

## When laughter resounded on Bhopal streets

Laughter of every kind could be heard - the silent laugh, karate laugh and even the cell phone laugh - as thousands guffawed their way through the streets of [Bhopal](#) on World Laughter Day Sunday.

'Fast-paced lifestyle, coupled with stress, has eclipsed laughter from our landscape. Research has shown that a laugh - natural or artificial - can enhance longevity and boost health,' said 70-year-old C.B. Chansoria, president of one of the city's laughter clubs.

About 1,500 members from over 25 laughter clubs participated in the three-km rally, which wound its way through various localities. The laughing exercises they performed also included the deep breathing laugh, acidity laugh and dog laugh.

'Barking like a dog is a muscular exercise that eases stress and flattens the stomach,' Chansoria told IANS.

Chansoria went into depression 1997 after his wife's death. Perturbed by his declining health, his children introduced him to the Hasya Kendra (laughter club). Apart from becoming its president, he has now opened quite a few branches as well.

'When I saw people laughing at the Kendra, I thought it was foolish. But after 15 days I accepted the value of laughter and the resilience it brings into human constitution,' he said.

Kasturi Singhal, who is over 100-years-old, is all praise for laughter and its benefits.

'Laughter exercises include yoga, aerobics and meditation. So after participating in a laughter session, you need not do any other exercise,' Singhal said.

'There was a time when I was not able to walk without support, but today I can even dance,' she added.

Said Vinay Mishra, a psychiatrist: 'A healthy person should, on an average, laugh at least 15-20 minutes daily. It increases oxygen intake in our body. Moreover, when you laugh, all muscles function. It reduces tension and the person becomes mentally healthy.'

'Also, due to a decrease in tension-generating hormones and increased oxygen intake, our blood circulation improves. When the heart gets regular blood supply, its capacity as well as efficiency increases.'

An interesting fact Mishra pointed out is that our body doesn't know the difference between a fake and real laugh.

'If you laugh spontaneously at a joke or you do laughter exercises, the same set of physiological changes occur in your body. Laughter reduces at least three negative hormones of the mind - epinephrine, cortisol and dopac - that increase stress and tension,' Mishra explained.

M.M. Beg, a doctor at Kasturba Hospital here, said: 'We do not claim that a disease can be cured by laughter but we can definitely say that laughter reduces mind stress, strengthens the nervous

system, increases oxygen intake, purifies and smoothens blood flow, and increases body resistance.'

He added: 'People do get relief from many problems like high/low blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, depression, allergies, anxiety, backache, neckache and frequent headaches, breathlessness and altered sleep patterns.'

The rally aimed at driving home the point that laughter is the best medicine after all.

*Sanjay Sharma* ( © IANS / India eNews)