



Special Issue 37

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Reach

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SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: ON YOGA

"Yoga, as it is described in the Gitā, is of three kinds: jñāna, bhakti, and karma. One is able to see God through this telescope of yoga."

Source: *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Ch 35 'At the Star Theatre',

<http://www.belurmath.org/gospel/chapter35.htm>

SRI SARADA DEVI: ON DIFFICULTIES

"It is idle to expect that dangers and difficulties will not come. They are bound to come. But for a devotee they will pass away under the feet like water."

Source: <http://www.belurmath.org/srisaradadevi.htm#Some Saying>

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: ON ALL KNOWLEDGE COMING FROM THE MIND

"All the orthodox systems of Indian philosophy have one goal in view, the liberation of the soul through perfection. The method is by Yoga. The word Yoga covers an immense ground, but both the Sankhya and the Vedanta Schools point to Yoga in some form or other. The subject of the present book is that form of Yoga known as Raja Yoga. The aphorisms of Patanjali are the highest authority on Raja Yoga, and form its textbook. The other philosophers, though occasionally differing from Patanjali in some philosophical points, have, as a rule, acceded to his method of practice a decided consent."

Source: 'Preface to Raja Yoga', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama) vol. 1 p. 122



This special issue of *Reach* presents extracts from the papers presented at the 5th International Yoga Conference organized by the Vedanta Centre of Sydney in collaboration with S-VYASA University of Yoga Sciences, Bengaluru, India

Yoga—Science of Infinite Possibilities

Dates: 1-3 October 2016

Venue: Western Sydney University
(Parramatta South Campus)



We welcome you all to the Vedanta Movement in Australia, as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and invite you to attend our programmes and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal Message of Vedanta.

BRIEF REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

The Vedanta Centre of Sydney, in collaboration with the S-VYASA Yoga University convened its 5th International Yoga Conference *Yoga—Science of Infinite Possibilities* on 1-3 October 2016, at Western Sydney University. This conference was part of **Confluence: Festival of India in Australia** organized by the joint cooperation of the Indian and the Australian Governments.



The conference comprised of 16 speakers, who spoke over 3 days comprising of 6 sessions. Each session had a plenary and a breakout session.

The speakers who spoke at the conference included:

- o Swami Sridharananda, President, Vedanta Centre of Sydney
- o Dr. Marc Cohen, Professor of Complementary Medicine and Head of the Department of Complementary Medicine, School of Health Sciences, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
- o Dr. R Nagaratna, Medical Director & Dean of Yoga & Life Sciences S-VYASA University of Yoga Sciences, Bengaluru, India

- o Dr. N K Manjunath, Professor, Head of Anvesana, Research Laboratory S-VYASA University of Yoga Sciences, Bengaluru, India
- o Dr. Latha Nithyanandam, General Manager, ADFNSW-Kathleen York House, Sydney, Australia
- o Kamal Sarma, CEO Rezeliem & Chair of RUOK's Conversation Think Tank Sydney, Australia
- o Steven Gameraov, Asset Management Division, National Australia Bank
- o Dr. Swami Shankardev Saraswati, Medical Doctor, Yoga Acharya, Bihar School of Yoga, Yoga Therapist & Psychotherapist, Sydney, Australia
- o Remy Quinter, Yoga Teacher, Sydney, Australia
- o Dr. Sat Bir Singh Khalsa, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA
- o Dr. Craig Hassed, Associate Professor, Department of General Practice & Coordinator of Mindfulness Programs, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
- o Dr. Pauline Jensen, Faculty of Health Science, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
- o Dr. Pooja Maddela, Clinician, Master Yoga



- Teacher, Yoga Therapist Auckland, New Zealand
- o Dr. Rama Prasad, Alternative Medicine Practitioner, Sydney Ayurveda Centre, Sydney, Australia
 - o Vivianne Barry, Founder Yoga Circle & Yoga Therapist, Queensland, Australia
 - o Tamara James, Founder Yogaphysio & Senior Physiotherapist, Queensland, Australia

Item	No
Registered Attendees	156
Students & Faculty of Medicine and Complementary Medicine	31
Honorary Volunteers	52
Speakers	16
Guests	14
Dignitaries	4
Total	274

The organizers would like to thank the sponsors of this conference which included Yoga King, Indian Council of Cultural Relations, Abhi's Restaurant, City of Parramatta Council, and India Tourism.



The inaugural session on 1 October 2016 began at 10:00 am and included the participation of His Excellency Sri Navdeep Suri, High Commissioner of India, The Hon Julie Owens, Federal Member for Parramatta, Dr. Geoff Lee, State Member for Parramatta, Dr. Vinod Bahade, Deputy Consul General and Dr. Nagaratna, Medical Director & Dean of Yoga & Life Sciences S-VYASA University of Yoga Sciences, Bengaluru, India.

We had positive feedback from all those who attended the conference. The breakup of the attendees is:



Day 1 (1 October 2016): Inaugural Session

From the Address by His Excellency Navdeep Suri, High Commissioner of India to Australia

We readily agreed to collaborate with the Vedanta Centre of Sydney in holding this international conference due to two reasons. One, there has been an exceptional focus on yoga in the last two years



multicultural. It is really interesting watching it as an outsider, this extraordinary capacity of India to embrace the world. To look at opportunities and aggressively embrace the world, while keeping alive and valuing the things that made it what it is. It is an interesting combination of progressive and conservative. Not conservative because of fear, not reactionary, but conservative because it values the things that makes it what it is. It provides an interesting model that many other countries can follow. We have a lot to learn watching India. We have a country that embraces the world and has a Minister for Yoga. That is an amazing thing. What is it about India that allows these two ways of looking at the future to co-exist. This is an extraordinary thing. We have much to learn. For all the philosophies and religions that arose in the world, the one that comes from India is the hardest to understand from an outsider's perspective. It looks at wellness through the fusion of mind, body and spirit, as a life-long question and not an answer. This is a question that takes a lifelong to ask. Not a lifelong to answer. This conference brings together some of the best minds from East and West to share the research and experience and make what yoga was intended to do which is to make our lives better. This will be a fascinating three days and a mind blowing experience. It has been beautifully organized by the Vedanta Centre and I thank them for it.



since Prime Minister Modi came into office. He has done a lot to propagate yoga. The success of the international day of yoga held over the last two years is testimony to that. We received messages of congratulations from Indian Prime Minister Modi and Australian Prime Minister Turnbull on the occasion of the International Day of Yoga held in the major cities of Australia. The second reason, we agreed so readily is this conference fits perfectly with the idea of confluence. What is the meaning of confluence: it is a *sangam*, a meeting point of two rivers. In the context of this festival, it is a confluence of arts and artistes, cultures and civilizations, in ways people can learn from one another. With respect to this conference it is the confluence of body and mind, the physical and the spiritual. Emphasis here is on medical aspects of yoga, the convergence of ancient wisdom with the rigors of Western medicine to take us to a better place.

From the Address by The Honourable Julie Owens, the Federal Member of Parliament for Parramatta

We are very lucky in this country to have a bit of India in us. The Indian civilization is genuinely

From the Address by The Honourable Dr. Geoff Lee, the State Member of Parliament for Parramatta

The Vedanta Centre of Sydney is organizing and managing all of the things here today. I have increasingly been impressed by their work. I will like to pay tribute to you Swamiji, revered Swami



Sridharananda, and all the monks here, Dr. Nagaratna, all the members of the community, and committee members.

Can I say a couple of things about the Vedanta Centre! I have been there (Ermington) numerous times to see your wonderful work and inspiration. It has gone from a dream and a vision of having a small building on top of a hill overlooking the valley to a wonderful institution with brand new buildings, a centre for prayer, a centre for scriptural classes, a centre for understanding yoga, a centre that enhances our community and provides a real beacon for your studies. Welcome Swamiji and I congratulate your achievements and everybody here. It is great that we have been able to support you sometimes.

Today we are here to celebrate of course yoga and I can say that I was a co-host of World Yoga Day. I hosted Yoga Day in NSW Parliament in June. It was very exciting. I was on stage performing Yoga. You may say that politicians are inflexible and I did nothing to dispel that observation. I was

positively terrible.

Can I congratulate all the organizers for today, in terms of Yoga and its contributions to mind, body and spirit. Ten thousand years in the making. We can all learn a lot. Unfortunately, I will not be staying for the whole conference like Julie. But to understand better, it will serve us all well. I wish everyone all the best. Enjoy all your sessions. On behalf of the NSW Government, can I congratulate everybody here for coming to the conference.

From the Address by Dr. Nagaratna, Medical Director & Dean of Yoga & Life Sciences S-VYASA University of Yoga Sciences, Bengaluru, India

Swami Vivekananda said 'Each Soul is potentially Divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature external and internal'. What have we done today? We have controlled external nature through a lot of technology, a lot of science, gadgets, and in the field of medicine we have fascinating advances, we have organ transplanta-



tions, which are all taking us into longevity. Life expectancy which was 30 years has become 100 years in some countries. But there is a big lacuna, because of the other part Swamiji envisioned. Unless we control nature which is internal it is not going to be possible to bring about a global family, harmony, health and happiness. Stress related problems are all on the increase. It is very, very important that we control nature internal and recognize the inner divinity, the strength within.

Swamiji to complete the definition of Yoga says do this either by work, worship, philosophy or psychic control and move towards total freedom. Yoga is the total recognition of freedom by going into our deep inner Self, inner confidence, inner positivity, fearlessness, to find our infinite possibilities. It is not hear say, but a science.

From the Address by Swami Sridharananda, President, Vedanta Centre of Sydney.

We have nomenclatured or captioned this conference the Yoga – Science of Infinite possibilities. On the face of it, it appears to be audacious. When a person is rationally convinced in a rock solid



manner, crystal clear manner that there is something more than bread to live upon and he looks inward to answer the pertinent question: Who am I?, What am I? Because I am the centre, I am the fulcrum around which my world rotates. I am the fulcrum of my world, but I do not know who am I? So from the Indian traditional point of view, there are two types of education. One is to demystify the mysteries of nature, to make our quality of life enjoyable, comfortable, liveable, which human civilization has achieved no end and is breaking the boundaries of this mystery all the time at almost every moment of our civilized life. It improves the quality of life and living, management of the forces of external nature. Now come the forces of inner nature. We all know we have a dynamic energy being manufactured by this body – mind mechanism. And that energy manifests it-

self. And in the process of manifesting that energy it keeps on identifying itself with what it is not in actuality. I say 'my body', and I can't get rid of it, because that thought process has such a tremendous hold on me by habit of thinking. I can't come out of that groove. I say, 'my body', but I say 'I am sad'. Sadness is a quality of the mind. I have identified myself with it. So the other type of education in India's spiritual heritage is to educate yourself correctly, properly, based on robust common sense with the help of your rationality, with the help of your emotionality, with the help of your ingenuity, and with an unstoppable determined will. I will like to know who am I? What am I? What is my true original nature without affecting the flow of life. This is the beauty of yoga. This is the excellence of yoga.

What is yoga? To be in communion with is the literal and etymological meaning of the word yoga. I have to link myself with my own original nature about which I have no information. To that extent, we have our mood swings, and identify ourselves with it, we have the vagaries of our physical health problems, we identify with it, even when a person is dying, he says or she says 'I am dying'. These are robust commonsensical analysis of a human mind and its thinking. Yoga teaches you how to manage the forces that you generate within yourself and direct it in such a manner that you go beyond the veil of not knowing your own true original nature. It is as simple as that. When we say science of infinite possibilities, it is not a preposterous claim, it is not an audacious claim. It is firmly rooted in robust common sense. Yoga teaches how to manage the movement of your mind. Yoga teaches how to hook up your mind, how to latch your mind, how to have a hold on your mind so that it behaves like a well trained, well disciplined dog. This is a self imposed discipline, done with dedication, devotion, and determination. Yoga teaches you that art of management of the forces at play within yourself. Yoga teaches you to manage your personality through

the management of your mind. Yoga teaches how by managing the forces of nature that one generates and directs it to one particular goal which is to make us a better specimen of a human being, physically, emotionally, rationally, and holistically. If all of us present here today make a genuine effort to correct our personality faults which emanate from ego centric, separatist individuality, if you can broaden your concept of individuality and slowly and slowly break the boundaries and identify with that eternal spirit that exists in me, exists in you and I feel oneness with the whole universe all the six negative propensities will disappear. I make myself a better specimen of a human being.

Uniting with the Deep, Inner Well of our Being

Dr. Marc Cohen

Yoga has found me and forced me to be immersed in it. Matter and energy cannot be created, it can only be transformed. The whole universe is one. Everything is fixed. We are one. Life is a flow. That flow is created by our mind, body and our



breath. As soon as you see yourself as separated from the environment, as an isolated system, you create pain. Life itself is the beginning of illness. As soon as you consider yourself a live, an isolated system, separation you have the seed of entropy of

isolation. Entropy is based on isolation and wellness is based on connection. What is wellness? It is the harmony of external and internal worlds. When fully present in the moment, actions flow naturally and authentically.

Flow is a joyous, self-forgetful involvement through concentration involving the mind made possible by the discipline of the body. Flow happens with the body, mind, in harmony with a single action. Being in the centre and acting on the edge. Yoga changes lifestyles.

There is this paradox. We are beings of light. We are whole and we are part. Ego is our particle nature. We need both. We are also participants. We need to balance ego centric selfish actions with egoless selfless actions. Entropy is what brings us down, that is the stressors, separates us, causes contraction, causes pain, based on fear. Evolution is what brings us up, based on connection, flow, expansion and love. Love takes us up, fear brings us down through separation and paranoia.

Hormonal Balance: A Holistic Approach to Women's Health from a Yoga Perspective

Dr. Pooja Maddela

Yoga is your own great awareness. It is not about a few stretches. It is about your own great awareness in every walk of your life. With that awareness, happy hormones will flow. Joy is coming from within. Being positive and being open minded.

Always appreciate people. Appreciate simple good weather. A little bit of excitement is important, so are openheartedness and gratitude. Being compassionate and truly caring for others are important. Separation is illness. Unity is wellness. Yoga means unity. Give importance to other people.

Apana is downward flow. *Apana* is release—letting go. Am I letting go of the emotions that I no longer need to hold on to? If you carry something for a



long time, it may be small, but it may become a large issue. We shouldn't carry the emotions that didn't make you happy for a long time. That is the opposite of *apana*, we don't release it. If you are holding on to anything, try letting it go. 'I allow myself to release this pain. I allow for this sadness to go'. We will not live for a 1000 years, we should not carry any regrets or resentments. Suppressed emotions: suppression is a depression. When you are sad, you must push yourself to talk with someone even if they don't listen or sing a song. If you suppress your emotions it compromises a lot. It takes time to digest experiences and issues in our life. But if you cultivate positivity, it will be easy. Not rigid. Not resisting.

Models for Understanding and Managing Persistent Pain and fear of Movement: Where Does Yoga Come in?

Tamara James

This paper presents an overview of models that explain pain and associated fear of movement and how this can be integrated into a yoga class to empower folk limited by pain. Those experiencing pain have fear of movement. The old way of think-



ing was because of injury we experience pain in a particular area. Because of that we should not do anything to cause that pain.

Pain management models manage the impact of injury and align people with what they want to be. What is important is being aware of the present moment and having the ability to step back. Acceptance is better than avoidance. Avoiding pain may not be useful. Rather than pain dictating what we do, we decide on what our life should be like. In a yoga class, education can be integrated into the class providing positive messages about healing, desensitization of pain and capacity, despite pain, of increasing your body's confidence in moving, focusing on self awareness, achieving a balance of guidance to ensure safety, and flexibility to empower the student to increase self confidence with movement. Yoga classes for folk with chronic pain can be planned to address biomechanical factors in a graded way.

Yoga for Healthy Ageing

Dr. N.K. Manjunath

Yoga helps to make ageing an enjoyable process. Old age comes to us without effort. Ageing population is progressively increasing across the world. By 2030 we are probably going to have 28.3 per



cent of the population over 65. Improved medical facilities have increased life expectancy, which has increased the proportion of people over 65 years of age. The conditions for healthy ageing are lowering the risk from disease and high functional

capacity. These include physical activity, mental health, nutrition, social harmony, spiritual health and wellness. Surveys reveal that around 60 per cent of the population surveyed practised yoga and meditation to help them with the ageing process.

The most common health problems that older people face are related to a) the muscular skeletal system, b) gait and balance which impact on the mobility, c) sleep, d) cognition, and e) depression. Many people are using yoga as an intervention to respond to these and help with the ageing process. Yoga has proved to be effective in improving gait and balance through physical postures, regulated breathing or *pranayama*, relaxation and meditation. The second category of problems that the aged face is depression by losing partners and remaining lonely. Yoga improves depression in individuals by bringing in socialization. After undergoing yoga for 6 months, the Geriatric Depression Scale came down. The elderly also face sleep related problems like the amount of time taken to fall asleep. They spend a lot of their time in bed awake. Depression and sleep are very closely connected. If your sleep is affected, you are affected by worry. If you are awake and worry, your depression increases. These are connected. Multiple studies have shown that practising yoga for 3 to 6 months will improve sleep architecture qualitatively and quantitatively. The time taken to fall asleep reduces significantly. The period of time taken to fall asleep from 20 mins to 1 hour and 40 mins was reduced significantly to an average of about 30 mins after practising yoga for 3 to 6 months.

The Power of Clarity: How to Develop the Peace of a Monk and the Focus of a Warrior

Kamal Sarma

We believe your mind is very resilient. Every one of you is so resilient, it is not funny. Your mental muscles are very strong. In its natural form it is very strong. What we need to be able to do is to be

still. Get your mind to be in one place. Need to be able to shut down thoughts. The most productive thing you can do is to learn to do nothing. How to shut down your mind? Mind is incredibly strong. What you need to be able to do is to rest your mind at will and pick up your thoughts at will. Meditation is not about eating mung beans and being off with the pixies. It is about being emotionally intelligent. Meditation is about creating emotional intelligence and connecting to this. I am going to teach you to do absolutely nothing. Through meditation your relationships will improve, you will become more intimate and connected with the people you love. Number two your health gets better, you have the clarity of thought.

Studies have shown that meditation keeps the mind very sharp. When you see these older monks they have a sharpness not seen in the general population. After meditation parts of the brain actually become bigger. After 21 days meditation increases the size of the pre-frontal cortex. It



makes the brain stronger. It delays cortical thickening. Cortical thickening is associated with dementia and Alzheimer's. Lastly it actually makes your brain work faster. It gets you to do stuff even better. The first part of the training is physical stillness—the art of learning how to be still. When you go to sleep you are not physically still. The next step is to be calm. Need to be able to reduce mental chatter. Need to experience tranquillity. The next step is insight, understanding of yourself. The

last one is wisdom. It is a deep understanding of yourself. Wisdom is innate in us. After meditation you get clarity to make decisions.

Impact of Yoga and Mindfulness — A Personal Story

Steven Gameraov

I was drawn to meditation. I joined a Zen Korean Buddhist monastery. I had a desire to deepen my meditation. My life revolved around being a corporate executive, leading a family life and daily practice. I would wake up before dawn, and practise yoga, asana, *pranayama* and doing retreats in the Advaita tradition. Effects of the practice include calmness and stability, less ego involvement, increased awareness, both self awareness and others' awareness, better regulation of energy levels, finally more vibrant health.



Firstly, I face a huge amount of complexity when making decisions, particularly in large organizations. Having less involvement in one's own ego is very important. In making decisions there is a lot of ambiguity. Practice has made me comfortable with ambiguity. One needs to step back and chill. Wait for a week or two and things change. We bounce back from setbacks. Corporates are restructuring every 18 months. Need to be resilient and comfortable about changes and not being too attached to a particular position you have. No matter how senior you are you cannot make decisions. You need other people to make those decisions. A lot of what we do is about influencing others to try to get them to make the decision that

you want made. Path of yoga is genuinely transformational.

Yoga in the Management of Diabetes

Dr. Nagaratna:

Four factors in our lifestyle which have to be managed, which are the cause of diabetes, are wrong diet, lack of exercise, bad habits, and mental and emotional tension. Behind all these is the mind. It is the mind which is the root cause of the problem.

We think that the problem is outside. But by definition stress is my response to the situation. It is not really the situation. Once you recognize this, you start looking at your mind, because response is all in the mind in the form of emotions, and emotions can be classified under one of these 6 enemies—anger, fear, jealousy, hatred, tension, worry and depression. In the modern lifestyle we have too many of these demanding situations and we go on reacting, reacting, reacting, and we have no time to get back to normalcy. Every time we react there is a big increase in the blood sugar. If we can recognize the problem of stress is beginning in the mind, where I am reacting to the perceived stress, then we can start working on our mind and that is what the sages called *Adhiya Vyadhi* where the mind reacts to demanding situations. When there is a stressful situation the mind gets agitated, which also affects the *prana* and which percolates into my physical body to increase blood glucose. The problem is there. Therefore something has to be done at the mind level.

Uncontrolled, speeded up, rewinding of sentences in the mind is what picks up enormous energy which causes all these problems. Mind speed, prana speed, and body speed. What is the body speed? Inflammation. Fighting underlining of the cells. Fighting in the cells is a reflection of the fighting that I am doing in the mental level. This is the first and the foremost understanding of yoga as the cause of any disease which are all lifestyle diseases.



Therefore what is it that we need to do? Reduce speed at all levels. This is the treatment. Reduction of speed is the therapy. Yoga by definition is speed reduction. That is the definition of speed that I want you to carry home of yoga. What is Yoga? MMM. Mastery over the Monkey Mind is yoga. What is the monkeying of the Mind? Anger, fear, tension, depression, habit, and pattern of reaction. Mastery over craving is what is important for diabetes. Mastery over the irregularity of doing exercise. Therefore a reduction in stress helps to get to a state of balance.

The whole problem is related to breathing: to mind speed and breathing irregularity. *Pranayama* is basically to slow down the breathing. Yoga is basically slowing down. The test for all yoga teachers is, is my breathing rate decreasing over a period of time? Yoga is slowing down. We need to slow down the mind. For that we need to slow down the breath. Meditation is also an important part of our breathing, in which we hang on to a single thought and go very very deep into quietude, rest, calmness, and merge ourselves. One reaches that deep silent stage.

Yoga for Depression

Vivianne Barry

What are the self empowering tools to deal with depression? Life is suffering and there is no way of getting out of suffering. Suffering presents an opportunity for transformation. It provides an opportunity to cultivate resilience and to familiarise ourselves with our underbelly. The cause of suf-

fering in yogic terms is known as the *kleshas*. The *kleshas* are the afflictions that distort our mind and our perceptions: our disconnection with our soul nature, our desires and our attachments to that which lie outside of ourselves and repulsions towards unpleasant experiences, identification with our egos and projection of self, our fear of death. These all propel us to act and keep us separate from the divine. These are what cause our separation—separation from within ourselves and separation from those outside of our selves. As our symptoms of depression persist we have increasingly difficult time separating from the *kleshas*. The first step in the healing process is to familiarise, acknowledge, and try to understand what the root cause of suffering is in our lives. Ultimately, we realize that these will pass. Nothing is permanent. Time is a great healer. When one hits rock bottom rather than begin with meditation one should begin with positive imagery.

I really encourage people who are going through difficult times to connect with the daily rhythms of the planet. Find a place where you can watch the sun set or sun rise: to be aware of the cycle of the moon, to feel the vibration of the earth. We are part of a grander scheme at a grander scale. *Yamas* and *niyamas* are the foundation and the moral philosophy of yoga. These ground you. Selfless service is also important: moving into the commu-

nity, and finding your passions. I have everything within myself to heal myself. Wisdom lies within. We have to believe in our wholeness and create a *sankalpa* that we are whole and perfect. The breath is the pathway. We need to give attention to the breath. Through *pranayama* and *asana* we begin to occupy the body. It is important to welcome whatever arises. Cultivate witnessing consciousness. I am beyond my thoughts. I am! *Soham!* Cultivate acceptance and equanimity. Only adversity fuels resilience. It is an incredible opportunity for growth.

Pranayama – Moving Beyond the Body as a Machine

Remy Quinter

What is the science of *pranayama*? It is consciously working on breath. The air we breathe is the most important thing. It is a gift of love from the universe. There are different practices of *pranayama* like the bellows breath. One must have a sense of what practice is good for one. Shift from fast *pranayamas* to slow *pranayamas*. More useful to use



a technique that bridges you from fight or flight into rest and digest. This is where slow *pranayama* can really help to move one into a deep state of rest and digest. You cannot just keep inhaling and you cannot just keep exhaling. Breath is a rhythm. It is a deep lesson as to what life is. Everything is about getting one out of fight or flight and into rest and digest. Yoga was originally designed for renunciates. They said it was to cut off one's fight or flight. Yoga texts talk about not doing fast

pranayama for too long because it will stir things up. Many forms of slow *pranayamas* are to calm things down.

Yoga Psychology and Psychotherapy – Theory and Practice

Dr. Swami Shankardev Saraswati

Definition of yoga is the awakening of self-awareness. Anything that creates self-awareness is a form of yoga. Yoga therapy is the application of yoga and meditation to treat illness in order to re-establish harmony and balance in body, mind and spirit. It is evidence based and a holistic science. In yoga there has to be some form of meditation and



conscious connection. There has been a lot of research into *asana*, *pranayama* and meditation. Yoga therapy is particularly good for chronic, psychosomatic, degenerative conditions and mental illness. There are two approaches: health management and disease management. I think of yoga therapy as disease management. It is the application of different techniques for specific conditions. Need to use different methods. Yoga psychology is the science of the embodied relationship between consciousness and mind. It is about taking the knowledge from the head and into the body. It is the science of the subtle body. Yoga psychotherapy is the application of yoga and meditation to treat mental illness and support positive psycho-spiritual growth and development. Yoga psychology is rooted in four Indian philosophies. The practices include *asana*, *pranayama*, cleansing techniques and

meditation techniques. Everything that we practise now is Tantra. Hatha yoga is Tantra. Yoga psychology comprises of Sankhya and Yoga, Vedanta and Tantra. *Sattva* gives rise to consciousness mind, *rajas* to subconscious mind and *tamas* unconscious mind. *Chitta* is the contraction of infinite consciousness into a finite state. In *chitta* there is positive and negative. *Chitta* may be *sattvik*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. Through *sattva* you connect to the transcendent and through *rajas* you disconnect to the transcendent. Need to purify the *chitta* from toxic memory. Yoga psychotherapy aims to use meditation techniques to link the knowing and feeling mind and have them dominate the ego and thinking mind.

Question and Answer Session

The Takeaway Points from the Presentations

Remy Quinter: Pick up something and stick to it. Do it every day. Be honest with yourself and do it six days a week. Do it for 3 to 5 years and stick to it.

Vivianne Barry: Be confident that the answers that you are looking for are within yourself. It doesn't necessarily involve sitting in meditation in complete silence. It can be outside of yourself. Know that you carry all of the power and all of the answers within yourself. Start observing within.

Tamara James: Don't give your power away to practitioners.

Dr. Marc Cohen: You are all paradoxes. You are both one with everything and an individual. You are the I and the We. You need to embrace both of these. You need activities about you and also need activities that take you outside of yourself. It's great to have a quiet time and indulge in that and also super active time. The ultimate time is when you embrace those at the same moment—when you are in your centre actually in the world. The yoga practice that you do is not only in the 5 minutes on the mat, but what you do all the time. It becomes a part of your life.



Dr. Pooja Maddela: Yoga is your own awareness. Awareness in every walk of your life that makes you realize that all is well. Believe in yourself and have that awareness.

Dr. Nagaratna: We have a mission of a diabetes-free world which forms the basis to many of our lifestyle problems. S-VYASA has a 'Be and Make' message, to see a healthy and happy society.

Dr. Manjunath: In yoga there is *abhinivesha* or fear of death. If you understand the philosophy well, the fear of death or the fear component is taken out. Then the journey is very smooth. There is no beginning point and end point for yoga. We need to have *blissipline*, if you have that bliss with your so called discipline life can be very enjoyable. Those who are 40 is the best time to start doing yoga.



Dr. Sankardev Saraswati: My message is self-awareness. Try to understand the effect of everything in your life. By looking within give yourself time. Take time to look at yourself. You are all

wonderful, full of incredible power. You are all powerful beings.

Kamal Sarma: Bad stuff happens to good people. Bad stuff happens to good relationships, bad stuff happens to good countries. You can't inoculate yourself from bad stuff. You can be resilient to it. Buddha said life is suffering. I say get over it. Life is suffering. Life is also joyful.

Day 2 (2 October 2016)

Yoga in Modern Society: The Science and the Research

Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa

Popularity of Yoga

In a survey in 2016 it was found that 36,000,000 Americans are actively practising yoga. That is a big number relative to the population. Not only is yoga popular, that popularity is growing. When you look at the trend over time from the previous surveys you can see a growth of almost doubling from 2012 to 2016. This will suggest the existence of an exponential curve that yoga is really taking off.

Yoga as Therapeutic Intervention



Yoga has been introduced as a form of therapeutic patient intervention for the treatment of diseases. It is my belief, from my understanding of the literature, no real evidence that suggests yoga was originally systematized form of medicine for treating diseases. It was a form of spiritual practice for

Self development. However, the fact that yoga has multi components with improved body function in many levels makes it a candidate for patients. So in the beginning of the 20th century in India, yoga was formally adopted in many institutions as a therapy. And that popularity grew through yoga clinics and yoga hospitals and ultimately in 1963 the Indian Government commissioned a book called *Yogic Therapy: its Basic Principles and Methods* by Swami Kuvalayananda. That grew and there are many books now in the West for individual conditions.

Cutting edge of Yoga Research

The central dogma of biology is that our DNA, our genes create RNA which ultimately creates proteins that do everything in the body. What we are learning about the action of DNA and creation of protein is that you can impact the system at multiple layers. If you smoke cigarettes you will turn on genes that cause cancer. But what we find is that behaviours can change gene expression, which genes are up regulated and which genes are down regulated. Studies have been done to show that yoga and contemplative practices can change gene expression. You can change the activity of your DNA. Herbert Benson's study from the Harvard Medical School shows that these practices can enhance the expression of genes associated with energy metabolism, condrual function and insulin secretion. What we see in gene expression matches what we see behaviourally. They improve stress response, improve immune response, and reduce inflammation. For those who practise yoga, know that they feel better and that their immune system is stronger. This is not a placebo effect, it is not imagination. This is biology! We are changing biology when we practise yoga. Another example of this genomic expression is a study done at UCLA using a yogic meditation and they showed the same kind of thing. The up regulation of the genes involved and that is very valuable for people who are chronically stressed. Through our practices we

are able to change at the cellular and molecular levels. This is real stuff.

The other cutting edge practice is neuroimaging. These are large machines using the fMRI. One of the leaders in the field in meditation research in recent times is Richi Davidson studying mindfulness meditation. These studies are able to pinpoint which parts of the brain are active with millimetre resolution, you can pin point exactly where in the brain, which nucleus in the brain is being activated with these practices. That gives us an enormous insight into how the brain is working when we do these meditative practices. One of these kinds of studies is to take long term meditators and put them in the scanner and compare them with non practitioners to see if their brains behave differently. The answer is yes. When you engage in meditation, you engage in attention network. Not surprisingly you see that activated in long term meditators.

It is not just activity. Brain has this activity called plasticity. The more you do that the more the brain structure changes to accommodate that activity. As you practise yoga and you activate the areas of the brain, over time there is a change in structure. They actually get bigger. There is more blood supply, there is more connection, and you should actually be able to see structural changes. This was one of the first studies to actually show that long term meditators have structurally different brains. And again it is in those areas that are involved in yoga practice. There is a change in grey matter density in the brain. You can change your brain structure in as short as 8 weeks.

Meditation

People are studying what it is to focus your attention and what is caused by that. They are also focusing on what the opposite is and what you are doing when you are not meditating. That is mind wandering. This is well known in the Upanishads. Human minds wander all the time. This to my

knowledge is the first definition of meditation. If you stop your mind wandering there are some benefits to be had. Science is also now beginning to study mind wandering by no less than a team from the Harvard Medical School who studied this and published their results in the premier biomedical journal *Science*. And they concluded that people's mind wandered frequently. People were less happy when their mind wandered than when it did not. Why is there a cost to allowing your mind to wander? We are focused on survival a lot. We are spending a lot of time on survival issues. You are standing at the bus stop. 'Oh it is starting to rain.' Each one of those thoughts is generating a stress and emotional response and feeding your limbic system, your emotional brain functions 24 x 7 and you end up in a lousy mood. That is a risk factor for psychiatric disorders. What happens when you focus your attention: you go into neutral mind when you are focusing attention on your breath, mantra or sound. You stop your mind wandering because you are focusing your attention. It is a mind wandering holiday. The more time you spend meditating, the less time you spend in negative thoughts and negative moods. As a consequence, meditators are less at risk for developing mood disorders and psychiatric conditions. Long term meditators have structurally shrunk limbic system. Medulla is actually smaller. So we can see this, both behaviourally and structurally. Those people whose mind wanders all the time who are risk at developing psychological disorders explains why modern society has this huge burden of mental health conditions.

People who meditate improve their mood, they improve their attention tasks and they control stress better. Those are the behavioural findings and we are beginning to see the validation of using objective measures. We find that one of the key findings of yoga practice is stress management. Now we have the general population really practising yoga for the purposes of stress manage-



ment. Surveys conducted suggest that stress management was the major reason people were practising yoga. There are review papers on yoga for stress. We have seen this in our own studies. It was that same survey sample showing reductions after a beginner's yoga programme. And we have seen this in work place populations where we are improving even perceived stress in a working population. We have also seen it in police academy cadets where we can reduce stress in just six weeks of practice. This leads us to this construct of resilience. This response to stress turns into a skill. Ability to bounce back from stress more effectively and this is not an insignificant phenomenon.

Change in consciousness

Over the short term we see these benefits of reducing stress, mind body awareness and resilience. But over the long term people experience a deeper state, a philosophical, psychological transformation. This is an important phenomenon which is little studied. But we can see evidence of this. People show better levels of mindfulness after practice. Practice times were correlated with experience of transcendence. Richie Davidson shows an increase in absorption experience. This was based on a study of Ashram residence people who experience levels of oneness, experiences with the divine or changes in life than does the regular population. We can't quantify these spiritual type changes. The idea of flow and of being immersed in your activity is a very profound and beautiful

state to be in. Yoga practitioners had increased levels of flow.

I bring you now to the punch line. Yoga affects the 4 components that we talked about. Physical there is an increase in fitness levels, flexibility, strength, coordination, balance, respiratory function, self efficacy and physical functioning. Self regulation, particularly emotion and stress which leads to resilience to stress and equanimity in the face of stress and emotions, which leads to psychological self efficacy. Meditation improves mind body awareness that enhances mindfulness and cognitive functions like concentration and ultimately meta cognition which is the ability to step back and watch the flow of thoughts without getting caught up in them, which is a key phenomenon in meditative practice. These practices can lead to changes in spirituality through unitive and transcendent states. These can be just a few seconds, but they are so profound that they can be life changing. People will say yoga changed my life, increasing life meaning and purpose.

The Connection – Mindfulness and the Mind-Body Response

Dr. Craig Hassed

Mindfulness and meditation is getting the hands back on the reigns to connect, to be present, to be engaged. It is not a new idea. If you go back through all the wisdom traditions, they say pretty much the same kind of thing in different ways. Being mindful is pretty simple. It is not a complex thing. It happens naturally and spontaneously. It is just taking in the scene, enjoying the moment, regardless if we have done any mindfulness training. It happens naturally and spontaneously if you are in the flow of an activity and you are mindful. Many people say my stress management is my sport, music, skateboarding. Where is your attention when you are on your skateboard? You have to be totally connected to what you are doing. You can't do the tricks if your mind is somewhere else,



you will hurt yourself. How do you feel at the end of an hour of skateboarding? I feel great. I feel alive, reinvigorated, mind is clear and ready to get back on track. That is a product of being mindful for a period of time. And take that attitude of mind into whatever next awaits.

Attention

Attention is a natural state. We were not born distracted, inattentive and disengaged. We were not born that way. It is a habit we get into pretty early in life. A child will always be in the present moment. But its ability to nominate, engage and sustain attention is pretty rudimentary. The attention will always be there. But for an adult, if we develop this capacity well, we develop the ability to choose what to engage the attention with in a discerning way. A Microsoft report reported that the average human being has a lower attention span than a goldfish. It has been tracking down for quite a long time. In a marketing report it was said that you have approximately 8 seconds to get your message across, because the minds of people are already outside the window.

This overload of information is breeding a distractibility that we have never seen before. Technology is making it worse. There is this modern mythology that I can have a fuller life and can get more done by paying attention to multiple things at the same time. The human brain does not do that. The Jury is not out on this. There is a differ-

ence between efficient attention switching, which is what we do when we are very focused and engaged. The attention being exactly where it needs to be at any given moment is mindfulness, a very agile and engaged attention, is efficient attention switching. That is not multitasking. We miss things we don't even think we are missing but we are grinding away with these stress response constantly. What do we do? You can practise mindfulness. According to William James from 1890 in the first really major text book on Psychology: "The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will. No one is *compos sui* [master of himself] if he has it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about." Even in the birth of modern psychology, there was the recognition of the importance of attention but the skills of how to train it or develop it were not widely known. It was footnoted and ignored for another century. Mindful means engaged. Where we are, what we are doing. Mindfulness and attention regulation: attention regulation is the psychological term for this, paying attention in a mindful way. It is about attention and the attitude with which we pay attention, which is equally or perhaps more important. Attention regulation has three main aspects. First, know where our attention is. Very often the attention wanders off, without us even realizing it. You are doing some sort of yoga posture on the mat and all of a sudden you realize that you are thinking about lunch. You didn't even notice that the mind went off. It went off by itself. The first thing is to know where the attention is. The second thing is to prioritise where the attention needs to be. At any given moment there will be a priority more than anything else. From that perspective, everything else is a distraction at that moment, unless the priority shifts, in which case the other



soon as the brain engages with breathing etc. The brain becomes quiet again. Over the longer term, if a person practises this on a regular basis, even when the default mental activity switches on the brain goes on to rumination for example. The areas of the brain related to self monitoring and cognitive control switch on much more quickly, that is the person gets better at recognizing self monitoring, 'Oh there is that train of thought again'. Cognitive control is 'Do I want to get on the train or not'. We have to be aware to make that choice. If we are not present and paying attention and get on any old train of thought that gets into the mind and go where that train goes. But if we develop some awareness, that cognitive control, that ability to engage or not engage with that thought for example is a really crucial ability to have.

Sit on the platform and just allow that train of thought to come and go without getting on, without any particular involvement or attitude to it. Have no particular attachment to it. It is transitory. Being and watching of course is not transitory, but the thought, the feeling, the sensation is. The ability not to interfere with it starts to produce a kind of liberation from the thoughts or the feelings.

things are distractions. Then for the attention to go there and stay there unless a more important priority comes along.

The Applications

Then studies started looking at the brain, how it changes the structure and function of the brain. And it is not just neuro plasticity. It is neuro genesis it stimulates new neuronal growth in the adult brain right up to old age. The human brain wasn't meant to be able to do that. Quietening down the amygdale, it changes, it renovates the brain in a very positive way, the opposite to the damage with default mode. Then studies started looking at managing chronic pain, metabolic and hormonal effects, the opposite of the stress response, helping people to cope with cancer.

Performance

People perform better and function better. There is a difference between being distressed and losing focus and being able to be mindful. When performing at their best there is a state of inner calmness, but total engagement in what we are doing. If they link attention and being present to performance, then executives want a bit of that.

When we unhook from sensory present moment, default mode (default network which I mentioned before as a distracted state of mind) is associated with depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, autism. Default activity is decreased or deactivated when paying attention. Default activity switches off as

The Theory and Practice of Yoga as a Treatment Module for Addictive Disorders

Dr. Latha Nityanandam

We don't see things as they are. We see, but we don't see the objects as it is. We see the objects with a coloured glass, which could be our egos, our desires, our hatred, fears. All these things colour what we see. But nobody knows that we have coloured glasses. Nobody thinks they are wrong. These are our *kleshas* which are quite prominent. We cannot get rid of I. Anything to do with my experience, my desire, my hatred, my fears these give rise to the yellow coloured glass. To remove that is very difficult. There are other obstacles like illness, mental stagnation, doubts, fatigue, over indulgence, lack of perseverance, regression and



addictions. As it is, there are a lot of misconceptions. It takes away perception totally. They cannot see the object. Addiction is just the opposite of yoga. Because yoga is mindfulness, going within, addiction is being drawn outside with a substance from outside. It is not within. It is from outside. That is why we get drawn to objects. Our senses are drawn. Instead of keeping our senses within, we are drawn out and that is where the problem starts. If I am doing mindfulness, I am working on some meditative practice, but our *kleshas* and perceptions are always interfering. That is why it is very difficult. Even when doing postures, our *kleshas* are constantly present resulting in constant fluctuation. We have to work hard to bring down those *kleshas*. With substance use, they have withdrawal, denial, and delusion. The people who come to the Drug and Alcohol place, by the time they come, their whole perception is hopeless. No hope. No matter what you say, it is not going to work. Self image is so poor. Drug addiction cycle is a trans-generational cycle. Parents have used or grandparents have used. There is a lot of family violence. The self image is too low. We have to look at the object as it is, by removing the *kleshas* and removing the addictions. How do we do it? *Heyam Dukham Anagatam*: Yoga is bringing down stress and the ability to handle and bring down future stress. The causes of *dukha* are the inability to perceive or accept change, needs are not fulfilled. These are things we are so firmly attached to, we find it difficult to get out of these. How do

we start practising? Reflection, tear the fog, see it as it is. This is what we have to aim at. But it is not so easy. That is why we go to the goal of yoga. Reduce the *kleshas*, reduce attachments, look for peace.

Pratyahara is control of senses. Usually what happens is our senses are taken over by the objects. Instead of the mind controlling it, the object decides what the mind is going to be involved with. According to Sankaracharya, every living thing has some sensory organ that leads to its downfall. The mouse; its downfall is its sense of smell. The moth's is, vision. It is so attracted to flame. It just flies into it. For human beings, all the five attract. All the five senses lead to our demise. That is why it is very important to start practising *pratyahara*. It is only after practising *pratyahara* that you can start doing *asana*, *pranayama* etc. *Dharana* is a stage when we start focusing. Mindfulness starts when you start focusing. You decide, I am going to start focusing on this. *Dharana* leads to *Dhyana* and that is meditation and meditation leads to *Samadhi*. One leads to the other.

Ageing and Mental Agility – Dementia and Alzheimer's

Dr. NK Manjunath

The biggest ageing related disease is Alzheimer's disease. We have a major advantage of it and a disadvantage of it. You will all agree with me when I say that we are bestowed with a gift—two gifts in fact. One is the ability to remember. Equally important is the ability to forget. Imagine if you are able to remember everything you have come across in your life since childhood, how miserable that would have been. Each and every experience is stored somewhere in your brain. The ability to forget, just as much as you store, it is important to forget certain things in life. We should store all good things in life and forget all bad things in life. But the opposite happens many times. You go to college you have to write your



exams, you have to remember what you have studied. A good number of us will have difficulty reproducing what we have studied. Equally important is that you have had a very bad day. You want to get out of it. You want to forget it. The thoughts are lingering that it is very difficult for you to get out of it. We have the ability, we have the choice like in a computer to insert the memory or delete it. But we have to do it selectively and most probably we do it wrongly.

Yoga talks about the component of memory in a different way. In yoga it is called as *smriti* and it is one of those occupations of the mind. *Smriti* is the process of memory or the ability to capture information from past experience, store it and reproduce it. How is it going to help an individual? The process of life and stress affects one's memory. Stress can cause oxidative changes and that can result in changes in the brain probably resulting in Alzheimer's. Where are these memories coming from? According to ancient scriptures it comes from *vasanas* and *samskaras*. How do you use yoga to activate memory? There is a process described in the Patanjali Yoga sutras, which includes *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. All of us go through the process of *chanchalata*. We have different random thoughts coming into our minds. From these you bring your focus to one point, *ekagrata* and intensified focusing called *dharana*, and expanding and remaining in that state is called *dhyana*. This process of in and out helps you to activate your memory, to develop better processing, and you can re-

member it.

There are lots of studies that have been done on yoga, particularly talking about Alzheimer's. There are a few hormones, which are known to influence the elderly, resulting in Alzheimer's, these hormones are said to reduce cortisone focus. Yoga helps to reduce stress. There have been studies to look at how yoga can reduce neuro degeneration. Yoga increases the cortical thickness in different areas with more nerve cells being activated for the task of meditation. There are several studies looking at the specific areas of the brain, which are all concerned with Alzheimer's disease and how yoga can influence those particular parts of the brain which are all related to limbic system and few other areas related to memory. Meditation has been shown to bring in a change. When we do meditation, where is the activity? Meditation is a tool to switch off. There is inhibition happening in the brain, more than activation. Activation happens in specific brain areas, but inhibition across the whole brain area. One study looked at the increased Gaba levels, particularly looking at inhibition. Also we have several other studies that talk about similar things. One study talks about the increased thickness in particular areas, while others talk about increased volume in areas that are most affected by Alzheimer's, particularly the Hippocampus area. Functionally also it has been shown that the areas which regulate attention and memory have been most actively used during meditation. It is quite obvious for us to say that there is a relationship between the influence of yoga on the brain and the brain areas affected by Alzheimer's.

The Effects of Yoga on the Attention and Behaviour of Boys with ADHD

Dr. Pauline Jensen

With ADHD you can have inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, disorganization or a combined disorder. Some ADHD children have another dis-



order at the same time. Disruptive behaviours have an enormous effect on their personal lives, social lives of children, relationships, which affects peers at school and also teachers. Schools recommend that parents should take their children to a paediatrician to see if they have got this disorder and medicate them.

I was thinking we should not medicate those children. If we get them to yoga we can change that trend. It was a small study. There were 7 boys in the control group, and 11 in the yoga group. They went from the controlled to the yoga group. They were randomized. The measures I used were the Conners behaviour rating scale of teachers. That is basically for the teachers. There are 100 questions and they answer not at all or very much so. From that the paediatrician can get an idea whether they have got ADHD, what sort of ADHD the child has. All the parents did that, but they withdrew the medication for a day, so that they can do it when they were not medicated. The paediatrician thought that was ok to do. So we got a look at them when they were not on medication. They did an hour's class per week at Westmead hospital. They gave me a little room and I was hopeful that they would do a home practice as well. They had a manual to take home and a little diary in which they could write. The parents were aware what was going on, they encouraged them and helped them. There was a full programme beyond the *asanas*, we did *pranayama* as well and *yoga nidra*. The boys did participate. They did enjoy it. Not all

the time. But they did. If you look at the research: neurological effects of yoga breathing and the implications for neurological dysfunction. With research from ADHD there was evidence of lower oxygen consumption and glucose metabolism. I started to think if we can increase the glucose metabolism through yoga it will help to address that deficit. There were changes in cognition with *pranayama* which found a difference in what is happening in the right and left brains. Relaxation techniques and meditation techniques change to alpha brain waves and decreases anxiety, but often with medication increases anxiety.

The Results

There were 6 scales out of the 16 scales in the Conners parent rating scale, in which significant changes were observed and those 6 related to ADHD conditions, not necessarily related to anxiety or social dysfunction. In the yoga group the oppositional traits reduced significantly. There was quite a drop in the inattentive symptoms. This study had a number of limitations, small study, short intervention etc.

Yoga for People with Intellectual Disability

Dr. Latha Nityanandam

Why yoga for people with intellectual disability? What exactly does yoga mean? How do we teach yoga? Yoga has become a part of the curriculum for special education. Yoga is very holistic. The connection between the teacher and student is very important. What is yoga? To bring two things



together. To be able to coordinate the activities of the mind and the body, starting from where they are. It should be able to reduce the distracted state of mind. It should help concentrate on the present activity and improve his or her activities of daily living to a degree that couldn't have been achieved. Anything that they couldn't do before and that is what they are supposed to be focusing on. How do we do that? It is through breath. In an experiment that was done it was found that yoga improved the general health of the subjects. Improvement in attendance may have improved the results. What was not anticipated was that teachers found a lot of changes in the students and that encouraged them to teach further. The connection between students and teachers became much stronger. How do you teach? Teaching posture is one thing. Teaching controlled breathing is more difficult. Deshikarchar used aspect of sound. They have to be comfortable in whatever they are doing. There should be a kind of steadiness. It is important to be comfortable and steady in a position. What we do for different people depends on what their condition is. The physical condition can be very different. Each one needs to have different kinds of *asanas*. How do we teach breathing to the intellectual disabled? That is why we use sound by saying Maa. For *asanas* go with your body flow. It is important to listen to the body and see what is comfortable. Yoga was tailor made to students with intellectual disabilities. Postures were adapted and variations of postures was designed. Hyperactive children liked *suryanamaskar* because of the variety. For doing a posture we need to prepare. Postures can have negative effects as well. Hence we need to do counter poses.

Practising and Teaching Mindfulness

Dr. Craig Hassed

Has anybody tried to catch a dog with a ball in its mouth? What happens when you run after the dog? It runs away. A dog is always 6 feet in front



of you. No matter how hard you try, it is always a little bit out of reach. It will turn from time to time and show you the ball. If you keep running after the dog, the dog will run and run and run. Whereas if you just sit on the bench, the dog runs around and tries to get your interest in the ball. If you don't show any response, the dog is likely to just drop the ball at your feet. You are experiencing a level of peace or stillness in spite of the dog still running around. Our minds are a little bit like that. You can use the dog metaphor for learning mindfulness like training a puppy. When training a puppy we get angry and intimidating. We should train our minds through being consistent, gentle, clear, you need to have care to do it well. Very often people find that not criticizing and judging that the mind is wandering and doing what it does, helps a person to experience a level of calmness and there is less and less to aggravate that. The mind is like the weather it is different every day. The good days are sunny, clear with light they are the pleasant days, but not always the most useful days. But that doesn't mean that the other days are not good and more useful. If you want to learn sailing, the day that is sunny and pleasant is best. The day when there was a howling gale it wasn't so pleasant, it wasn't so easy. If our mark of what is useful is pleasant and easy

then the sunny, clear gentle breeze day is the best. If our mark is what is going to help us to sail much better, it is actually the tough day. When we are trying to deal with anxiety, anger and frustration, fear, depression, physical pain and everything else there are some pretty gloomy days. If we can learn to work with that, in a mindful way, we get our most deep insights in the tough stuff.

If we are mindful, it doesn't mean that anger will not arise. If we are mindful, we may notice anger. If we notice the anger in a mindful way and stand back from the anger and not trying to control the anger, suppressing it, getting rid of it, the harder we try to do that, what effect does it have? It exacerbates it. A person who is mindful in the presence of anger may notice the anger and be able to stand back from it. Not control it or be controlled by it. Non attachment to it. Stand back from it. You are the observer of the experience. The observer is constant, the experience is transient. Observe as changes come and go. That space provides the window of opportunity to choose to respond or not to respond. And if you do respond, how do you respond? That serving choice, executive functioning and emotional regulation ability to make that choice in a discerning way is predicated on the ability to observe, judge and react and being non-attached. With meditation, it is not about trying to have a deep experience for 5 minutes or 10 minutes, half an hour or 2 hours in a chair. The aim is to cultivate the qualities so that once we get out of the chair we are able to take those qualities with us. The proof is in the pudding. It reveals itself in day to day life. Students who do the mindfulness course notice that their minds are wandering. That itself is progress. Now you are noticing. That is progress. You may not think it is progress, but it is progress. You mean to say that your mind was not wandering before you started to watch it. You didn't even notice when something was happening. When you are noticing, you just bring back your attention back to the

task. Do that in a gentle way. What is the effect of that? I am wasting a lot less time. I can get some study done. That is the informal practice of mindfulness. Being present, engaged and attentive, in our life.

We tend to get identified with what we are aware of. We notice the thought and immediately identify with the state of mind. That process of identification or attachment to those things. Mindfulness helps to loosen the attachment to those things. There is the 'I' undifferentiated conscious Self. There is light here which is of no particular colour but it illuminates all of this. There is a difference between the light and what it is illuminating. Mindfulness is a form of meditation, but it is also a way of living—living with awareness. It is as much a way of living as meditation.

Mantra and Mudra for Health and Well Being

Dr. Pooja Maddela

The word mantra comprises mana + tra. Mana is mind and tra is instrument, protection continuity. Therefore mantra is an instrument of the mind, a powerful vibration sound that helps to enter a deep level of consciousness. You know the mantra and you need to bathe in that. If you continue to repeat the mantra with feeling, the mind gets sta-



bility. One needs to have a sense of *adbhuta*. Mantra is about continuity.

The repetition of mantra is *japa*. The types of *japa* are *vaikhari japa* (out loud), *manasika japa* (silent), *upamshu japa* (whispering), *likhita japa* (writing). To absorb the *sara* or essence you need to repeat the mantra. When you go on, so many things come up. Break the stagnation, balance the oscillation and live in *sattva*. *Upamshu japa* is best to balance the *rajas*. Sometimes you can do meditation with all the combinations. The *bija* has the potential to become a tree. Divinity is in us, but we need to awaken it by repeating a mantra. Intention plus attention give rise to life force. You have to have positive intention or *sankalpa*. The moment you have thought you are injecting positivity into your cell, focus and invest your energy into what you want. But we end up focusing on what we don't want. Mindfulness is non judgemental awareness, open-minded, compassionate with loving kindness. The present moment is the gift given to all of us.

Holistic Yoga Practice to Address Pain and Fear of Movement

Tamara James

Our understanding of pain has grown to distinguish when pain persists and goes on for a long

period of time is found to be unrelated to what is actually going on in the tissues. So when we have an acute injury, as that injury heals under normal circumstances, pain subsides. It may persist a little bit, beyond the healing of the tissues, but generally it subsides. The problem of chronic pain is that the tissue healing will take place but the persistence of pain becomes a problem in itself. We have to see those things separately. We start to continue to manage chronic pain according to acute pain models. We start finding ourselves and getting caught up in things which are not helpful. When you are experiencing pain, that pain is telling you to stop and not do anything but to rest the area. That could actually be counter productive in the long run. It can contribute to increased sensitivity in the nervous system. Of course, on the other hand, we don't want to push ourselves. So it is about finding that delicate balance to figure out what is right for the tissues over the longer term and that involves the right amount of movement. It is often a very touchy area when we are experiencing pain, quite often people who have experienced pain have had conflicting information and they are quite unsure about what to do. When we experience pain, we need to consider ourselves as a whole.

A practice may hurt if people are tense and fear-



ful. They need to have experience that they can move without pain. When we are talking about fear of movement, we are talking about graded exposure. When we fear something, it is not always rational. Someone who has hurt their back will be very fearful of bending down to pick something up. But when they are not thinking, they may be able to put on their shoes. How do we deal with fear and disability related to that fear?

Pain is complex. When we understand the complexity of pain we can see how we are best resourced. The mindfulness and awareness we bring into our body provides its own graded exposure for us to increase our capacity and cope with pain. That is a vicious circle in a positive direction because we get increased resilience and we feel empowered. Think about the healing of the tissues, not just about avoiding pain. Pain is not necessarily a problem. It is a message more than a sensation. It tells us something is wrong and we need to respect that. That points us in the direction of getting the information that we need and behave in a way that it is going to be helpful. Particularly when pain has become chronic, you have to witness and inquire by stepping back to access that *vijnanamaya kosha* to be able to let go of the negative stories.

Yoga for Building Energy

Vivianne Barry

We are all interested in how we can make our bodies the most efficient machines in a sense. How can we take in the nutrients of oxygen, food, and use them in the most efficient way. Paramahansa Yogananda who wrote *Autobiography of a Yogi* devised 39 short exercises. These exercises are to oxygenate the blood and draw the pranic life force and directed it to certain body parts. It is very similar to Tai Chi. We practise these before we meditate. Personally for me, getting out of bed and onto the meditation cushion is a little bit challenging. I like to get a little bit of air moving through



the body through a short sequence of exercises. It is about learning to control the flow of the body. From the physiological perspective learning how to take our healing life force and direct it to areas of the body that need to be healed. Swami Yogananda emphasises that our bodies are energy bodies and we have over 30 trillion cells and each cell is like a little battery that requires energy recharge. If we can learn to oxygenate and enliven ourselves and connect our emotional body and our physical body this is all part of yoga practise.

Question and Answer Session

The Takeaway Points from the Presentations

Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa: Based on survey studies we are in an unprecedented time in society with the practice of yoga and meditation. We have not seen anything like this in history. It is really a turning point. Such a large number of people are turning to yoga and meditation. It is an opportunity for us as teachers and researchers of yoga to really work harder to make this fall into the mainstream of society in a big way. There is a strong emerging body of literature showing us the objective evidence of how these practices work. We can stand in front of the medical community and say this is



not placebo, not expectation affects, it is not a hobby this is real neuro biology, real science these are things we are really doing to our bodies to improve functioning and capability. Treating diseases is very real through molecular biology and neuro imaging.

Dr. Manjunath: We always worry about Alzheimer's patients. I wanted to add one thing to that. That is the role of care givers, particularly if you have in your house a patient suffering from Alzheimer's then you know how really tough it is to manage life. There is equal importance given to using yoga in both areas where it can benefit a patient, and how it can also benefit a care giver. Research with respect to yoga in Alzheimer's is at an infancy stage. We do not have any direct evidence to suggest that yoga can be used for Alzheimer's. We are making inferences based on some other studies. We have a long way to go to talk about an evidence based approach adopted for the management of Alzheimer's.

Dr. Nagaratna: It is very very important that we prevent these diseases. In prevention of dementia, lifestyle is very important. There is much evidence about diet. A very very important message that we can communicate as yoga professionals to people around is to memorize something every day. In India, in the olden days, there used to be a lot of memorizing. How to memorize was something

very fascinating. If we can promote memorizing something every day in the form of poems, slokas, sutras, *Bhagavad Gita* that will be good. Let us inculcate this into our children. Today's education has lost the need for memorizing because we have everything on the computers. Memory should be actively kept alive in the background of healthy living. It is something that we should incorporate into all of our yoga classes to be able to prevent Alzheimer's. For Alzheimer's patients, we find breathing to be very useful. Improving the breath flow to the brain cells has been found to be very useful. If we do breath holding practices it will improve memory, will improve blood flow to the brain. Start doing *antar kumbhaka*, introducing regular and systemic breath holding. Start with 1:4:2 ratio, 2:8:4 and increase to 4:16:8 and go on increasing depending on capacity and other conditions one may have. Learning the Sanskrit language helps with learning difficulties.

Ayurvedic Approach to Soul Searching

Dr. Rama Prasad

One of my teachers, who was a leftist Ayurvedic teacher, used to say that *moksha* is not about after death, it has to happen here, otherwise there is no point. There is no guarantee when you are dead. Liberation is all in the definition. He defined *mok-*



sha in a very simple way, it can happen right now. If you know who you are, you have a better opportunity to use your faculties, body, mind and life. When we talk about who you are, there are many aspects we can talk about. One is your skills. You know your skills, natural biological skills, in spite of whether they are developed or not. If you know that you are skilled with all these things then you have a better chance to explore them, train them. In India we do not have a religion, we have paths and methodologies. If you know who you are, what you are designed for, there is a better chance of you applying your energies, skills and talents.

Soul searching technology was invented thousands of years back. Looking at yourself, exploring your skills, exploring who you are is the start in everything, whether you are about to start a business, a career, doing anything, whatever. We had to read the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* contain motivating stories. I had to read the *Bhagavad Gita* multiple times. When you read the *Gita* a couple of times you get a superficial meaning, the intellectual side of it, techniques. But if you keep on reading, you befriend a book. When you befriend a book you get more. It is basi-

cally time and effort. Read, Read, Read, Read . . . Aha. I was reading this book a few times and I started seeing some connections. In the second chapter and the seventeenth chapter there were some exiting things. I was looking for the definition of soul or atman and there is no one giving you any definition. Everyone talks about atman, finding the atman is the whole purpose of life, but no one tells you exactly what it is or where it is. So how do you explore it? So I wanted to get a definition to the word atman. In the second chapter Krishna tells us, before we get into the soul, we need to talk about the body. Body is the physical thing made up of nutrients modified by your thinking, lifestyle, mostly by your thinking. Mind is exciting and complex at the same time. Mind means thinking. What is thinking? Thinking is all about working with beliefs. What is belief? Belief is a piece of information. Beliefs are stored in the subconscious mind and all the beliefs are in the form of apps. Everything we gather in this life is stored in the subconscious mind in the form of beliefs which is a piece of information. Mind is that, but it is not that simple. There are billions of beliefs. That is the beauty of mind, it has a number of folders which you can use appropriately. We all get confused some time. Beliefs can be mixed up.

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, when he didn't want to kill his uncles etc, that he is not the body. He said you are not your body. The soul is not what you think. We have to define soul. According to Sri Krishna in the second chapter, you are your soul. In the seventeenth chapter Sri Krishna says one more thing, you are your faith: *sattvanurupa sarvasya, shraddha bhavati bharata shraddha-mayo 'yam purusho yo yac-chraddhah sa eva sah*. This soul is your *shraddha*. You are your faith. Faith means what? Let us look at how the mind works. You have superficial beliefs. We also have core beliefs. Superficial beliefs are kind of flexible. But core beliefs are different. Core beliefs are impossible to change. That is why Sri Krishna says faith is a core

belief. Technically you cannot change your core beliefs. You never say I have faith in these tomatoes. I have faith in my guru, in science, practice, truth, values. When do you use the word soul in a meaningful context? An event is soul destroying when the core belief is shaken, foundational beliefs are shaken.

‘Who am I’, is soul searching. Once you know what soul is, searching is easy. Where are the beliefs coming from? Beliefs come from outside. This information is changing your system. This is why after a life changing experience, your beliefs change. We go with superficial beliefs, without touching the core. The moment someone touches the core, it is an amazing experience. It is a big event. How do you explore your core beliefs? You are already doing that, whether you like it or not. You are constantly interacting with the environment. Environment is teaching you lessons, wisdom and beliefs, constantly. You are responding to them constantly. If the event is according to your belief system, what is the emotion that you experience? You are happy. Happiness is when things happen according to your belief system. Happiness is an emotional experience you have when the event is according to your belief system, harmonious to your belief system. What is sadness or anger? The event is not according to your belief system. Sometimes it is completely opposite to your belief system. Once you know this, unhappiness or anger will not affect you. Observe yourself, how you are responding to the environment. That is all. Who you are is the most amazing thing. Once you start observing yourself and decoding your beliefs, make a little journal, it is amazing.

Ayurvedic Approach to Holistic Healing

Dr. Rama Prasad

Health and disease have a lot to do with lifestyle. Finally science accepted that idea. It is scientific, it is lifestyle. In the last 15 years, life style diseases have come up. That is a new topic. There are many



factors in life that keep you happy or not. If you sleep well or not, you can be happy or not, fit or not, fertile or not, or wise or not. And it is proven now. Lifestyle is one of the complex factors. There are so many factors in lifestyle. Sleep, rest, breaks, all sorts of stuff, everything matters. One other thing that I have come across is, if you don't know who you are, you will be doing somebody else's job. The main reason people fall sick is that people are not using their bodies in the way that it has been designed to be used. It needs to be handled with care, firm but with care. Each of us is designed in a particular way. We are going to use the *maha pancha bhuta* approach to body typing. Once you know who you are, it becomes easier, life becomes sustainable. *Dosa* analysis is currently available all around the world, but they are confused because they blend all these ideas together. Body type is unchangeable. It is your genetic map. It is your genetic information. You can't change it. You can activate it or deactivate it. Body changes,

every day the body is changing, exercising and non exercising. Body type never changes. Preferences tend to change, tendencies tend to change. When you take the right measures you don't tend to do anything. If you reduce your calories for a month, you will be reducing your blood sugar. Illnesses can come and go. Emotions can come and go, but body type remains the same. How you use it changes. This is a body type analysis not a personality analysis, personality changes. You can classify everything into 5 groups. What are the 5 elements that they talk about? Everything is made of wisdom. Programming software includes *akasha*, *vayu*, *agni*, *jala*, *prithvi*, ether, air, fire, water and earth. You need nothing to be something. When you drink enough water your flexibility comes back. Each element has got its own shape. Earth is rectangular, water is circle, fire is triangular, air is a dot, ether is a line. When you are dominant in one of them, how do these look in the body. Earth people will be dense, you cannot squeeze them, they are solid dense, broad shoulders, wide hips, broad feet, rectangular face, chunky fingers. Water dominant people will be water shaped, like water globules, rounded face, squeeze, squeeze, curves, when you shake their hands you don't want to let it go, well cushioned. Fire shape is triangular, triangular faced, muscular, penetrating eyes, pointy nose, pointy chin, all angular, when you shake their hands they want to let you know they are here. Air people are tiny, shortest in the family, tiny fingers, they are tiny. 99.9 per cent of the time, this is correct. Everyone is made of all the 5 different elements at different levels.

Think about the levels of existence, you are made of nutrients, molecules, atoms, cells, tissues, organs, systems, bodies, at these levels you have different proportions of these 5 elements. But we are looking for an overall dominance. Long tall people are designed with ether, and ether is all about wisdom. Wisdom is always about knowledge seeking.

These people will be calm, quiet, silent they sit with a paper and pen and three hours later they are still doing the same thing, creativity, imagination, thinker, philosopher, they want to know what is behind, what lies beneath, planner, big picture person, visionary, very little words. Air types are designed in a different way. They want to do three things at a time, air type doesn't want to be boxed, air people don't want to be in the same job for more than a few months, unless you change their roles. Air is a pop star. All pop stars are messengers of change. They are amazing at communication, multi tasking, easy going, adaptable, dance teacher, performer, air is great with extempore. Fire is like a commando, analytical, precise, like a Japanese warrior. Fire is all about precision. Fire people get into precise, transformative, business or work areas, finance, stocks, if they are body fire types they join the army navy, when they retire they get into karate and kung fu, become personal trainers, if they are your boss, they will get you to work like a slave, they don't see slave, they see potential, efficiency, result. Water types are natural mums and dads, parental, they just want to look after someone. They generally try to make lots of babies. Without babies, they look after dogs and cats, they baby sit. Water types, when they come into a room, see lots of people, I need to look after them. Earth type are simple, natural managers, administrators, systematic organized. We need to know what your dominant element is and start working on that.

Yoga as Evidence Based Life Style Intervention for Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

Dr. Nagaratna

Let me begin with a story of four wives. There was a rich merchant who had four wives. The fourth wife he loved the most. He adored her with rich robes treated her with delicacies. Took great care of her and gave her nothing but the best. The third wife also he loved. He was very proud of her. Al-



ways wanted to show her off to her friends, however the merchant was always in great fear that she will go away with some other man. The second wife he loved too. She was very considerate, always patient. She was the confidant of the merchant. Whenever the merchant faced any problem, he would always turn to her and she would always help him out. The first wife was a very loyal person, had made great contributions in maintaining his wealth and business, as well as taking care of the household. However, the merchant did not love her, although she loved him deeply, he hardly took notice of her. One day the merchant fell ill. Before long, he knew that he will be going away. He thought his time is going. Now I have four wives, why don't I take one of them with me. He asked the fourth wife, I loved you my dear the most, endowed you with the finest clothing. Now that I am going, will you follow me? No way, replies the fourth wife. She walked away without another word. The answer cut like a sharp knife right into his heart. The sad merchant then asked the third wife, who already had a readymade answer. She said no. Life is so good over here. I am going to remarry when you die. The merchant's heart sank and turned cold. Then he asked the second wife and said I always turn to you for help and you have always helped me out. Now I need your help again. When I die will you follow me and keep me company. I am sorry I cannot help you out this time. At the very most, I can only

send you to your grave. The answer came with a big bolt. Then a voice called out, I will live with you, I will follow you, no matter where you go. The merchant looked up and there was his first wife. She was so skinny as though she suffered from malnutrition. Greatly grieved the merchant said I should have taken much better care of you, while I could have. Actually we all have four wives in our lives. Who is our fourth wife? Our body. No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look good it will leave us when we die. Who is our third wife? All our possessions, all our property, status, wealth, when we die they will all go away to others, the third wife, who was ready to get married to another man. The second wife is our family and friends, no matter how close they had been, the farthest that they can take us is to the grave. Who is our first wife? This is something we cannot see: our soul, often neglected in our pursuit of material wealth and sensual pleasure. This is the only thing that follows us wherever we go. Perhaps it is a great idea to cultivate it, strengthen it, now rather than wait until we are disturbed. This is the message of yoga, which all of you are trying to propagate and touch the soul of every human being and nurture the first wife through yoga.

NCDs are non communicable lifestyle diseases all controlled by the mind. Therefore we say that mind is the root cause of the problem. We know this. Mind is the root, diseases are all sitting on the branches. But where do we go from here? What do we do with the mind? Are we to go to a psychologist? It is only a 50 year science or 60 year science, which is still struggling to define mind itself and handle mind. The most unfortunate thing that has happened to psychology is whatever research we do, we are doing research on somebody else's mind. But here were scientists of the Indian soil who said if you really want to know anything about mind, God has given you the capacity to decipher your mind into two parts and the inner

mind can see your outer mind. I know that I am angry. I know that I am distressed. I can say that I am depressed. There are two layers in our mind, the inner mind and the outer mind. So why don't I do research with my own mind, looking at my mind. Therefore, the first step in yoga is to close the eyes, turn your mind inwards and start doing research with your own mind. And in the mind there are four major faculties that we have: perception, analysing capacity, memorizing and emotions. Stress is the emotion component of our mind. All our emotions can be divided into violent emotions and soft emotions. Violent emotions can be positive or negative. Positive excitement we always see this in cinemas. Even a violent emotion of the positive type can be harmful if it is overwhelming. But that is not the usual problem. The usual problem is the negative violent emotions: anger, fear, jealousy, hatred, tension, worry depression suppressed over a long period of time which the sages classified under the six enemies of mankind. Another very important thing that we communicate to our participants is stress. What is stress? We take a history of all our participants. All your problems are stress related, when it comes to non communicable diseases. If stress is the problem, please make a list of all the stressors you have gone through in your life, starting from age 5, 10, 15, 20 and write down the points. Sit with a counsellor, talk about it and how one particular stress at a particular time could be a cause. Recognition is half solution.

Prashamana is calming down of the mind, stabilizing the mind. We have to work on negative emotion. The one common underlying factor is the speed of the mind. This is the greatest contribution of Indian thought through the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Yoga Vashista*, Patanjali, etc. The definition of stress in the mind is an emotion. Emotions are nothing but uncontrolled, speeded up, rewinding of sentences in the mind, violence, violence, violence, speed, speed, speed. We all, as yoga teachers, as yoga



professionals should recognize this. Why am I getting angry? What is happening in my mind? Uncontrolled rewinding of sentences in the mind, when I am tense, uncontrolled, speeded up, rewinding of sentences in the mind. When I am depressed, lazy to get up from my bed, laziness is also speeded up, uncontrolled, rewinding of sentences in my mind. Just recognition of this makes all the difference. Simple people who work in assembly lines understand this and say, I understand my problem is speed of the mind. Fast improvements start happening because of this. *Vega*, *vega vega* violence, violence, violence, beginning in the mind, settling down in the body. In the *Yoga Vashista* it is shown how violence in the mind, passes through violent activity in the *prana*, to settle down in the *pancha pranas* to produce inflammation in the body level. The solution is slowing down. That is the definition of yoga. Definition of yoga is slowing down, calming down, the take home message of this presentation is *prashamana*, calm down, slow down, yoga is to slow down the mind, not slow down the bodily movements. Through Vashista's definition we enter into the second definition of yoga of Patanjali which is mastery over the modifications of the mind. Patanjali's definition is, anger welcome, anger bye bye, tension welcome, tension bye bye. This is Patanjali. The whole of the capacity that the human system has that we can change our pattern of responses, *kartum*, *na kartum anyata kartum* to react, not to react or change of a response pattern. From

violent emotions to soft emotions is an inbuilt capacity. Through that we reach a state of deep rest to the nervous system and it is that rest to the nervous system that we need to work on. So the majority of the yoga that we introduce shall have lots and lots of relaxation techniques instant relaxation, quick relaxation, deep relaxation techniques, cyclic meditation, for stress management. Gaudapada the sage, said that when there is intense dullness, awaken the mind, when the mind is awakened, hold it down. Stimulate, relax, stimulate, relax, these are all techniques. Starting from body level we have diet, cleansing techniques, *asanas*, *pranayama*, meditation, emotion culture, devotion. Bhakti yoga is a very important technique that we use.

The big thing that has changed mankind today is a lack of contentment in life. How to make mankind become content and come out of the big materialistic rush and run towards achievement, target, restlessness, *lokeshana*, *viteshana*, *putreshana*, *eshana*, *eshana*, *eshana*, rush, rush, rush, desire, desire, desire unending. How to take them back is only through this slowing down. When one recognizes that inner joy within oneself we use this concept of karma yoga etc. Recognize the silence inside, calmness inside, stability inside, go deep. Go into your spiritual being and you will heal yourself. Silence inside the cell is the rest that is the healer.

Yoga Asanas – Why we practise!

Remy Quinter

Asana was originally designed for people between 13 and 15. For spoilt rich kids, with no ego problems, for Brahmins to go off and become renunciates. They would go off the householder path and go into the renunciate path. That is the way it was originally designed. Let us look at where these 13 to 15 year olds were coming from or originally came from. This is really important. You are not mindful of your body most of the time. If you are



good, you go to a yoga class 1 to 3 times a week, by the authority who has been blessed by the Yogiraj.

The perfect squat is like a two year old squatting which is similar to an African bushman. See the ease with which they sit. This is *asana*. What is responsible for this *asana* disappearing? Furniture. We are all social beings. We recognize the power relationships in our social group. We are deeply insecure and the first thing we are trying to do is get off the ground and get up a little higher because we recognize that that is what the more powerful people do. Bowing is so good for us psychologically and it is good for us physically. It is the same as the squat, it is opening up the hips, it is opening up the knees, compressing the digestive system, and it is making us humble. In Buddhism, you bow to Buddha three times before you do your meditation and three times afterwards. In Islam you bow 5 times a day. According to Yogi Raj Ramalingam *asana* is everywhere. When you do your laundry and bend over to take your clothes you are doing *uttana asana*, when you hang your clothes it is *tala asana*. Asana is everywhere. If you can do two sun salutations a day, you take responsibility for your body. If you cannot do a sun salutation, do a cat stretch, five times, every single day. Cat stretch and up dog and down dog is all you have to do. If you have 10 minutes, do 2 sun salutations, cat stretch, up dog down dog. If there was only 1 pose that everybody should do, it would be this: shoulder stand. If not put your legs against the wall, a half shoulder stand. Just the fact

of getting on to the ground becomes an *asana* for some of you and the act of getting off the ground becomes an *asana* for some of you.

Respiratory Patterns in Students Enrolled in Schools for Disruptive Behaviour Before, During and After Yoga Nidra Relaxation

Dr. Pauline Jensen

Most of the common treatments for ADHD are medication and behaviour management which can happen at home or in the school like establishing rules, expectations, reinforcing good behaviour, and having consequences of negative behaviours. There are some family programmes, and these programmes can have success. But there is always a need for improvement and often there is a relapse after treatment. If the medication doesn't continue, the behaviour relapses. If the programme doesn't continue, if the management doesn't continue, the behaviours return.

Yoga encourages participants to be actively involved independently. If we are actively involved with our own treatment, we own it, we can continue it. Medication is something that is external to ourselves and behaviour management is something external to ourselves. Sometimes I say to children, do you want to control your own behaviour or do you want the teacher to control your behaviour. If you don't want the teacher to control your behaviour and you dislike it, you can control your own behaviour. It is self management, basically through yoga techniques like respiratory awareness like the manipulation of the breath and postures. I wonder how much stress has got to do with these behaviours. If you look at the nature of stress, it is the parameters of the breath rate, heart rate and blood pressure, which change under stressful conditions. These are influences by the activities of the nervous system. It is the autonomic nervous system that in turn produces stress. It has become increasingly evident that stress is a factor in behavioural problems. The trig-



gers for stress for those with disruptive behaviour may not be easily evident. For a teacher, parent or anyone, suddenly these behaviours manifest themselves and you don't know what the trigger was. It might be a look from someone else, a word, tone of the word, and there is an easy and quick reaction. As Dr. Nagaratna was saying it is the quickness, the speed of response with stress. Look at the action that contributes to the stress response via the sympathetic nervous system, where the adrenalin is released. The adrenalin enhances the pulmonary function, the heart rate and blood pressure increases. And this process prepares the body for fight and flight. These children react quickly. They can be violent and it is a huge explosion at times. Afterwards it can be denial, or that it was someone else's fault. The activation of the sympathetic nervous system brings about rest and conservation, restoration of energy, and the respiration rate slows down, the heart rate slows down, and the blood pressure equalizes. It is so much related to the body in terms of the stress and reactions.

Yoga nidra is a guided relaxation practise. The participants are given instructions involving awareness of sensory inputs, the breath and various body parts. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the founder of Bihar School of Yoga, simplified and systematized this ancient process, which he describes as a systematic method of inducing complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation while maintaining wakeful awareness. There are a number of studies done on other relaxation tech-

niques. It is calming but not sleeping. We have to be aware of this. It is coming into the alpha state not going into sleep and the theta waves. In the alpha state one is awake and alert and consciously really relaxed. Some of the studies on the psycho, neuro, physiological parameters changes in brain wave frequencies and it increases the dopamine release in the body. It was found to have equal efficacy as imipramine for treating depression also electroconvulsive therapy. It is really very significant.

Some of the conclusions were that there were trends towards normalizing the breathing patterns, stabilizing the breath rate and regulating the amplitude. The breath was more regular despite being somewhat shallow. But the breathing rate remained relatively high in five of them. So we can say as a conclusion that the relaxation training reduced the respiration rate for participants after yoga nidra. Yoga nidra reduces the need to move.

When you do a study you always look at the limitations of that study. The numbers were small, the sample was restricted to boys, possibly the control group was a poor comparison. But I would have got a similar result if I had done a larger group. But we really needed larger numbers to say that there was a control group. A lack of pre yoga breathing data is another limitation with the study. I would have liked to have had more equipment to analyse things, rather than doing it at face value.

The Benefits of Yoga for Enhancing Sports Performance

Dr. Latha Nityanandam

What fascinated me about these three (sports videos) was the focus. In spite of so many confusions, so many obstacles, you are able to do that (score a goal, hit a winning run, serve an ace to win a match). There are so many things that make a person good at sports. First they must have the drive. They have to be able to do that. The drive must be



there that we can surpass everyone. Second, personal discipline and a competitive spirit. Third, self confidence. You always want success, success, success. If somebody fails, they do not know how to deal with failures. Sport is the best way to train people to deal with success and failure. Sports also need commitment, time management, talent, determination, high tolerance for pain, and emotional maturity. If you look at these, it is what yoga is all about. If you look at the *Ashtanga Yoga*, this is training human beings for this. Whatever we do, we become better. What is there in yoga that helps performance? Before we go into what helps performance, what is that which obstructs a person from getting that drive, self confidence. These are the most important things. Illness, without being physically fit we won't be able to do that. Mental stagnation, if your mind is not working, if it is dull, if you have had no food, if you haven't slept, and your mind is dull, you can't do it. Doubts, you have to have the confidence that you can do it. Lack of foresight, without foresight it is very difficult. Fatigue, both physical and mental. Over indulgence, which is too much of eating, not being able to say no to our senses. Lack of per-

severance. These are the obstacles for anybody, particularly those dealing with sports. It is a big problem. It is important to work on these. They need training at the physical level, cognitive level, psychological level, emotional level, they need training. What does training at the physical level mean? Strength, you have to do what the others are not able to do. Should be at the cutting edge, need to have endurance, stamina, the moment you fall you have to get up, you have to deal with a lot of injury, spontaneously you have to recover, injury prevention, agility. These are all good for what *asanas* can do. At a cognitive level they need an extra strategy with respect to decision making, problem solving skills. Psychologically we need to have mental endurance, focus, motivation, confidence, alertness, calmness. You should be calm, but at the same time alert. Use stress, that is stress at the optimal level, which is going to help you. This should not become distress. There should be alertness and arousal. Next is emotion: sportsmanship is very important. Not letting failures deter you. Our life is a rollercoaster. I think of life as boxing, it is ok if you fall, but you must get up. You cannot stay there for more than 10 seconds. You fall and you get up. What is important is how quickly you are able to get up. You can't be without falling at all. Not letting failures deter you. Curbing mental chatter, what our mind is saying, you have to deal with that also. You need emotional maturity to understand that when something goes wrong, it is not the end of the world. Failure is something we must learn to overcome. When people talk about yoga, these are the three things they talk about, *asana*, *pranayama*, and *dhyana* (meditation). Why *asana*? It prepares our body. That is most important. It helps with equanimity, balance, agility, injury prevention, endurance and enhanced recovery. Why *pranayama*? Relaxation, flexibility, calmness, inner stability and alertness. Why *dhyana*? To reduce anxiety, reduce stress, calmness, improved cognition function, physio-

logical changes including the immune system, sleeping better, eating healthy. Other aspects of *Ashtanga Yoga* are *yama*, *niyama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *samadhi*. *Yama* includes non violence and our relations with others in thought, word and deed. Thoughts can be very strong affecting action. Positive thinking truth, integrity, loyalty, and self-esteem. Inner disciplines are important for a sports person. They need to have hygiene, contentment which is an attitude, where you are happy with the stage you are at. What happens is that a person wants to reach a particular stage and until they reach there they are miserable. They don't enjoy the moment until they reach there. Be happy and contented while you reach there. Progression is as important as the goal. Perception is important which is self reflection knowing what we did wrong and what we did well. *Pratyahara* is focus and sense control. Our senses are supposed to be our subordinates, but what happens is we are slaves to our senses. Controlling the senses is very, very important, the ability to shut out external distractions. *Samyama* is *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. Only if you can shut down can you go inside and be mindful. *Dharana*, choose what you want to do, reduce distractions, sustain interest, sustained driving. *Dhyana* is meditation. *Dharana* leads to *dhyana*, *dhyana* to *samadhi*. Mindfulness is a part of *dharana*. In *dharana* there is the person and the object. In *dhyana* there is communication between the person and the object. In *samadhi* there is no difference between the person and object. It is important to go slowly. Yoga is both the means as well as the goal. Goal is the ultimate union by removing the *kleshas*. The mind and the senses should be like the queen bee and the other bees. The mind is the queen bee and the other senses are the other bees. The senses should follow the mind, but what happens is that the mind follows the sense organs. For different sports, different *asanas*, different *pranayamas* have to be performed.

Yoga Therapy for the Treatment of

Schizophrenia

Dr. R. Nagaratna

Can yoga cure schizophrenia? We cannot cure schizophrenia without modern therapies. Yoga is useful as an add-on when anti psychotic medications have stabilized the delusions of schizophrenics and made them manageable without aggressive behaviour. It helps to reduce basic psychopathology, improve socio-functioning and reduce other symptoms. One of the major areas that we all would like to work on is prevention. By research it has been shown that if the mother is stressed during pregnancy, the child will become schizophrenic when it is 5 years old. When should yoga be started to prevent schizophrenia? In the womb. The mother has to become very positive, do yoga to prevent schizophrenia for the child. Although we know that schizophrenia is a genetic disorder, as genes have been identified, a genetic event is very small to start the disease, but it is lifestyle that takes the disease up there. What is the present day genetic understanding? Genes are themselves not software programmes. The software of genes can be changed by nurture, by lifestyle, environment. If the environment of the baby which is growing, the foetus that is growing, causes a chemical imbalance in the brain, you tend to become a schizophrenic. How much more change can be brought about, when you listen to a schizophrenic, when and how the problem started, it is a strong family tendency, it is a genetic tendency. If you listen to the events that trigger their imbalance, 99 per cent of the time it is because of a change of school, city, family disturbances, failure in sports performance. Why is schizophrenia such a difficult thing?

How does tradition understand mind and psychology? Let me take some time to communicate psychology in yoga. What is mind? In very simple language, mind is thinking. We are all thinking all the time. This thinking happens in sentences. We



keep doing internal dialogue in the form of sentences. What is a sentence made up of? Words. A word is a single thought. A conglomeration of thoughts is a definition of mind according to yoga. What is yoga according to Patanjali? It is the mastery over the conglomeration of thoughts. What is psychosis? A disturbed mind. A disturbed mind is *adi* according to Vashista. According to Ayurveda Science, *adi* is the seed of disease.

We all have 5 aspects of our existence. They are the physical body, the *annamaya kosha*; that which enables the physiology of the body to happen, the *pranamaya kosha* and the mind, the *manomaya kosha*. We all have two minds, the inner mind and the outer mind. The inner mind is the discriminating mind called the *vijnanamaya kosha* and the *anandamaya kosha*. What are the functions of the *manomaya kosha* or the lower mind? Perception and emotion. These are the two functions of the *manomaya kosha*. For example an object is perceived while window shopping. It is taken in through the eyes and projected in the mind through the brain. I perceive it as a beautiful rare object. After I interpret it in my mind as a rare object, I apply my emotions, I love it, I have to have it. These are the two functions of the lower mind. The inner mind is the *vijnanamaya kosha*. The *vijnanamaya* mind is the seat of wisdom. Yes, this is a beautiful object,

but I should not touch it because it is not good for me. The *buddhi* differentiates between right and wrong knowledge, analysis, memory, discrimination, and decides if the action is in tune with cosmic laws. I see a sweet in front of me. My lower mind says I love to have it. The right knowledge is sorry you cannot touch this because you have blood sugar. It is this layer which is God, I, *kartritva*, *bhoktritva*, *nischeyatmika buddhi* are functions of the inner mind. It is this layer that is disturbed in a person with schizophrenia. Even though it started in the *manomaya kosha*, because of stress it affects the person. *Anandamaya kosha* is the sheath of bliss, pure awareness. It is characterized by deep silence, no thoughts, the true nature of the self, absence of all miseries, bliss, knowledge, power and freedom. Total health no illness. Yoga is to reach that stage.

Stress begins in the *manomaya kosha*. It is all in the form of response to demanding situations. It is defined as uncontrolled speed and rewinding of sentences. How am I going to cope, how am I going to cope? This knocks off one's awareness. That is the whole of the understanding, the problem begins in the *manomaya kosha*. If these problems are there, and if I face these and I have a very strong will, we will not end up with schizophrenia or neurosis or depression. If I am in a difficult situation, I have to fight, I have to cope, my emotions come, my fears come. But I know how to push them down and face these with an enormous amount of energy. I push that *prana* down to the body and therefore it leads to psychosomatic problems, hypertension, heart disease, back pain, etc. The will power is so strong that it pushes the *prana* down to the body. Only a person with poor will power ends up with a psychiatric problem. But they are aware. If you have awareness you then end up with neurosis. If that awareness gets knocked out, *prana* is coming up, I am agitated and disturbed, I suppress it, but I am not capable of handling it, depression or anxiety or addictive

behaviour, the awareness gets knocked back and percolates back into my *vijnanamaya kosha*. Then I get knocked out and I lose my awareness. I am not aware of what I am doing. Mind is free to do what it wants because the I gets knocked out. The whole thing is situation response *vega, vega, vega* speed, speed, speed. Speed suppressed body level, speed expressed anxiety, speed locked up is depression, speed locked up and with absolutely no confidence to face the situation ends with addictive behaviour. The entire problem therefore, the sages very clearly tell us, is nothing but uncontrolled excessive speed and this makes the mind go haywire. And the biggest problem with schizophrenia is that we have locked up awareness. How to help these people? The first step in yoga is awareness. Recognize what is happening in my mind, recognize what is happening in the body, recognize what is happening in the stomach and bring about a correction there. But a correction is not possible in a person who is totally unaware. The question is how to bring in that awareness. Yoga cannot be taught to people with schizophrenia as an added therapeutic modality. If you recognize that you have a problem, then you can be ready to be helped with yoga. Otherwise we have to put them on psychiatric medication, which is very necessary for all these people. These help them to come out of their delusions and hallucinations and bring them to the manageable level. The symptoms of schizophrenia are to be controlled by medication.

Locked up speed is the problem. This is the greatest understanding from yoga we need to recognize, that it is all speed, violence at the mind level, which is all suppressed. We have to take them to a stage of *prashamana* (slowing down), resting the nervous system, giving deep rest to each and every cell in the body. How to help them? We have to bring back a beautiful way of understanding the four streams of yoga. The four streams of yoga are Raja yoga (self control), Karma yoga (self sacrifice), Jnana yoga (self analysis) and Bhakti

yoga (self surrender). The grandeur of these practices is that even when these are done without awareness, these change the nervous system. It brings about corrections in the pranic imbalances.

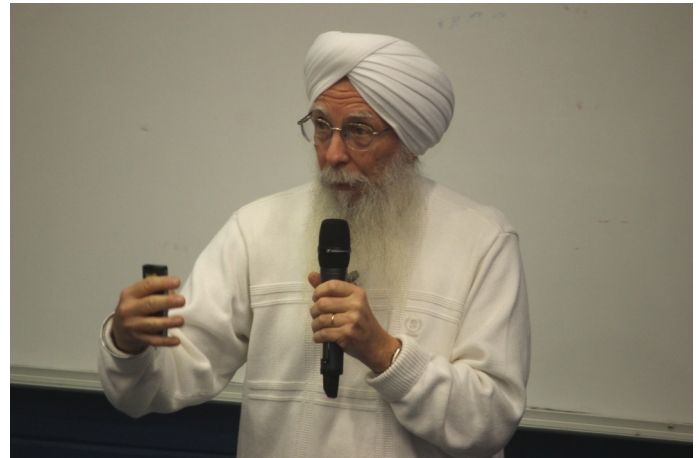
The steps that the mind goes through in yoga psychology are from going haywire, random or *chanchalata* to *ekagrata*, then *dharana* and to *dhyana*. What is *ekagrata*? It is concentration. The mind was going here and there. All our discoveries were because of concentration of mankind. *Ekagrata* is a fascinating power of the mind and the sages tell us a further step is *dharana*. *Dharana* is a single thought on a single topic: *desha-banda chittasya dharana*. The mind getting fixed completely on a single thought, in a single zone. *Dharana* is intense focusing. It is like a laser beam focusing on a single point to get mastery over the mind. To be able to switch on and switch off when not required, we must move from a single thought to slowing down of the thought. The process is to recognize the distractions of the mind, make them come into focus, intense focus.

An Overview of the International Scope of Yoga Therapy and a Review of the Research Evidence Base for Yoga as Intervention

Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa

Preventative Medicine

NCDs is 'the' disease in modern medicine. NCDs is the leading cause of death in the world. It is not just in low income countries, it is also in high income countries. China, US and India are 1, 2, 3 in diabetes prevalence. This is the major challenge in modern medicine. Lifestyle diseases are due to lifestyle risk factors. Lifestyle diseases are like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression, and the risk factors are things like poor diet, lack of control of stress, lack of physical activity, and lack of mind body awareness. There are three factors that yoga can address very well that underlie these risk factors of NCDs. One is the inability to cope with stress. We have a huge stress



burden in modern society. Second, awareness. I believe that most people in modern society have very low levels of mind body awareness. Yoga and meditation can address that, because that affects behaviour. Finally, as a society, we have a very limited world view. It is still very materialistic. Everyone wants money, they want three Mercedes in a three car garage, they want power, they want fame. These materialistic goals don't lead to life satisfaction. We have to be able to change that world view. Yoga and contemplative practices are something which can do that through their action on spirituality.

You can't argue against preventative medicine. The beauty is if you apply something early on in life, you change the trajectory of chronic disease. If you don't and you apply that intervention much later in life you don't get much change because a lot of the damage has already been done. Modern medicine has the choice, you can either spend \$1000 teaching an adolescent how to practise yoga or have him sitting in front of a TV for 40 years eating hamburgers and spend \$100,000 for a quadruple bypass. It is your choice. The person sitting on the couch is also having a lousy quality of life. We have evidence that yoga is good for prevention. There have been studies of long term yoga practitioners who have reported good health, never smoking or having quit, having high levels of physical activity, and they are mentally flourishing much more than the general population. This is also true in Australia. Women who regu-

larly use yoga and meditation are positively associated with physical and mental health. People who are practising yoga in Australia have a much higher practice of a number of physical activities than the general population. There is something about yoga practice that enhances physical activity of all kinds. That is reducing a risk factor for lifestyle disease.

We have done a study of long term yoga practitioners on the internet in the US and have found that body mass index is directly reduced, the more the number of years they have practised yoga. There is something about yoga practice that keeps weight down. The more you practice yoga, the more chances of you having a healthy weight. That correlation also applies to medication use. The more they practice yoga, the less they use pharmaceutical medications. And the disorders are lifestyle diseases like depression, diabetes and high blood pressure, where a highly significant correlation was found between reduction in the use of those and long term yoga practice. Not only do they report that their health is better, they attribute that improvement in health to yoga. A survey asked long term yoga practitioners whether they felt their health had improved because of yoga. Eighty nine per cent said that was very true. They believed that yoga was due to that improvement. Yoga improves their mind body awareness. The participants reported an increased self awareness as a result of their experience. The more they practised yoga, when they practised exercise after yoga, they said wow that feels great. I never felt that before. That is because they have increased their mind body awareness. They tend to gravitate away from negative behaviour because they are now beginning to feel how negative behaviour feels in their body. This mind body awareness improvement can change lifestyle behaviour. Pills can't do that.

Where is the best place to put preventative medicine? This is a captive audience. Children have to

go to school. If you put yoga into the schools you are going to get them all. That is what we have been doing. The majority of mental health problems in adults began in adolescence. You have to treat the adolescent. There is a high burden of adolescence disorder. That is largely driven by stress, by a number of factors. We should be putting yoga in the schools for prevention. Bringing back wandering attention is meditation. This was recognized by educators at the beginning of the 20th century.

Question and Answer Session

The Takeaway Points from the Presentations

Remi Quinter: I specialize in contextualizing yoga for westerners and also on contextualizing the scientific aspects of yoga. I talked about *asana* today. My main message was that *asana* was previously a very integral part of our natural existence. For human beings, *asanas* had been a part of their daily activities. Today we go to yoga classes expecting some kind of miracle.

Dr. Pauline Jenson: My area of research is with children with disruptive behaviour. One of the aspects for these children is generally they don't have much control in their lives or of their behaviour. Most of the treatments for them, whether it be therapy programmes, behaviour at management is all about that side of themselves, where they have no control. Yoga teaches them internal control for a lifetime. This is really the important part about this. They are actually managing their own behaviour, which is giving them empowerment. Even though I have only worked with extreme cases of behaviour, yoga is a valuable skill for all children. Yoga can be started at a very early age even when the baby is in the womb.

Yoga influences the physical systems within the body, such as heart rate, breath rate etc. For these children the breath is erratic, which is an indica-

tion of the nervous system not functioning very well. They are not actually aware of their condition.

Through *yoga nidra* we see that the breathing rate, which is very erratic, actually slows down. We can teach a little bit of awareness through this. A practice such as *yoga nidra* can slow down the breath. Through changing the breath, we can actually change the behaviour. This was a beautiful thing to see.

Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa: It is only in certain institutions that have integrated medicine centres. Typically you will find it in the larger, more reputable centres. The more stereotype medical centres are more conservative. So for example, Harvard Medical School has a whole page of publications on yoga. It varies across the country depending on where you are. But it is very small. It is growing. It is very difficult to find a cancer centre that does not offer some complementary medicine. Today patients demand that. They cannot succeed if they do not have integrated care.

Dr Nagaratna: We have been running yoga centres in mainstream hospitals and small hospitals for some time now. But with the new government coming in, we now have a beautiful centre of yoga and integrated medicine. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi – has become a big show piece for integrated centre. We already have ten projects written up and it is going to become a centre of excellence and is going to be a very big example for the entire country. As soon as this was announced, a chain of ten more institutions have come forward to ask us for our help in creating integrated care departments. The Apollo chain – which is the biggest chain in the country, has got an integrated medicine department. But as Dr Sat Bir said it is still a very small percentage. India is going to have a new All India Institute of Medical Science – 8 to 10 centres around the country and they have been told to have an infrastructure in

place for integrated medicine. While big activities are going on we are short of skilled trained professionals. We need PhDs who can be Professors. That is the biggest challenge now. Therefore the central universities have been asked to start post graduate courses in yoga and integrated therapy, for which the syllabus is being promoted. Once the central universities are asked to start post graduate degree programmes on yoga, then other private institutions will come forward and then it will all happen faster. The big challenge now is to have a large number of degree holders in yoga therapy to head these university centres.

Closing Address

Swami Sridharananda

Dear Friends,

As I mentioned in the inaugural plenary session, let me have the pleasure of addressing ourselves as the children of Immortal Bliss, and that experience is achievable, attainable, performable, doable. We have been feasting ourselves with infinite ideas and possibilities about what humans can do for themselves and for the society, with irrefutable statistics and personal experiences. Friends, I am not an academic. I am neither a scholar. But I have one authority with me; that is, I am practising the ideologies and disciplines that yoga schools of philosophy want us to practice, to attain the position of immortal bliss. And I have been trying to be at it for the last seventy years. That is all that I can share with you with an authority at my own command.

Yoga is a science. It is not a faith or a belief. Material scientists need a multi million dollar laboratory to prove that what they have fundamentally arrived at through infallible logic, to prove that it is true and to make it perceptible by any of the five sense organs, whereas yoga is a science where the laboratory is your own personality. You educate it, you train it, you manage it, you modulate it. And ultimately you will find that there is a poten-



tial capacity in yourself to manage yourself and correct where it needs to be corrected, and add up ideas where they need to be assimilated. Each human on this mother earth has an individuality, has an ego, has a concept of separateness: 'I am'; 'You are' and there is a Chinese wall between you and me. Your ideas are not acceptable to me. Therefore, I don't like them. And when your ideas are acceptable to me I fall for it. So what is happening? My ideas – when it collates with yours, we are the best of friends, and when the ideas fall apart, we are the worst enemies. Let us analyze what is happening here. I am a fixed entity with my own ideas. When others' ideas collates with me I am on cloud nine, and when the ideas clash, I fall out with a thud.

Yoga with its infinite possibilities, speaks to the whole humanity. In our language, in the *Upanishads* and the scriptures, it is said that it is a discipline that applies to one and all, irrespective of faith and belief. Why? It is a man making, character building idea, so that we can make ourselves a better specimen of a human being. This is the essential lesson of yoga to be practised within myself, making myself a field of observation and experimentation. The first experimentation is: you

live in this world, and react because you are habituated to react spontaneously. And how did that habit form? Through repetitive, wilful performance of the activity at the levels of physicality, emotionality, and rationality. That repetitive similar activity leaves an indelible mark in our psyche and we are the slaves of that force of habit. So we react, because up till now, no body ever told me that attitude can be corrected. We take it for granted that this is what it is. Whereas we accept it as what it is but we refuse to analyze that our life is swinging between two extremities and I am a slave of the force of my past habits known as *samskaras*. How did that habit form? Because of repetitiveness. So, I can correct my attitude and create a repetitive similar effort of thinking 'not to react'. What do you think of it? Is it doable? In the past I had done it unknowingly and now I do it knowingly. Why? Because I am motivated. Why? Because, I am tired of this unending farce. 'This dream does please no more. This ever running never reaching nor even a distant glimpse of shore'. This is what Swami Vivekananda explained the flow of our own life as it is today. So I have understood there is a better way of life and living—by correcting my attitude. So yoga teaches you how to correct that attitude with which you live in this world of objects. An attitudinal correction, a change in the perspective of our life, and a clarity in understanding of what we are in for. As the life flows this is what we are in for. We can create a new force of habit by repetitive efforts to erode the force of previous habit and be a slave to the new habit that identifies yourself not with your make-believe nature, but with your true original nature, child of immortal bliss. That is what *Kaivalya mukti* is all about, this is what yoga teaches you.

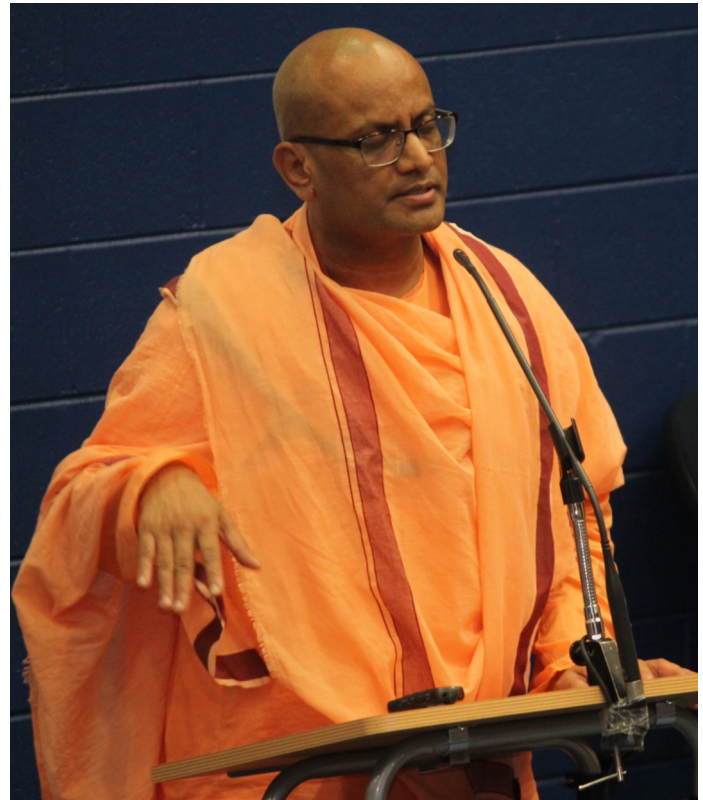
Vote of Thanks

Swami Sunishthananda

In biology there is a theory called – theory of recapitulation. Ontogeny repeats phylogeny. I am starting my vote of thanks with that. It is a wonderful theorem. If you want to study the theory of evolution, the best example is the study of embryology. You will find that when the child is in the mother's womb, in nine months it covers all the stages of evolution. It starts from a single cellular organism and in nine months ends up as a human being. And in the process it covers all the stages of human evolution. An interesting thing is that if we look at evolution in nature it took millions of years for a single cellular organism to transform into a human being. It took millions of years. And it happens in the mother's womb in just nine months. And you can take this conference as the second type.

Yoga started with Maharshi Patanjali . In our inaugural session we heard Swamiji offering his respects to Jesus Christ, to all the great spiritual leaders of the world leading to Swami Vivekananda. All this process of evolution, the spiritual research of all these evolved souls took thousands of years. We, as the successors, inherited everything in such a short time. We inherited this huge knowledge, all these findings in such a short time. And in this conference what a wide scope of knowledge we have discussed, and in such a short time we have exposed ourselves to a huge body of knowledge.

First of all I would like to thank all those spiritual masters from whom we inherited so much. Next in the current global scenario, the interest of any state does not lie just within the boundary of the nation. As part of promoting multiculturalism and globalization, we are finding the role of governments changing. The Indian Government is making a huge contribution to this festival of confluence of which this yoga conference is a part. And



all cultures have their positive traits. And in the current world scenario, because of the cultural osmosis, easily the positive traits of one culture can be infused for the betterment of the world. And this is the process of cultural osmosis. We convey our thanks and gratitude to the Indian Government, ICCR, the High Commission and the Consular General. And of course the government of Australia has patronized the conference. It's a joint venture. There is a great role played by the government of Australia in indirectly helping this conference to materialize. And directly we got help from the local bodies and councils and our special gratitude to them as well. The Western Sydney University really helped us a great deal. At the last moment the lift did not work. It was a challenge for us to have the conference on level 2 with the lift not working. And the day we arrived here we found all the security personnel and the way they cooperated with us was amazing. All our needs were met. We got an additional store-room on the ground floor as the lift was not working. And when the microphones did not work in our allocated rooms, we were provided alternate rooms. That way we could conduct the conference

in a very smooth way. Our thanks to Western Sydney University and specially, to the security personnel here who were so helpful and cooperative.

And now we come to the sponsors; Yoga King, India Tourism, and Beyond Blue. When we started marketing the conference the registration fees were high. Our budget was high. When the sponsors started coming in we could then reduce the registration fees. Our aim was to have a maximum number of people. And with the help of the sponsors, we could reduce the fees and a wide range of the Australian population could avail themselves of this opportunity. Our special thanks to the sponsors, who played a great role in making this conference open to all.

We have to thank the patrons, who helped this conference. There is a nice saying from Tulsidas, a great Indian saint. He told a story. In the ancient Indian villages, the milkmaid had to go from door to door to sell the milk. What they did was life giving for the village. But it was such difficult work for them. But they never had to be convinced to do their work. To have that kind of conviction is what makes conferences like this a success. It is only after attending that we realize what a great event it was. Initially we had to go knocking on a lot of doors. Many people have helped us through their social networks, Yoga Australia, Art of Living, Gandhi Creations, Zee Entertainment, Oz India, SBS radio, ABC radio. A lot of work at the micro level has been done by many of our sympathizers and supporters through Facebook, Whatsapp to promote this event, just like selling milk from door to door. Our special thanks to all of them from the bottom of our hearts.

And now we come to our delegates. In the *Upanishads*, it is said that what goes to the ear is free, life giving liquid water is free. We pay for cold drinks and contaminated water, but natural pure water is free. The most essential things are free. But people

do not always avail themselves of them. There are some privileged people who feel these are required. Those who came here and felt this was a need, create a process of inducing such need in the entire society. Delegates play a great role to spread the word. Those who were here for all the lectures from the first day, their feedback has been phenomenal. They were truly inspired. We request and encourage all such inspired people to carry the messages from this conference. We specially thank them for their patience and cooperation in making this a successful conference.

And finally we come to the volunteers. When things are going so smoothly, you don't know who is organizing them. That is the most successful conference. So many people were working tirelessly for so many months together to make this conference a success. When the ball started rolling, everything appeared so smooth. It is like when a maths teacher solves a problem on the board it looks so easy. And when the student is asked to do it, it is quite hard. It looked so easy when they are doing it so smoothly, but it was a herculean job. All the volunteers who made it all appear so smooth. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Special thanks to Mrs Geeta Kirpalani the Event's Manager of this conference and Rebekkah Sparrow Lord for the Photographs

Glimpses of the Conference





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PARRAMATTA

Reach out to attend yoga meet

Melissa Yeo

THERE'S more to yoga than stretchy pants and contortions.

A healthy body extends from a healthy mind and connections between eastern practice and modern medicine are on the rise.

"The physical aspect of practice is just the beginning," event organiser Geeta Kirpalani said.

"You sustain and give bursts of energy to your body physically, but having have inner calm and peace through meditation can help manage ageing, mental stress, addiction and anxieties."

A meeting of leading researchers, doctors and yoga professionals at Western Sydney University hopes to open up the practice for those in the west.

The physical aspect of practice is just the beginning.

Geeta Kirpalani

"There are so many yoga schools in the eastern suburbs, and the practice is so popular, but in Parramatta we only have a handful of schools," monk Swami Mahabodhananda said.

"People aren't aware of the benefits and so we want to bring yoga to western Sydney."

A bill of 16 distinguished speakers will discuss the practice over the long weekend, touching on everything from the ancient practice presented by monks to integrations with modern medicine.

No matter what your motives for practising the ritual, Ms Kirpalani insists there are a multitude of benefits.

The international conference is held across the long weekend, October 1-3 at Western Sydney University, Parramatta South Campus.

YOGA CONFERENCE

AN International yoga conference is being held in Parramatta over the October long weekend, presented by the Vedanta Centre of Sydney in collaboration with S-VASA University of Yoga Sciences, Bengaluru, India. The conference tackles the pursuit of happiness through yoga in managing stress and anxiety. It also addresses depression and drug and alcohol abuse. The three days of knowledge include vegetarian meals and the chance to talk to doctors and yoga practitioners from overseas and around Australia. For details, visit yogavedanta.org.au

HILLS SHIRE TIMES, Tuesday, September 27, 2016

The Hills Shire Times, 27 September 2016



The Parramatta Advertiser
28 September 2016

