



Dr KK Aggarwal
Padma Shri Awardee
President, Heart Care Foundation of India
Group Editor-in-Chief, JJCP Group

The Spiritual Heart: Your Heart and My Heart are One

“My Heart, Your Heart” ... this is the theme for the World Heart Day this year, which happens to be today. This means to not only look after our own hearts but also of our loved ones.

It's important to lead a healthy lifestyle, not only as individuals, but also make sure that people we care about do the same.

This is what our Vedas also expound.

“*Tat tvam asi*” is a mahavakya in the ancient Sanskrit texts of the Upanishads. It translates as “I am that” and means that “You and I are same” or “your heart and my heart are one”.

Whenever we point to our own self, we put our hand on our heart; we also put our hand on our heart when we say “I love you from the bottom of my heart”.

Does the consciousness reside in the celiac plexus (Manipura chakra) or thymus plexus (Anahata chakra)? We do not know. Manipura chakra is associated with fire and the power of transformation. The Anahata chakra manifests unconditional love, forgiveness and patience.

Our ancient scriptures and the Bible say that the heart is the size of a thumb and it is in the heart that our consciousness (soul) resides.

- **In Svetasvatara Upanisad (5.8, 5.9):** "Soul is the size of a thumb, bright as the sun, when coupled with conception and ego. But with only the qualities of understanding and soul, it appears the size of the point of an awl. This life is the hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred times, and

yet in it is infinity". Here the sruti is speaking metaphorically, because actually the soul is atomic in size. Therefore in the next verse (Svet. U. 5.9) the soul is compared to a fraction of the tip of a hair. These comparisons are meant to indicate that the individual soul is atomic rather than all-pervasive.

- According to **Vedanta Sutra**, the idea that God resides in the physical heart the size of the thumb is for the sake of conceptualization during meditation, and is thus a metaphorical description. The size of the thumb refers to the size of the human heart. God is in reality all pervading and atomic at the same time.
- **Atharva Veda:** The soul is a particle of God.
- **Jain metaphysicists** refer to it as of varying sizes, small in a child, big in adults and old people and very big in elephants.
- **Nemi Chandra in Dravya sangrah-2:** Soul is characterized by knowledge and vision, has the same extent as its own gross body.
- **Katha Upanishad (1.2.20):** Spirit, the size of a thumb "angush matra", is the inner soul, always seated in the heart of creatures.
- **Katha Upanishad Part Fourth XII:** The Purusha (Self), of the size of a thumb, resides in the middle of the body as the lord of the past and the future, (he who knows Him) fears no more. This verily is That. The seat of the Purusha is said to be the heart, hence it “resides in the middle of the body.” Although it is limitless and all-pervading, yet in relation to its abiding-place. It is represented as

limited in extension, "the size of a thumb." This refers really to the heart, which in shape may be likened to a thumb. Light is everywhere, yet we see it focused in a lamp and believe it to be there only; similarly, although the life-current flows everywhere in the body, the heart is regarded as peculiarly its seat.

- **Garuda Puran:** Ultimately, the soul, which is not more than the size of a thumb, reluctantly comes out from the body as the attachment with the world exists even after his.
- **Gaudiya Acharya Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana** in his Govinda Bhasya commentary on the Vedanta Sutra (1.2.7, 1.3.24-25.): During meditation Paramatma does appear to the yogi or devotee as a localized form in his heart, but in general Paramatma is all-pervasive and all-knowing.
- **Unknown:** According to some Vedic scholars the soul enters the human form like 4-8 weeks after conception, like when the fetus is the size of a thumb.
- **Bhagavad Gita 15.15:** "I (soul) am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the Vedas, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas."
- **Vedanta Sutra II, 6,17:** "The person of the size of a thumb, the inner Self, is always settled in the heart of men. Let a man draw that Self forth from his body with steadiness, as one draws the pith from a reed. Let him know that Self as the Bright, as the Immortal."
- **Swami Muktananda, Play of Consciousness, p. 85:** The whole body is like a lotus which has four petals of four kinds, colors and sizes.... The first is the gross body, its color is red. The second petal is the subtle body, in which we sleep and experience dreams. It is the size of a thumb, and its color is white. The third petal is the causal body. It is the size of the tip of third finger, and its color is black. The fourth petal is the supra-causal body, which is as small as a sesame seed. Its color is blue.... It is very brilliant; it is the foundation of sadhana; it is the highest inner vision.

- **Matthew 5:8:** Soul resided in the heart: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

When we meet somebody and form a relationship with another person, we go through five stages: Euphoria, reaction, adjustment, liking and loving.

The stage of *euphoria* is due to release of phenylethylamine, dopamine and norepinephrine. Dopamine makes them feel good and norepinephrine stimulates the production of adrenaline, which makes the heart beat faster. The stage of *reaction* is based on release of adrenaline and noradrenaline.

Adjustment is the balance of all hormones. Endorphins and serotonin abound in the stage of *liking*. The endorphins or opiate-like peptides calm and reassure with intimacy, dependability, warmth and shared experiences. The last phase is the real spiritual *love* or the state of 'rasa', where your emotions are one with the other. This is "made for each other" and denotes a parasympathetic state of mind.

Only the β -blockers have been proven to reduce mortality in heart disease. They block the sympathetic response of the body and convert it to the parasympathetic state, the relaxed state.

The parasympathetic state can also be achieved by doing parasympathetic exercises, which are healing, e.g., progressive muscular relaxation, yoga, pranayama, shavasana (also called kayotsarga, which means total relaxation of mind, body and speech with self-awareness) and meditation by thinking differently, thinking opposite and thinking positively.

A parasympathetic state can also be achieved by neutralizing the noise of attachment, expectations and desires or going through these, but bypassing them.

Increase in physical activity is recommended for a healthy heart. A long walk not only offers physical benefits, one also gets the benefits of nature as one's inner stimuli are exposed to the outer stimuli during the parikrama. The proximity with nature helps in the inward spiritual journey and shifts one from the sympathetic (disturbed) to parasympathetic (relaxed) mode described by lowering of blood pressure and pulse rate.