Yoga helps us regain the ease we had lost through dis-ease (as implied by *sthira sukham asanam*—Yoga Darshan II:46). It also produces mental equanimity (*samatvam yoga uchyate*—Bhagavad Gita II: 48) where the opposites cease to affect (*tato dwandwa anabhigatha*—Yoga Darshan II:48). This enables us to move from a state of illness and disease to one of health and well being that ultimately allows us to move from a lower animal nature to a higher human nature and finally reach the highest Divine Nature that is our birthright.

Extensive research on Yoga being done all over the world has shown promise with regard to various disorders and diseases indicating scientifically the feasibility of them being amiable to the application of Yoga as a therapy. (However we must remember to try and deal with the root cause for if not, we are going to only be practicing Yogopathy and not Yoga Chikitsa!)

As Yoga Chikitsa starts to be introduced into mainstream health care, we must not fall into the dangerous trap of claiming that Yoga is a miracle that can cure everything under the sun for that “puts off” the modern medical community more than anything. They then develop a stiff resistance to Yoga instead of becoming more open to this life giving and health restoring science. As the use of Yoga Chikitsa in medical centers is still in its infancy we must be cautious about the after-effects we may produce by our conscious and unconscious thoughts, words and actions. Better to err on the side of caution than be true to the adage, “fools rush in where angels fear to tread”.

I am not downplaying the potentiality of Yoga for it DOES have a role in virtually each and every condition. We must however realize that though Yoga can improve the condition of nearly every patient, it doesn’t necessarily translate into words such as cure. Modern medicine doesn’t have a cure for most conditions and so when Yoga therapists use such words, it creates a negative image that does more harm than good.

Conditions that at present seem amiable to the application of Yoga Chikitsa include psychosomatic and stress disorders such as bronchial asthma, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, gastrointestinal ulcer diseases, atherosclerosis, seizure disorder and
headache. Yoga Chikitsa can also help improve the condition of those suffering from physical disorders such as heart disease, lung disease, and mental retardation.

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

Yoga may be even able to help control and prevent infective and communicable diseases by improving the individual immunity and resistance as well as the improved hygiene brought about through practice of Yama-Niyama. The use of the cleansing practices (Shat Kriyas) and a disciplined cultivation of good habits coupled with the avoidance of wrong habits also ultimately lead to a balanced state of immunocompetence.

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

I would like to reiterate the need of the modern age which is to have an integrated approach towards all forms of therapy. We must try to integrate concepts of Yoga in coordination and collaboration with other systems of medicine such as Allopathy, Ayurveda, Siddha and Naturopathy. Physiotherapy and Chiropractic practices may be also used with the Yoga Chikitsa as required. Don’t forget that advice on diet and adoption of a healthy lifestyle is very important irrespective of the mode of therapy employed for the patient.