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## Being in the 'NOW'

## 'Hazy' Awareness

## Towards Enlightenment



**Message from Master Mani:  
Awareness:  
the Essence of Liberation**



# Message from Master Mani

## Awareness: the Essence of Liberation

Awareness is the pivotal training in liberation. To attain the highest state of human consciousness one has to sharpen awareness to completeness.

Every single thought, shifts of emotions, changes to facial gestures, changing moods need to be made aware in the canvass of consciousness, through the sharpest state of awareness.

One must be able to pick up the changes even before they become thoughts. To do this would seem impossible, even to speculate, but when awareness is developed it functions in the subtle realms of consciousness too, whereby intuitive faculties are mastered beyond the primitive instincts.

In the realm of energy and intuition one can perceive thoughts even before they become structures, so through that state of awareness one transcends the limitations of trying to fight with thoughts when they are already formed.

The classic introspection, etc, are inferior techniques as they deal with thoughts after they are formed, but this is the process which is known in present day meditation, with stories of struggles over darkness and triumph over evil. Thousands of years of such techniques have prepared the meditator with the conditioning of struggles, pain and negativity.



*Master  
Manisekaran*

How many have succeeded? Due to that initial programming, many feel that the only way to succeed is by being a recluse, monk, nun or renunciate, while the rest just give up, feeling that this life is not good enough for the really good people — the monks. Hence the perennial inferiority complex of the householders and the superiority complex of the renunciates.

The training of awareness is the most important component of liberation, and not labels or titles. Search not for superior labels but look for superior technologies of awareness so that liberation can be attained the instant you start to meditate — no more struggles, no more illusions, no more distance between you and the bliss that awaits within.

Start the process today with the tutelage of a technologist and not rely on individuals with superiority establishing titles.

Have a very happy 2016 enjoying higher awareness.

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# Content

- 2 Message from Master Mani
- 5-6 Being in the 'NOW'
- 7-8 'Hazy' Awareness
- 9-10 Towards Enlightenment
- 11 Events: *MAYI Yoga Academy Graduation Ceremony 2015*
- 12 Events: *Camping Wonders*
- 13-14 Articles by Practitioners
  - *Service from the Heart*
- 15-16 - *Yoga's Universal Appeal*
- 17 Yoga Therapy: *For Relief of Back Ache - Part 2*
- 18-19 At Your Fingertips:  
*Bhringraj - The Ruler of Hair*
- 20 Yogic Wisdom For Daily Living



- 21 Eco's Echoes: *My ATTITUDE Towards Legacy of Earth - Part 1*
- 22 Inner Insights:
  - *5 Things I Have Learnt From Selfless Service*
  - *My Introduction to Ayurvedic Massage*
- 24-25 Ayur Yoga: *Ayurveda for Arthritis and Joint Ailments*
- 26-27 Super Yoga Kids Corner: *Mindful Parenting*
- 28 Featured Asana: *Janu Sirshasana (Head to Knee Pose)*
- 29 Chef Yogi's Food Notes!
- 30 Schedule of Courses: Jan - May 2016

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Master Mani

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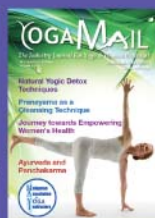
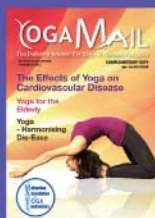
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# Being in the 'NOW'

*by Chandra Nanthakumar*

"Namaskar, ladies and gentlemen. Please sit down in a comfortable position. Place the back of the palms on the knees and keep the body upright. Gently close your eyes. Let's begin the class with a short practice of awareness. Be aware of the space occupied by the body on the mat. Be aware of the sounds in the room. Be aware of the temperature of the room. Be aware of the temperature of your body. Slowly shift the awareness to your breathing. As you inhale, feel the ribcage expanding; as you exhale, feel the ribcage contracting (repeat this three to four times). Slowly bring the awareness back to the whole body. Wriggle the toes and the fingers. Gently open your eyes and let's begin with the pawanmuktasana series....."

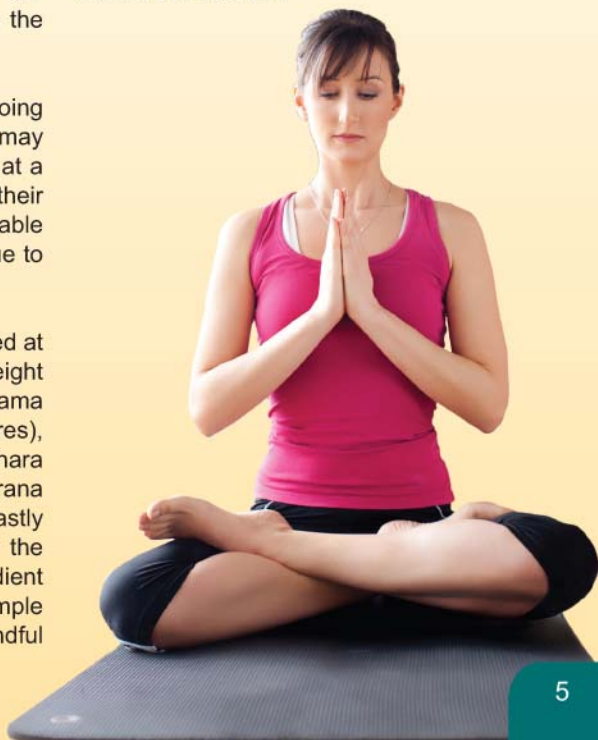
The preceding paragraph recites the practice of awareness, which is the first part of the lesson plan for a typical hatha yoga class classical style. It is the first level of awareness primarily focusing on the internal assessment of the physical body and it is all about centring the mind.

An ignorant person may perceive yoga as doing asanas to increase flexibility. To others, it may be seen as doing movements and holding at a certain position aimlessly while gritting their teeth and/or panting heavily as they are unable to bear the pain. This suffering is simply due to lack of awareness.

Patanjali's system of yoga, which is practised at MAYI Yoga Academy, consists of eight limbs. They are yama (universal ethics), niyama (individual ethics), asana (physical postures), pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation), and lastly Samadhi (bliss). If we were to scrutinise the eight limbs, we will find one common ingredient in all, that is, 'AWARENESS'. By simple definition, awareness is the act of being mindful in whatever we do.

The mind is like a devil's workshop. It is cluttered with lots of thoughts. However, by conducting ourselves with awareness in everyday life, we would be mindful of our thoughts and deeds. We would be more focused and centred in our daily chores. When we act without awareness, we appear aimless in life; we simply act on our strongest impulse. We merely allow the mind to take control of us. On the contrary, if we act with awareness, we are in control of the mind. The senses become crystal clear. Hence we are able to perceive things better, see the positive side in everything, think rationally and also hear intensively.

It is in the practice of yoga that we are thought how to place our awareness on every single movement or even stillness. It is with awareness that we move deeper into the asana to experience an intense stretch. It is with awareness that we regress when we find the stretch too intense.



We are constantly reminded to 'listen' to our body. If the mind is dissipated, we are reminded to redirect our thought waves to not only on the asanas but also to the pranayama. It is with this breath, body and mind coordination that we move to higher levels of awareness and achieve a state of tranquility. Hence, there is no need to take medication or go into isolation to calm the mind. Regular practice of yoga increases our awareness on how our body actually feels.

Occasionally, some of us may experience aches and pains, but with awareness and coordination of breath with the asana, we will be able to restore balance eventually.

Unlike common forms of exercise like running on a treadmill or jogging, yoga asanas help us get connected with the physical aspect of the self. When performing an asana, our awareness is connected to three stages that is, the journey into the asana, the stay (i.e. the duration during which the asana is held in position in sthiram (steadiness) and sukham (pleasure), and the journey out of the asana.

By being completely aware or by being present in the moment, we are able to not only kinesthetically, but also psychologically feel all imbalances, obstacles and fluctuations of the mind (Singh & Madhu, 1987). We are able to explore the change that takes place at a structural and muscular level at that very moment. This is when we make all the necessary modifications to the pose in order to experience a state of sukham and sthiram.

In conclusion, yoga not only refines the mind, but also helps one develop awareness. Yoga asanas done with full awareness provide a gentle massage to all the internal organs and leads the practitioner to a relaxed state of mind. Pain and discomfort in a particular part of the

body can be released by simply bringing our awareness to it. That is the power of yoga. relaxed state of mind. Pain and discomfort in a particular part of the body can be released by simply bringing our awareness to it. That is the power of yoga.

Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,  
Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
Your values become your destiny.

-Mahatma Gandhi

If you have not started practising yoga, start right now by watching your thoughts. If you are unable to witness your thoughts with a smile, please let us help you. All you need to do is enrol in one of the yoga classes at MAYI Yoga Academy. **YM**



#### References

Singh, V. & Madhu, A. (1987). A study of the effect of yogic practices on certain psychological parameters. *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 14(2), 80-83.

# ‘Hazy’ Awareness

*by Nemala*

Being a recurrent annual phenomenon across the Southeast Asian region, the recent haze has been the worst in the past decades. The entire region was showing a high Air Pollutant Index (API) denoting the unhealthy air quality. There was neither clear visibility of the sun nor the beautiful sight of the lovely blue sky.

Having to live in such environment can very quickly impose change on the physical, mental and emotional states of people. From simple adjustments such as the need to wear facial masks or being unable to jog in the park or waking up to a low visibility day filled with air smelling like ashes can create friction with their ideal plan for the day and reality. All of these can lead to some form of disappointment, frustration and stress.

Many may not realise that factors such as weather too have long been associated with influencing the emotion, or mood, and the general feeling of well-being in the human population. In fact, there have been scientific researches that have revealed several correlations between weather and human behaviour (1). A study conducted in the United States shows there is a significant increase in crime rate during a hot weather compared with any other month (2) while another study shows how the summer seems to increase the enthusiasm of the people experiencing it (3).

Such correlation seems to display the nature of humans that are both impulsive and easily stimulated. Many of us actually live our day-to-day life with almost complete dependency on the external environmental factors. For example: Having tendencies to feel much more laid back on a rainy season or agitated in a noisy environment or how one simple variation could create repel effects that land us into a day entirely filled with “bad” outcomes. It can range from “bad luck”, terrible weather, an antagonistic colleague, an imprudent neighbour, lack of sleep, too much of



work, irresponsible spouse, and the list can continue. Often times, very little attention is given to the notion of how one's own actions, feelings or thoughts can be a catalyst of change in order to yield a different outcome in the many unfavourable situations faced.

So here's the million dollar question; are we aware that in every situation we can make conscious choices to allow the outcomes to be if not in favour at least to not dampen our day? It is at this cross junction that one who exercises self-awareness will see a completely different aftermath compared with those who don't. Self-awareness is a term that has been widely discussed by many great beings such as Lao Tzu, Vivekananda and many more. To my understanding self-awareness in its simplest meaning is to be able to be conscious in how your self is being; to be able to pay attention to your character, thoughts, motives, desires, emotions and actions in different situations such as that one is able to give the most appropriate respond to any occasion rather than be impulsively reactive and lose control.

For example, many amongst us would have spent a fair amount of time expressing the dissatisfaction about the bad weather (haze) despite knowing that simply talking about it may not bring any tangible change or benefit. Perhaps for a brief moment such discussions could bring the relief by speaking out the dissatisfaction that is present at the moment, however, in the long term the entire process serves only as an interlude to pass the time.

So the question that came to mind as I watched the pale smoky sky was:

1. How many of us were indulging in such conversation or facing the haze with complete self-awareness?
2. How many of us were swept off by the general overwhelming sensation felt by the people around us?

If much of the moment was filled with self-awareness than the conversation would have been geared to solve any discomfort that arose due to haze, if there was any. It would have been a conversation where people shared ideas and actions to continue their day's better experiences despite the haze. While the best form of conversation filled with awareness would have been a discussion of needed matters at that moment besides haze may not even make the cover story of their matter. If you are wondering how the conversation would have been with the absence of self-awareness, well, the entire conversation would have probably been about the multilevel dissatisfaction that was caused by haze and the much displeasure faced in life.

Reading this you would be able to comprehend, how one same situation can end up creating two or many different experiences. This shows that the entire experience is no longer about others or the external factors, but us. If it was not us, than how is it that the very same influencing factors give out multiple different outputs? It should not, but since it does, it is us who are the

variable factors that can consciously take the appropriate measure to respond to a particular situation and alter the outcome.

The simplest example would be: imagine a handful of people eating at a roadside stall and suddenly it starts to drizzle. While a few may leave the stall, you may still stay in to quickly finish your food and others may take a shed nearby the stall hoping the drizzle would go away soon. Whatever the reason may be to drive your decision, there is no one best decision for all as the circumstances of them all vary. The variation depends on what is most necessary for each individual at that moment and the best decision can only be of which suits the varying conditions. You decided to stay because you were hungry plus you need to get back to office in time and you know that little drizzle will not affect you in any way. Hence, the sudden drizzle forced a quick self-evaluation to take place and you responded appropriately, favouring to the requirement present. The outcome would be that you made it back to office in time with a slightly damp shirt, which will dry off eventually. The quick self-evaluation could only be of favour to yourself if you were conscious of your thoughts, motives, desires and emotions, which in words is self-awareness.

It was only then I realised that a moment filled with self-awareness, even the haze can become a great friend, leaving you with a moment of wisdom. **YM**

*Reference:*

*Seasonal Variation in Homicide and Assault Across Large U.S. Cities Homicide Studies November 2015 19: 303-325, first published on June 3, 2014*

"Jump or not jump?" I was about 4 or 5 years old then. For a long time I was standing alone on the wooden balcony railing of our estate house, contemplating whether to jump or not to jump onto a low, thick glass-panelled table below.

Finally, I made a decision, and vigorously threw myself onto the glass table — shattering it to pieces — inviting a few cuts, bleeding and lots of commotion from family members. It was a conscious decision, but the adults thought I fell accidentally, while I conveniently agreed.

Even as a child, I have very vivid memories of battling things out in the head. There was an interplay of thoughts and consciousness but I didn't know the difference. The outcome was the many lessons learnt.

As the years grew, thoughts started breeding and multiplying. Books and TV fed into them voraciously. I became a thinker...to a point where life was largely made of thoughts, especially in secondary school days. Thoughts controlled me and I became their slave, and quite helpless at that — producing whatever suffering there was in life.

Nevertheless, backed by wisdom, I was also a smart thinker. I noticed that all the time I was thinking and living, I was also watching. It was a strange phenomenon that fascinated me — the fact that I was always watching everything, even the thoughts.

Due to this, I felt like there was a higher knowledge guiding me.

For example, after a year full of pain and being depressive in Form 4 (a year earlier my father had met with an accident and left me and family shattered... and there were red marks in my report card), I realised that every one of my classmates were becoming more and more outgoing and dynamic while I was going



downhill. There was a constant downward spiralling feeling.

Then wisdom spoke. In Form 5, early on in the year, I made a decision to hold on to every shred of faith within to turn things around. Based on that, the outcome was simply extraordinary. Tough mathematic formulas, that I previously struggled with, came within my ability to grasp... and at the end of school year, mine was one of the names announced as the "Grade 1" achievers.

That was Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge, wisdom) happening within, long before I knew anything about yoga.

Along with that, Bakti Yoga (the path of devotion) and Karma Yoga (the path of selfless service) were already an essential part of my life. They came through family members, neighbours and the community around me — temples, prayers, endless happiness in heartfelt rendering of the Bhajans, Sivapuranam, Thevaram (devotional songs that belonged to acute 'Bakti' movement in India hundreds of years ago) and having "gotong royongs" in the temples, etc.

Bakti Yoga is concerned with the cultivation of love and devotion towards God. It is expressed by many people in many ways, but the goal is one. When one surrenders his "ego" to the object of worship, then one attains emancipation.

(According to swami Satyananda, Bakti Yoga done without understanding the real purpose, intention and awareness, can lead to superstition and confusion. For example, a prayer can be reduced to mere ritual).

Karma Yoga has a power of its own because it happens in the purity of one's heart. As Master Mani says, it's not really what one does, but rather with what understanding and awareness one does it... and with what sincerity.

When Karma Yoga and Bakti Yoga are practiced, true to their meaning, only then the breakthrough in consciousness will happen, allowing Jnana Yoga to happen as well.

Complete knowledge of consciousness, expansion of consciousness, different segments of consciousness and the different states of consciousness comes with Raja Yoga — the art of studying the mind. Mind and consciousness are different sides of the same coin. At a certain level, they are one and the same.

To me, Raja Yoga came with Master Mani... and with him all clarity — about all the yogas, about existence, about people, about what is happening within me and who I am — everything.

All the paths of yoga lead to the same result, which according to Swami Satyananda, is to know one's true self, minus the "ego", which is created solely by the mind.

Raja Yoga gives the clarity to understand the difference, and sets in motion the expansion of consciousness. The more it expands, the clearer one becomes, the clearer one is, the better the quality of one's life becomes

— elevating one to a higher state of existence. Thoughts, plans, formal education and smartness have got nothing to do with bettering the quality of one's life. Consciousness has everything to do with it. One grows truly only when one grows in consciousness. When consciousness expands, thoughts too are affected and they work in concert with the inner light.

Quote from Master: Who asked you not to think? Must think and not think!

Having reached the ultimate state of realisation, which is complete awareness — thoughts are realised as a form of energy that can be directed in the desired way — to live our daily life effectively, to do Kriya Yoga or any other yogas and experience the state of doing everything with a sense of heightened awareness. That's what Master meant.

But in pure consciousness, when one is living in the moment, thoughts will cease to exist. Which means being totally conscious and aware of everything in a dynamic state of mind.

The journey doesn't stop here. The expansion of consciousness takes one deep into the realms of being in the moment, where the world as we know it does not exist as we think it does. Everything just is ... in completeness (Purna)!

Lastly, in order for the breakthrough in consciousness to happen, we must observe all the Yama, Niyama values. Coupled with asanas, cleansing, pranayama and sincere practice — with total awareness — the path to enlightenment becomes tangible.

The expressway to this is Kundalini Kriya Yoga, which is a tantric practice. Tantra meaning the exploration into the deeper domains of consciousness — the final goal being super consciousness, or enlightenment. This path is considered the most conducive and the most suitable now, because of all the "mental" dissipation and illusions that are unique to this age. **YM**

# EVENTS MAYI Yoga Academy Graduation Ceremony 2015

The Bangsar studio was filled with congratulatory wishes and cheers during the annual MAYI Yoga Academy (MYA) Graduation Ceremony in November last year with the theme 'Yoga from the Heart'. The aptly themed event kicked off with Master Mani's opening speech detailing the history of yoga and MYA's achievements, followed by a stunning yoga performance by some of the International Yoga Instructor Course Level 3 graduates.

MYA certificates were then presented to participants who had successfully completed the International Yoga Instructor Course, Pranayama (Breathing Techniques) Instructor/ Practitioner Course, Super Yoga Kids Instructor Course, Pregnancy Yoga Instructor Course, Yoga Therapist Certification Course, Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course, and certificates for the completion of Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course, Prana Vidya, Manipuraka, and Urdhva Retas. Amongst the graduates, we saw the proud faces of parents, spouses and children who were equally thrilled witnessing and celebrating this jubilant occasion with their loved ones.

Apart from the presentation of certificates, the highlight of last year's graduation ceremony was the presentation of the Malaysian Yoga Society's Corporate Social Responsibility Award and Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Level 1 Corporate Social Responsibility Awards were awarded to Chandra Nanthakumar and Premalatha Karisnajanunian for 3 years of Pro Bono Yoga Teaching to the Public, and the Lifetime

Achievement Award was presented to Pushparani a/p K.Suppiah for her tireless and selfless effort in providing her services to the less privileged segment of the community. She garnered a thunderous applause from all for her amazing contribution.

Graduates were also delighted by the promotions offered by MYA, and surprise bonuses came in the form of lucky draws throughout the ceremony. All graduates were given the opportunity to grab hold of the many goodies which were given away, ranging from yoga mats, mat bags, bracelets, MAYI AyurYoga's Ayurveda treatments, and a trip to Pulau Redang as the grand lucky draw prize! **YM**



# EVENTS

## Camping Wonders

by Vijaya

So, this is how the story goes. I learnt one thing crystal clear via both National Yoga Camps held at SJK (T) Vageesar, Kuala Selangor (December 6 to 9), and SMK Miharja, Cheras (December 15 to 19), - the Yama Niyama values supercede everything else.

"These values will help them be righteous in their decisions, strong and healthy in their views, have clarity in their lives and help them live in harmony with themselves and the others around them," said Puguneswary, one of Malaysian Yoga Society's (MYS) volunteers who stayed with the students for the entire duration of both camps.

The values were for each and every one of the 150 students who took part in the camps to learn, practise and uphold in their lives. If they understood that then the camps were very successful indeed.

This didn't, however, mean that all the other practices were less important. Together they were designed to effect complete transformation in the students. And we could witness the signs of that in the very third day into the camps. In fact, the effectiveness of this programme has been tested and proven since MYS' first project in 2012.

For all the 4 or 5 days there, the students' routine was very rigorous. It started 5am in the morning everyday and finished only 10.30 at night, with hardly any time in between to do anything less productive.

At the camps, the days were begun with Shatkarmas (cleansing methods). This was to clean the body and mind and prepare them for all other trainings. It was also part of "Sauca" one of the Niyama values. The Shatkarmas were then followed by power-packed asanas in the mornings, evenings and in between talks - which covered all Yama Niyama topics throughout the day - and also Pranayama (breathing) and Yoga Nidra (yogic relaxation) sessions.

This was to awaken their minds, break their tamasic (lethargic) nature and teach them skills to live a healthy and prosperous life.

Each day ended with Bhajans and Kirtans to relax their mind, and Trataka to help improve their memory and focus.

All these were highly effective yogic skills with colossal benefits... if the students were alert enough to understand and have will enough to adopt them as daily practices, that is.

"In this era of gadgets and predomination of unhealthy lifestyle, the Yoga Camp instills a new way of thinking and a new way of living - a natural, healthy and mindful way," said Nemala, one of our volunteers.

Like she said, the entire camp was not run in a mundane way, it was run in a calm yet dynamic way, giving room and space for the teenagers to show their creativity.

When time came for them to show their creativity (while doing presentations on the Yama Niyama values), the kids simply rocked. Such creative genius lived inside every child and the Yoga Camp helped tap it. The parents who saw the yoga performance and the drama performance on the last days of the camp would have watched a completely new son or daughter that day.



It's up to the parents now, whether they want to continue seeing their children blossom in this natural and dynamic way or fall back into their old lifestyle.

The older students who participated in the previous camps came back as senior trainees or volunteers. The senior students took up the basic MYS instructors course while the volunteers were prepared with the A to Z of handling future camps.

All these were happening and the same time and one could not imagine the kind of awakening that was taking place on the camping ground, especially when Master spoke, or when other presenters like Durai, Ravin, Puspha teacher and Anne were there in full force -- delivering their very best.

The jewels in the entire programme were the volunteers. As usual there was an overwhelming show of support on the first day and the last day. Those who were privileged to be there during the entire camp or those that made an effort to come in between and contributed by giving speeches or doing asanas or spending time with the kids, gained the most. They got to learn lots of things like did the students (smile).

Maybe we'd have more volunteers next time. **YM**



# Articles by Practitioners

## Service from the Heart

by Saravana Sealán

*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day;  
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.  
Motivate a man, and he does what he envisions by  
living up to his fullest potential.  
Show a man the potential that lies within him  
and he rises in being his authentic self and stays  
motivated.*

All these have been about sharing. So too has been the transmutation of karma yoga, viz union of mind, body and soul through seva (service), as I understand it.

*'In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says:  
'tasmad asaktah satatam karyam karma samacara  
asakto hyacaran karma param apnoti purushah'*

*'Therefore, without being attached to the results of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the supreme'.*

*It reminds me of what Master Mani propagates –  
"The highest form of yoga is karma yoga".*

Two of my dear friends, Durai and Nithya, shared their wonderful experience about Karma Yoga.

Here's what Durai wrote:

*Many years ago, my friends and I decided to conduct a mini charity event at a Tamil school. It was for fun and learning. We clicked away hundreds of pictures and interacted with the kids who came from deep inside the estates. But it turned out that some of them were so poor that they could only afford to have food when they came to school. So, when we bought them a meal from a popular fast food chain, most of the kids brightened up instantly.*

*I was sitting beside this cute, tiny child who was eating her share of the food very meticulously. When she was done, she ensured every tiny bit was carefully cleaned off the plate. I asked her jokingly if she had*

*ever seen the meal being advertised in television before. She looked up and said, yes, she had seen it on a neighbour's TV, but had never tasted it before.*

*My ignorance got shattered as a new realisation dawned within: the things that I take for granted are a dream come true for many. Something as simple as a the fast-food meal can be a luxury to others.*

*When another portion was placed on the little girl's plate, she glowed in happiness. That was the starting point of my journey in the path of Karma Yoga. The reaction from the little helpless girl gave me a spiritual ecstasy that's difficult to explain in words. It was a kick-start to my journey in Karma Yoga.*

*This happened on another occasion. It is quite common for people to say that we should be careful when helping others as many may take advantage of our kindness. One day, my wife and I were shopping in KL when we came across this elderly lady in her 80s. She looked frail and was begging with a cup in her hand. We walked pass her, but something stopped me. I took out RM10 and asked my wife to pass it to the elderly lady. My wife apprehended as it was a big amount for a beggar, nevertheless I insisted. When she placed the money in the cup, tears rolled down the elderly lady's eyes. She explained that she had been thrown out of the house and has not eaten since morning.*

*Why think about the money that has already been donated? Why do we need to be sceptical when it comes to serving others? Unless the situation is clear-cut that your intention or contribution would be abused, do not for a second look back on your actions to serve someone out there - you could be making a major difference in their lives. It shouldn't be your concern whether they abuse your contribution. How can we claim to be doing selfless service when we're concerned about our contribution? Serve with love, serve without expectation.*

-S.K. Durai

**Here's Nithya's version:**

*'Pure Life Society' is a place I have heard of and a place I always wanted to visit since I was in secondary school. The day came when Saravana Sealan "anne" initiated the MYS Yoga Camp in Pure Life Society at the end of May 2015. I felt I was ready to be committed as a Karma Yogi. I remember telling Master that I was progressing very slowly compared with others but the door was now open.*

*The children were so pure and I felt that they needed something more than yoga asanas; I realised it was love, care, motivation and most importantly some guidance in their academic endeavours. I wanted to do more for them, but there was a doubt: "Am I capable?", "Can I commit myself?"*

*Then, my inner voice said "Just give it a try and go with the flow".*

*With the support of Saravana Sealan and Teacher Puspa, I started my journey at the Pure Life Society with counselling sessions, yoga classes and also tuitions. I used to be sad after hearing issues faced by the children, but slowly I have learnt to 'WATCH' and 'BE AWARE' - as what Master always says.*

*I felt a peculiar joy in the vigorous selfless service. I have read that the act of Karma Yoga purifies the heart, mind and soul. By detaching ourselves from the fruits of our actions and offering them up to God, we learn to sublimate the ego. I believe I am going through the phase of purification.*

*I would like to thank Master Mani, Saravana Anna, Puspa Teacher, all Karma Yogis who have inspired me and the Pure Life Society for giving me the opportunity. I hope my journey as a Karma Yogi will continue. And eventually, I hope I will develop humility and pure love, and attain inner spiritual strength. Namaskar.*

*-Nithya Ramasamy*

As Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs prescribes, Karma Yoga too seems to fulfil the following needs:

- i) Physiological needs such as providing basic necessities like food to the lesser fortunate
- ii) Safety needs such as financial assistance, shelter, etc.,
- iii) Love and belonging needs such as accepting without discrimination,
- iv) Self esteem needs such as motivating a person.
- v) Self-actualisation needs such helping a person to realise one's fullest potential.
- vi) Self-transcendence, to surrender to some higher goal outside oneself, in altruism and spirituality.

As self-transcendence happens, through the process of Karma Yoga, the doership gradually erodes, leaving awareness alone.

Who is serving, who is being served, even that thin line, dissolves, as it seems...

As we surrender, it seems like life itself is Karma Yoga.

I asked Master Mani once, which of the chakras is greater - sahasrara or mooladhara?

His reply: "Take a flower Saravana, which petal could be more important than the other?... They are all equally important."

Today, as I'm writing this article, I'm coming to realise that "Every need, needs to be addressed. They are all required." What an opportunity to share our blessings with others!

Karma Yoga, and the awareness it offers... is simply AWESOME ! **YM**



# Articles by Practitioners

## Yoga's Universal Appeal

*by Vijaya*

This little detail never ceases to amaze me — that people of all nationality, all religions and all cultures are continuously drawn to yoga, and they eventually find their way to MAYI Yoga Academy — especially when they have an innate seeking for deeper knowledge in this wisdom.

Nahid Rahman called me a few times, over a few weeks, from Bangladesh before I caught up with him at the Bangsar LRT station. He was a part-time yoga teacher in his country and a part-time advertising agent, he said, talking to me as if he already knew me for years.

Yet another thing that amazes me... when complete strangers become instant friends. It happens in the yoga circle all the time. On that serene Saturday morning, Nahid joined Master Mani's Asana Yoga session and spent a long time talking to us.

He belonged to a yoga school in Bangladesh that also served as a home to underprivileged children. He had a very interesting yoga history to share. It was apparent, even in the way he spoke that he was a long-time practitioner. His facial expression, voice and calm demeanour were testament to his yogic knowledge.

It felt good to hear a practitioner talk of yoga with such passion and maturity. He shared his views sparingly and I decided to take notes, just for the records.

"Yoga is a very important part of my life," he claimed. "It has helped me prosper in manifold ways."

Fine. I would say that anytime. But as a Muslim, how was it different for him? I had to ask.

"The yoga practices I do help boost my health, make my mind calm and steady, and give me inner peace and strength. This helps me perform my prayers better."

Oh really? Was that his individual view? In this respect, at what level was yoga accepted by

others in his country or any other muslim country for that matter?

I was surprised by the answer.

Apparently, yoga is very popular in his homeland, especially amongst women and the younger generation.

Nahid continued to keenly explain why yoga was important. He personally feels that every person should do yoga to attain inner peace and clarity; and be healthy and steady in body, mind and emotions so that they can be better brothers, sisters, sons or daughters and be strong followers of what their religion teaches them.

He said the fact that he practised yoga helped him stay true to his religion, his beliefs and his community.

For example, the asanas, or postures, improve his sitting position in prayer and help to add strength and flexibility to his body, allowing him to do the prayer ritual better. Pranayama (breathing exercises) improves his stamina and allows him to pray with more intensity and also sit longer for prayers, and he doesn't feel out of breath when doing the recitals. Most importantly, his concentration is longer, deeper and more complete due to the peace of mind and tranquility achieved through the yoga postures.

After doing yoga, he could sit in Vajrasana (thunderbolt pose) with ease — without the slightest strain on his knees — and that helps greatly when he's doing his prayers.

What my friend Rasha, from Syria, said was also to the same effect: "I feel a deeper connection to what I'm doing because yoga has helped me understand the meaning of what I'm doing."

She meant that from a physical point of view because the movements in her prayer routine were similar to some of the yoga poses like Parvatasana (mountain pose), Ardha Uttanasana (forward bending) and Shashankasana (moon pose), she said.

For example: The mountain pose helps release stress, has a cooling effect on the body and relaxes the mind.

When the body is stronger, the mind is relaxed and the breathing is better, not only prayers, anything can be done with energy and enthusiasm.

This shows that yoga's appeal is universal and so are its benefits. It has this strange and wonderful ability to transcend all cultural, religious boundaries and reach out to all humans regardless of their beliefs.

On June 21st last year, we saw how despite all differences, and being separated by physical boundaries, people of all nations came out to the streets, the fields, to an open space — all over the world — to spread out their mats, lie down on it peacefully, get connected to their own bodies and self, stretch their bodies and views — and

talk about peace, being happy with oneself and others... about harmony, about growth and about prospering as a humanity.

I did a google search and learnt that more than 45 Islamic nations took part in the June 21st International Yoga Day celebration — from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, South Africa, etc. People sprang up from everywhere to show their support for yoga. They represented the peace, harmony and the deep-set values they practised in their lives.

Something that builds stamina, endurance, flexibility and staying power... that provides balance and upholds moderation cannot be a religion, it has to be a vital part of every person.

Nahid said yoga is very important to him. Yoga is life to many of us truthful practitioners. **YM**

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# Yoga Therapy: For the Relief of Back Ache - Part 2

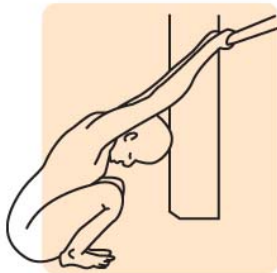
by Nalini Singam

People who have bad posture often have poorer physical and emotional health. Researchers define bad posture as "the head in a tilted forward position and the shoulders dropping forward in a rounded position". Bad posture has been linked to a host of medical problems, including headaches and other neurological problems, depression, constipation and heart disease. Furthermore, constant slouching is likely to cause chronic back pain.

## Sitting at a computer — how to avoid lower back pain

Decompress the base of your spine by getting up at least every two hours. When you are up you should drop down into a squat, which pulls the spinal segments apart longitudinally.

- Three-part bar stretch
- Squatting is the universal panacea. At first the knees will complain but unless you have knee problems, it is good for them too.



## Backstretches are the best antidote to sitting at a computer all day

- Supta Vajrasana

This puts you in the classic anti-sitting posture and it not only stretches all the shortened ligaments at the front of the hips and down the front of the spine (which keep you bowed over), but prises open the lower spinal segments from the front and drags much needed fluid back into the lumbar discs.

## Supported inversions right-angled wall stretch

- Right angled wall stretch is a lovely way to stretch the sciatic nerve and to open out arms trapped to the side of your chest.
- Supported Shoulderstand



## Garudasana — to avert the after effects of sitting at a computer

An effective way of loosening the ribs where they key in to the sides of the thoracic spine.



## PRANAYAMA (Breathing Techniques)

- Ujjayi - Removes nervous tensions, soothes muscular tension and general stiffness

## RELAXATION

Yoga Nidra to relax and soothe the back muscles. Option to bend knees or place pillow under knees in shavasana to reduce pressure on lower back

All yoga techniques can be modified to suit the individual based on the fitness level and ability. Do consult an experienced Yoga Therapist for guidance.

# A t Your Fingertips:

## Bhringraj – The Ruler of Hair

by NSR Centre

Bhringraj is a well-known Ayurvedic herb found throughout India and Asia. In Ayurveda, bhringraj is considered as a 'rasayana' – a substance that acts as a rejuvenative and slows down the ageing process. Bhringraj is also traditionally well-known as "Ruler of the hair". It helps to make hair strong and is able to rectify hair loss and premature greying of hair.

It is also considered as a nervine tonic as its alterative and pacifying nature pacifies the mind; hence it can be used in disturbed, angry or irritated emotions from high Pitta (Fire). It reduces Vata (Air) indirectly by calming the flames of Pitta (Fire).

### Quick info on Bhringraj

- A tonic for the hair.
- Also called King of Hairs because it is the main herb used in hair formulas.
- Supports skin and promotes lustrous complexion.
- Urinary system is supported through this herb.
- Helps to maintain healthy respiratory function.
- For circulatory system it possesses myocardial depressant.
- Maintains and rejuvenates hair, teeth, bones, memory, sight and hearing.

### Benefits of Bhringraj

- Considered as a rasayana (rejuvenator). It helps to rejuvenate the body.
- Natural conditioner and a cooling agent for hair. Since long ago, Indians have used bhringraj herbal powder for healthy hair growth, natural hair colour and for improving the overall health of hair.
- Helps in healthy function of liver. As liver is the controller of the metabolism of the body, it improves the metabolism of liver and provides strength to the body by rejuvenating



each and every part of the body.

- It helps in the digestion of "Ama" (undigested food).
- Helps in purification of blood. It helps to promote lustrous complexion. It can be taken orally or applied on the skin directly in the form of a paste.
- Helps to cleanse and rejuvenate both the kidneys.
- Helps to maintain normal level of cholesterol as in a normal healthy person.
- Powder of bhringraj is also effective in eye sight.
- Helps to maintain normal body temperature.
- It is believed that with the use of bhringraj powder the appearance and the health of the skin improves, making it appear younger and healthier.

### Promotes Healthy Hair

According to Ayurveda, hair loss and other problems with hair are a result of an excess of the pitta component; because bhringraj oil helps to pacify this, it works to promote hair growth. Regular massage using this oil increases the circulation of blood to the scalp. In turn, this activates the hair follicles, resulting in increased hair growth. The NSR Centre's Bhringraj oil formulations may also contain herbs such as shikakai and amla along with a blend of pure oil of gingelly and coconut – all these ingredients work together to make hair healthier and more lustrous.



### **Keeps Dandruff and Greying Away**

Regular massage with bhringraj oil is useful in preventing infections of the scalp so it helps to keep dandruff away. Using it on a regular basis prevents the greying of hair and helps it retain its original colour.

### **Reduces Stress**

Ayurveda says that imbalance in pitta leads to stress in the body and mind; the regular use of bhringraj helps to pacify the vitiated pitta and thus, helps to relieve stress. This has a highly beneficial effect especially in people who suffer from stress-induced hair loss. On a related note, massage with bhringraj oil also helps to provide relief from tension and headaches.

### **How to Use Bhringraj Oil?**

Massage the oil gently onto the scalp and leave it on for a few hours. Then wash it off with a mild shampoo or even better, a mixture of shikakai and soapnut powder. For convenience, NSR Centre have prepared a product call Anasha Natural Hair Cleanser made from the same ingredient.

Bhringraj oil is a natural product and therefore, has no harmful effects. However, because of its cooling action, it is not advisable to leave the oil on the scalp overnight. Also, it is not recommended for use in winter, especially by people with a tendency to catch a cold.

### **The Difference after Bhringraj Oil**

After a few weeks of using bhringraj oil, you are bound to notice a gradual change in the quality of your hair. However, despite using this oil, if you notice your hair falling out at an alarmingly

high rate, it could be an indication of some underlying medical condition such as a thyroid problem. In such a situation, it is best to consult a dermatologist and take measures they recommend to deal with your hair fall problem.

### **Other traditional Usage of Bhringraj Powder**

- For healthy function of liver: Mix bhringraj powder with black pepper. Take one teaspoon twice a day with water.
- As a tonic: Take one teaspoon of bhringraj powder daily. Take three gm of powder daily with water for several days. It acts as rasayana and provides rejuvenating effects.
- For healthy skin: Mix bhringraj powder with water to form a paste and apply it on skin. It helps various skin problems.
- For burning sensation during urine pass out: Mix bhringraj powder and salt. Take it with water. It gives relief in burning sensation in urine.
- Headache: Mix bhringraj powder in small amount of carrier oil and apply on the forehead. It helps in relieving the headache.

Contact us at 03-77241072 to schedule a complimentary consultation session on how this herb can benefit your body type and your condition. At the NSR Centre, we do our part to empower you to live your life in health and harmony with nature.

**Disclaimer:** This information is meant to supplement, not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease and not replace advice from your doctor or healthcare provider. This information may not fit your specific health circumstances. You should always speak with your health care professional before you start, stop, or change any prescribed part of your health care plan or treatment. **YM**

NSR Kumari is produced with whole aloe leaf, dried and in powdered form. For more information on NSR Kumari or other herbs and oils please contact us at **03-7724 1072** or email us at [nsrcentre@gmail.com](mailto:nsrcentre@gmail.com). Website: [www.nsrcentre.com](http://www.nsrcentre.com)

# Yogic Wisdom For Daily Living

## *1.13 tatra sthitau yatnah abhyasah*

*by Jamie Spatafore*

**Practice is the steadfast effort to still these fluctuations.**

The fluctuations we want to be rid of are the fluctuations of the mind. It has always interested me that Sri Patanjali has created the Yoga Sutras from back to front. The second sutra is actually the end result. That is the goal. That is the seed. The sutras then branch out and grow from there just like a tree.

You can see the sutras are almost like a conversation between a teacher and a student. It is no different than when a child asks a question and we give it the answer. The child is likely to be unsatisfied with that answer so it asks for clarification. We oblige and clarify perhaps several times in several different ways. We then look up and realise we are so far from the original answer that confusion may arise.

Practice is not clarified in this verse. Later Patanjali does allude to practices such as pranayama, concentration, etc. We may take it that the practice alluded to in this verse is ANY practice that assists in the stilling of fluctuations of the mind. One of those practices you can do anywhere any time. You do not need a yoga mat or the ability to stretch and bend. That practice is awareness. Awareness is the rare ability to be present in the here and now. If you are reading this then you have been exposed to some awareness practices in class. This goes beyond the classroom. This is all the time.

What typically happens is that we go to class and practise some awareness and we come out feeling good. Then we are confronted by life, we must think about crossing the street, we must return our friends' text messages, etc. Slowly but surely, the awareness starts to fade. It is very strange. It is hard to do two things at the same time. How can we answer the phone,

listen intently and still be aware? The sages will say that this is due to the senses roaming in search of objects to partake. Those objects then have an effect (either good, bad or neutral) on our minds. The effect then causes a ripple or reaction and soon we are on a hamster wheel running in circles.

How do we avoid that? First we need to relax. This problem has been around since mankind was created. I used to feel that I always had to be successful at everything I did. When these concepts were first introduced to me I said okay, I will sit here and conquer the sense organs. That was a big mistake. I spent many years thinking I was conquering the mind but all I was really doing was suppressing. When I let off the brake only a bit, all of those fluctuations that had been suppressed came flooding back with double the force. It was shocking. So let us now feel that we can solve this issue in one day. After all, we have been digging this grave for many lifetimes. It is good enough right now to stop digging. Later, we will figure out how to get out of the hole.

What may be helpful is to practise little by little every day. When I speak of practicing awareness I am not advocating sitting in a dark, quiet space. That makes it easy. I am speaking of practising awareness in the middle of the pasar malam. I am speaking of practising awareness while your boss is yelling at you. Pick one situation every day. Perhaps it is when you have a company meeting or presentation. Or perhaps it is during the family meal. Pick a situation and just be there. Do not think, do not suppress. Just be there. Peace. **YM**



# Eco's Echoes:

## My ATTITUDE Towards Legacy Of Earth – Part 1

by Ravin.S

Long ago, life on earth was very different from today. There was much space on the land and few people occupied it. We were mesmerised by the beauty of the world, and we were thankful for the blessings in our lives.

Then something began to happen, and our lives changed. The memory of that gift began to fade. Separation started to happen between our feelings and the world. We began to build machines, as an extension of ourselves.

Then we travel, deeper into the quantum world. We reach the interstellar spaces, and we probe. And now, a mystery unfolds as our own science seeks the memory of ourselves. Moving into the farthest reaches of space, plunging deep into the reality, we find there is an INTELLIGENT FIELD that cannot be measured. That field defies engineering. The ancients called it "Intelligent", which binds all this creation as SPIRIT. All the data, measurement and information are pointing back to You and I. It is asking us to remember the originality of us, and directing us back to the very nature of our being.

This brings us to a situation. While I was waiting for a train, I saw a man smoking in that station. This event took place despite there being a "No Smoking" signboard. There are 600 ingredients of cigarettes. Out of these, over 4,000 chemical compounds are created by burning a cigarette. 69 of those chemicals are known to cause cancer. The school children, women, elders and everyone there were forced to tolerate the smoke. It doesn't end there. The cigarette bud was carelessly thrown on the floor even though there was a dustbin nearby. Is this scenario happening only in that particular train station?

Let's see some other similar scenarios. While driving, I saw a driver throwing an empty Pepsi can through his car window. For him, it was small matter. Some people like to spit everywhere. Spitting upon another person, is a universal sign of anger, hatred, or disrespect. Then, how it is possible for a person to act so mean towards the earth, which has given us a place for our lives to take place? It is all about attitude.

Are we really feeling 'the earth' and its heart beat?  
The world is a magical place.

We see condensed water vapour falling down as rain. At the right distance from the sun, the earth's perfect balance enables it to conserve water in liquid form. The water cuts channels. They are like veins in the body, the branches of a tree, the vessels of the sap

that the water gives to the earth.  
The rivers tear minerals from rocks, adding them to the oceans.

We see plant life feeding off the sun's energy, enabling it to break apart the water molecules and taking the oxygen. And oxygen fills the air. The earth's water cycle is a process of constant renewal. Waterfalls, water vapour, clouds, rain, springs, rivers, seas, oceans, glaciers and so on. The cycle is never broken.

Though we know that life on earth works on linkage, yet the same attitude, which we discussed earlier causes the connection to cut down, in larger scale.

We see trees breathe groundwater into the atmosphere as light mist. They form a canopy that alleviates the impact of heavy rains. The forests provide the humidity that is necessary for life. They store carbon, containing more than all the Earth's atmosphere. They are the cornerstone of the climatic balance on which we all depend. The primary forests provide a habitat for three quarters of the planet's biodiversity, that is to say, of all life on earth. These forests provide the remedies that cure us. The substances secreted by these plants can be recognised by our bodies. Our cells talk the same language. Though we know all this, yet, in 40 years we have succeeded in destroying the world's largest rainforest, the Amazon is reduced by 20%. The forest gives way to cattle ranches or soyabean farms. 95% of these soyapppbeans are used to feed livestock and poultry in Europe and Asia. And so, a forest is turned into meat, allowing us to have fast food burgers. What a bad deal is that?

It took more than 4 billion years for it to make trees. The sad part is, one forest does not replace another forest. Again, it is the same measure of attitude we discussed earlier causing the disruptions in global scale. Where is our appreciation towards the blessing bestowed to us?

To be continued... YM

# Inner Insights:

## 5 Things I Have Learnt From Selfless Service *by Sivabalan*

In one of my classes with Master Mani, I was deeply moved by his explanation on Karma Yoga. It was a catalyst for me to get directly involved in Malaysian Yoga Society's (MYS) karma yoga projects, though previously my contribution was only in monetary terms. Last year, Master asked me to handle the National Yoga Camp project, which changed my entire view on how to approach life. It opened my heart and mind to a lot of things. These are the 5 important things I learnt:

### To Be Humble and Drop My Ego

I have learnt to be humble and bow to the fortunate so as to feed the less privileged. It's about acting selflessly without expectation, and dropping the ego while accepting the truth that I am doing it for the benefit of others. Such priceless experiences bring joy to my life.

### Not to Be Judgemental

When I meet a person, my mind tends to judge and make conclusions about the person.... until I started to realise that the judgements are based on what I know or have experienced in the past. Now, I understand that my judgements are based on information stored in my own subconscious mind. I'm learning to accept, understand and know myself.

From here starts the process of liberating myself from false perceptions.

### Love and Compassion

I was asking myself why am I doing charity? One day I watched a video clip on a child who had lost his parents. He takes care of his little brother and sometimes he sacrifices his single meal for the younger brother. This act of care touched me deeply. Being a father, I identified with the feeling. Through this experience I understood why I'm into charity work. The people I'm involved with are neither known to me nor related to me, but the universe has its way of churning the love and emotion within to work towards the oneness concept of universal

love, which is beyond religion, race, gender, richness and poverty. And I realised that I do not need to change the world, but I only need to work to change myself.

### Happiness

I was told that meditation is a way to keep your mind silent and achieve peace within. Meditation taught me to dive deep into myself. But reality comes when I open my eyes and start to face the world on a daily basis. This is where I see the real wonder of meditation. It becomes clearer when I start to engage myself in charity work. I understand what I am in actuality. Slowly, I am starting to learn to unlearn all stored emotions and characteristics built within me.

### Charity Begins At Home

The other day when I was at home, I was browsing through my phone while my son was talking to me. Soon, he started to show his unhappy face while requesting me to pay attention to him instead of the phone. I looked at him and realised my mistake. Charity is not only for the needy but I should learn to appreciate and love the ones who are dear to me first before I spread love, compassion and consideration to others. This always reminds me not to neglect the people who I know and am with while doing charity for the unknown. **YM**



*Siva and Master Mani at the MYS Yoga Camp*

# Inner Insights:

## My Introduction to Ayurvedic Massage

My name is Stephanie, and I am a Spa addict. I can confidently say that my mother is fully responsible for planting this seed in me. She introduced me to the wonderful world of spa therapies when I was a young child. On family vacations, my brother would look forward to joining the kids club groups with sports, games and crafts; naturally, I would join him too, but come 4.00pm "ding, ding" a spa therapist would show up to bring me to the spa for some mother-daughter bonding time – and this was the true highlight of my vacations.

Since my teenage years not only do I regularly attend day spas (at least twice a month), but I've also planned entire holidays around spa resorts or treatments that I want to try. Needless to say, I've spent hundreds of hours face down on a table, being rubbed down by a warm (and sometimes not so) stranger, and as such, I like to think of myself as a bit of a spa therapy connoisseur. And when I discovered Ayurvedic massage, I was rather surprised at how unique and different it is.

Due to some particularly poor habits during adolescence, I've had back pain that comes in varying waves of severity for the past 15 years. I've seen countless orthopedists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, traditional healers, acupuncture practitioners, surgeons and various other specialists looking for relief for my back ache but with no real solution that worked. As such, whenever the pain or body aches crop up I would book myself in for a nice long massage – my thinking was that since all the other avenues were unable to provide long-term relief, I might as well pick the one that provided me the most enjoyable short-term solution. The warm oil and soothing strokes would ease tension away, and more often than not my masseuse would find "kinks" that she would have to knead out. This varied from mildly uncomfortable to nauseatingly unbearable – but in my mind I would always think, if it hurts this bad, it must be doing some good. Or, my personal favourite, "Wow, this masseuse is really talented, she knows exactly where to press on the pressure points". I would leave the spa with less pain or numbness in my body, happy and relaxed that I had done something good for myself. The following days, however, would be a totally different story. The pain would come back (sometimes worse than before), and I would question whether I had truly done myself a favour or worsened my situation.

Let's fast forward a few years, I was having back pain again, and I decided to try out an Ayurvedic full-body massage, Abhyanga, followed by a steam bath, Svedana.



*by Stephanie*

The massage itself was rather different from the other massages I had tried, with copious amounts of warm, edible oils being poured over me and rubbed into the tissues. The strokes were long and flowing, different from the usual pinching, kneading and pressing; the closest I had experienced to this would probably be the traditional Hawaiian style Lomi-Lomi massage. The emphasis here was more on allowing the highly rejuvenating and nourishing oils to seep into my tissues... and the long, flowing strokes sent me to a blissful state of relaxation. The massage was so gentle, so relaxing; without any painful manipulation of the tender points. To be totally honest, as I lay on the table, I wondered how such a gentle massage would get rid of my "terrible, chronic knots" that previous masseuses would literally have to pound out of me. Regardless, the soothing feeling of the warm unctuous oil and the rhythmic strokes lulled me right into a calm, semi-lucid state, and I felt myself easing onto the table underneath me. The next thing I knew, the massage was over, and it was time for my steam bath.

Post treatment, I was given a grain based and 100% edible cleanser to bathe with, similar to Dermalogica's Microfoliant but for my entire body. Fresh out of the shower, the foggy state of dreamy relaxation had lifted. I became aware of the post-treatment effects. My usually dry, eczema prone skin was more luminous and silky soft than after a Hammam scrub and polish. My joints usually dry and prone to cracking noises felt flexible and supple. And the tension in my back had totally melted away, in fact, I realised even my hips and knees felt so wonderful that probably I had pain there that I had never realised. The entire day I felt so light and happy, full of energy and vitality. This profound effect on my mood and emotions further compounded my conviction that this was certainly different from anything I had experienced from a one-off massage. And best of all, the day after, I still felt on top of the world, with no post-massage pain to suffer through.

So now, whenever I have been a little lax in my yoga regime, or indulging in other off-limit activities (like dancing non-stop at a dear friend's wedding for hours, in 5-inch-heels), I have a new routine. Instead of popping painkillers and muscle relaxants, or trying out a new massage, I call up MAYI AyurYoga and book my regular pick-me up session – a one hour Abhyanga session followed by a steam bath. **YM**

# Ayur Yoga:

## Ayurveda for Arthritis and Joint Ailments

Are you suffering from arthritis or joint problems? It is a good idea to understand some of the grave issues that surround this common ailment. Read on to find the Ayurvedic explanation for this problem and how Ayurveda and Yoga can be used to manage it.

Ayurveda suggests that it is primarily an excess of Ama (toxic waste), elevated levels of Vata dosha (air element) in the system and a lack of Agni (digestive fire power) that cause arthritis. Poor digestion and a weakened colon, resulting in accumulation of undigested food and the build-up of waste matter, can cause this. Poor digestion allows toxins to accumulate in the body and problems with the colon allow the toxins to reach the joints. One way, therefore, to treat arthritis is to stimulate the digestive fire (Agni) and rid the body of toxins, known as Ama.

Changes in a person's lifestyle, diet and emotional constitution can cause the three governing elements in the body known as Vata (air), Pitta (fire) or Kapha (earth) to go out of balance. That particular dosha then slows down Agni, resulting in the toxic, sticky by-product of inadequate digestion known as Ama.

### Signs and Symptoms of Arthritis

Signs and symptoms may include the following:

- Joint pain (often a deep, aching pain) that is worsened by movement and improved with rest (in more severe cases, a person may experience constant pain)
- Stiffness in the morning or after being inactive for more than 15 minutes;
- Joint swelling
- Joints that are warm (inflammatory arthritis) or cold (osteoarthritis) to the touch
- Crunching or crackling noise when the joint moves
- Limited range of motion
- Muscle weakness.
- Abnormal growth of bony knobs near joints causing deformities (such as Heberden's nodes, in which bumps appear on the outermost finger joints).



### Preventive Care

The following measures can reduce the risk of developing arthritis:

- Ayurvedic massage and preventive therapy
- Correct diet
- Protecting an injured joint from further damage
- Practising a low-impact form of exercise that is gentle on the joints
- Losing weight
- Avoiding excessive repetitive motions
- Using appropriate herbs

### Ayurvedic Herbs and Arthritis

Inflammation represents a major source of oxidation or free radical damage and Ayurvedic medicine is blessed with an arsenal of wonderful herbs to control inflammation at different levels.

A few recent trials comparing Ayurvedic herbal remedies with placebo drugs found that participants who consumed the Ayurvedic herbs experienced significant improvement (with much milder side effects than other forms of treatment) compared with those in the placebo group.

### Anti-Inflammatory Turmeric

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), a popular spice used in many Eastern cuisines, is known as Kunyit in Malaysia. It is traditionally used in Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine. Current research has found turmeric to be a powerful antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticarcinogenic, antimicrobial and hepatoprotective. It has also demonstrated positive results in cardiovascular and gastrointestinal diseases. The active principals in turmeric are the flavonoid curcuminoids along with various volatile oils, resins, proteins and sugars.



### Anti-Inflammatory Properties

Turmeric is a potent anti-inflammatory. Various laboratory studies have identified a number of different molecules involved in inflammation that are inhibited by curcumin. These include phospholipase, lipoxygenase, cyclooxygenase 2 (Cox-2), leukotrienes, thromboxane, prostaglandins, nitric oxide, collagenase, elastase, hyaluronidase, monocyte chemoattractant protein-1 (MCP-1), interferon-inducible protein, tumor necrosis factor (TNF) and interleukin-12 (IL-12). Cox-2 inhibitors, such as Celebrex and Vioxx, had been prominent as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

Recently, Vioxx showed an increase in heart disease, and was recalled from the market. Turmeric, on the other hand, covers almost every aspect of inflammation and has a much broader spectrum than the current drug regimen available. In animal and in vivo studies, turmeric extract has been shown to decrease chronic and acute inflammation.

Oral administration of curcuminoids in instances of acute inflammation was found to be as effective as cortisone or phenylbutazone. In animal studies, oral administration of the turmeric extract reduced the inflammation of adjuvant induced arthritis.



### Anti-Inflammatory Effects on Skin Diseases and Wound Regeneration

Certain types of arthritis cause skin disorders and wounds to develop on the affected joints. Turmeric extract applied to the skin topically has been shown to reduce inflammation and irritation associated with inflammatory conditions and allergies. In other studies, turmeric extract has been shown to regenerate skin and help repair wounds faster.

### Ayurveda Therapies

Ayurveda provides us with various techniques to help alleviate arthritis and its associated symptoms. Abhyanga (Ayurvedic body massage), Vasti (targeted joint therapy) and Svedana (fomentation therapy) are some of the techniques that provide excellent results.

Abhyanga with gingelly oil helps to pacify Vata dosha and increases blood circulation, oxygenating all the cells in the body. It also stimulates lymphatic drainage, loosens up Ama and helps to mobilise trapped cellular waste. Daily self-massage with gingelly oil will help the joints feel more supple and flexible. A full abhyanga performed by a knowledgeable therapist can provide immediate relief from stiffness and pain, and is also an excellent preventive therapy. Gingelly oil can be fortified by mixing one part of AyurYoga's muscle and joint tonic with four parts of gingelly oil to provide a nourishing and strengthening oil with rejuvenating and analgesic qualities. This oil can be applied whenever the joints feel inflamed, to soothe aches and pains and as a daily topical supplement.

Vasti can be performed on almost all the joints in the body, but is most commonly done on the knees, neck and back. A natural dough is used to create a moat around the affected joint and warm medicated oil is poured over the area and allowed to steep. The heat from the oil helps to open up the pores and improve circulation in the joint and surrounding tissues. Circulation is key to healing and health as it enables a greater flow of oxygen and life force to flow towards the area, whilst simultaneously allowing the removal of toxins and cellular waste. The oils used have a particularly small molecular makeup and are able to penetrate deeply into the joint, further assisted by the opening of the pores. The oils act as a carrier to bring the herbs and active ingredients deep into the affected area, nourishing and lubricating the joint.

Svedana comprises a group of heat therapies that induce mild perspiration. The most basic form of svedana therapy is performed by placing the client in a steamy enclosed space, such as a tent or sauna box so that the entire body is covered in steam except for the head. The heat from the steam dilates the channels in the body and loosens trapped Ama, allowing it to move out of the body through various channels.

At MAYI AyurYoga, we offer tailor-made packages to address your needs whilst taking into consideration practical commitments. If you would like to know more about how you can benefit from AyurYoga, call us at 03-61275693 and speak to one of our consultants today. **YM**

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AyurYoga Bangsar : 03-2282 4980 / 012-2679 621  
AyurYoga Damansara Uptown : 03-7726 6682 / 012 6660 035  
Webiste: www.ayuryogamayai.com Email: health@ayuryogamayai.com

Breathe in deeply. Lengthen your spine. Bend your knee. Twist to the left. Relax your muscles.

Aaahh, the common instructions which echo through every yoga studio and continue to ring in our ears till the moment we roll up our mats and return to our respective "roles" – off the mat and out of the studio, all of us are a son or daughter, a sibling, a friend, or a parent to someone.

When we were in school, there were school rules to abide by. Now, in the work field, there are work guidelines and protocols to adhere to. Yet those who embark on the amazing journey of parenthood are bravely stepping into the world where no manuals will be provided. There are no teachers to assure us that we are on the right track, no managers to remind us of deadlines, and no yoga instructors to remind us to take a deep breath in, and certainly there is no one to provide us with the to-dos when managing a household. And the most exciting part of a household is that each member has a unique and individual personality, filled with unique characters and unique needs. We are one of them too!

Being parents, how do we mind all the needs of our family members while minding ourselves too, when the bottomless list of to-dos often leaves us baffled and turns us into scatter brains?

The answer is One-pointedness.

The ancient and wise yogic text speaks extensively about one-pointedness. It stresses on the importance of being aware and mindful by concentrating on our tasks as this is one of the ingredients in the recipe for success. Now, how, you may ask?

## Mindful Parenting



First and foremost we need to practice mindfulness. Being mindful and aware simply means calming our thoughts enough to be aware of the present moment and of what we are doing, or rather, what we are required to do right here, right now. It is crucial to understand the most important moment is "now" – "just now" has passed, and "later" hasn't arrived yet. So, it is essential that we focus on "now". This awareness is then magnified when teamed with attention and positive intentions. Having said that, practicing mindfulness in this current fast-paced society can appear to be more challenging than it sounds.

Being a parent often requires one to be observant and tactful – observant to the family members' needs and tactful when providing necessary intervention or guidance. This speaks volumes for both the working parents and the stay-at-home parents. The amount of attention garnering tasks which parents have to juggle on a daily basis deserves a standing ovation.

Now, let's look at some of the ways which can help us to be more aware and mindful when caring for the household.

### Be Consistent

In order to achieve our goals, we need to persevere and work towards continuation. Practice makes perfect. We might make mistakes or get diverted along the way. But these trials and errors are means to show us clarity. Once we learn the way it's best we

maintain consistency. This includes consistency in communication with the members of the family, especially when responding to children. Children often compare themselves with their siblings and if they notice parents providing inconsistent response to them, it may be perceived as parents having special preference for another sibling and this may cause confusion and discontentment.

### Maintain Your Calm

Some would compare managing a household and raising children to entering a minefield of emotions. Truth be told, there is bound to be conflict of opinions and this needs to be met with a calm mind. Outbursts will only be met with similar outbursts and there's no point in participating in a relay of outbursts as it will not bring any solution. When you are faced with challenging tasks or confrontations, take a moment to take a deep breath in and allow yourself some time to relax before responding. This technique allows us time to think and respond with clarity rather than impulsively.

### Acceptance

Adults make mistakes too. The important thing is to acknowledge that we've made a mistake, followed by efforts to correct them accordingly and learn from (the mistakes), and strive to be better. This applies to our communication with the children as well. Be a brave parent who is not afraid to apologise if a mistake is made. By doing this, we are in fact showing the children that admitting to our mistake and apologising do not make us a weakling, but someone who is strong and honest in rectifying mistakes.

### Rejoice with Gratitude

Being grateful for our current situation is a gratifying feeling through and through. People who experience and express gratitude will find themselves perpetually radiating inner joy. As a family, spending time pointing out things which we are grateful for allows us to have a glimpse of each individual's point of view and priorities. It builds understanding and respect. These qualities, when shown to children will nurture their hearts.

### Be In Tune

Just as we always talk about working on balancing the mind and body so they can work in sync, the formula for a harmonious family is just the same. When parents open up their eyes

and ears to genuinely observe and listen to the voices of their children, they will most definitely be able to fine-tune their understanding with each other. This positive communication will undoubtedly open up each other's hearts as well. The key is to be open to communication without judgement. Answers met with judgement and/or sarcasm will only lead to turning off of interest to communicate any further.

If ever we are unsure if we are on the right track, take a moment and have a heart to heart communication with our wise little "consultants" – our children. Only when we listen with an open heart, will we be enlightened by their purity, honesty and sincerity.

Below are ten questions which we can ask our children, and their answers will help us understand their perspective better and enable us to look deeper into ourselves, and the projection of our characters.

1. Which three words do you think best describe you?
2. Which three words do you think best describe daddy/mommy?
3. What does daddy/mommy look like when he/she is happy?
4. What does daddy/mommy look like when he/she is angry or upset?
5. When do you feel the happiest?
6. What is the most important thing to you?
7. What is the hardest thing to do as a child?
8. What is the most amazing thing that your mommy and daddy ever say to you?
9. What is the most amazing thing that your mommy and daddy ever did for you?
10. What makes your family special? **YM**

SYK classes include Yoga Kids Class, Teens Yoga Class, Family Yoga Class and Pregnancy Yoga Class. For more information about Super Yoga Kids, log on to [www.superyogakids.com](http://www.superyogakids.com) or find us at Facebook: SYK Superyogakids. Contact: Brickfields (03.2260 5322), Bangsar (03.2282 4980), Damansara Utama (03.7726 6682) and Selayang Utama (03.6127 5693).



# Featured Asana

## Janu Sirshasana (Head to Knee Pose)

### Starting Position:

1. Sit with the legs outstretched and the feet together.
2. Bend the left leg and place the sole of the left foot against the inside of the right thigh (with the heel of the left foot as close to the perineum as is comfortable). Keep the left knee of the floor.
3. Place the hands on top of the right knee, keeping the spine straight and the back muscles relaxed.



### Step by Step:

1. Inhale gently in the starting position. As you exhale, slowly bend forward, sliding the hands down the right leg, and grasp the right foot. If possible, hold the big toe with the index finger, middle finger and thumb of the left hand and the outside edge of the foot with the right hand. Try to touch the knee with the forehead.
2. Keep the back relaxed.
3. Hold the position for as long as is comfortable and breathe normally.
4. Inhale as you return to the starting position and rest the hands on the knees.
5. Change sides and repeat with the right leg bent and the left leg straight.

### Benefits:

- This asana stretched the hamstring muscles and increases flexibility in the hip joints.
- Stretches and lengthens the entire spine.
- It tones and massages the entire abdominal and pelvic region.
- It helps to remove excess weight in the abdominal area and stimulates circulation to the nerves and muscles of the spine.
- Helps to relief the symptoms of menstrual discomfort and menopause



# Chef Yogi's Food Notes!

## Polka Dot Appam

by Kavi Vitya



### *Ingredients*

- 275g plain flour
- 220g castor sugar
- 150ml milk
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp ovalette /sponge stabiliser
- Fillings – blueberry/ strawberry/ nutella/ coconut etc
- Food colouring

### *Method*

1. Add in all ingredients and beat with maximum speed (around 6-8 mins) till fluffy.
2. Divide the batter and add food colouring accordingly. Now, you're ready to do the piping!
3. Place the paper cups into the paper cup holder and pipe in the batter to act as base.
4. Then, add your fillings!
5. Fill up the paper cup till 3/4 full to allow the batter to rise later.
6. Add in design with the second colour. You can dot on it, zig zag or even put smiley face on them!
7. Steam for approximately 10mins with medium heat.

# SCHEDULE OF COURSES: JAN - MAY 2016

JAN

|           |        |                                                      |
|-----------|--------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 21/1/2016 | DU     | Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course                          |
| 24/1/2016 | DU     | Precision & Alignment: Level 1 Practitioner Workshop |
| 25/1/2016 | BSR    | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course      |
| 25/1/2016 | BSR    | Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course (male)             |
| 30/1/2016 | BSR/SU | Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course                    |
| 30/1/2016 | BSR    | Pranayama (Breathing Technique) Instructor Course    |
| 30/1/2016 | BSR    | Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course                          |

FEB

|           |     |                                                 |
|-----------|-----|-------------------------------------------------|
| 20/2/2016 | BFS | Slimming and Wellness Programme                 |
| 20/2/2016 | DU  | Mini Detox Workshop                             |
| 21/2/2016 | DU  | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course |
| 21/2/2016 | BFS | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course |
| 27/2/2016 | DU  | Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course               |
| 28/2/2016 | DU  | Jala Neti (Nasal Cleansing) Workshop            |
| 28/2/2016 | BSR | Pregnancy Yoga Instructors Course               |
| 28/2/2016 | SU  | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course |

MAR

|           |           |                                                           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 6/3/2016  | DU        | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course - Chinese |
| 6/3/2016  | BSR/SU    | International Yoga Instructor Course - Intermediate       |
| 7/3/2016  | SU        | Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course                         |
| 13/3/2016 | BSR/SU    | Super Yoga Kids Instructor Course                         |
| 13/3/2016 | BSR       | Anti-Aging Workshop                                       |
| 14/3/2016 | BSR       | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course           |
| 14/3/2016 | DU        | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course           |
| 20/3/2016 | DU        | Effective Communication Workshop                          |
| 20/3/2016 | BSR       | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course           |
| 20/3/2016 | BSR/SU    | International Yoga Instructor Course - Intermediate       |
| 20/3/2016 | BSR       | Yoga Therapist Certification Course                       |
| 21/3/2016 | BSR       | Super Yoga Kids Instructor Course                         |
| 27/3/2016 | TTDI Park | Yoga Outing (TTDI Park) with Yoga Flow                    |

APR

|           |     |                                       |
|-----------|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 10/4/2016 | BSR | Manipuraka Workshop                   |
| 10/4/2016 | BSR | Urdhva Retas Workshop                 |
| 16/4/2016 | SU  | Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course           |
| 17/4/2016 | BSR | Short Course on Effective Sleep       |
| 17/4/2016 | BSR | Partner Yoga Instructor Course        |
| 21/4/2016 | DU  | Prana Vidya                           |
| 24/4/2016 | BSR | Shatkarma Workshop                    |
| 24/4/2016 | DU  | Super Yoga Kids Instructor Course     |
| 30/4/2016 | BSR | Dhyana (Meditation) Instructor Course |

MAY

|           |     |                                                 |
|-----------|-----|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1/5/2016  | BFS | Full Intestinal Cleansing - Practical Session   |
| 7/5/2016  | SU  | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course |
| 8/5/2016  | DU  | Mother's Day Yoga Workshop                      |
| 8/5/2016  | BSR | International Yoga Instructor Course - Advance  |
| 15/5/2016 | BSR | Jala Neti (Nasal Cleansing) Workshop            |
| 15/5/2016 | BSR | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course |
| 22/5/2016 | DU  | Introduction to Chakra Workshop                 |
| 22/5/2016 | DU  | The Natural Beauty Workshop                     |
| 23/5/2016 | BFS | International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course |
| 23/5/2016 | BSR | Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course                     |

BFS: Brickfields; BSR: Bangsar; DU: D'sara Uptown; SU: Selayang Utama

\*Dates are subject to change without prior notice. Kindly refer to [www.mayi.org.my](http://www.mayi.org.my) for updates

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89A&B (1st & 2nd Flr), Jalan SS21/37, D'sara Utama, PJ.  
8-1 & 9-1, Jalan Paragon Utama, Selayang Utama, Bt Caves.  
11B, Jalan Kenari 22, Bandar Puchong Jaya, Puchong, Selangor

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