10:14-22	Luke 6:43-end
Sunday 12 September <u>Pentecost 16</u>			
Ps 14; Jer 4:11-12,22-28; 1 Tim 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 13 September:	40:7-11	1 Cor 11:17-26,23	Luke 7:1-10
Tuesday 14 September:	100	1 Cor 12:12-14, 27-end	Luke 7:11-17
Wednesday 15 September:	33:1-12	1 Cor 12:31b-13:13	Luke 7:31-35
Thursday 16 September:	118:1,2,17-20	1 Cor 15:1-11	Luke 7:36-end
Friday 17 September:	17:1-8	1 Cor 15:12-20	Luke 8:1-3
Saturday 18 September:	30:1-5	1 Cor 15:35-37, 42-49	Luke 8:4-15
Sunday 19 September <u>Pentecost 17</u>			
Ps 79:1-9; Jer 8:18-9:1; 1 Tim 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13			

SUBTLE DIMENSIONS

When we talk about subtle dimensions what do we mean? The word subtle means “*so slight as to be difficult to detect or describe*”. We all have had experiences that fit that meaning. For example a person walks into a room and the atmosphere can change either positively or negatively. No word is spoken, no special gesture is made—but some subtle presence is felt which is impossible to detect and hard to describe. Others may experience the subtle elements in the compassion of a friend, or the sense of vitality when you get up on a fresh shining spring morning. The point is, we know the presence of the subtle dimensions from our daily life experiences.

These subtle dimensions are already present within our physical bodies. More subtle than our breathing in and out of air is the subtle life force which moves in with the breath. It is the essence of all matter and flows to us through our food, water and air and becomes our body’s life force. Although carried into us by oxygen, water and food, in itself it is not any of these. It is more subtle, more vital, more essential, infinite and invisible.

Concerning Invisibility: So far no scientific instruments have been found to measure or verify this life force.

Concerning Universality: The life force is one, in all the cosmos. There is not a Christian life force—only Christian labels we tie onto our experiences—like holy spirit, or Christ consciousness, or the presence of God. When we look over our religious boundary fences we see that all the great religions and philosophies also have different labels for the one life force.

Concerning Labels: We need to make sure that we do not mistake the labels for the one great life source. We can hear different cultures, religions and philosophies using very different words and can accept them as a rich tapestry of meanings which add to our own familiar understandings. Last issue listed some of these labels. Here’s a reminder: Chi, Ki, Holy Spirit, praan, divine energy, cosmic life force, infinite Source of Life, Love and Light.

How to increase the subtle more powerful and refined qualities of life? Breath and conscious breathing is a (perhaps the) major key. When we are agitated, stressed or emotionally upset we usually begin breathing rapidly through the mouth—ready for ‘fight or flight’. To calm down we need to consciously slow our breathing, do it through the nose, and hold the breath for a little longer than usual. Dr John Douillard in his book “*Body Mind and Sport*” says “When we use proper breathing through the nose the subtle life energy travels to the brain. When we breathe through the mouth the life energy (praan or spirit) moves directly to the lungs. The value of the life energy when inhaled through the nose is heightened with its ability to nourish the control centres of the brain.” The result is clarity of awareness, appreciation of people and our surroundings, greater calmness and a sharper and wider consciousness. All very subtle but very real.

KEEP BREATHING

Breathing is perhaps the most essential practice to bring about the integration of body, mind, emotions and spirit. We are always breathing, either consciously or unconsciously. When we breathe, we open and receive sustenance, and also let go and release what’s no longer needed.

Holistic physicians often say that conscious breathing is the number one health practice. Spiritual teachers often call it the number one spiritual practice.

- extracts from ‘Integral Life Practice’ by Ken Wilber and others

Any time you ...

- ◆ Want to be more aware in the present moment the most effective thing you can do is to take a deep, feeling breath.

Any time you ...

- ◆ Become frightened, angry or frozen in some thought pattern or painful emotion, take a deep, feeling breath.

The ancient saints and sages have said for centuries that when we pause between breaths (kumbhaka) the life energy (praan) can be sent to all parts of the body, “from the nails of the toes to the tips of the hair.”

At a birthday celebration for a ninety year old the advice from the guest of honour was plain and simple — “Keep Breathing”.

A Possible Exercise

- ⇒ Sit comfortably and close your eyes.
- ⇒ Become aware of your breathing. Don’t hurry this. Breathe calmly through your nose.
- ⇒ Reflect that this air is more than just air. It is charged with the power and the presence of God—Infinite Source of Life.
- ⇒ Reflect that while you inhale the air you are drawing God or Divine Energy into your body.
- ⇒ Take time to be fully aware that you are receiving the power and presence of God each time you breathe in.
- ⇒ Reflect that this is the same basic process as we read about in Genesis Ch. 2 ... that God breathed into man’s nostrils and he became a living being.
- ⇒ And reflect that when you breathe out, you can imagine you are breathing out all the tensions ... your fears ... your discontent ... your negative thoughts and feelings.

- based on an exercise in Anthony de Mello’s book “Sadhana”