So just to start on a quiet introspective mode, this is always good, let’s just sit quietly, a short while, not too long. And let’s just contemplate the beauty of life, the very fact that we are alive, a living body with living emotions, living thoughts, a living spirit that dwells in us – a spirit that is a reflection of the divine Spirit, our Atma, the Jivâtma, and the higher self, the paramâtma. We, as an embodiment of the divine, manifesting in this world, enabling us to grow, work out our karma, burn up the kleshas, so that we can regain, re-attain, re-unite, re-integrate, harmonise ourself with the Divinity. Focusing on the breath that is the link between the divine and us. Each time we breathe out we are giving up the individuality, each time we breathe in is an opportunity for the universality to come in and dwell in us, a constant, continuous, uninterrupted play between the individuality and universality going on with each breath we take. Focusing on the connection between the heart and the head, between the mind and our emotions, the thoughts and emotions, between the intellect and the heart-felt empathy, compassion; let there be harmony between heart and head. This harmony, a harmonious blend of head and heart, a mindful heart and a heartful mind, enables us to be the best of what we can be, a good human being, becoming day by day, moment by moment, more and more humane, until we regain that divinity that we have forgotten.

Om, om, om. Tat Ganeshaya vidmahe, vakra thundaya dhimahi. Thanno Dantihi, prachodayate om.

Om. Tan Maheshaya vidmahe, vaki shudaya dhimahi. Thanno Shiva, prachodayate om.

Om. Vinaganaya vidmahe, Vrinchapatni cha dhimahi. Thanno Saraswati, prachodayate om.

Om. Tat Paramaparyaya vidmahe, jnana lingeshwaraya dhimahi thanno Guru prachodayate om.

Om, sahana vavathu, saha nau bhunakthu, saha viryam karavavahai.

Tejasvi namadhitam asthu, ma vidvishavahai.

Om shanti, shanti, shanti-hi, om.

Gently rubbing your palms together, generating warmth, signifying improved circulation at the annamaya kosa and pranamayakosha level that then comes through as an improved pranic flow, coming through the pranmaya, manomaya and the higher koshas. Once you have generated adequate heat, warmth, place your palms over your eyes, cupping them gently, letting the pranic energy, the warm golden pranic energy flow from our hands. Remember our hands are hands of the divine – “ayamme hasta bhagavan” – letting the healing pranic energies, rejuvenating, invigorating, energies flow through the eyes into the optic nerves, criss-crossing from right to left and left to right, from the front to the back of your brain, letting the pranic energies percolate into each and every cell
of your brain, activating each and every one of those millions of connections, connections that enable us to understand ourselves, understand others, and live to the best of our ability. Gently start to blink into this semi-darkness and as you continue blinking, slowly bring your hands down to your laps and keep on blinking until you get used to the light once again.

This morning I’ve been given the topic – or rather I chose it – both ways – to discuss some specific issues about the musculoskeletal disorders that have become the bane of the modern world ever since they invented computers and mobile phones. Recently one of my friends on Facebook (yes, I am on Facebook, and it’s a beautiful medium to spread, share teachings – as long as you know what you are doing. Thanks to that so many of my students, my friends, my students are my life, okay? Sometimes my wife gets a bit mad at me for that but... students come first, my Yoga family comes first, okay? So many of them are already sharing the fact that I’m here with you and having a nice time.) You know, one of my friends, a young friend, sent me a nice message the other day. They said 80% of young people have back problems; the other 20% don’t have a computer. It’s a very beautiful thought to think about, because though I’m someone who spends a lot of time on my computer every day, communicating with people worldwide (I tell my students that any time of the day I am there if they need something. It’s very important for the younger generation that there’s someone who they can talk to, they can message, they can call. You prevent a lot of miseries by giving them an ear at that moment.) Despite that, what happens is with the growth and the phenomenal use, misuse and abuse of modern technology, we have started to put strain on our system that is way beyond what our system can bear. Well, the moment human beings stood up, we invited a host of problems. There is a huge list of medical disorders that exist because we human beings stood up, because our body, just like an animal body, was meant to crawl around on all fours, and when we stood up, we stood up a bit faster than all the other changes could happen. And so our vertebral column is not really able to withstand the stresses of just standing, just sitting. The amount of time we spend on two legs, sitting erect, standing, is so much of strain going down thanks to gravity – 9.8 metres per second square – that pressure of gravity coming down and you know we all have big heads, so pressing down with gravity!

You know when I went to buy a helmet, I couldn’t find one because my head is so big! (much laughter in audience) not just my brain, it may be my ego. My mother sent me a message yesterday by e-mail; in school and even in college she used to send me letters which said Divine Bug, and yesterday after a long time she sent me a message which said “Ananda Bug, this is just to keep you humble”. You know seriously, I can never stop counting the blessings I have in my parents, because she knows just what I need. But what happens is our head is so heavy, at least 2.5 kilos if not more, depending on the size of our thick skull, along with our thick skin, no - we have thin skin and thick skulls, yes, that’s the way it is, but you know the skull which is thick so it protects the brain, please understand God, divine, nature, universe, cosmos, call it what you will, he, she, it, has created the human being in such a way that all the vital organs are well protected. The brain is vital; the brain stem is the vitallest part to keep you alive. Your breathing, your heart, and so this area is the thickest part, the back is the thickest part of your skull because it is wanted to be protected. Now, this just means those organs that are not covered by hard bone maybe are not so vital, but that’s a different part. Now, your head, along with this entire spinal column, 33 vertebrae, each one and especially once you get down into the lumber area, they’re all huge. Up here in the neck they’re a bit thin which

"Yoga for musculoskeletal disorders". Extracts from Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani’s talks at IYTA, Sydney, Australia in Nov 2012 transcribed by Yogacharini Jnanasundari (Janita Stenhouse), France.
is one of the reasons that people, the neck goes out a bit easily because they are much more thin, so that you can turn your head and say hi there, and there goes a nice beautiful girl, and isn’t that wonderful and look at that scene and uh-oh, what happened to my socks and all these movements you make with your head, because of those vertebrae being thin and the joints being so malleable. In fact one of the former Vice-chancellors of the Pondicherry University recently remarked as a senior citizen and taking up Yoga and he said: “Yoga improves our turn-ability”. I think it’s a very beautiful phrase. You know we talk about flexibility; he talked about turnability – the ability to turn. Because what happens if your neck goes out, instead of your neck turning, you have to do this (turns whole body). So that was a very perceptive comment from a man who is very intelligent, who really got Pondicherry University on the map.

These bones that make up our vertebral column are supported by huge muscles running down your paraspinal region, there’s a spinal cord running down the centre, there are nerves coming out, 31 pairs of spinal nerves, 31 on your right, 31 on your left, there are all the intervertebral joints, there are the intervertebral discs (which I’m going to come back to a lot today) – all of this is quite a burden. And we keep on standing, standing, and standing – and on top of that – fashion! I don’t want to tell you what it does! Unnatural weight-bearing; our horrible seats – nowadays we have ergonomic seats but for most of the time it is very difficult to find too much of that. You travel around and you don’t really get too many of those things. Our body posture! In India the school kids carry the school bags on the back, they are virtually this (walks bent right over). Now you do that to them twelve years of their life – you think those backs are going to be healthy when they are twenty? Huh! That’s being too optimistic! Luckily the school my kids go to, they can keep their books in the school but still they want to carry a bag because other kids carry a bag and I say at least put it on my bike and I put it on the front and you don’t carry it, just take it in from the door of the school, but you’re not going to carry that. You know Patanjali said “heyaṃ dukham vanādatham” – prevent those miseries you can. The first one is to adopt healthy body posture. You know what is the second one? Drink water! We all drink water, yes? You know something? Your body is made up approximately 70% of water; you say “well we all look quite solid”. Last time down in Sydney I went to the aquarium, a huge thing there, beautiful. I love going under and looking at the sharks above me, the only time I would be so happy to be so close to a shark. Glass, and hope it doesn’t break! And they had an exhibit with a sea creature in it and they said it was something like 98% water, and you can see through it actually, 98% water! And I said wow! 98% water; and then it suddenly struck me we are 70%. Which means every cell in your body has 70% water; that is what the cytoplasm is for in your cell. And the cytoplasm, all the organs that are functioning in it, mitochondria, blah blah blah, every one of them in the factory needs proper hydration in order to function.

You know what happens if things dry out? In Egypt they call them mummies. I don’t know why they called them that, they should have found some other word for them! You know what they did? They just dried them out. You know what they do with pickles? They dry them out. I was talking about salt content in pickles and pappadums; because it is dried out, it’s concentrated. And you know what? WE are drying ourselves out; we are becoming Egyptian mummies by not drinking adequate water. And we say “well I’m walking around and I am fine”. Yeah, you’re fine. It’s like you know you are just walking along the edge of a cliff and all you need is a small push and whoosh, you’re down there! And no bungee or rope to support you! I like to call it subclinical dehydration. Clinically you’re
hydrated, you’re fine, you pinch your skin, it goes back. One of the simplest things is you just pinch your skin, well, it depends how old you are of course, (background laughter) you have to give and take a bit of time. Some people say “oh doctor, I’m dehydrated”. No, fine, you have to give and take a bit there, you pinch the skin, how fast the skin comes back. Is your oral cavity dry? Does your tongue feel dry? Are your eyes feeling dry? You know these are just a few things that you can look at but by the time that happens, you are already going downhill. Please understand that. By the time your blood pressure falls, you’re already going downhill. And you know what happens? I’m surprised in hospitals when we get people coming in, their blood pressure is very low, you have to start them on IV fluids to help them, and you’re like “what happened?”. “I had two episodes of vomiting and one episode of diarrhoea”. Now come on! You should be able to have twenty episodes of vomiting and ten episodes of diarrhoea before you need an IV drip. Now just think about what I’m saying – that is how hydrated you should be. But because we’re already on that borderline, we’re just waiting on the cliff to jump off, the moment you have two episodes of vomiting, what happens? You’re down.

Now imagine if this is the situation, let’s get to the joints of your body. The joints of your body need hydration just as a machine needs oil for lubrication. Every joint of your body – okay let’s leave out the fibrous and cartilaginous, there’s a big question about it, but all the synovial joints have synovial fluid in them. Now you start to dry up the synovial fluid, what happens? It is dry bone against dry bone. What happens in one day? Not much. Two days, nothing much. In ten years – degeneration, osteoarthritis. And then you say “well, it happens when you grow older”. It doesn’t have to happen as you grow older if you take care of your hydration. You know what? Patients come to me with a bad back, a bad neck; they went to different orthopaedic specialists, have had an MRI scan and another one to make sure. I look through their MRI report and it says the discs are dehydrated – this is the exact word! No exaggeration. Dehydrated discs. Now, you use your common sense, I use my common sense – what does dehydration mean? Lack of hydration, lack of water. Don’t you think at least one of these super specialists, super-duper specialists would have said “please drink more water”? None. Maybe we can do this surgery and maybe you can do that therapy. Not one has suggested drink water and the report says it! Come on, there’s logic gone out the window! In the name of science – science is logical – yet.... So please remember: the first step to preventing and correcting any musculoskeletal disorder, same thing with muscles, your muscles can dry out, they also have a lot of fluid, again every cell in your body is 70% fluid. It doesn’t matter whether it’s your bone or whether it’s a muscle or whether it’s a tendon, everything needs water, please remember that. That is what your body is about. Now, if you want to correct it, a minimum at a normal level – two to two and a half litres of water a day. Now, you use litre system down here? Okay, fine. (I am terrible at converting it to gallons and that’s just one of the nightmares I have, to convert these things.) Two to two and a half litres, that is what we need. You know what, in India, just like here, hot, hot, it’s hot right? It wasn’t hot last night! When I got up this morning I was brrrrr, the hot Australian weather! The warmth, the heat, the humidity, pulls the fluid out. Just imagine it. Now I thought it was just the warmth and the humidity, and then my friend in Italy said you know even when it’s cold, it pulls everything out. So it doesn’t matter where you are. Two to two and a half litres of water is quite safe. The only disclaimer-rider is if you have a kidney problem where you may have to limit it to one, maybe one and half litres, depending on the condition of your kidneys. Normally two to two and a half litres of water. What you are doing is you are rehydrating. In India I am lucky if...
people have three glasses of water a day, that’s 750 millilitres, 250 into three. When they have breakfast they have one glass, at lunch, they have one glass; at dinner they have one glass: three glasses. Now 750 millilitres of water per day, now you start to think about the deficit they are going to have as they go on – just imagine! Now it’s fine when you’re twenty, you don’t feel it. As you get to thirty, I tell the kids to get things done before you’re thirty because after thirty you know your energy allowance will start to go down. By the time you are forty, start to know where you are putting energy and what you are doing and start balancing yourself. But the kids say “oh it doesn’t matter, I can eat anything, I can do anything, I can jump up and down and it doesn’t matter” and it doesn’t matter at that time, and later on you are going to wonder why you did it. But of course it’s very difficult because we human beings are blessed with hindsight, not with foresight. Though our eyes are put in front, we see behind much better than we see ahead.

So please understand when you come to any musculoskeletal tradition, hydration is essential for the normal turnover to start happening. Even if there’s an inflammation in the body again requires turnover, you need to wash it out. If you don’t wash it out, it is going to stagnate. And please remember that an inflammation in your body is happening as a protective mechanism. So you say I have an inflammation in my body so I take something which is anti-inflammatory, block it off. But what has happened is you have not corrected it, you still have the headache. You’ve just taken something and so you don’t feel it but it’s still there. And that is why you have to get to the root, even headaches, even many headaches are just due to dehydration. Please understand that the reason why after a long flight, the moment I come I have a nice full bottle of water, get into a bath. My father used to say whenever you get into a new place, get into the closest water body available, because that way you acclimatize to that place. Because the water of that place, when it comes into your body or mixes with your body, you are going to immediately feel at home. It’s a very beautiful piece of advice wherever you are. Just get into the water, drink the water – of course, with safety precautions, and immediately what happens is you have harmonized with the fluids, your body fluids have harmonized with the fluids of that area. I could say the same thing about food. People say what is the best way to eat? Ideally the best is to eat that which is locally produced, for the simple reason that your body becomes in tune with what is around you. But what do we do? We eat apples produced in that end of the world and papaya from this end and we say “well, I’m eating healthily”. Well then you say “what can I eat? Do I become a breatharian?” So please understand, for any musculoskeletal condition, hydration is the first thing to be corrected because the intervertebral discs are sponges. You know a kitchen sponge? We all know what sponges are like, right? Now you put it in water, get it nice and wet – and try to tear it. It will be very very very difficult. Now the same sponge, leave it out today, get back home in the evening, take it and just squeeze, and you know what happens? You can break it because it is dehydrated. The same sponge. Hydration gives it strength, dehydration makes it weak. Now apply that to your intervertebral discs, apply that to your joints, apply that to your muscles. One of the reasons why people wind up getting cramps is usually dehydration. As simple as that. Now of course along with the water we are losing other things and that is why when you try to rehydrate with the rehydration salts, these are some other salts to help balance what you have lost along with the sweating. But I’m not just talking about sweating, I’m talking about the intake itself being deficient, and on top of that when you sweat you are adding to it. So please understand, any condition, be it the back, be it your joints, be it your neck, first and foremost is correcting the dehydration.
The second thing – avoid those miseries that can be prevented. Now what happens is I’m walking along and my watch falls down. What do I do? I just go (bends down) and just by taking that, I have hurt myself (not right now but in the future. It’s okay. Once in awhile you do it to help others understand and you pray to god you’ll be forgiven. You learn tricks, okay? It’s like the professor who was teaching medical students, and he said “you know, you need a certain quality of ability to get through the muck and gunk and stuff”, and he put a finger into the dead body and said “you should be able to do that and then give it a good lick”. And the students were all “aagh!” And he said: “The first one is that; the second is you should observe which finger I put in”. (Much laughter in audience)

I told you yesterday – intelligence and empathy. When something falls down like that and you want to take it, all you have to do is bend your knees slightly. The moment you bend your knees, you have changed the whole equation at the physics level and by doing this I have prevented a future back ache due to lifting a watch. Now of course you’d say from lifting a watch you don’t get a backache, but when you do it over and over – a pen in the office, something at home falls, children’s toys, there’s such a natural response for us just to bend straight down at the knees. Well you’ll say “what about all the forward-bending s from the standing where they say “keep the knees straight”. Well, that depends on how you’re working, where does the bend come from? And that’s why you bend from the lower back and you start to learn how to work with yourself and never say “oh, she can touch her toes and I cannot!” Go slow, grow into it. We have seen with the children at the City Centre, they come to us and you wonder what they are ever going to do. And five years later they are doing the most complicated s with ease, with a smile on their face. You grow into it. And we don’t push them into it, it’s just they grow into it. So it happens; it’s not like you go into the first class and “you have to touch your toes, if not, I’m going to break your nose”. We are not competing with anybody, please; if you have to compete with anybody, it’s what you were the previous moment, nothing else. It’s a step-by-step process. So please remember the simplest thing which nobody seems to be teaching people is if you have to lift something, bend your knees. Now, I see people at the airport and I’m like oh, my God, how many backaches and neck aches are being created the way they lift the luggage off the carousel, and you know they take it and I’m like oh my God! It’s not my job to go there and say “I am going to save you all from the backache”, no, that’s not my job, okay? I don’t even stand on the corner and say “Yoga, Yoga, Yoga” – I don’t do that. You ask me and I’ll say yes, you ask me about diet and I’ll talk about a few things but I’m not going to stand on the corner and.. no, no. But you know it’s just amazing, you have hundreds of adults – educated – and nobody has taught them about it. A simple thing! The moment you do this, bend your knees, you have prevented something. If somebody has a back pain, if somebody has a neck problem, if somebody has a joint problem, please bring this in so that you don’t worsen it! So they already have lumbago so why ... no, no, no, the first step is to prevent it from getting worse. You have a problem, try to stop it where it is; you have degeneration, try to stop it where it is, and this is what I tell my patients. I say there may not be gigantic improvement but at least you stop the disease process where it is now – that itself is a big achievement. And this requires self-awareness; this requires taking responsibility for your own health (which I’ve been harping on since yesterday). We need to be responsible. And the moment this comes, now it doesn’t happen overnight. I find myself at times doing this and I’m like, come on now, okay, bend your knees. The toothbrush falls down while you’re brushing and you’re like no. You know, when you’re a bit groggy in the morning and – no, okay? Bend the knees! Very essential! The same thing, coming back to another level, please remember, all of us have a tendency
to use one side of the body; this is right from childhood we get used to it and on top of that, we get into sports which have again a tendency for that, so what happens one side of the body is getting used all the time, and the other side is like “who cares about you?”. Now you know if you have two kids in the family and you just care about one all the time, the other one is not going to be too happy. Luckily I was born alone (background laughter) so I got all the care. Well I often tell my mother “maybe you should have had five kids and each would do one thing instead of having one kid do all!”

It’s nice in a different way, because one could have done the music and one the Yoga, and one the medicine, one could take care of the ashram – well, that’s why we ended up with two. And you know it’s just amazing. “He got it!” “She got it!” so his birthday becomes her birthday, her birthday becomes his birthday; we have to celebrate two birthdays. I think all of us know about that, right? Now imagine you are using one side of the body and you think the body doesn’t think? You think it doesn’t care? You think it doesn’t feel neglected? It does! So it starts to say “how can I get attention?” It’s all there! And that is where the Yoga, by virtue of balancing, you do the right side of a posture, you do the left. You don’t say “my right side Nataraja’s good, I’ll do that, but I won’t do the left because it’s not so good; I’m not so photogenic on the left side. Throw the photos out”! It’s doing it, it’s not how well you’re doing it, it’s the fact that you have cared about the other side of the body, the body says “okay fine, thank you”. And sometimes you know, people have used so much one side of the body, normally we teach do the right side and then the left side, and there’s logic behind it, but then there are times when you say start on the left, do the right and end on the left. There are times you do that. Because then what you are doing is you are compensating for what you have missed out. At the same time, please understand I am not saying right, left, left – I’m saying left, right, left so that again, you are doing the left one more time but you are ending up with a balance. The right-left is about activation-deactivation. Okay yesterday we were talking about this, activation-deactivation, so right-left is activation-deactivation and you end up with balance. You deactivate - you end up with imbalance – it’s not the same, it’s very different. It’s your right and left brain. When you do something on your right side of the body you are working with your left brain; when you do something with the left side of the body you are working with the right brain. So what are we doing? It’s not just right side muscles and left side muscles, it’s up here (taps head). You are working with your right and left brain, you are creating harmony between both the brains when you do it. When you do alternate nostril breathing. One more thing I will put out here, normally for virtually every condition that we human beings have, because it is psychosomatic, because it is stress-based, because it is usually adrenalin-pushed based, the left nostril breathing helps virtually every patient. Today I am going to give you some techniques so if you really don’t know what to do, these techniques, you could do with virtually everybody. These are your secret weapons, and please understand, Yoga is very great. The greatness of Yoga is that you’ll be doing the wrong technique for the wrong person, and still they will get benefit (laughter in the audience). It’s marvelous! My whole consciousness is blown when I think about Yoga because sometimes people come to me and say “I have this condition and I went to this teacher and I’m feeling so good”. And I say ‘what did you do?” and they’ve done everything they shouldn’t be doing! It’s wonderful; it is an inbuilt safety mechanism of Yoga, that is why though there are the controversies about does Yoga wreck your body and things like that, please understand, Yoga is based on consciousness, on awareness. If consciousness and awareness are there in Yoga practice, you cannot wreck yourself. And if consciousness and awareness are not there, is it Yoga anymore? Same thing I was talking about research yesterday; if
somebody doesn’t know they are doing Yoga – double-blind – is it really Yoga? Just a thought, I’m not
giving answers, I’m just seeding thoughts. Now, left-nostril breathing is an effective technique – it is
called Chandra nadi pranayama (many of these techniques I have included in those two books which
were put out by the National Institute of Yoga, one on well-being and the other on personality
development, because that was what the Yoga week was about, but many of the techniques were
techniques I am going to be talking about so you don’t have to worry about that.) Chandra Nadi –
most of my DVDs would have this pranayama as part of it. Chandra is the moon, the cooling,
relaxing, parasympathetic aspect. Please understand the left nostril is connected to your right brain;
your right brain is about art, music, creativity, abstract thinking, relaxation. It is the quality in life as
opposed to your left brain which is the quantity in life which means calculating, analytical, how can I
get the most out of the situation? How do I survive? - the left brain. Whereas the right brain is about
how can the quality of life be enhanced? I like to say you know in India we have two goddesses,
Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, and Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, creativity, music, art. I
like to say the left brain is Lakshmi, prosperity, and the right brain is Saraswati, creativity, wisdom,
music, and you know what? If you just had right brain dominant or you just had left brain dominant,
your life’s not going to be any good. You need a balance. Now I believe it was Doctor Jonn Mumford
(Swami Anandakapila) who, many years ago, said something like this, and I’ll try to say it correctly:
When you are entirely in your left brain, there’s nothing right about it. And when you are entirely
in your right brain, there’s nothing left. I’m sure you’ve heard this before, it’s a beautiful statement,
it just reiterates the fact that – balance. You end up with amazing painters, musicians, poets, who
don’t have food to eat, and you have these amazing guys who have boundless amounts of money
and power, and have no life. So you need a balance.

Please understand that virtually all disorders, diseases that we are working with are psychosomatic,
stress-based – I showed you that reaction yesterday, stress coming down to disease and how Yoga
works all those stars of Yoga, the way they all work. Now, when you start doing the left nostril
breathing, exclusive left nostril breathing, this chandra nadi pranayama, what you start to do is you
start to reduce your stress levels, both at the psychological and the physiological levels. We have
done a lot of work on the left nostril breathing; it brings down the heart rate, blood pressure – we
are working on blood sugar, in diabetics it’s not so easy. You know there was a study done many
years ago where they found left nostril reduces blood sugar, right nostril increases, but that was in
one subject, done many many times, and it was a normal subject. Now we have been trying this, we
have done about 35 diabetic subjects, right nostril, left nostril, and both nostrils, and it’s a bit
confusing, okay, I wish it were easier but it’s not like that. Research is never easy and anyone who
says it is easy, hasn’t done it! It’s very difficult, seriously, and it’s very confusing – in some of them it
goes down, some of them it goes up, and you’re like, what’s happening? Why should breathing
through both nostrils increase the blood sugar in diabetics? We are still trying to find out why –
because it is doing that. And right and left nostril, both are bringing it down. Now this is just a
preliminary finding, that single nostril breathing is bringing it down, both nostrils it’s just normal!
They are walking around, breathing through both nostrils, it’s increasing it. So we’re struggling with
the interpretation and I said let’s do another 15, get to 50 and let’s see what we have. Statistics, difference of numbers of course – the more you do, the clearer the picture becomes.

Left nostril reduces the blood sugar, blood pressure, the heart rate, improves the variability of your heart rate – the heart variability changes positively, there’s an enhancement of the parasympathetic, reduction of the sympathetic, which means that whatever stress is coming through and aggravating, causing or precipitating your condition, you start dealing with that. It’s not just that your blood pressure is high, you do left nostril breathing and your blood pressure comes down. That is just symptomatic management and I call that Yogopathy – it’s a term which I coined a few years ago and I love that term. This is what modern doctors and Yoga therapists are doing. “Oh, you have a headache? Maybe if you do right nostril it will help you, or left nostril it will help you” – this is just Yogopathy. You have high blood pressure and you lie down in Shavasana for five minutes, your blood pressure comes down – Yogopathy. What we are doing is instead of giving you an anti-hypertensive, I’m saying do left nostril breathing. Instead of giving you a pain-killer I’m saying lie down in shavasana. Now please understand it is just again symptomatic and so I call it Yogopathy – I’m not against it because it helps people but it is not Yoga Chikitsa in its entirety. Now when you do left nostril and you realize that why you are doing it is not just to bring down the heart rate and blood pressure but you are now working on the cause – the stress that is precipitating and coming down. You start to calm something right at the higher level, it’s not just what happens down here. And when you start to talk to the person, help them understand what is stressing them, why is it stressing them? – then you are starting to get into Yoga Chikitsa, Yoga therapy. But if you just say okay you have this problem? Go and do left nostril breathing 4 times a day, 9 rounds each time – it’s good but ....anyway. So just to give you a tool that is very useful, left nostril breathing calms the person down physiologically, psychologically. The question comes, what if the person is already depressed? Because logically you would say okay fine, right nostril breathing is required. Now we have to understand is the depression the first part, is it the cause, or is the depression the effect? Somebody is exhausted – is exhaustion the cause or is exhaustion the effect? Because if exhaustion is the effect, my trying to do right nostril breathing to activate that person is going to be flogging a dead horse. You get that? If the depression is the result of sympathetic burn-out and you start to give right nostril breathing saying that “oh, you’re depressed, so right nostril breathing is what the research studies said, right nostril activates you” – excellent! But if the depression is the result of a burn-out of the sympathetic and you go and give more sympathetic, you are not correcting the underlying problem, and that is why Yogopathy can fail at times. Oh, you have depression? Doctor Ananda’s book said do right nostril. Right nostril – if it is the cause. So again one has to be very careful. Why is the person exhausted? We were talking about post-traumatic stress disorder yesterday. In post-traumatic stress disorder, please understand that the person has been burnt out, and then on top of that you say okay let’s do right nostril breathing – and burn you out further. You get me? That’s why I said: intelligence! And that is why it is not a book. Despite all my books and all my DVDs, they are guides for people who know what they are doing. I tell my patients “Don’t try to practice it just from the book, just from the DVD, that is just a reference, something to help you in addition; and that is why one has to be very careful. You need person-to-person individual contact.

I get e-mails on the website: “Doctor Ananda, I have this problem, can you advise me what to do? I live in Spain.” Ah! Very difficult. They say “I have diabetes”. Okay, their expectation is (I’m sure many
of you have expected I’d just come here and given you 20 techniques for each disorder and get over with it, and then you have the 20 techniques you need – no, no, it’s not about technique, it’s what lies behind it! And I say any technique will work, once you understand what lies behind it. Now, it’s very difficult. This person has diabetes and is living in Spain and I have no idea what is their lifestyle, I have no idea what the person looks like, what they sound like – okay, you say, maybe you do Skype. Now that’s something I do not want to do, I have enough problems managing my time! I avoid chat and skype for that reason, I say okay, fine, e-mails, when I’m free I’m going to answer them. You have to be very careful because individual contact is essential if you want to understand the other person – what is it that is hurting them? What is it that is ailing them? What is it that niggles, that is manifesting in the anxiety, in the depression, in the bipolarity, in the backache, in the headache, in the diabetes? What is it that lies behind it? If you don’t meet the person, how are you going to know it? “Can’t you just tell me what s I can do?” I wish it was so simple! If I did that, I would be untrue to myself, and that’s the last thing I will do. You need to have individual patients come to the hospital; they meet us, each one of them, they meet us, we take forty-five minutes or an hour, we talk to them, try to find out what lies behind what is manifesting. Sometimes it takes you many many sessions; there have been times when six months down the line we found out what the problem was. So don’t expect it to be: Yogic counseling, consultation – first 15 minutes you find the thing, second 15 minutes you devise the schedule, the next 15 minutes you have them do it, the last 15 minutes you charge them for it. It’s not so easy! It may take six months, because you are dealing with human beings. They are multi-layered and the first thing there’s going to be all this defensive wall. “I’m perfectly normal, doctor! I just want to do some Yoga.” Okay, fine, do you have any problems? “No”. What is it you are looking for from Yoga? “Well I have diabetes, and I had a coronary by-pass six years ago…” It comes! Layer by layer it comes. And if I just say what’s your problem? “No problem”. Okay fine, you go to normal class, and I would have missed somebody. So please remember, in Yoga therapy giving time to people is important, listening is important, reaching out is important, more than any technique.

Coming back to left nostril breathing: it is a very useful technique and even in people who are depressed, people who are exhausted, it will work generally. This is because it is mainly due to the burn-out, it is due to the overdrive of the sympathetic which has done that, it is the stress mechanism. I usually tell them do it 27 rounds. Now the first day you won’t be able to do 27 so start with 9 the first week. The second week, add another 9, but by the 3rd or 4th week you should be up to 27. 27 rounds in the morning takes about 5 minutes, just breathing in 6, breathing out 6. You can later on add the ratios if you want. 27 rounds before lunch, 27 rounds before you go to sleep at night – T.I.D. - 3 times a day dose, you can make it even 4 if you want, Q.I.D. And you know what, by the end of the first week they start to feel better; they are going to start to find changes. We did a study with 13 hyper-tensives, all staff members of our hospital. Well, I must warn you – the first week showed that their blood pressure and heart rate went up. This was not just left nostril – it was many techniques put together. This was when the body was reacting - what is happening, what am I doing, why am I doing – so don’t get scared when that happens. It’s easy to say oh! maybe it doesn’t work. But the second week, third week, fourth week, and by fourth week they were getting off medication. Out of the 13, 11 were off medication by the 4th week. Now along with this there was also improvement in the sympathetic nerve function. We tested the hand grip and the blood pressure and heart rate response to hand grip – it’s a sympathetic test – that also improved. So it wasn’t just

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sympathetic goes down, parasympathetic goes up, but the whole autonomic nervous system was getting balanced so that if you had a stress, you could deal with it better, and when there wasn’t stress, you could relax better. A very beautiful study. I wish it had ended there. You know what happened? Human nature! This was in a project in 2000 to 2004. In 2004 our project funding finished, so I went back to working in the villages doing my allopathic consultation and getting those pictures from the little old ladies. Six months later I happened to come back to the hospital for something and I went to the canteen – that’s where you meet anybody in the hospital – and happened to meet a few of these guys out of the 13. “So how are you feeling?” “Yes doctor, we are fine.” “Are you continuing the Yoga?” “No doctor”. “What about your blood pressure?” “Well, you know it went up and I’m taking my medication.” “Why? What happened?” “It’s all your fault doctor.” My fault – yeah, okay, why not. “You stopped the classes.” You stopped doing it. I’ll never forget this experience because it was a published paper of ours in an indexed journal, quoted all over the world up to that point but then – it’s just the human laziness that I can take my medication once a day or twice a day, and if you give me a class during working hours in the hospital, I’ll do it. We have classes; not exactly working hours but sort of, so that people can do it otherwise they are not going to do it. So please understand that Yoga works, but then it requires so much on the part of the person, the participant - they have to participate. That is why pharmaceutical companies should never worry about Yoga being a threat to them, because people are always going to find it easier to pop a pill.

Anyway, coming back to where we were – left nostril breathing is one of those techniques definitely you can keep across the board, but this hypertensive who came, we were talking to him about left nostril and he said “fine.” We met him after a month or so, they were going to the classes – we have classes going on in our hospital right from 6.30 in the morning until 5.30 in the evening; we have only two Yoga teachers. I pity those two! 6.30 to 7.30 in the morning there’s one class for people who are “normal”; 10 to 11 for diabetic patients 6 days of the week; 11 to 12 there’s class for people who have cardio-vascular conditions; 12 to 1 some individual sessions for those who need individual and can’t be fitted into other sessions – I do personally believe that Yoga therapy should be one to one because there is no “one size fits all”. Left nostril is going to help people so you could have a diabetic, a hypertensive, an anxious person, maybe another heart failure patient and you could be doing left nostril – you can mix and match a bit, which I sometimes have to do at both the Institute and the hospital. So 12 to 1 we have a few of those, then a short break. 2.30 to 3.30 we have a class for pregnant ladies because we are doing a work on seeing whether Yoga can prevent eclampsia, pre-eclampsia, hypertension in pregnancy; from occurring a second time in those who have previously had it. Now normally if you’ve had hypertension in pregnancy the first time, when you go in the second time they give you aspirin, this is the usual protocol. Now what we are doing is giving aspirin plus the Yoga to one group, the other group is receiving the usual care of just aspirin. And we are trying a study, it’s very difficult to get subjects because many of them live out of Pondicherry – ours is a referral hospital so they come once a month, they cannot come three times or twice a week. Those who live locally believe that only allopathy can work and that nothing else will work and why should I come to Yoga when allopathy is going to take care of me? So it is very difficult getting the patients we want, but we are still getting a trickle – one this week, two next week, so we have a session 2.30 to 3.30. 3.30 to 4 we have a half-hour session for some of the nurses in the hospital who come and they have a wonderful party – it is their support group. Why 3.30 to 4? Their timing as their work finishes at 3 and it takes until 3.30 to hand over their charges to the next group, their husbands can come and

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collect them only at 4, so they had half an hour. So we said okay, fine – it started like that. And they enjoy themselves so much and there are about 12 or 13 of them from different departments, so Yoga is getting into different places through them (again – an insidious job we’re doing there! Like many of my students are becoming doctors and I’m planting insidiously into the medical community so we have a few of those). And then from 4.30 to 5.30 three days a week, Monday Wednesday Friday we have again a class for the normal subjects. And two teachers are sharing this load! I’ve asked for another two teachers and maybe we’ll get funding because now they want us to start with cancer patients and I said I need more people. I cannot send these two people on top of this to the regional cancer centre to teach.

Left nostril breathing – this hypertensive patient I gave it to him, he comes back a month later and he says “I’m fine, my blood pressure has gone down and I’m feeling so much better. Well, doctor, you told me to do left nostril but I found it wasn’t very nice for me and I wasn’t comfortable so I started doing right nostril breathing.” True story! He started doing right nostril breathing, his blood pressure has come down, he is feeling better – physically, emotionally, psychologically and everything, with right nostril breathing. So why I’m putting this put is do not get caught in a “left-nostril only”, please do not get caught, because I am learning every day and that is what I am sharing with you because you are going to get instances where maybe the people’s wiring systems are different, and it’s not about being right-handed or left-handed, because they are not wired too differently, so from the yogic concept we don’t get into that; this is just something different, and be open to it. If right is working for you and I see the effect, please continue it. Imagine if I said: “no, according to Yoga Vashishtha and the Patanjali Yoga Sutra you should breathe through the left nostril and not the right nostril (of course Patanjali doesn’t say it!) and the right nostril will be activating you and what you are doing is wrong, and according to all the teachings of the tradition you must breathe through the left nostril”. (Audience laughter) Please understand: be ready to take a step back and say “fine – it works for you – do it”. One thing that is essential when we work with people and that to take that step back and say “okay, fine, this may not be working but maybe that works and against all logic, against all I have learned, but if it works for you, please go ahead.” Because all that matters to me, I don’t care whether my patient does Yoga, tai chi, goes for ayurveda, siddha, homeopathy, allopathy, naturopathy – I don’t care. All that matters to me is my patient should get better. And if they can learn something better from somebody else, I’m even more happy. I don’t say “oh, I’m going to lose somebody” – no! it’s not about territory, it’s not about my technique, it’s not about my tradition; it’s about how can you become a better you. So please understand this is very essential; it doesn’t matter – the talk is about musculo-skeletal, but this is essential. Because it doesn’t matter whether the person has neck pain, a back pain, whether it is diabetes, hypertension... doesn’t matter. It is the approach that matters; it is where you reach them that matters, because please understand, if somebody is in a well, I don’t stand there saying “get out, get out, get out, climb out”. What do I have to do? Give them a rope, give them a ladder, and that should reach them. I cannot put the ladder in at my end and say “get out, get out” – I am sure you all understand that. And yet we do this! We say “this technique you should do” – you have not got there!

Coming back to where we are, anybody who has a neck pain and comes to me and I say “congratulations! Your back pain is going to come soon” and anyone who comes to me with a back pain I say “congratulations, you are going to have a neck pain soon”. People fight it that both ends

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are connected – they are too far apart. Please understand, the moment you have a back problem, you know what happens? To adjust to that, this starts to do something (wobbles head side to side). And when this (the neck) goes out, this starts to do something (wiggles hips). Where does it all start usually? The fact that all of us are born with one leg slightly longer than the other – it may be millimeters, it may be centimeters, a few of us it may be an inch, and automatically what happens is your pelvis is off to one side, right from day one. To compensate for that you start to adjust, that puts a strain on the back – it starts very early. But you don’t see it when you are 20 because it has not got to that level. This is where starting early, trying to help the person, because if you are adjusting and you keep on doing that, you are going to hurt yourself. So then what you do in the Yoga practice you start to balance. This is where the whole concept of balance so that the weight-bearing becomes balance. Why do you do the samasthiti āsana? Something as simple as samasthiti (tada āsana if you want to call it that) - you’re standing straight, weight equally balanced – why are you doing this? When you sit for Paschimottana āsana you have your legs stretched out, immediately you know whether one leg is a bit shorter or not – it’s right there in front of you. You start to work on it, you start to work on your back so what happens is that you start to harmonise, that which is weak is brought to normal, that which is overworked is brought down to normal – you are working on balance from Day One. It doesn’t matter if it is paschimottana āsana whether it is the hasta pada or pada hasta where you’re bending forward, often called uttānāsana, it doesn’t matter whether it is the natarajāsana, again why do you do it? Because the moment you do nataraja āsana, you are going to work one side of the body, then you are going to do the other, you are going to start to realize which side needs to be worked. You will realize it! And that is why it is not about you telling your patient what to realize – ask them! When you do this, what happens? – and they will often tell you. “This side is a bit tight but this is looser”. Where does it lie? Now if you do that you will be correcting most of these maladjustments, which if you leave uncorrected are just going to snowball. Here’s a list of these disorders: back pain, osteoarthritis, inflammatory arthritis, crystal arthritis, musculoskeletal injuries, metabolic bone disease – all this is common knowledge.

What I’m more interested in is you getting a feeling of how to reach the person you are trying to reach so that the ladder reaches them and you can help them climb out. You cannot climb out for them, I’m sorry but you cannot do it for them. You can give them the ladder, take it close to them, maybe put their hands and feet on the ladder – I wish you could have a hydraulic crane and put it down and lift them out but it’s very difficult. Well, there are different conditions, and more than any of this, two of the prevention strategies which are across all therapies, not just Yoga, are physical activity, ideal body weight – and it’s not just what the chart says but what you are able to do. You need a body that can do what you need to do, and we talk about BMI, we talk about height/ weight and so on, and seriously I tell you, we forget that each human being is different, each has different needs, different uses of the body, and it’s going to be very different. Well, there are different conditions, and more than any of this, two of the prevention strategies which are across all therapies, not just Yoga, are physical activity, ideal body weight – and it’s not just what the chart says but what you are able to do. You need a body that can do what you need to do, and we talk about BMI, we talk about height/ weight and so on, and seriously I tell you, we forget that each human being is different, each has different needs, different uses of the body, and it’s going to be very different. And places like India, where you have people who are down on the BMI so much, who need to do a lot of work and manage to do it, and you have the other extreme: people with higher BMI doing what they need to do; so as long as it is ideal for you. Usually the therapists will talk about charts, but what is ideal for you so you can do what you need. So a balanced diet, calcium, vitamin D – this is becoming quite an issue and I cannot understand why a country like India claims we have a lot of vitamin D deficiency, which I cannot understand with the amount of sunshine that we have! Your skin should be making vitamin D with the sun – is it a conspiracy? God knows! I really don’t understand this because our skin is capable of

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making it, we have the sun [and yet] they are linking vitamin D deficiency to diabetes in India. If your skin is to synthesize something, maybe – let me take a wild guess - let us go back to dehydration. If your skin cells are not hydrated they are not going to function as they should and one of the skin functions is producing vitamin D. Maybe subclinical dehydration. (Voice off: “We spend a lot of time indoors so maybe...”) Yes, and of course if you go out without sunglasses and a hat, you get sunburnt and sunstroke, so where’s the balance? The message of Yoga is moderation: have enough outdoors, enough indoors, enough up, enough down, and that’s what a balanced Yoga practice is about. It’s not doing just standing poses all the time or sitting poses all the time; it’s not just about activating all the time, it’s not just about relaxing for one hour – it’s about a balance.

Now let me start with the lower back. We’ve been talking about a few of these things – strains, structural problems, a few rare and serious conditions which then you have to deal with in a slightly different manner. In biology we say “every rule has an exception” and I say that rule also has an exception. You are going to have situations where people are going to have the weirdest situation and then intelligence has to come in, really get down to where the person is and understand them. But in common what we want to look at : medications which everybody takes, heat, ice, ultrasound, physical therapy and exercise, common sense, logic that is often not used. Common sense is not so common; someone wrote an obituary to common sense some time back which was quite good.

We’ve been talking about a bit of prevention: avoiding the heavy lifting – what happens is you want to show off to somebody and you say “I’ll lift that myself” (you see so much of that in organizers, they have to organize something and they have to move tables around and “I can do that” just so that others will know that you can do it). And then queek! Crack! Something went. So it’s always good to be a bit humble when lifting things and say “can I have some help?” - it’s safer! Humbler is usually safer. As I said, get in close to the load, holding it close, these are common things that are taught but just to reiterate it that holding it close to you, bending your knees, the spine upright when you sit and squat, tightening the stomach muscles because they all give a support, the thigh and abdominal muscles give a good support; turning rather than twisting, things like that and again, depending on where the load is, and add to that what I was talking about, the bending the knees. This is vital, it’s the first thing I tell every one of the patients when they come to me with neck or back problems; I demonstrate this and I bend my knees slightly which you didn’t notice the first time.

In acute stages, rest is vital. Yesterday I was talking about the acute stages of different conditions; rest is vital. The warm fomentation – people often forget the benefit of warmth (not just heart-to-heart warmth but warmth) because if you improve the circulation to that part, you are improving the prânic healing flow. It’s not just feeling better; you actually start to energise the area with prâna the moment there is good circulation. The warmth enables the circulation to come into that area. Your body basically can heal, regenerate, rejuvenate anything but you have to give it time. You know lizards re-grow their tails, and we could re-grow the liver theoretically if we gave it enough time. But you know we human beings are worse than monkeys. If a monkey has a wound it doesn’t let it heal because every two minutes it is scratching it, and our minds are like monkeys. The human mind is equated to a monkey – not just a monkey but a drunken monkey (background laughter), on top of that the monkey is bitten by a scorpion and add to that the monkey is standing on a hot tin roof. Just have that visual imagery – that is what the human mind is like. ‘Haven’t I healed yet? Haven’t I healed yet?’ and that is why many people come to me and they say “I have a fracture and the doctor

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put me in a cast and healed me”. And I say “sorry, I have to correct you. The doctor put you in a cast to prevent you from being stupid and stopping your healing. It just keeps everything in place so that you heal yourself. Otherwise in two days when the pain and swelling subside, you’ll think maybe now – and it’s gone.” This is what you have to do, sometimes you have to put people in good support.

Don’t tire yourself, adequate rest, not pushing yourself. Lying down – please lie down on your side and bend your knees a bit, removes the strain from your back as opposed to shavasana. You do shavasana in class but you do not sleep in shavasana. It’s good for relaxation but when you lie down better on your side; it also opens your air passages on your side, it enables you to breathe better so you may not snore, you may not have sleep apnoea. You end up more energised in the morning than if you have been waking up ten times in the night because of blockages. Thin, hard pillow to support the neck – you asked me what is the best thin hard pillow; as a medical student I found my medical textbooks to be the best ones. (Audience laughter) Whenever I had a kink in my neck I used to wrap a towel around my favourite medical anatomy textbook, which was quite good, and you know the benefit of using a textbook? Osmosis! Knowledge comes from higher concentration down to the lower concentration area and overnight you learn so much in addition to having a good night. That’s how I got the Gold Medal, okay? Sleeping with my textbooks! (I should write a story on that!)