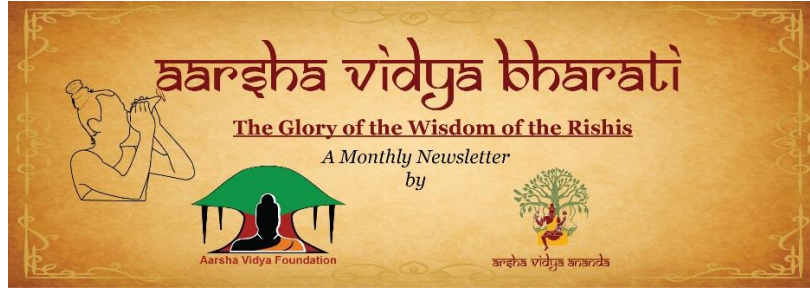

Aarsha Vidya Bharati - February 2023

Magha - Phalguna 2079

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



This is one of many articles from our monthly newsletter. Access the [Feb 2023 issue](#) or read any of [the articles](#).

Body Intelligence – Vibhūti of Īśvara

By Dr Mridula Nadamuni, USA



Although the sun is shining, a bitterly cold and biting wind nips at the exposed surfaces of my skin. My fingers are painful inside my gloves, despite having shoved them into the pockets of my winter coat. Why on earth did I think it wise to leave the cozy comfort of my bed and expose myself to the elements? I lament for the parts of my body that have frozen and seem ready to fall off. It's not my body's fault that we are out here right now. It was just following the commands of my foolish mind — the same mind who arbitrarily decided that I needed more exercise. The same mind that set a resolution to go outside today-- the coldest day of the year.

As I plod along, pondering my life choices, the oddest thing happens. As I move, it is as if someone has thrown several logs to the furnace all at once. Suddenly, I'm steaming up inside my cocoon of jackets and my woolen shirt is beading with sweat. How can it be, that in the middle of winter in freezing

temperatures, my body can still provide the power and heat needed for me to not only stay alive but walk, think, and talk?

Without my oversight, while I was actively not paying attention to my body, it activated its systems of thermoregulation, or keeping heat balance. Little receptors in my skin recognized the cold temperatures, and sent signals to a region in my brain called the hypothalamus. My hypothalamus activated my muscles to start shivering. These tiny little contracting movements generated heat. The heat warmed the blood flowing through the capillaries nearby and warm blood circulated back to my core. Thus my brain and heart stayed warm, allowing me to keep going on my pity party, wondering why I had chosen to come outside.

As I started walking more quickly, the millions of cells in my muscles started turning stored glucose and fats into a molecule called adenosine triphosphate or ATP, a fuel for the body which I used to keep moving. All the cells began working in concert like a giant orchestra, each

playing their part. As more ATP was made and I moved more, enough heat was generated to the point where I began to sweat.

All this happened without my involvement. I did not ask my hypothalamus to check my body temperature—much like my body knows how to breathe on its own, it also regulates the temperature independently. In fact, my conscious mind completely ignored my body's response, and instead was busy focusing on self-recriminations like “It's cold, I hate this, and I wish I was back in bed.” If the intelligence of the body was entirely dependent on the mind, could any of this have happened without me noticing?

When I think about what the body can do independently, it is clearly *Īśvara prasāda*. The body is intelligent and does so much for me silently, in the background, all the time. I do not have to tell my cells to grow nor repair. A healthy cell once born knows its function without being taught. It responds to the signals of its environment. Once it has completed its assigned responsibilities, it undergoes apoptosis or programmed cell death and makes way for fresh cells coming behind. On the way back, I cut my finger on a tree branch. I notice for a moment that it is bleeding and painful. Once home, I wrap it, I forget about it unless it bothers me. In 2 weeks, the area will be completely healed and it will be impossible to see where the cut once was. New cells will have grown and taken the place of the injured ones. This too will happen without my involvement.

All this happens in my body every minute, and I take it for granted. I rarely stop to question how it is that my body continues to function even when I ask it for impossible things. When I push my body too hard and it breaks down, I complain bitterly instead of thanking *Īśvara* for the gift of every cell and molecule that quietly performs its role, allowing me to enjoy a stroll in the park on a harsh winter day, when by all other measures I should have stayed in bed.



Mridula is a medical doctor based in Boston, USA