



# GITANANDA YOGA

## NEWSLETTER

# DOWN UNDER

Official Quarterly Newsletter of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia Inc  
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## NAMASTE!



*Welcome to another vibrant Newsletter of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia Inc.*

The Association is truly moving in leaps and bounds thanks to the wonderful dedication of its members.

We are currently seeking accreditation as an association with OAMPS Insurance Brokers Limited. You are probably aware in this day and age the importance of having insurance as a Yoga Teacher and/or alternative therapist to protect your reputation and interests in case of any form of litigation made against you, your business or your products.

Registering with OAMPS will also further lift the status of our Association as a professional body as well as provide a needed service at a reduced cost to our members.

Yogacharya Murali Dharan, a bastion of Gitananda Yoga in Australia, has done much of the research and ringing around in this regard. OAMPS fees are approximately \$275 per year for \$2M insurance and approximately \$350 per year for \$5M. However if we are successful with our application, which we should find out by July 13, then we will obtain the following reduced premium: \$197 per year for \$1M, \$224 per year for \$2M and \$264 per year for \$5M insurance.

For more information, access the following hyperlink: <http://www.oamps.com.au/oamps/default.asp>;

This edition's main feature is on Yoga Chikitsa or what is commonly known as Yoga Therapy. During the Six months Yoga Teachers' Training course at Ananda Ashram, ICYER in South India various aspects of Yoga Chikitsa are taught in a 'hands on' context. I am sure you will find our various members' experience in receiving and giving Yoga Chikitsa,

(a much misunderstood and relatively unknown science in the West), fascinating and insightful.

A very important date in the Hindu and Yoga calendar is taking place this quarter. It is Guru Purnima, the day devotees pay homage to their spiritual mentor. It is at the time of the full moon in July, the month of Jupiter or Guru. This was the day when Sage Vyasa, author of the voluminous Hindu epic the Mahabharata (from which the Hindu Bible the Bhagavad Gita originates), was born.

Ananda Ashram, our mother ashram, will continue celebrating the Guru spirit in August (16th to 22nd) on Swamiji's 100th birth anniversary. Many senior yoga practitioners and teachers from all over the world will be converging to ICYER for the occasion.

May the Guru spirit of our revered Yoga Master Puya Swamiji Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, smile on us and bless our Yoga Sadhana. Jai Juri Guru Gitanandajji!



*Yours in Yoga  
The Editor*

## YOGA THERAPY/CHIKITSA

### 😊 YOGA THERAPY – A Wholistic Concept

In modern times when the terms Yoga and Yoga therapy have become synonymous, this article is but a small attempt to put into perspective what Yoga therapy can offer us as an integrative system of wholistic wellbeing.

According to our Guru Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, *"Yoga Chikitsa is virtually as old as Yoga itself, indeed, the 'return of mind that feels*



*separated from the Universe in which it exists' represents the first Yoga therapy. Yoga Chikitsa could be termed "man's first attempt at Unitive understanding of mind-emotions-physical distress and is the oldest wholistic concept and therapy in the world."*

The Nirvana Prakarana of the Laghu Yoga Vashishta, one of the ancient Yoga Texts describes in detail the origin and destruction of mental and bodily diseases.

Sage Vashishta teaches Lord Rama that there are two major classifications of disease. Those that are caused by the mind are primary (Adhija Vyadhi, the psychosomatic, stress disorders) while those that afflict the body directly are secondary (Anadhija Vyadhi, infectious disease, accidents etc). The primary disease has two sub divisions. These are the Samanya (ordinary physical diseases) and the Sara (the essential disorder of rebirth that may only be destroyed by Atma Jnana or knowledge of the Divine Self). Samanya diseases are the ones that affect man physically and may be destroyed by the correction of the mind-body disharmony. It is in these psychosomatic disorders that the actual practical application of Yoga practices as a mode of therapy can be very useful.

In Yoga therapy it is vital that we take into consideration all of the following aspects that are part of an integrated approach to the problem. These include a healthy life nourishing diet, a healthy and natural environment, a wholistic lifestyle, adequate bodywork through Asanas, Mudras and Kriyas, invigorating breath work through the use of Pranayama and the production of a healthy thought process through the higher practices of Jnana and Raja Yoga.

The application of Yoga therapy can be correlated with the Pancha Koshas and various Yoga practices may be used as therapeutic interventions at different levels in this respect.

- Annamaya Kosha:

Jattis (simple units of movements), Mudras (gestures for energy generation and conservation), Kriyas (structured movements), Asanas (steady and comfortable postures) along with the dietary modifications and control. Kaya Kriya, Tala Kriya, Dridha Kriya are good examples of the Gitananda Yoga techniques that may be used at this level. The Loma Viloma set of practices are also excellent.

- Pranamaya Kosha:

Shat Karmas (cleansing actions), various Pranayamas, development of breath awareness, working on breath-movement coordination and the energizing and balancing of the Pranic energy. The Hathenas of Gitananda Yoga offer us a wonderful tool to deal at this level.

- Manomaya Kosha:

Trataka (concentrated gaze), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), Japa and Japa-Ajapa practices are useful. Various aspects of concentration such as the Mandala Dharana and other Yoga Drishti techniques are available in Gitananda Yoga for this purpose.

- Vijnanamaya Kosha:

Swadhyaya (self analysis), Satsangha (lectures and spiritually uplifting exchange) along with the wonderful Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga relaxation and concentration practices of Gitananda Yoga.

- Anandamaya Kosha:

Learning to implement the principles of Karma Yoga (Yoga as skilled action performed without expectation) and following the principle of action in relaxation help us to bring about joy in all our activities.

A realization that we live in a blissful universe and that all life is joy is to be brought about in this intervention through use of Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and other aspects like Bhajana, Yogic counselling and Satsangha. The Mantralaya and other Laya Yoga practices of Gitananda Yoga are excellent for producing effects at this universal level as the individual energies are absorbed or reabsorbed into the Divine.

Extensive research on Yoga being done all over the world has shown promise with regard to various disorders and diseases that seem to be amiable to Yoga therapy. These include the psychosomatic and stress disorders such as bronchial asthma, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, gastro intestinal ulcer diseases, atherosclerosis, seizure disorder (epilepsy) and headache. It also includes physical disorders such as heart disease, lung disease, and mental retardation.

Psychiatric disorders such as anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression and substance abuse can also be managed along with other therapies. Musculoskeletal disorders such as lumbago, spondylosis, sciatica and carpal tunnel syndrome can be tackled effectively with Yoga practices that offer a lot of hope in metabolic disorders such as thyroid and other endocrine disorders, obesity and the modern metabolic syndrome.

The need of the modern age is to have an integrated approach towards therapy and to utilize Yoga therapy in coordination and collaboration with other systems of medicine such as Allopathy, Ayurveda, Siddha and Naturopathy. Physiotherapy and Chiropractic practices may be used with the Yoga if needed. Advice on diet and life style is very important irrespective of the mode of therapy that is employed for a particular patient.

A word of caution is also required. Though Yoga and Yoga therapy are very useful in bringing about a state of total health it is not a miracle cure for all problems. It needs a lot of discrimination on the part of both the therapist as well as the patient. It may not be useful in emergency conditions and there is a strong need to consult a qualified medical doctor where in doubt. Each patient is different and so the therapy has to be moulded to suit the individual needs rather than relying on a specific therapy plan for patients suffering the same medical condition. A very true problem is that there is a different approach of the different schools of Yoga to the



same condition. It is better to follow any one system that one is conversant with, rather than trying to mix systems in a "Yogic Cocktail". One must also be vigilant as there is a strong presence of numerous quacks pretending to be Yoga therapists and this leads to a bad name for Yoga therapy as well as Yoga in general.

Yoga helps us regain the ease we had lost through dis-ease (as implied by *sthira sukham asanam*). It also produces mental equanimity (*samatvam Yoga uchyate*) where the opposites cease to affect (*tato dhwandwa anabhigatha*). This enables us to move from a state of illness and disease to one of health and wellbeing that ultimately allows us to move from the lower animal nature to the higher human nature and finally the highest Divine Nature that is our birthright.

**Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi**

**Bhawanani**



**Chairman : Yoganjali Natyalayam and ICYER  
Hon General Secretary, Pondicherry Yogasana Assoc.**

## ☺ YOGA THERAPY AND WESTERN SCIENCE

Contemporary Western Science in the last twenty years has produced a mountain of evidence vindicating Yoga as a therapy, so many of us may gain the impression that this is a new and major breakthrough. Not at all and I am going to quote from an article I wrote in 1973 demonstrating that the Scientific method applied to Yoga as therapy had been well established by the late 1960's both in India and other countries.

What has changed is the amount of research now done and the willingness in the Western media and medical journals to publicise ongoing data.

A few preliminary comments of mine:

Yoga is a technique for utilizing the mind-body complex along a dimension of five realms (Panch Kosha) not envisioned within the context of current Science. Remember that so called Scientific "Fact" however is always "provisional" to point 'now' rather than an 'eternal' truth!

Those who aspire to Yoga Therapy must always keep in mind that Yoga ultimately is not a 'therapy' but rather the union of the See-er with the seen, the subject with the object, the perception with the conception, the attention with the environment, and the awareness with point-instant in time. Yoga is a state of being and not a practice – the practice is but the means to shift from being "nowhere" to "Now Here".

The methodology utilized must always be considered within the context of the individual i.e. different types require Kriya or a method suited to their genetic endowments, early environmental imprinting, and cultural milieu and place in the "historical timeline".

What do I mean by "Historical timeline"? Let me give an example those advocating "Amaroli" often do not take into account

Amaroli or Urine therapy, considering massive pollution in many Western countries, China and even some parts of India, is not a viable therapy for most as more than homeopathic and allopathic doses of salts, vitamins etc may be thrown out in the Urine –e.g. heavy metals - something not many people are aware of!

Considering the prevalence of meat consumption and the toxic dosing of meat products with antibiotics and growth hormones is an additional factor that makes Amaroli even more dubious as a contemporary practice in today's historical time-line.

Yoga Therapy also requires careful recognition of the total matrix within which Yoga is embedded.

Samkhya (500 BCE) provides the theory that gave birth to the magic triplets:

- ❖ Ayurveda
- ❖ Yoga
- ❖ Tantra



This means that a careful evolution and specialization took place on a historical time –line of concrete materialization as Samkhya – Ayurveda – Yoga – Tantra and we shall have to wait for Amma's wonderful Magnus Opus, "The History of Yoga" for the details to emerge.

Ayurveda utilized the Shat Kriyas (cleansing practices) of Yoga as therapy in the form of the Panchakarmas.

The basic scientific foundation for Yoga was laid in the 1960's and early 1970's by Indian institutes and American Universities.

Consider the following statement in 1966:

"Oriental Mysticism at first sight may seem to have little in common with western science, but the time may be approaching when we shall be able to build a bridge between the two."

The Science Journal, August 1996

During the early 1960's Japanese scientists did brain wave measurements of Zen monks' meditation and established a prevalence of Alpha waves which have been defined as "Relaxed vigilance".

About the same time Dr Joe Kamiya in America was training volunteers to identify the moments when they were producing alpha rhythm subjectively, and through biofeedback they quickly learned to switch the rhythm on or off by a voluntary change of attitude.

The Sun Herald April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1970 ("Meditation brings about Body Changes") cited research by Dr. Wallace, L.A. Center for Health Sciences, proving that meditation decelerates the heart frequency and reduces the need for Oxygen



consumption. The meditation state he measured was an independent state from sleep, hypnosis, waking which is no news to serious practitioners of Yoga.

By 1969 the Yoga Mimamsa Journal (Pune) had established the major physiological facts about Yoga conclusively. The research was conducted by Indian and Western scientists working with patients and students within the Ashram. These studies indicated:

1: Psychosomatic and physical disorders may be greatly assisted through the proper asanas and Shavasana practices as verified by Electromyography studies.

2: Oxygen consumption in performing traditional static asanas within a non-gymnastic setting is less than walking or running indicating an energy conservation benefit to such postures.

3: Direct quote: "In male as well as female subjects, uropepsin in urine was reduced by the practice of Asanas. Uropepsin is the end-product of pepsin, a digestive chemical secreted by the stomach. Production of pepsin is governed by hormones called 'corticoids' which are secreted by the adrenal cortex. It is also well known that in any kind of physical or mental stress corticoid production is increased to meet the stress. On the other hand, if stress is reduced, production of corticoids is diminished. Since uropepsin excretion is governed by the corticoids, it reflects the increase or decrease of the latter. Reduction in uropepsin excretion is indicative of reduced corticoid excretion is indicative of reduced corticoid production and consequently a state of reduced stress and tensions as a result of practising asanas."

The significance of the above statement cannot be overestimated as much research since 1969 has corroborated this and refined analysis of the biochemical pathways has led to even deeper understanding of Yoga as therapy.

4: Even 45 minutes of continuous pranayama breathing does not disturb the acid-base equilibrium as shown by urinary acidity studies and thus popular objections raised to Yoga breathing are completely unfounded.

5: Even a few seconds of Kumbhaka or Breath retention will improve perceptive discriminative capacities as proved in psychological pattern sorting tests.

6: Heart control studies have demonstrated that specialized Yoga techniques are capable of slowing the heart down and even bringing it to a complete standstill.

7: Studies on Khechari Mudra have demonstrated a lowering of the BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate) by 25% and subjects demonstrating this remain healthy despite decreased food intake and engaging in vigorous work.

I have not even touched the surface of research during the 60's and 70's which lulled by the 90's and has now resurged exponentially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We need to always remember that we stand upon the shoulders of giants (to paraphrase some one else) and in considering Yoga Therapy recognize the individual temperaments and needs: "One size does not fit all" and here-in lies often the failing of Western Medical approaches to chronic disease and prescribed medications.

We are Kapha, Pitta, Vata, or is it Tamasic, Rajasic or Sattvic? Whatever - each DNA brew is different!

Finally I have often been struck by how the wordy "Discover" etymologically means "Uncover" and we spend our lives imagining what we "Uncover" is a "discovery".



**Dr. Swami Anandakapila Saraswati**  
Ambassador, Gitananda Yoga Association

### 😊 Yoga Therapy – Deeper Aspects

Man's rehabilitation from a serious illness is no different from man's ultimate salvation from the cycle of births and deaths. Both culminate in attuning to the source from whence man originated, Divine/Cosmic Consciousness. The practice of the deeper aspects of Yoga (the breathing, chanting and meditation) is Yoga Therapy in its pristine purity.

Man is essentially Self Consciousness, part and parcel of Divine/Cosmic Consciousness. The Christians call it Christ Consciousness, the Hindus call it Krishna Consciousness, and the Buddhists call it Buddha Consciousness.

Man lives in three states of Consciousness in this worldly life, Wakeful, Dream, and Deep Sleep States of Consciousness attuned to the three Planes of Existence, Physical, Astral and Causal, in keeping with the basis of creation – the three modes of nature: Tamas, Rajas and Sattva.

These three Planes of Existence are manifestation of Prana, They are Physical, Astral, and Causal Energy Bodies, created and sustained by the cosmic vibratory energy of Pranava AUM.

These three Energy Bodies may be classified as follows:

Physical Energy Body	physical body	Annamaya Kosha
Astral Energy Body	electromagnetic field	Pranamaya Kosha
Lower mind		Manomaya Kosha
Higher mind		Vijnanamaya Kosha
Causal Energy Body	bliss body	Anandamaya Kosha



Yoga Therapy is no different from Yoga. It is helping a student-patient to rise above body and conscious mind, negate ego consciousness and attune to the state of causal silence within, where renewal, repair and healing take place. This is achieved by helping the student-patient to develop physically, emotionally, mentally (intellectually) and spiritually at the five koshas/energy bodies. The healing follows naturally, within the constraints of one's karma.

All above vibratory energy bodies (including the cells in the physical body) need daily sustenance of energy and the vibratory frequency of Pranava AUM to experience a state of wellbeing and experience good physical and mental health. The energy is supplied by Mahat Yoga Pranayama, while the vibratory resonant frequency is supplied by Pranava AUM.

Mahat Yoga Pranayama regenerates and rejuvenates the physical body when done to an 81 day programme, incorporating Adham, Madhyam and Adyam Pranayamas. It is done in five sessions in different ratios to generate healthy blood and glandular cells and bodily fluids. It is also done in deeper rhythms to slow down the rate of breathing, which in turn slows down the bodily processes giving a greater duration of time for renewal, repair and healing to take place. It may be remembered in this context that the ancient secret to good physical and mental health and longevity was breathing deeply, slowly and rhythmically.

Pranava AUM consists of chanting "A" at the lower lungs, "U" at the mid lungs, and "M" at the upper lungs, and "AUM" at the complete lungs.

"A" attunes to the vibratory sound of the physical body, universe and a Wakeful State of Consciousness.

"U" attunes to the vibratory sound of the mind, cosmic mind and a Dream State of Consciousness.

"M" attunes to the vibratory sound of self consciousness, cosmic consciousness and a Deep Sleep State of Consciousness.

"AUM" integrates the body, mind and self-consciousness, the universe, cosmic mind and cosmic consciousness and transcends the Wakeful, Dream, and the Deep Sleep State of Consciousness and leads the student-patient to the fourth state, Turiya, beyond conceptualization. I call it the State of Causal Silence within, the abode of happiness, peace, tranquility, creativity, intuition, health, knowledge and freedom - the source of everything.

Emotional traumas and tensions of this and previous births are stored in the Chakras preventing the free flow of prana into the nerve plexuses and endocrine glands under them.

These are neutralized by Chakra Meditation at the Navel Centre (Manipura Chakra) associated with the Physical Plane of Existence, at the Throat Centre (Vishuddha Chakra) associated with the Astral Plane of Existence and at the Brow Centre (Ajna Chakra) associated with the Causal Plane of Existence. It is also done at the Heart centre (Anahata Chakra) the seat of the soul.

Chakra Meditation, if done at the Physical Plane of Existence, is as follows:

"A" is allowed to vibrate and resonate three times each at the Navel Centre, reptilian part of the brain, and the Physical Energy Body radiating from the Navel Centre. The three Planes of Existence are then integrated at the Navel Centre by allowing "AUM" to vibrate and resonate at the Navel Centre nine times, veered to silence and the silence experienced for three minutes. Then the Navel Centre is visualized with one pointed awareness as a ten petalled lotus (or water lily). This activates the Centre and it is experienced as a whirling sensation leading to a sense of pulsation, when "AUM" or "AMEN" or one's personal One Word Mantra is mentally chanted for five minutes to synchronize with it. This process neutralizes emotional traumas or tensions stored at the Navel Centre, enhances its psychic quality of personal power, and initiates a process of healing at the Physical Plane of Existence. The enhancing of the psychic qualities of the Centres also transform the personality and character.

If I may cite a feedback to substantiate my claim from Milijana – a clairvoyant, Victoria, Australia

"I have been practicing VBT since June 2003 which resulted in the following:

- removal of energy blockages,
- detoxification of the body and
- opening up of the psychic system. In other words I had a quantum leap in every aspect of my life as a result of the spiritual development triggered by VBT practices."

Healing is effected by taking awareness to the organ needing healing and allowing "AUM" to vibrate and resonate there. The focus of the awareness activates the consciousness of the cells in the organ, the breathing at Mahat Yoga Pranayama energizes the cells, and the vibratory resonant frequency of "AUM" makes the cells holistic to experience a state of wellbeing so healing can take effect.

In order to facilitate this, the Psychic Passage (Shushmna Nadi) is first cleansed by moving "AUM" up the spinal column nine times, the Physical, Astral and Causal Planes of Existence integrated at the Navel, Throat and Brow Centres, the reptilian, mammalian, and neo-cortex parts of the brain, and the Physical, Astral and Causal Energy Bodies (extended to infinity).

The cosmic vibratory energy of Pranava AUM is done 27 times at the organ needing healing on the first day, and increased by one more chant every day for 81 days, until a total of 108 chants are reached and leveled off. The chanting of "AUM" is veered to silence and experienced for three minutes. Awareness is then taken to the Heart Centre (Anahata Chakra) the seat of the soul, and meditation is done on "AUM". This is progressively lengthened. The session is ended with an affirmation. This practice is done in the morning to set the tone for the day.



This main practice of Vibrational Breath Healing/Pranava AUM and Meditation is complemented with Rhythmic Breath (Savitri Pranayama) [and Meditative Walk to the same rhythm] once every three hours during the day or when stressed, tense, depressed or even tired. Psychic Sleep (Yoga Nidra) is done when going to sleep or during an afternoon siesta. Both these practices create a state of wellbeing and enhance the process of healing.

Additional practices to cater for specific conditions, including traumas locked in the nervous system etc, (which we learnt at the Ashram) are introduced, if and when necessary. Fortunately we have learnt the deeper versions of all practices and they are most effective. But the main practice always remains only Pranava AUM and Meditation.

Brief feedback from a leading medical practitioner from Melbourne, who has attended my 81 day programme and is a dedicated student, may help you to appreciate the unique character and "heal thy self" quality of my discipline better.

*"Remember, you are doing this for the good Lord, not for mankind.....if you know my meaning... and the few you have shown the way will open the floodgates when the Divine time is at hand.... People like me do it day in, day out. I see the face of the Lord again and again. Fear and despondence is not what I encounter now, but rather an understanding of the workings of the Divine and man's choice to veer or follow God".*

*Dr Kuan Chin, Physician Consultant*

*Sri Bala Ratnam, Yoga Therapist*

*Founder, Vibrational Breath Therapy (based on Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga)*



## 😊 YOGA THERAPY IN CONTEXT

**Therapy:** The treatment of disease, disorder, defect, etc, as by some remedial or curative process.

(NL therapia, from Greek therapeia healing)

The Macquarie Dictionary – Third Edition Macquarie University NSW 1997

Is the term Yoga Therapy an anomaly or is it integral to the philosophy of Yoga? And is it suitable to modern man?

If we take a look at the roots of the word Yoga, we will be directed to the meaning of the word. The root of Yoga is yuj, 'to yoke, harness'. What are we trying to yoke or harness when practicing or coming to understand Yoga? As Yoga Maharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri spells out in his 'The Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali' page 4 *Self-realisation or identification with Atma, Paramatman is the object of Yoga.* The eight limbs of Yoga as codified by Rishi Patanjali provides us with the philosophy and framework for the sincere Sadhak or seeker to explore and experience this first hand. A far cry from 'gym yoga'.

In the context of Yoga therapy, using the art and science of Yoga to treat disease, disorder, defect etc. let us look at the

following three questions which will be addressed separately below.

- I. Does the practice of Yoga with its plethora of techniques have the ability to heal as a side effect so to speak of a concerted Yoga Sadhana?
- II. Is illness both physical and mental considered impediments on the path of Yoga and its realization, and has Yoga developed its own techniques or adaptation of existing ones to directly address this (i.e. Yoga Chikitsa)?, and
- III. Is Self-realization, the aim of Yoga, the ultimate therapy?

I. Does the practice of Yoga with its plethora of techniques have the ability to heal as a side effect so to speak of a concerted Yoga Sadhana?

A person's illness may limit their own ability to perform some of the Yoga techniques and some may need to be modified or altogether not executed as they may be contraindications to the very conditions the person present. Examples would be the contraindication of practicing Agni Saara Kriya when suffering from a hiatus hernia or practicing Paschimottanasana when one suffers from slipped disc or sciatica.

My own experience in this matter is that despite my sport clinic advising me not to go to India to undergo the six months Yoga Teachers' Training course at Ananda Ashram ICYER due to a very eroded meniscus (almost bone against bone) with at times much pain felt in my knee, I consulted with Dr Ananda at the Ashram who wisely and kindly told me that it could very well go two ways : either my knee would strengthen itself through Asanas and long periods of time kneeling in Vajra Asana (I think we can all recall that experience!) or it would get worst and I wouldn't be able to continue the course.

After 19 years of intermittent suffering and much pain and degradation experienced in the last year before coming to the Ashram (an old martial art injury), my knee did strengthen. I most successfully completed the six months course and have not since suffered any knee pain. There have been many such examples at the Ashram of students coping with or overcoming their ills, physical, mental and emotional as a consequence of their stay and practices. My suggestion is for the individual to consult their doctor or a qualified Yoga therapist if they have any doubts before starting a Yoga program.

A Yoga Sadhana may provide incidental healing or perhaps the Yoga journey is an on-going healing process of the four-fold aspect of man – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual as the Sadhak progresses on the path.

II. Is illness both physical and mental considered impediments on the path of Yoga and its realization, and has Yoga developed its own techniques or adaptation of existing ones to directly address this (i.e. Yoga Chikitsa)?



Maharishi Patanjali states in the Yoga Sutra: Samadhi Padha Verse 30 *Vyadhi Styana Samsaya Pramadalasya Virati Bhranti Darsanalabdhabhumi Katvanavasthitatvani Citta Viksepas Teyntarayah*

The literal translation of this verse is: 'Disease, languor, doubt, carelessness, laziness, worldly mindedness, delusion, non-achievement of a Yogic stage, instability, these (nine obstacles) cause distraction of the mind (from pursuit of Sadhana) and they are the (nine) obstacles to be overcome (by the true Sadhak.... one who seeks Truth)'.

We are told by this verse that Vyadhi or disease/illness is considered an obstacle to the aim of Yoga. There is yet hope as Dr R. K. Garde in his book 'Principles and practice of Yoga Therapy' informs us that the aim of Yoga Therapy is to combat the pathological processes and re-establish the physiological state and normal health. He further provides a useful summary in understanding the rationale behind the techniques used in Yoga Chikitsa:

*The Shatkriyas: Effective as eliminative, purificatory measures and radical cure – Shodhan-Chikitsa.*

*Asana, Bandha, etc.: Effective in improving the digestive power and its progressive processes (assimilation, etc.) and in vitalizing the nervous system, both central and the autonomic, thus improving the voluntary and vegetative functions and re-establishing physiological processes, and so keeping away diseases.*

*Pranayama: Does the same as above, more or less on the subtle, psychic plane; directly improves and strengthens the respiratory organs and system.*

*The Yama-Niyamas: Purges the mental impurities directly, helping indirectly to lessen the twin-Doshas (Vata-Kapha), which are their material analogues, reflected on the physical plane. In fact, Yama-Niyamas may be deservedly termed the mental Asanas or the psychic exercises for mental discipline.*

The conclusion is that techniques normally practiced in Yoga Sadhana can be adapted to suit the individual Sadhak suffering from illness and take them on the road to recovery (health) and wholistic integration.

### III. Is Self-realization, the aim of Yoga, the ultimate therapy?

If we consider the period of bliss of enstatic union to be the eradicator of the mental and emotional woes of man then yes. However there is no guarantee that the body with its own laws bound by nature will follow suit as per the testimony of the life of some of the saints, sages and Yogis. With this in mind I would like to quote from the West Australian, 1992: *'Even if you don't see a platypus it's good therapy just to sit and meditate.'*

Yoga therapy can become an integral part of the Yoga path and when it does it is indistinguishable in philosophy to it. This is why it has not flourished in the West. Mainstream Western lifestyle with its junk food, fast food and consumer orientated philosophy has given rise to a culture of Bhogis and Rogis, materialistic self-centered hedonistic individuals who live uncontrollable lifestyles and as a consequence are unhealthy causing suffering to self and others.

After much suffering these individuals may awaken and seek a remedy, a solution to their ills. Some will look for it in a magic pill not realizing that years of wrong living cannot simply just fade away overnight. Many of our modern ills are lifestyle-generated and unless one is willing to change one's lifestyle then one will experience more of the same or purely, left in the hands of modern medicine will be drugged, sedated or have bits cut out. In other words the cause is not effectively dealt with and the illness is not allowed to be seen as a teacher and an opportunity for growth and wholistic understanding.

The average not-too-aware individual will not see yoga therapy as a means to deal with his ills – it takes someone with a hint of a Yogic perspective on life to gravitate towards Yoga Chikitsa as a therapy of choice. Just as Yama and Niyama are an integral part of the eight limbs of Yoga so are they in Yoga Chikitsa. As Yoga Maharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri so aptly puts it: *'One cannot break the law, just break themselves over it.'*



*Yogachariya Devidasan Giri*

### 😊 YOGA CHIKITSA – Safe and Sacred Healing

It was always with relish that I partook in the Yoga Chikitsa sessions at Ananda Ashram.

By 4pm my body felt ready for the nurturing attentiveness it received from my fellow Ashramite and I lay willingly on my straw mat to face myself in the hands of someone else. There was something deeply soothing to have my spine cajoled into a deeper release as it gave way its cracks and groans under the loving pressure of a well placed foot. The hands touched my heart and gave both physical and emotional comfort as they adjusted my limbs and manipulated my structure.

As I lay relaxed, allowing and releasing under the guidance of my Yoga Chikitsa partner, who was keenly observed by the sharp eye of Renuka, I felt a greater surrender, a gentle and loving ability to give up the holding, the ideas, the notions and past that generated tension and disturbance within. In those sessions I was able to enjoy the meeting of myself as a soft and easy person. The sessions became an analogy for the giving up and trusting that occurred daily within the sacred space of the Ashram, with my Yoga family. As the facing of myself sometimes felt painful, difficult or just plain crazy, the Yoga Chikitsa sessions reconnected me with the deeper love in myself and all around me, a time to just relax and be okay with myself and the world.



As I use Yoga Chikitsa within my own 'Yoga work', it has become based on this foundation- a gentleness that does not avoid but provides for a safe and sacred place in which a student can heal with the direct support and guidance of the teacher. The knowledge that as the student surrenders themselves they allow great opening and possibility. The techniques that are used are important but seemingly secondary to the space that is created between the student and teacher and within the student themselves.

When the space of love can be contacted then great changes can occur. The integrity and intelligence of Yoga provides the basis for deep and transformative awakening, the Yoga therapist provides the right conditions, the space and assists the meeting of that which is neglected, with all that is whole.



*Nivaimathi*

### 😊 Yoga Therapy – Back Walking

My first encounter with Yoga Chikitsa was at Ananda Ashram, Thattanchavadi, Pondicherry in 1980. At 3 o'clock every week—day afternoon we had a Chikitsa class after our siesta period. It was done in pairs with instruction from Swamiji and was always a very enjoyable class, we lay on our rush mats out in the yoga area, near the garden and the bird enclosure and it was usually very still and quiet except for the sounds of the birds especially the peacocks calling and chatting. The technique I enjoyed most was Back Walking and I have used it often over the years mostly with family members and occasionally in class as a special treat.

Back walking is a healing therapy done with awareness and sensitivity, a contemplative form of bodywork, involving compression massage to the spinal muscles combined with soft-tissue adjustments. It helps to relieve tension and stiffness and promote relaxation. Contemplative practices blend the calmness of meditation with movement or activity and the state of the practitioner during the activity, is as important as the activity. There was a mantra that we chanted mentally as we did the back walk but I have long since forgotten it.

#### Before commencing the treatment:

With your partner in the prone position, stand comfortably on their left side and position yourself so that your left foot is approximately level with your partner's armpit and rest your right foot across their waist. Before you start, it is a good idea to check whether you will be able to move your right foot the full length of your partner's back without having to stop and move your left foot. It is important to keep your balance and avoid having to move your left foot once you commence the back walk, as your right foot is going to do the walking from the waist to the coccyx and up to the shoulders with rhythmic pressure and if your left foot is not positioned for you to be able to do it, you will have to stop the treatment in order to shift your left foot.

#### To begin:

Stand in Tadasana and centre yourself with a breathing technique such as Savitri Pranayama, the breath helps to

stabilise mind and body. Allow thoughts and emotions to dissolve on the exhaled breath. Create a feeling of tranquillity or *shamatha*.

When you are ready, place your foot across your partner's waist and tune in to their breathing pattern in order to co-ordinate the pressure of your foot and your own exhalation with your partner's exhalation.

#### The foot movement:

The foot is positioned so that the heel of the foot is on the near side of the spine and the ball of the foot on the far side of the spine and the arch of the foot is directly over the spine. There should be no pressure on the spine itself at any time throughout the treatment. The foot is moved in a toe-heel swivel action on either side of the spine and all pressure is co-ordinated with the slowly exhaled breath, at a calm, rhythmic pace.

#### The pressure:

The pressure is applied gently, increased to about 40% of your capacity, and released slowly, like pressing onto a firm cushion. Begin by pressing down evenly at the waistline with the whole foot while exhaling together – Inhale - now the heel remains in place as the ball of the foot is lifted and swivelled moving 3 or 4 inches toward the sacrum. Press the ball joint down on the out breath – Inhale - lift the heel and swivel it 3 or 4 inches toward the tailbone as you exhale. Continue moving in this toe-heel pattern to the end of the sacrum. Pause briefly here, then move the foot back towards the waist and continue in this manner up to the spine of the scapulae (top of the shoulder blades), stopping before the foot slides over the curve of the shoulders. Make another pause here and then return back to the waistline to finish. Pause here for several breaths before gently removing the foot from the back.

#### Cautions:

It is important to explain the technique fully to your partner/client, to gain their informed consent and let them know that they have the right to stop the treatment at any time if they feel uncomfortable with it or experience any pain. The technique is not suited to everyone and it is important to be sensitive to what the person may be experiencing. The treatment may be a little uncomfortable at times but it should not cause pain.

#### Contraindications:

Massage children and frail or aged people with extreme care. Do not perform back walk on clients who are ill or pregnant, suffer with hypertension, osteoporosis, arthritis, heart conditions, asthma, recent surgery or fractured bones.

*Margo*

### 😊 My personal journey – Yoga Therapy in the widest sense

I have been practising Yoga for the past 15 years – that is at first off and on, from a basic perspective in thinking it was just a stretching and toning thing, progressing to a stress management and health thing, and now to a regular multi-faceted integral practise for establishing, developing and maintaining body, mind, spirit harmony. With this comes the responsibility and desire to pass it on to those willing, in as true a sense as I can – that in itself has become a Yogic



practice with many levels and growth opportunities.

Through my learnings with Devidasan and through my own teaching and students, I have come to know and experience ever deepening levels of the body, mind, spirit being that I am, which is a wonderful thing and *"Man/Woman know thyself"* has truly become a Pandora's box of treasures.

Some years ago I had a challenging episode with my back and it was quite debilitating, and given that I am a massage therapist and teacher/trainer in stress management and wholistic health care, it was not a good look to not be able to straighten up or to have a pained look about me. So I decided serious and regular Hatha Yoga was the way to go, with the aim of de-stressing and stretching and strengthening my muscles so I would not have back pain and I would have strong and flexible muscles to support me given the physicality of the work I do.

While conscientiously practising my Hatha Yoga routine, I went from only being able to bend enough for my hands to touch my knees to going all the way to the floor in not much time at all. However, the getting there was painful and I had to consciously connect with the pain and be at one with it as it were, and in doing that, Viola! I made an important discovery (or uncovering) – within the tightness and pain, there was resistance and fear – fear of letting go, fear of trusting that 'the pain' wouldn't hurt. So in breathing into all of that, there came a sense of surrender and I literally felt my muscles relax and let go. It was a very interesting experience, especially when I applied that to areas of life and living, from the aspect of stress, resistance and fear. That is phase one of my personal Yoga journey.

As part of the teaching component of my business, I have designed a multi-faceted Yoga program for schools, largely for students, but at the same time for teachers. Having worked in a school for the past 19 years, I have seen up close and personally the stresses and difficulties faced by students and teachers daily and have been acutely aware of mainly (although not exclusively) the students' need to feel better.

I wanted to design a program that would address and work with the *body/mind/spirit* and bring harmony and balance to individuals and classes collectively. However, I also knew that I needed to work within the confines of Education Department politically correct language, and that meant I could not use words like *spirit* at all and I had to choose my words and tread very carefully so that in no way could any form of religious connotation be applied (by parents, school community and some teachers).

So Heart Matters was (carefully and fearlessly) born in 2003 and in 2004 I ran a pilot program with several teachers from several schools (I train the teachers to present the program to students). Now I am happy to say, *spirit* is an acceptable word in some circumstances. Heart Matters has been going to a lesser and greater degree ever since 2003, but at

present it is strong even though not great in numbers of teachers - but I calculated that this year around 750 children will have exposure to it.

The bottom line is that students can't cope with life these days and self harm in many and varied ways. The family unit sadly seems a rare commodity and personal safety for children is also not a given these days – to mention just two factors.

And teachers get sick, largely with cancers and depression partially due to ever-increasing workloads, accountability and demands (the demon stress). Also life for adults is hugely affected by family breakdowns - again to mention just two factors.

It is my belief that it is important to offer a way (tools, skills) to assist in changing this direction.

Basically Heart Matters is a daily Yoga program of about 20 minutes, comprising 3 segments. Segment one consists of a couple of asanas (specifically chosen); segment two, breath awareness (Pranayama) exercises, and then segment three, relaxation - Yoga Nidra. Thereby offering students empowerment with a way to feel better (by taking care of the body, mind and spirit) and to empower them with a tool and skills, especially for when they are older with more hazards in their path, that they can use which doesn't rely on external influence, but rather their own innate Self.

At the same time because this sequence of techniques would generate calm and focus within the classroom structure, (and it does) the teacher would greatly benefit as well (not only by the resultant harmony but also by her/his input and rapport-building within the delivery) and so the cycle would continue. The dedication of the teachers along with regular practise gives the program power and effectiveness

My dream is for many, many children to have access to Heart Matters (or something of that nature) and for the program to be supported by the Education Department. I am working towards this in various ways.

So in the widest sense of the word, the therapy/influence of Yoga has many, many limbs as it were and a very wide circle of influence, and is applicable in the most basic ways, to the most basic circumstances where people have never heard of it or only know it as dare-I-say, a religious, or fitness, trendy, new age thing, - to perhaps giving the necessary strength to troubled adolescents – and I have seen in schools where sometimes without a necessary strength, students have taken to self harm and sadly, even more than that.

I am privileged and honoured to be in a position to facilitate such a program, and by my association with Devidasan and his constant support and continued teaching.

*Candida Vassallo*





## ASHRAM DIARY DATES

7th July	Annual Day celebrations of Yoganjali Natyalayam
10th - 19th July	Residential course at ICYER
29th July	Vyasa Guru Purnima
12th August	Sri Sri Ambalavana Swamigal Guru Puja
12th August	Sri Sri Subramaniya Swamigal Guru Puja
16th - 22nd AUGUST	100TH JAYANTHI CELEBRATIONS FOR YOGAMAHARISHI DR SWAMI GITANANDA GIRI GURU MAHARAJ: Meeting of International Senior Sadhaks of Gitananda Yoga at ICYER and Spectacular Dance Drama by Yoganjali Natyalayam
13th September	Jayanthi celebrations for Amma
15th September	Ganesha Chaturthi Puja
October 17th to 30th	Dr Ananda tours Italy again. attends MilanYoga Festival



## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

July 14	New Moon
July 30	Full Moon
August 13	New Moon
August 28	Full Moon
September 11	New Moon
September 27	Full Moon

## OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

16th July	<u>Rath Yatra</u>	<u>Rath</u> Yantra is the festival associated with Jagannath.
29th July	<u>Guru Purnima</u>	Guru Purnima is the day devotees offer puja (worship) to their <u>Guru</u> . This was the day when <u>Vyasa</u> ; author of the <u>Mahabharata</u> was born.
11th Aug	<u>Mahalakshmi Vrata</u>	Mahalakshmi Vrata is a <u>puja</u> performed by <u>married Hindu women</u> to seek the blessings of <u>Mahalakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity</u> .
27th Aug	<u>Onam</u>	Onam is a <u>harvest</u> festival, celebrated mainly in the Indian state of <u>Kerala</u> . Like many other religious festivals in India, Onam is celebrated by people across all castes and faiths.
28th Aug	<u>Raksha Bandhan</u>	Raksha Bandhan is a festival celebrated mainly in northern Indian states. Rakhi is a special occasion to celebrate the chaste bond of love between a brother and a sister.
3rd Sept	<u>Krishna Janmaashtami</u>	Krishna Janmaashtami is the Hindu festival celebrating the birth of <u>Krishna</u> .
14th Sept	<u>Gowri Habba</u>	Gowri Habba is celebrated in <u>Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu</u> . <u>Gowri</u> is worshipped for her ability to bestow courage to her <u>devotees</u> . <u>Newly wed couples</u> are invited to the house of the groom's parents and served with <u>varieties of food</u> .
15th Sept	<u>Ganesh Chaturthi</u>	Ganesh Chaturthi is the celebration of the birth of <u>Ganesh</u> .



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