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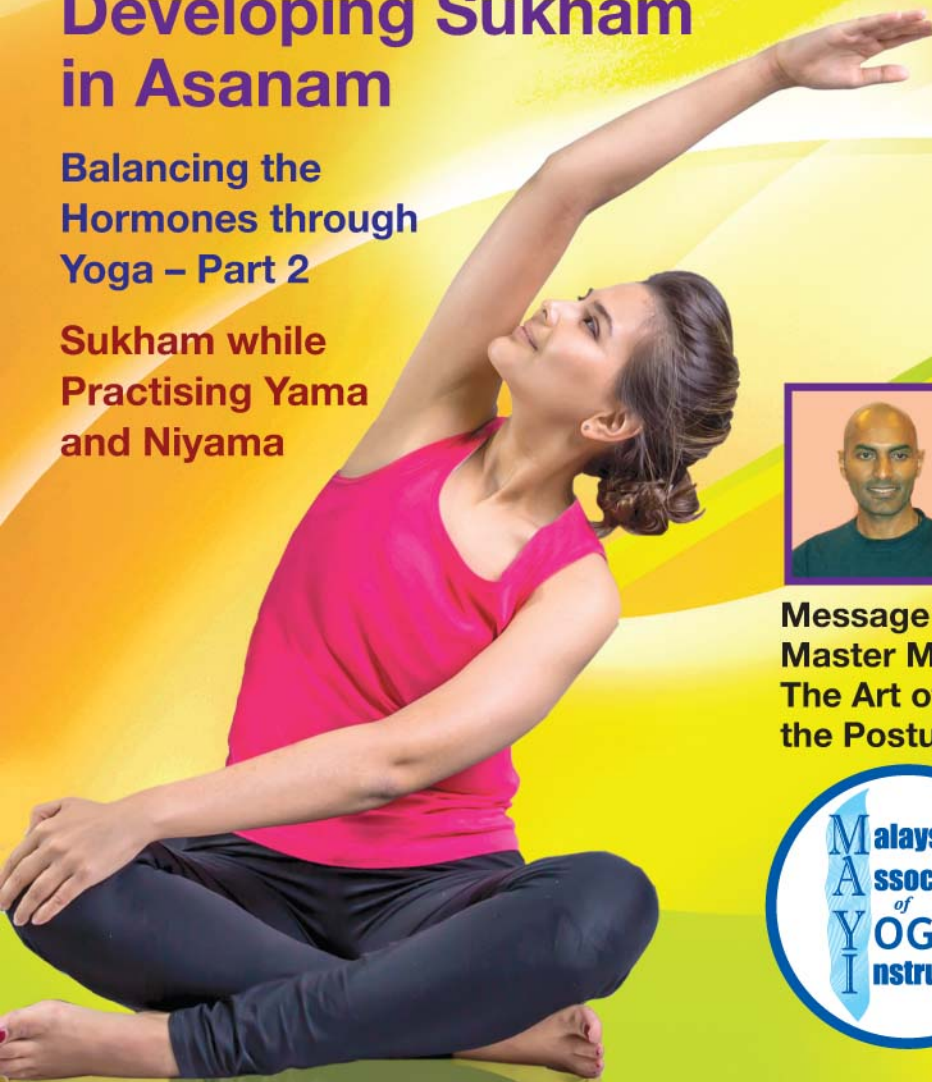
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Oct - Dec 2015 ISSUE

Developing Sukham in Asanam

Balancing the
Hormones through
Yoga – Part 2

Sukham while
Practising Yama
and Niyama



**Message from
Master Mani:
The Art of Holding
the Posture Steady**



Message from Master Mani

Art of Holding the Posture Steady

Sthiram Sukham Asanam:

Steady and comfortable is the definition of yoga posture.



*Master
Manisekaran*

The above verse is from the Yoga Sutras written by Rishi Patanjali. It very clearly expounds the most important teaching and guideline on how the practice of yoga asana (yoga posture) should be.

When the body is held steady we are able to hold the mind steady. When the body is comfortable we are able to hold it longer and learn to enjoy being in the steady posture. It is a great feeling of body mastery with a tangible real-life experience of great physical and mental pleasure derived purely from the body when there is no movement involved.

This is an advanced state of living and knowing the body. The evolution that is taking place is unmatched in any action or inaction.

Bliss and mastery achieved through years of consistent practice have no theoretical or verbal explanation — they can only be experienced. This remarkable state of being is the special reward for a yoga practitioner for his or her persistence.

Read below the Bhagavad Gita's description:

‘Holding the body, head and neck straight, he should remain still and steady, gazing at the tip of the nose without casting his glance in other directions. Undisturbed, fearless and observing a vow of brahmacharya, he should sit and control his mind by thinking of Me as his highest goal.’ **YM**



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Advisor:
Master Mani

Editorial
(Writers and Contributors)
Surya Tay
Vijaya
Lee Yan
Meiwan
Navanesan
Jamie Spatafore
Other contributors

Advertising & Circulation:
Kasturi

Graphic Designer:
Danny Kwok

Cover Design by:
Danny Kwok

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Manisekaran

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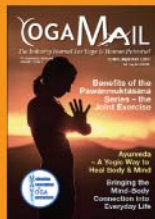
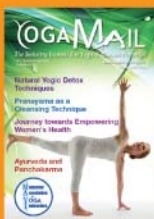
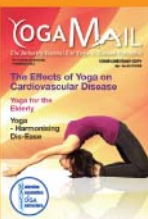
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D

eveloping Sukham in Asanam

by Chandra Nanthakumar

According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, the physical practice of yoga can be described in Sanskrit as *Sthiram Sukham Asanam*. These three words have in-depth meaning in the practice of yoga. Literally translated, the practice of yoga should be done with strength and steadiness, but in a tranquil and comfortable manner.

Yoga is all about the mastery of the mind. It is the journey towards achieving a thought-free mind. When this happens, one will be able to experience the realms of self-realisation. As practitioners of yoga, we are aware that mastering of the mind may not be as simple as it seems. First and foremost, one has to engage oneself in a posture that is not only *Sthiram*, but also *Sukham*. '*Sthiram*' means being steady or motionless while '*Sukham*' means being in comfortable or exultant state.

Sthiram and *Sukham* are dissimilar, but both are equally important traits to develop the practice of yoga and improve one's quality of life. Though these traits are not mutually exclusive, they are very much interconnected. A yoga practice can be steady or stable and joyful just as in how we can find peace and harmony in our lives between strength and relaxation. On the yoga mat as well as in our lives, we should look for the balance between flexibility-cum-freedom and stability. This clearly explains the need for *Sthiram* and *Sukham*.

Coming back to yoga, when one practices a particular asana, the part of the body which is in contact with the ground is usually *Sthiram*. The connection to the earth has to be strong and the contact points have to be firmly rooted to the ground. Only then can *Sukham* be experienced. More often than not, *Sukham* is experienced through body parts which are furthest away from the ground. Consider a person going into the tree pose. The part of the body in contact with the ground is the sole of the foot and grounding of the foot has to be *Sthiram*. The head and arms, which are at a distance from the ground, would experience *Sukham* — a feeling of bliss. The sole of the other foot, which is in contact with the groin, should also experience *Sukham*.

Nevertheless, sometimes one may feel the entire asana being in *Sthiram*. In this situation, in order to experience *Sukham* concurrently, the practitioner will have to soften his/her gaze, shift his/her awareness to

the face to relax the facial muscles. While trying to relax the entire body, the practitioner will find comfort and joy. From time to time, I notice the students in my class donning a serious look on their faces when holding a pose. Some have the flexibility in their asana practice but do not have adequate stability to keep the body and joints safe. It is the duty of the instructor to remind, guide and help the students go into a *Sukham* mode in order to reap all the benefits of doing that pose.

The state of *Sukham* is also crucial in meditation. Traditionally, the posture for meditation is the seated posture. Sage Vyasa has recommended several postures. The most well-known is *Padmasana* (i.e. Lotus pose). *Vajrasana*, *Bhadrasana*, *Svastikasana*, *Dandasana* and *Samasamsthana* are some of the other postures used in meditation. It does not really matter which posture is adopted as long as it brings about a state of not only *Sukham* but also *Sthiram*. In order to experience that state of *Sthiram*, the practitioner needs to ensure that the head and neck are aligned, while maintaining the curvature in the spine. Some effort is definitely needed here.

Having said so, perfecting the pose for meditation comes not so much by doing but of not doing. As one allows the posture to settle in, the centeredness is felt and the next step is to do nothing. This conscious effort of not doing anything should be felt internally and this brings about *Sukham*.

Therefore, the key in achieving a state of *Sukham* is to relax and that is to let go of the thought patterns in the mind. This, in turn, will let go of the tension that is being held in the body. Having this awareness is so important in any practitioner who wants to practise yoga with *Sukham*. **YM**

Padmasana



Balancing the Hormones through Yoga – Part 2

by Nemala

We are all aware of what hormones do to our bodies. But are we aware that yoga plays a very important role in harmonising and balancing the secretion of hormones in the body?

Let's take cortisol, for example. There is much evidence and research showing continuous practices of yoga allows cortisol levels in the body to decrease. Those who have three to five years of experience in practising meditation had significantly greater decrease in cortisol levels than novices with three to four months of experience in practising some form of meditation, while other studies suggest an improvement in cortisol level just by doing hatha yoga. In 2004, in the "Human Physiology" journal, scientists from St Petersburg University in Russia noted a significant decrease in cortisol and an increase in testosterone (in men) in the participants' blood serum only by performing the cobra pose, or Bhujangasana. Besides that, a study done by University of Gothenburg, Sweden, which was published in the FASEB Journal 2012, concluded that just with a single acute yogic breathing, one can significantly reduce the stress hormones present in the body. How amazing! (5, 6, 7, 8)

One of the most common of all endocrine illnesses is the thyroid imbalance. The thyroid gland regulates body metabolism and is located at the base of the neck. In a book entitled 'The yogic management of common diseases', Dr Swami Karmananda mentions how yogis designed practices that help to maintain healthy glands and metabolism. Optimal function of the endocrine system is considered vital, particularly for higher awareness. Yoga asanas (postures) are considered the best to activate the thyroid gland. It limbers and stretches the neck as well as strengthens and tones the nervous system.

Asanas commonly specified for thyroid health are: Sarvangasana (shoulderstand), which puts considerable pressure on the thyroid, improves circulation and squeezes out stagnant secretions. Other asanas with similar benefits are Matsyasana (Fish Pose), Halasana (Plow Pose) and Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation). Pranayama too plays a major role in this. Study conducted by a researcher from Annapoorna Medical College in

Salem confirms the effect of specific asanas in improving the blood flow to the thyroid gland, thereby increasing the thyroid metabolism. Another study published in the Indian Journal of Ancient Medicine and Yoga, in 2014, showed that yoga asanas help to maintain thyroid balance in normal individuals and recommended regular practice for hypothyroid patients especially (9, 10).

Now, let's shift the attention to the pineal gland — a small endocrine gland at the vertebrate brain that is known to excrete melatonin. This hormone was initially only associated with regulating the sleeping patterns, but recent research showed otherwise. A study by Douglas Mental Health University Institute researchers showed that low melatonin level played a role in triggering premenstrual symptoms, or PMS. Another finding published by a research team in Paris, entitled "Melatonin: The Fountain of Youth?" in 2009, showed that melatonin-based treatment could delay the first signs of aging in small mammals (mice) by at least three months. Considering that they live just to 12 months, this finding is remarkably significant! While a much recent study in 2013 from the Journal of the American Medical Association in the United States, stated that low melatonin level is actually a risk factor for diabetes. It showed that participants with the lowest melatonin levels faced two times the risk of developing diabetes, compared with those with the highest levels. Clearly, the repercussions of the inability to produce enough melatonin, just like all the other hormones, can be undesirably life altering.

How can yoga help? There have been several studies showing significant result as an outcome of constant practice of yoga. Both hatha yoga and meditation have the capability to drastically improve the level of melatonin in the body, allowing it to function at its optimum. Making yoga a part of life goes a long way in creating a balance in the hormones as well as life. (11, 12, 13, 14)

Last but not least is the reproductive health. There is a recent rise in a condition called Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) that affects 10 to 20 per cent women of childbearing age. Women with PCOS typically have many small cysts (fluid-filled sacs) in their ovaries due to underlying hormonal imbalance. How big an issue is this? Just looking at the number of postmenopausal women in the world, it is estimated to

rise to 1.1 billion, consisting 1/8 of total projected world population of eight billion by 2025. To top it up there are also reports of high prevalence of infertility in men below the age of 45 around the world. Many researches are being done to see if an alternative can be obtained in dealing with these conditions, especially in using yoga as a substitute healing mode compared with hormone replacing pills and injections that are showing many side effects. Researchers in China decided to explore these as well and coherently reported a statistically significant result stating yoga training has a positive effect on estrogen, blood lipid and immune function of postmenopausal women. If you are too tired to do anything worry not as a present study demonstrates the effectiveness of Yoga Nidra (yogic relaxation technique) in significantly helping with hormone imbalances such as oligomenorrhea, menorrhagia, metrorrhagia and menstrual irregularities (15).



Further study reported by International Journal of Yoga entitled "Male Reproductive Health and Yoga" concluded that consequence of practising yoga (asana and pranayama) can lead to the prevention of infertility and improvement in male reproductive health, after considering their scientific evidence thus far in an ongoing research. There is also a common hormone that works together in the regulation of the human reproductive system called the Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and the luteinizing hormone (LH). Evidence published in Research and Reviews: Journal of Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy 2014 has shown there is a specific rejuvenating technique discovered by Vethanthiri Maharishi that allows synchronising of the hormones leading to normalisation of the FSH and LH. Testing of this practice, which was similar to Urdhva Retas, showed reversal in the participants' infertility condition.

Scientists are yet to be able to decide if all of these are due to direct influence of the endocrine gland or a side effect of other existing conditions that surface through yoga or something completely foreign, but they certainly can't deny that the practice of yoga is definitely altering life. It is undeniable that almost all research done on yoga only point to boundless possibilities to improve human life. **YM**

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Sukham While Practising Yama and Niyama

by K. Saravana Sealana

Every time I am caught in a situation, I'll be asking myself, "Why don't the body and its attributes, such as the mind, emotions, hormones and so on, come with a user manual, like some of the products we purchase? For then I would know how to effectively operate it and remain free as a child.

But the least I had anticipated was that the Ashtanga Yoga by Sage Patanjali was the user manual that I had been looking for, when it was introduced by the MAYI Yoga Academy as part of its International Yoga Instructor Course (IYIC) syllabus. "Ashtanga" means 8 limbs, comprising Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Out of ignorance and arrogance, I thought that the Yamas and Niyamas (the first two of the 8 limbs) were the least important as Samadhi seemed like the ultimate goal. So, when the Yama and Niyama topics were introduced in class by Master Manisekaran, I assumed I knew everything about them as they sounded somewhat like the moral studies in school. I merely participated without giving extra emphasis on the lessons.

Today, after volunteering in the yoga camps and visiting homes to teach yoga to the children, especially teenagers, I am seeing the seriousness in understanding the Yama and Niyama values. They are the most crucial fundamentals — like the groundwork (piling, etc) that goes into building a skyscraper.

The five **Yamas** — the self-regulating behaviours involving our interactions with the world at large, include:

- **Ahimsa**: nonviolence
- **Satya**: truthfulness
- **Asteya**: non-stealing
- **Brahmacharya**: continence, self-control
- **Aparigraha**: non-possessiveness (sharing)

Meanwhile, the five **Niyamas** — personal practices that relate to our inner world, include:

- **Saucha**: purity
- **Santosha**: contentment
- **Tapas**: self-discipline, training your senses
- **Svadyaya**: self-study, inner exploration
- **Ishvara Pranidhana**: surrender (to God)

When I mentioned the seriousness in understanding the Yama and Niyama values, I am not only referring to the ability to inculcate good behaviours in the children, but also for me to completely realise them. Why one might ask?

Let us take Ahimsa, for a start. It translates as 'non-violence' and on the surface level we will naturally begin to abstain from hurting others, be it physically, verbally or emotionally. That seems like a fair interpretation of Ahimsa.

But then when our life demands us to take stock of our evolution, of what advancement we have brought unto us, then we may begin to realise that any civilised person would abstain from hurting others anyway. We would see something lacking and we see the need to push the envelope further — in looking deeper into what Sage Patanjali might have meant. When we allow ourselves to open and be honest with ourselves, we would realise that the meaning is multifaceted and deep. If we were to go deep, as deep as the author had desired, where would we find Sage Patanjali, now?

Many a time, we might have assumed that we've got it completely, but have we? Ahimsa was once not to hurt, but when we allow it to grow, we also see it as kindness.

How to grow when we are stuck with complacency? I personally believe this is where a Guru is required to sit in 'satsang' with; discuss and ask questions to clear our doubts.

As I introspect, I realise that Ahimsa brings a deeper meaning.

Now, we see that the yogic philosophy mentioned here as Ahimsa requires an X Factor; that merely abstaining from hurting others alone doesn't ascertain us being kind to them, as kindness seems like a much desirable, actively evolving trait.

As the evolution continues, the reality of life will remind us that we are never alone in this world; that there are many types of people, and on a worst case scenario, let's say someone takes advantage of us or hurts us.

If we have fixed Ahimsa as kindness, our natural responses may either be,

- i. Suffer in silence while religiously holding on to the signboard that says Ahimsa; or
- ii. Completely divorce the concept of Ahimsa and gear up to get even with the perpetrator.

The understanding of the word Ahimsa that denotes to be kind then, as both the options above show, seem to fall short, somehow crippling each other. When that happens, our understanding of Ahimsa is challenged further.

What ought we do to ascertain that Ahimsa now transcends to embrace all, including dharma, the righteousness? Just like 'Sthiram Sukham Asanam' means the posture for yoga meditation should be steady, stable, and motionless, as well as comfortable, we are able to dwell deeper, into expanding the consciousness, in realising that it takes two to tango, and we correct the situation by offering healing instead of hatred, that things happen because we are naive and it's time to become wiser.

We then begin to take our Gurus and their teachings seriously. We begin to take ourselves seriously. As we surrender to the practices and Guru, we are able to remove our masks and walk with unconditional love and in willing to learn and share, in embracing this

universe the way it's presenting itself and in choosing to evolve and mature.

Just like a flower, the understanding of what Ahimsa is blooms from inside out and begins to permeate its fragrance, sparingly. An awakening begins to fire every time, every moment from then on, where we will come to realise that Ahimsa is actually Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha, Saucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya and Ishvara Pranidhana encapsulated as ONE!

As now Ahimsa will require Universal Love (Aparigraha) with uncompromising steadfast in holding on to Dharma (Brahmacharya), without compromising (Asteya) the Truth (Satya), infused with Purity, Contentment, Self-Discipline and Self-Study when challenged, and to remain surrendered to the Guru and the higher evolution all the time.

Every Information is available to us, within the click of a button, Yes!

However, it takes a Guru to complete the teachings for our final evolution.

For now, Yama and Niyama coupled with Sukham under the tutelage of a Guru has brought this. What other awakening awaits, only HE would know. **YM**

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EVENTS

AyurYoga Youthful Living Workshop

Yoga and Ayurveda are like inseparable sisters. The fact that these two sciences work so well together have prompted many Yoga practitioners to explore the wonders of Ayurveda and vice versa. Due to the escalating interest and demand in learning the fusion of Yoga and Ayurveda, MAYI Yoga Academy conducted its first ever AyurYoga Youthful Living Workshop on July 26, 2015 at its centre in Damansara Utama.

This 3-hour special workshop was filled with practical tools to enhance physical and internal well-being, and participants were introduced to a string of Yoga and Ayurveda techniques ranging from yoga asana, breathing techniques, Ayurvedic face mask and face massage techniques. The many tips and hands-on practices guided by Master Manisekaran kept everyone captivated.

All workshop participants were given the opportunity to apply the special Ubtan mix based on their preference for any of the three options below:

- Glowing skin / anti-aging
- Whitening / pigmentation
- Acne / blemishes

Half an hour later, the masks were washed off and the studio was filled with radiant faces grinning from ear to ear. The participants could barely hide their astonishment with the immediate rejuvenating effects and began to sing praises of each other's rediscovered radiance! **YM**

This is what two of them said:

"It is a fantastic experience as we are able to notice the immediate effect of the on-the-spot facial cleansing and mask sessions. It is easy, natural, affordable and so convenient to pack with us anywhere we go (especially when travelling). Thank you to MAYI Ayuryoga from the deepest part of my heart for organising this workshop."
-Liaw Choy Wan

"Having to deal with acne and 'problemated-skin' is a battle faced by many people. I am one of these 'warriors'. These issues often create unintentional frustration and mood swings; cost me a lot of money; and have a major effect on my confidence. I've gained a great deal of understanding through the AyurYoga Youthful Living Workshop. Other than understanding the truth and myth related to acne, I've picked up a great deal of anti-aging tips too! The package comes complete with information about nutrition, herbs, various related practices, Ayurveda techniques for facial massage and more. In my opinion, it is very important for us to understand and listen to our bodies and apply the techniques properly in order to achieve better health, great skin and youthful life! I'm truly contented with this workshop!"

-Jo Wong



EVENTS

A Date with the Deer and Elephants at Kuala Gandah *by Nemala*

It was a pleasant cool morning with a clear sky. The beautiful sun was gently warming the ground surface after a downpour that took place in the wee hours of the morning. At the corner of a busy road 42 people gathered and merrily waited for their bus to bring them for a short escape to the world of the deer and the elephants.

The journey to Kuala Gandah was about 2 hours. The Deerland Park was the first stop of the day. The organisers (Mei Wan and Sumi) swiftly sorted the tickets and gathered the group to capture the exciting moment in camera before entering the park. It was set amidst the edge of a natural rainforest, allowing visitors the opportunity to appreciate what nature has to offer.

As we entered, it gave a feeling of walking into a secondary forest. That said, the deer enclosure was a big one. All the deer roamed freely in it. They seem to be accustomed to having human visitors. Upon seeing us about 15 of them gathered at the front, expecting to be fed. This allowed us direct interaction with the beautiful deep dark brown 'pearl-eyed' creature. I understood then how the 'doe-eye' expression came about. Most of the feeding was done by the children with the assistance of some adults while the park guide helped to deepen the visitors' knowledge on animals, especially the deer.

There were several types of deer in the park bringing the total to 33. Mostly were the Javan Rusa, Sika Deer and Sambar Deer. Besides feeding the adorable 4-legged creature, there were plenty of opportunities to see and touch several other animals in the park such as the ostrich, hedgehog, rabbit and a 30kg Burmese Python ('he' was the centre of attention after the deer as 'he' rested happily on many of our shoulders). There were also many types of colourful birds, mainly the pheasant and parrot.

After finishing with the deer, we were all eager to meet the 'Giants'! The Kuala Gandah Elephant Sanctuary was only several minutes away. Before we saw the elephants, we watched a 30-minute short film about

them and the sanctuary. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks established the Kuala Gandah Elephant Conservation Centre in 1989. It was the base for the elephant relocation team - one of its kind in Malaysia. The team was dedicated to locating, subduing and translocating elephants from areas where their habitats were destroyed throughout the peninsula. Over the years, the team had helped to prevent further decline of the population by relocating more than 600 wild elephants. It showed how important the sanctuary was and that certainly made us all delighted knowing that the RM5 collected as part of the trip was given to aid in sustaining their remarkable efforts.

Besides that, every day at 2pm there was a public awareness programme on rehabilitation and the guides' roles in the park. The visitors were allowed to feed and pet the strong trunks of the huge yet loving and gentle creatures. They were fed with their favourite fruits such as papayas, watermelons and bananas. The food varied on daily basis. This was done by maintaining certain proximity to avoid unwanted distress or overwhelm the elephants. The feeding session was then continued with the bathing session. The adult elephants and their guides seemed to enjoy the moment so much that it didn't look like work to me.

Later, it was the visitors' turn to help bathe the baby elephants. Each baby elephant (2-7 years old) was allowed to have only 4-6 helpers at any one time. The joy they exhibited was contagious to us humans as well. Being so close to them brought the magical wonders of the nature alive in every one of the visitors. It showed how humans and nature are intertwined and how a world of splendour can be created when both are in harmony.

The 12-hour experience at the sanctuary was made extraordinary through the amazing view of the children. They saw the marvel of life in every animal. This was definitely a trip to be remembered. Thanks MAYI Yoga Academy and Super Yoga Kids! **YM**



A

Articles by Practitioners

Seeing Yoga through the Lens

by Nirmell Satthiyasilan

Call it the most treasured moment in my life. It happened when my thought patterns were suddenly ignited into a process of self-discovery. There was a strong urge to dwell deep into the unknown and find the meaning of my existence.

I started to read more on self-realisation and often questioned which practices would help me embark on this journey better. Clueless, I looked into myself and practised what made me happy.

Both art and photography are my passion. They add colour and beauty to life and allow me to connect better with nature as well as people. When my mind's focus is on photography, all visual inputs are processed differently. My brain perceives each image in multiple frames with respective angles and depth of field. This is how I understand photography ... in different aspects of a particular moment – lighting, angle, distance and depth of field come together to provide the final shot of the perfect moment. This gradually helps me appreciate the many factors around me.

Our life experiences are similar to the multitude of frames in photography. When we gather our emotions, we gain a unique experience in a particular moment, but unlike printed photography, our unique experiences are dissolved continuously to allow other experiences to arrive and swiftly leave us again in a continuous flow of arrival and departure. The passage of time is like a speed train with a one-way destination. Life passes by at a speed and moments are too precious to be taken for granted as together they build a path for us to take.

As a biology student, my inclination towards earth and living organism has always been strong. Despite being penniless, I saved up and got for myself a good camera and embarked on journeys to the depths of the forest while getting immersed in the visual experience of Mother Nature's true beauty.

Later, I was really excited with the purchase of a mid-range Canon DSLR with a compatible 18-125mm zoom lens, but there was a small problem... I did not know how to use the camera nor was I familiar with all the technical jargon such as shutter speed, aperture and ISO.

My DSLR skills needed serious polishing, but the desire to understand and experience life never faded. My photography journey started with a hike to the famous Nuang Mountain in Selangor. That was the beginning of a wonderful experience to the midst of beautiful forests, mountains, volcanoes and waterfalls... to this very day. But even though my visual experience was satisfied, my inner search for self-discovery was still flickering.

Rather surprisingly, through the same photographic journey I had later discovered the blissful path towards Hatha Yoga. After ten years of soul searching, finally I was at the doorstep of a place that would take me deeper into the universe within -- the MAYI Yoga Academy.

I was mesmerised by the depth of well-being of the body and mind that yoga covered. I had initially assumed yoga was a tradition based on a single practice known as asanas. To my excitement there were so many types of practices... for example, the asanas were for bodily health and vigor, and Kriya Yoga and meditation were for mental health. Even for cleansing, yoga had detox techniques and it taught healthy eating habits. These myriad of yogic paths could be practiced by a person individually or collectively. Amazingly, each time a person practices yoga, the experiences are unique and specific unlike before. This reminds me of the same unique experience with photography.

I then started enjoying my yoga practices and gaining a unique sense of self. Perhaps this was the outcome of the union of body and mind. But often I wondered what if I was unable to perform a particular asana properly, would I be classified as wrong? Should I always bend down completely to touch the toes during Surya Namaskar, even if there was pain?

But when I understood the concept of *sthiram* and *sukham* in yoga, I knew that even when not touching the toes, I was performing a variation of the *asana* which would provide me with my own unique experience. Happiness and satisfaction existed in practice only if my focus was not on achievement or failure. Similarly, in photography, the aperture value determined how much the surroundings were blurred compared with the subject.



This is known as the depth of field. Is there such a thing as a wrong aperture? Perhaps not. It depends on what is the final picture output we want to produce. Say if I needed a clear crisp picture of a flower or a bride with the surroundings blurred completely, I then would work on achieving that by applying a number of factors such as setting the right aperture as well as the corresponding shutter speed and ISO level, depending on how much light is available in that area. However, there is no single rule that allows you to achieve this outcome.

When I reflect this in yoga, if I want to have a clean and healthy intestinal system, I know that in addition to doing specific *asanas* in *hatha yoga* for digestive improvement, I could also practice the *shatkarmas* like *kunjla* or full *shanka*. Choosing the correct practice here was like using the best setting for photography. When the best setting brings about the perfect picture that truly captures the moment, wouldn't it be a waste to click aimlessly or live life by merely staying alive? Shouldn't we focus on self-development to unearth our true potential? Yoga helps us prepare for this aspect.

I remember when I used to find myself in the middle of a thick Malaysian or foreign rainforest with mud covering my feet a few inches deep, drenched in sweat and my faithful DSLR hanging by the neck. Oblivious to the speed of my hiking party, I always had the tendency to walk alone while keeping a fairly safe distance from my friends who would be walking ahead. While the rest were racing towards the peak, I kept thinking about the frames of my possible shots. Although my friends used to wonder why I was always the last to reach the peak, it never bothered me.

For me life is about experience and it is not a race or competition. Even while practicing *asanas* with my yoga group, we are advised to do it calmly and slowly to enjoy the full benefit. It is all about valuing each moment in the present so that it will accumulate into a beautiful experience. When we have set our minds into achieving something, other than planning and taking action, there is always a degree of austerity incurred. In the course, we may stumble and we may lag behind, or even appear like an outcast from our 'regular' peers. Yet, once we understand that our vision is for the betterment of the whole being, it clears us of all self-doubts. Walking beside our peers is not the most important thing, but walking and striving forward with full awareness is. As in photography, the quantity of the photos we take is irrelevant, but the "message" through the images carries weight. By taking my journey at my own calm and composed pace, I am in an ideal yogic state of mind, conducting photography in a full state of awareness, capturing nature at its best.

A person who sets his mind to live a full and meaningful life is no different from a photographer who aspires to take beautiful pictures to capture life's moments in multiple angles and frames. In order to achieve his goal, a photographer uses the right gadget and the right settings, similarly in order to live a full and meaningful life, we embrace *Kriya Yoga* for self-development, *asana yoga* for general well-being and meditation for mental and emotional health. And when all these practices are embraced, our body and mind become the melting pot of well-being – the picture perfect of health and harmony of mind, body and emotion. **YM**

Life is meant to be lived happily and not be beset by diseases. For that, we need to be healthy in body, mind and emotions. The state of being healthy and balanced emotionally starts with the mind and it works its way to the body. To keep our mind healthy we need to be aware of what we put into it. And it works vice versa. What we put into the body likewise affects the mind. In this article, I would like to share about the art of mindful eating.

A car needs fuel to be driven. In the same way, the food that we eat is the fuel for our body. Just as the car needs to be serviced regularly, the human body and mind too need servicing; and eating for sustenance is the first of the service we do for ourselves. Food is not just a source of energy it is our defence against diseases, and we can achieve this through mindful eating.

3. We will slowly realise that unhealthy food isn't as tasty as we thought it is, nor does it make us feel good.
4. We will experience natural weight loss.
5. Emotional issues can be sorted through emotional eating habit.
6. Social overeating can become less of a problem and we don't overeat while socialising
7. The eating experience becomes joyful and as a result we enjoy life more.
8. We learn how food can affect our mood and energy throughout the day.
9. We learn what food best fuels our exercise routine, work and play.
10. The best part is, we can be satisfied even with less amount of food being consumed.

What does research say?

Jean Kristeller, a professor emeritus of psychology at the Indiana State University, is a pioneer in the field. She first became interested in applying mindfulness to eating when she was working with overweight college students who compulsively eat large quantities of food, or "binge". So to help them she started a Mindful-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) programme.

Kristeller tested her MB-EAT programme in a pilot study with 18 women with binge eating disorder. They participated in seven sessions, which included assessments prior to and following treatment. At the end of treatment, only four participants still had the criteria for the disorder. Overall, the women demonstrated a better relationship to food and eating, and their depression and anxiety decreased.

Currently, there is no data to show what happens in the brain when people practise mindful eating. But Kristeller points to the large body of research on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme (MBSR) showing that people who use mindfulness increase the size and function of their pre-frontal cortex – the area of the brain connected to decision-making and long-range planning. She hypothesizes that mindful eating strengthens the same area of the brain, making it easier for people to cognitively process their desire to eat, rather than fall victim to the emotional centre that often drives eating. "We are interrupting the reactivity cycle," says Kristeller.



So what is mindful eating? Mindful eating is learning to pay full attention to our food; for example, putting the food consciously in our mouth, really tasting the food and also noticing our thoughts, feelings and sensation during the process. This practice is a form of meditation. It can't be achieved overnight and there will be a time when we forget to eat mindfully, but with practice and attention we will see improvement. Let's take a look at the benefits.

10 Benefits of mindful eating:

1. We will learn to eat when we are hungry and stop when we are full.
2. We will learn to really taste food and enjoy every bit of it.

How to start?

1. **Start Small** - Choose one meal/snack each day and focus on mindful eating.
2. **Appreciate the appearance** - Take time to notice the food on the plate.
3. **Stop multitasking while eating** - Set aside time to eat.
4. **Go for quality not quantity** - Smaller amount of best food we want to have.
5. **Focus on chewing** - Chew food properly before swallowing.
6. **Focus on each mouthful** - Think of the flavour, texture and the sensation in the mouth.
7. **Make time to make your own meal** - Cooking is a form of relaxation therapy. Let's prepare our own dishes with fresh ingredients.
8. **Being Thankful** - Lastly, be thankful for what we have on the plate.

I have been practising mindful eating for about 2 months now. As a result, my eating habit has changed; I eat less but I do not feel hungry as often as before. My stomach does not experience bloating as much as before. I have discovered the joy of eating. These days I taste the food I am eating, and as a result, my sense of taste has improved and I am almost able to taste the spices in the food I'm consuming.

Being a foodie I absolutely love food and used to go on "food-hunting" trips with like-minded people. So, for me, mindful eating is a habit which gives freedom from the dieting trap. I am confident, just like me, you too will have a natural weight loss and your body composition will slowly improve. I must admit, I have not lost a tonne of weight, but I am happy with the progress. I feel great about my body; it brings a new definition to my self-esteem.

One important thing to note: be kind to yourself and be patient if you don't see the results immediately; repeat the mantra, practice...practice...practice. So, I hope, from this day onwards we will no longer complain that we have put on weight or we have fallen sick due to the food we eat. Let's take our time and slowly build a healthy relationship with the food that we are eating and be happy.

Food is joy, Food is cure and Food is happiness. **YM**

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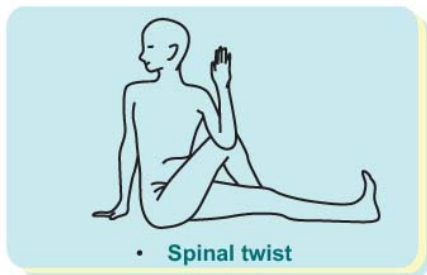
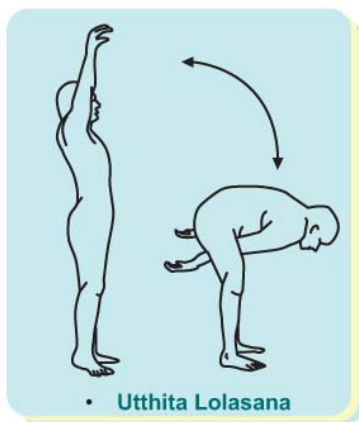
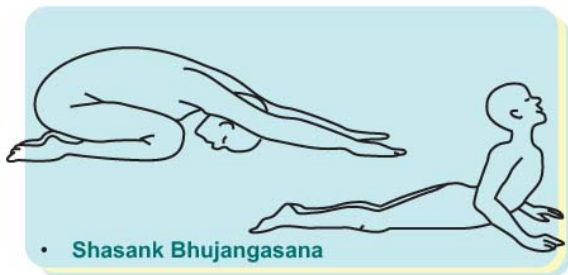
We were designed to stand upright, yet in this modern world, too many of us spend our days with our heads slumped over for a simple reason: staring at the tiny screen of our smartphone. The average adult head weighs 10 to 12 pounds when it's in the neutral position, however due to gravity, the cranium becomes heavier as you bend your neck at a 60 degree angle to check your phone, putting 60 pounds' worth of pressure on your cervical spine ('Tech Neck syndrome').

Sitting at a computer for hours, we have to deal with compression problems at both the bottom of the spine and at the cervico-thoracic junction, where the neck meets the shoulder.

The vertebrae at the base of our spine take more weight when we sit for long hours and the fluid from the intervertebral discs, which are the fibro-elastic pillows between the vertebrae, begin to leach out. Our discs become thinner and drier, and eventually cannot pull apart and puff up, even when we are not sitting. Our lower back gradually becomes stiffer and less forgiving, and in this brittle state it is much easier to be hurt by becoming a weekend warrior (infrequent exercise). Adolescents particularly, develop upper and lower back pain during the growth spurt with increasingly lengthy hours at a computer.

YOGA ASANAS

- **Surya Namaskar** – leading up to 12 rounds daily



- **Forward Bends (flexions)** – to widen spaces between vertebrae, stretch muscles of the back and hips and strengthen abdominal muscles. Note: to avoid of suffering from herniated discs
- **Backbends (extensions)** – to minimise radiating pain

**to be continued in the next issue with more Yoga Therapy tips for the relief of back ache!*

All yoga techniques should be learned from an experienced yoga therapist. For a free yoga therapy first consultation please call: **03-2260 5322** (Brickfields/Bangsar); **03-7727 6682** (Damansara Utama)



Yogic Wisdom For Daily Living

II.24 Santosat anuttamah sukhalahhah

by Jamie Spatafore

From contentment and benevolence of consciousness come supreme happiness.

Every being everywhere on this planet only wants two things: a) increase in happiness, and b) decrease in pain. This is a natural wish no one seems to achieve. Why?

Perhaps there is a clue in this sutra. Contentment. What is contentment? For me, contentment means there is a peaceful calm feeling that comes over me. And when it does, I do not feel the need for anything. I feel full. Do not get me wrong, I still take part in action, however I do it without the feeling of stress. I notice that when I am experiencing a period of deep contentment, everything I do is correct. It happens without me thinking about it.

Sri Patanjali says that with contentment and benevolence of consciousness come supreme happiness. Benevolence of consciousness is just a mind that is not striving, not arguing, and not aggressive. A mind that is content with its place and role is benevolent. Can we experience happiness just by being content?

Maybe we should go backward to go forward and investigate happiness. What is happiness? We say that pleasure gives us happiness. Is that true? Perhaps it is true temporarily but can it always give us happiness? I find pleasure in eating spicy food; that gives me happiness because my taste buds are awoken and the sensations on my tongue, throat and stomach are pleasurable. However, that spicy food will also give me pain later in the evening.

Being with my kids gives me pleasure. To interact with people who love you unconditionally is a really powerful experience, but what happens when they inevitably grow up and move out of the house and create a life of their own? What once gave me happiness will then give me pain. There is a great verse in the Bhagavad Gita that says (I'm paraphrasing): It is the wise man that knows what once gives pleasure also gives pain and he stays aloof of both.

Look at our modern day lives. We can do so much more than our ancestors. If I have the money and time, I can literally travel around the globe in one day. We can see sites that previous generations could only read about. We can access information with one push of a button. Are we anymore happy? We travel all over looking for happiness and eventually we find something or someone or some place that we think gives us happiness. But in a few years or so, we feel restless again and we want to find a new friend, a new lover, a new teacher or a new job.

Maybe that is why we cannot find happiness and decrease pain? Firstly, what we think of as happiness is really just a temporary sensation, an excitement, a pleasure that will inevitably give way to pain. Secondly, we are not accustomed to real happiness that comes from a content and peaceful mind. We are accustomed to excitement to sensory stimulation. Maybe that is where the problem has been all along. Maybe we have rarely experienced true happiness.

Sri Patanjali says that supreme happiness lies in a peaceful and content mind. It would then make sense that when we have that it does not matter where we are in life. We can be rich or we can be poor. Frankly, we can be in jail for that matter. Sri Patanjali says all external circumstances do not matter if our minds are right.

I have been very fortunate to have come across some highly evolved beings in my life. Of course all of them have had an effect on me but at that time I was very immature. There was a part of me that wanted to change my life and be like them. I could not do it. I was pulled by life in a different direction. It caused me a lot of suffering for some time... until I realised. What they were doing is what they were meant to be doing and what I am doing is what I am meant to be doing. There is nothing wrong with either of us. The key is are we happy and content with where life has placed us?

So let us not put so much pressure on ourselves. Let us understand that we took this body to perform these tasks and let us do them with the best of our ability. However, let us always try to keep a content and peaceful mind. **YM**

A t Your Fingertips:

Boosting Your Immune Health in 14 Days

by Lee Yan

Immune system is one of the most important indicators of vitality. It represents the capacity to defend one's health against physical, emotional and environmental challenges. The vitality of an individual is represented through various indicators of health. Although very complicated, digestion, elimination and energy are some of the examples that show the body's efficient metabolic functions — like helping to harvest energy and nutrition from food as well as elimination of toxic burden — to keep it nourished.

With the unpredictable change of weather and environmental toxics or a host of issues like cold or flu, we should all be asking ourselves this question: How do I boost my immune system?

Most adults recognise it when they are under extreme stress, feel run down and are at risk of getting sick, but kids often internalise stress and don't talk about it. Social stress can have a huge impact on immunity, as can physical exhaustion. Kids who play sports often get run down and complain of frequent colds. During holidays they can get overly excited, stay up very late and become exhausted. When they get run down they don't handle stress well and are more susceptible to illness. If a child has a weak immune system, he is more susceptible to cold, flu and other problems.

Germs are everywhere and being exposed to them is a natural part of life. For adults the immune system can lose some of its protective effects when the body is constantly battling negative health habits such as a poor diet, little sleep and too much stress. Many working adults are facing an epidemic of prolonged sleep deprivation. This condition wears down the immune protection layer and may lead to the loss of ability to defend the body over time.



There are many other conditions that compromise the immune system such as digestive imbalance, constipation, diarrhea, indigestion and acid reflux. Any irritation of the gut will affect the function of the villi in the colonic system. The villi is responsible for the assimilation of nutrients, immunity and the removal of toxins in the body.

If you have any signs of low immune system or looking to strengthen your immune health, we recommend NSR centre's easy-to-implement simple home programme called the "Home Immune Health Boosting Kit ". It consists herbs that are beneficial to health, a detailed guided instruction on the usage as well as immune health-boosting lifestyle and nutrition information.

This kit contains very powerful herbs like Neem, Ashwaganda, Amla and Daruharidra. Here are some information on them.

Neem, or *Azadirachta indica*, is a famous anti-microbial herb of the Ayurvedic tradition. Medicinal compounds found in neem oil and leaves stimulate various immune cells to act against pathogens. Use of the herb has proven effective in eliminating streptococcal bacteria. Studies on the properties of neem have demonstrated direct toxicity against a variety of fungus, bacteria and viruses. Further benefit of neem is derived from its capacity to lower blood sugar. This is helpful because sugar is the main source of sustenance for bacteria and fungus.

Ashwaganda, or *Withania somnifera*, is an excellent adrenal supportive herb that has tonifying effect on the whole hormone system. It has been observed to reduce stress on the adrenal gland and stimulate the thyroid gland activity. This demonstrates the anti-stress activity and pro-metabolic activity of Ashwagandha. It is a beneficial herb to balance the

quality of our internal energy. These reinforce immune activity of the individual, indicated by the mobilisation and activation of immune cells. It has also been observed to reverse immune-suppression and is one of the best hormonal and immune modulator offered by the Ayurvedic tradition. Ashwagandha has mild anti-bacterial properties and it does stimulate host defence through its tonifying effect on the endocrine and metabolic systems.



Amla, or *Emblica officinalis*, is one of the more popular Rasayana that has a general benefit to health. It has been used as part of a traditional formula to boost immune system for over 2,000 years. Amla is a very useful antioxidant and liver supportive herb. Antioxidant function of this herb also has a regenerative effect on the immune system. The liver supportive activity of Amla has been shown to restore antioxidant system of the liver and restore elevated liver enzymes to normal. It has been observed to protect liver damage due to toxins and protect development of liver cancer. Liver is the primary detoxing organ of the body. Optimal function of the liver reduces toxic burden, which alleviates the burden of chronic toxicity and low-grade inflammation that keep the immune system distracted from its real job. Amla supports the immune system to deal with real threats.

Daruharidra, or *Berberis aristata*, also known as the Indian barberry, is one of the best Ayurveda herbs which corrects the metabolism, improves the liver function and nourishes the skin on deeper levels. Daruharidra corrects the metabolism. It is very useful in all health problems related with liver; it maintains cholesterol in healthy limits and has a preventive role in diabetes mellitus and related problems. Daruharidra is a nature antidote for toxicities. Internally, daruharidra is useful in fighting a vast range of diseases. The properties like cholegogue, hepato-stimulant and astringent are useful in treating anorexia, dysentery, hepatitis and liver disorders. It also effectively reduces the uterine inflammations, hence it is a valuable medicament for leucorrhoea and menorrhagia.

After you've spent some time changing to an immune system-friendly diet and lifestyle in this programme, you should start noticing some positive benefits. Firstly, little bumps and scratches are more likely to heal faster and you're less likely to come down with cold and flu. If sickness does occur, it's usually milder and of shorter duration than for someone with a weaker immune system, which means you'll have plenty of time to enjoy a good time for your self and your family.

NSR Home Immune Health Booster Kit consists of:

- Herbal formula of Amalaki, Daruharidra (Turmeric bark), Ashwagandha, Neem, and other herbs as needed.
- Detailed course instructions
- Lifestyle and nutrition information
- Bonus – Immune-boosting recipes and exercises

Consider getting your Home Immune Booster Kit from NSR Centre. Contact us at 03-77241072 to schedule a complimentary consultation session on how this Home Immune Booster Kit can be individualised to benefit your body type and your condition. At the NSR Centre, we do our part to empower you to live a healthy life that is harmonious with nature.

Disclaimer: This information is meant to supplement. It's not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease or replace advice from your doctor or healthcare provider. This information may not fit your specific health conditions. You should always speak with your healthcare professional before you start, stop or change any prescribed part of your healthcare 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. Website: www.nsrcentre.com

Eco's Echoes:

Neuroplasticity and Yoga – Part 2

by Ravin.S

If we have anxiety, stress or fear, we will often do very INTENSE workouts or activities. This will result in creating a new engram. Therefore, whenever fear or stress arise, the whole thinking pattern will be converted into a useful form of energy. Instead of the earlier thoughts residing in us and making us weak and bringing diseases, the same thoughts can be used as energy. We may take out our anger in these ways. We may release our stress in these ways. We may destroy our fears in these ways. We will not be strengthening the old pattern. We will not be strengthening the old unpleasant mental set up. We will see that we are creating a new relevance. Only for the first few days we will need to create this new relevant. Then next time onwards, this new relevant will be strengthened.

Neurophysiologists say that each time we react in a certain way, we are strengthening that particular pathway. Each time the river runs in the same relevant, the relevant becomes deeper. The river which runs in the same direction becomes more permanent. In a similar way, within our brain we also have many rivers. Some are wild forest-like rivers. For rivers which suddenly create calamity by sudden flood, we need to make a dam and divert to a different direction instead. Making dam and diverting is what we call as SADHANA (accomplishing something by transcending into practice).

Unfortunately, we have another huge relevant, an engram called laziness. Laziness is the biggest enemy in the awakening of the non-mechanical parts of our brain. Laziness is a demon. First, we have to break the lazy mental set-up to work on these engrams and create a new lifestyle. The unwanted old engrams will disappear automatically.

The science of neuroplasticity focuses on how the brain can rewire itself to create new connections and break down the cycle of negative thinking. As the sage Patanjali beautifully says:

"If you are suffering from a particular engram just create the anti-engram, also known as anti-emotion, in your mind. If you are suffering from anger then create peace. If you are suffering from violence then create compassion. And feel it spreading all over your body. Release that into the cosmos through your every pore. You will see that you have just created a new mental set-up, a new brain pattern just as you wanted".

Regular practice of Yoga is a perfect formula to create new deep behaviour grooves in our brains, which take advantage of neuroplasticity straight away, working on our body in uncompromising ways to break the laziness pattern.

Yes, Yoga will keep us aware of our minds as well as physical bodies. Yoga will bring us peace. It will develop greater concentration and improve willpower. It enables us to know our own selves better and understand others as well. This will lead our relationships with our wives, husbands, family members, friends, colleagues, etc, to positivity. A healthy physical body and a mind that is set to a high point of sensitivity and serenity are achieved through Yoga. This increases one's ability to remove any obstacles that make progress impossible in life.

Practice of Yoga is one of the simplest and most effective ways for neuroplasticity to perform its action in rewiring the brain, easily. It will allow us to become a suitable vessel to receive the influx of higher consciousness. Remember, we are not reality but we are potentiometers.

We need to work and work constantly towards achieving the Yogic Body and Vedic Mind. **YM**



Inner Insights:

Living a Balanced Life in Yoga

by Somita Raj, "The Work-In-Progress Yogi"

When I was introduced to yoga in 2009 at my local gym, little did I imagine that what started out as a post-workout de-stressing exercise would turn out to be one of the most meaningful journeys in my life. I became curious about every aspect of yoga — the asanas, the breathing techniques and the reasons behind each posture. This curiosity created a desire to learn yoga at a deeper level and led me to the doorsteps of MAYI Yoga Academy. Since then, I have completed the Foundation and Intermediate levels of the International Yoga Instructor Certification Course (IYIC), with MAYI — the best investment on myself to date. Yoga now plays a crucial role in my everyday well-being, without which, my days feel slightly incomplete.

Prior to practising yoga, I always had the impression that yoga was something mystic and only the flexible and talented ones could do it. That myth has been debunked. Yoga is for everyone regardless of age, gender or flexibility. If you are inflexible, you will notice the subtle positive changes taking place in the body with every practice. This certainly happened for me. The IYIC had expanded my understanding about yoga by many folds. Now, I am conscious about the benefits of different asanas and how they are contributing to the overall state of my well-being. The Shatkarma, or cleansing techniques, were extremely useful and practical. What worked for me best was the Jala Neti, or the nasal cleansing technique. I used to suffer from chronic allergic rhinitis. In fact, during the Jala Neti session, water could hardly flow through as both my nostrils were completely blocked. But now, with regular nasal cleansing using the neti pot, rhinitis has become a thing of past!

Yoga works to change things at a cellular level rather than superficial level. Transformation can only happen from deep within, from the core, or the cellular level. Yoga does this and more. All you need is a mat, a little bit of space and 20 minutes of your time daily.

We often get lost in the fast-moving pace of this world and lose sight of our true purpose in life; we derail from what matters and unwittingly give in to

the trivialities of life. But yoga helps to put in perspective all the imbalance and helps to unite us with what is important within. After all the very meaning of yoga is "union" — of the body, mind and breath — which leads to a harmonious state of being.

Yoga contributes to physical well-being; it gives you a soft glow that radiates and shines from within and helps you age gracefully — which I will know in 20 odd years from now ☺. Mentally, I have experienced more focus, alertness and mindfulness. I was an occasional sufferer of migraine. My occasional bouts of migraine are almost non-existent now! Another of the many wonders of practising yoga. Long working hours are now more bearable and manageable — ahh... not forgetting our dear friend "Mr Stress".

Yoga has been a transformational journey for me. I have never looked back since and swear by yoga for a healthy, wholesome and balanced life. I firmly believe that there is a bit of a yogi in all of us. It's just waiting for that slight nudge to be unleashed and bring about all the goodness that's dormant in us. **YM**



Inner Insights: My Journey into the Realms of Yoga

When a crossroad is reached, one has to decide which path to take. When it happened to me, it was not very difficult to choose the path as it seemed pre-destined.

The Beginning... In 2010, an unplanned visit to the doctor took place and a diagnosis of a medical condition was confirmed. The doctor said there was no medication to cure the condition but suppressing the symptoms with anti-inflammation steroids was possible. He further emphasised that a cure is yet to be found despite extensive medical research on the condition. Some would have gone into despair on such news, but for some reason unknown to me at that time, I was unperturbed. The strong believe in the divine energy for healing had kept me sane.

Resolution... I woke up one morning with a strong resolution and determination to find a cure for the medical issue I was diagnosed with. Medical science may not have the answers but I was sure that the universe has an answer for all the trivial issues that men face. That's when the idea of yoga came to me. I guess when we search for something with a deep intent, the universe has its own way of showing a solution. The Search... Who do I learn from was the first question. The search for a place and teacher to teach yoga was at an inception but my search didn't take long. I don't remember exerting any serious effort for the search. It was as though the universe had carved out a teacher to guide, share and give me the knowledge of yoga.

The First Call... A friend of mine who surprisingly calls me whenever I am not well, and until today I don't know how he senses that I am not well, called me and gave me a number to call when I mentioned 'yoga' to him.

The Search is Over... I called and someone by the name of Mani answered. He spoke in a

voice that I connected with immediately. It was as though the call was destined. A gentle voice listened to the medical issues I conveyed and why I was considering yoga. He assured and agreed that yoga will help to alleviate the issues. Then he explained about the yoga he taught and he was certain that Kriya would help me. When I asked if I should do Hatha before proceeding to Kriya, an assuring voice said "No, you can do Kriya". Without hesitation, I said I will join the class. There was no doubt in my mind, only certainty.

Support... I told my wife about my conversation with a teacher named Mani and she enthusiastically supported me. Coincidentally, she had attended a couple of Hatha classes with MAYI Yoga Academy before.

Missed the First Class – A Dampener..... I still remember it was a Thursday and supposed to be the first day of the new intake for the Kriya programme. But due to heavy rain, transport issues and bad traffic jam, I could not attend the first class. I was very disappointed. I guess it was a test to my determination. A call to Master Mani and I was told that many of them missed the class that day and I was assured that I would not lose any knowledge from missing the class.

The Learning Began... Then it all began on the following Thursday. My first class and it seemed as though the universe had once again selected the time and date for me to start this new journey. A journey that I feel truly blessed for. For someone who believes in past lives and karma, I'm certain that whatever sin I may have committed in previous lives, I must have done something good to be richly blessed with this opportunity to learn. The rest is up to me.

I finally met the person I spoke to over the telephone who addressed himself as Mani. He

became my teacher whom I fondly call 'Master'. I was elated firstly for the knowledge that I was about to embark on and continue to receive, and secondly to find a teacher of such compassion to share the knowledge of yoga with.

A ten-month programme went in a breeze. I was looking forward for every Thursday to learn from Master and do the practices. From the very first class I felt some transformation happening within me. A heavy head became lighter, an agitated mind became calmer and the frequent anger for many reasons dissipated and was replaced with understanding of the reasons. These are simple things, but simple things that make life happier.

Kriya and Self Understanding... It has been five years now and I'm still going strong with my practices, especially Kriya. One of the biggest learning is the understanding of myself. Some call it self-realisation but the word seemed to bring different meaning to different people, and some have given a very large meaning to it. But for me, it is simple — I was able to understand myself better. I was able to listen to my mind and body. It speaks to me of my connection to the surrounding. It speaks to me about the mistakes I continuously make, which enable me to correct myself quickly. I was also able to understand that some of the pains related to my body were psychosomatic issues that I'm able to rectify the minute realisation comes to me. This aspect of Kriya for me is the most important learning. If we don't get such realisation and awareness, then we are unable to take corrective actions. I believe any effort of correcting oneself without realisation is superficial. The teaching of Kriya also drove me to other yogic techniques, especially techniques related to healing. I became interested in healing and once again I was blessed to gain the knowledge of Manipuraka and Prana Vidya from Master Mani.

The Kriya Benefits... The benefits were not only apparent to me by introspection, but also

noticed by others. Family members and friends claimed of positive changes in me, which I took as a compliment but without necessarily being self-conscious about them. I accepted the changes for what they are since they contribute positively to the people around me.

What Others Say... My wife found me to be more in control and my temperamental nature seemed to be dissipating. Colleagues found me to be more in control of things, especially in a stressful environment. My boss, who was initially sceptical about my ability to handle stress, now refers other staff to me when they are stressed. The ability to help others gives a tremendous amount of satisfaction that money cannot buy.

Moving forward... I find Kriya continuously strengthening my mind. The journey had just started and I have a very long way to go not only in understanding the full potential of the mind but also harnessing it.

One question I often receive is whether Kriya helps to reduce issues and problems. One fellow yoga practitioner and very good friend of mine had said that issues do not go away. They continue to come but the ability to handle them becomes stronger. How true she is.

I had a recent realisation that Kriya is not the only technique I should focus on but also on the asanas and pranayama — the two techniques I have often neglected. I find that the mind has become stronger and has the ability to negate the disturbance of bodily pains, but the physical self should also be trained to avoid the possibility of affecting the mind — a more holistic approach I guess.

My Master... In this journey I had embarked on, I am truly blessed to have Master Mani as my teacher, whom I see not only as a teacher but as a big brother I never had.

The journey continues..... **YM**

Ayur Yoga: 7 Ayurveda Ideas for Health and Happiness

Ayurveda is a science of life based on the Vedas – the ancient books of knowledge and wisdom. More than four thousand years old, Ayurveda is perhaps the most complete system of living – embracing not only medicine, but also philosophy, psychology, lifestyle and health.

Ayurveda is based on the idea that the universe is composed of five basic elements known as the panchamahabhutas. They combine to form the three vital energies, or doshas. The mix of the dosha in each of us, an inherited trait, determines our physical constitution, called prakriti.

The most basic idea of Ayurveda is the concept of balance. We are healthy and happy when our doshas and our gunas are properly balanced. Most diseases result from an imbalance of the doshas. To heal the disease, the Ayurvedic practitioner attempts through various treatments to restore balance.

The balanced body then heals itself. Practitioners of Ayurveda believe that our natural state of being is one of balance. In balance, our bodies are toxin free, our organs function efficiently and the body uses its own defences to restore and maintain health and happiness.

Ayurvedic tips for a healthy and happy living:

1. YOGIC DETOX

Nasal irrigation (jala neti), stomach cleansing (kunjil), intestinal track cleansing (laghoo/shanka) are safe techniques to flush toxins out of the body. They are simple yet powerful methods in maintaining the equilibrium of the doshas.

2. EATING THE AYURVEDIC WAY

The body is kept healthy by eating more alkaline-based food. It keeps the bacteria and parasites at bay. In a single meal, rice is best kept at one-third portion while the remaining two-third are made of a variety of fresh-cooked vegetables. This fills up the stomach and works on a healthier eating habit.

3. COOL THE BODY

Keep the body cool by lubricating it through oil massage or oil application. A cool body helps to bring down excessive heat, which could be a trigger for many health issues like high blood pressure, migraine, difficulty in conceiving and much more. Coconut water taken without sugar and ice brings tremendous benefit to the body.

4. SLEEPING THE RIGHT WAY

Sleep is important to recuperate and heal the body. Two hours before bedtime it is important that all electronic devices are switched off. A light awareness meditation could promote deep and quality sleep.



5. THINKING AND FEELING POSITIVE

It's very important that both thoughts and emotions are positive. Worry brings down the natural immune system of the body, stretching healing to a longer period. With complete trust that the body is capable of healing itself and by taking the right steps, progress happens instantly.

6. HERBS THAT HEAL

"Traditional herbal medicines are naturally occurring, plant-derived substances with minimal or no industrial processing that have been used to treat illness within local or regional healing practices. Traditional herbal medicines are getting significant attention in global health debates. In China, traditional herbal medicine played a prominent role in the strategy to contain and treat the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)" – excerpt from the World Health Organisation Bulletin. Ayurvedic herbs will help improve health without the side effects.

7. PRANIC-BASED PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS

Disease happens when life force (prana/chi/ki) becomes stagnated in the body. Yoga asanas (postures), tai chi, chi qung are among the pranic-based movements which aid the flow of prana in the body. Breathing naturally becomes deep in the practices and this indirectly affects the mind and emotions, making it more calm and steady.

MAYI AYURYOGA provides free consultation on appointment basis. Panchakarma is a treatment offered at our centre to purify, eliminate toxins and balance the physiology. Panchakarma, which translates as the five actions, is a medley of yogic and ayurvedic treatments that aim to clear the impurities from the body and balance the doshas.

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AyurYoga Bangsar : 03-2282 4980 / 012-2679 621
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UDWARTHANAM

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Slimming massage, tones skin & muscles, removes cellulite & body odour, promotes glowing skin.

PADA ABHYANGA

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Stimulates tired feet, removes cramps, calms the mind, improves blood circulation to the feet.

SHIRO ABHYANGA

Head, Neck & Shoulder Massage

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Brightens face, stimulates lymph drainage, relaxing, tones facial muscles.

PODI KHZI

Warm Herbal Massage with Bolus

Improves circulation, relieves aches & pains, good for arthritis & rheumatism.

NAVARA KHZI

Milk & Rice Massage with Bolus

Beautification massage, brightens & nourishes skin, tones nerves & body tissues.

KATI VASTI

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Good for slipped discs, lower back pain, muscle strain, fatigue, spinal health.

JANU VASTI

Warm Oil Therapy for Knees

Good for sprains, muscle and joint pain, arthritis, improves circulation and speeds up healing process.

GREVA VASTI

Warm Oil Therapy for Neck

Helps cervical spondylitis, slipped discs, bone spurs, nerve disorders.

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Encouraging Teens to Embrace Their Core Values

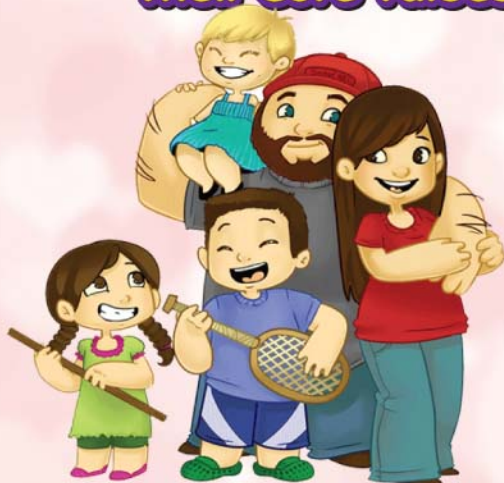
Growing up experiences mean different things to different people. Parents wish their children will be happy, joyful and healthy always while teachers wish their students will succeed in studies and all other undertakings. How about children? Children wish for things which are largely influenced by their lifestyle, environment and ideas projected by society and peers.

Most teens (and tweens) now live under pressure, especially with regards to their physical appearance. The strings of picture perfect models making headlines in publications of all sorts have caused a lot of misconceptions on the idea of perfection – size zero girls, boys with washboard abs, flawless faces of perfect symmetry, etc. These are just a few examples which have already sent many youngsters to go (or considering to go) under the knife for nips and tucks. And it doesn't help that girls are introduced to dolls with outrageously-proportionate bodies since young.

For some teens, physical appearance takes centre stage most of the time. Apart from managing their academic performances, they are often concerned about other people's opinion about them and hence they take a lot of effort in putting the best foot forward. Yes, it is indeed an admirable trait for children to want to be better... yet the driving reasons, aims and processes need adults' supervision.

Acceptance Without Judgement

Adults, especially parents, mentors and educators have direct influence on teens and are in the position to mould them. Although teens are more likely to associate with peers, it is the mentors who play the biggest role in their lives. Teens confide in their mentors and look up to them for advice and guidance. Being 'accepted' as their confidant shows that there



are elements of respect involved. And this respect should not be breached.

One of the tell-tale signs of a breach of respect is if/when adults start to compare their teens with others and judge their behaviours or achievements (or rather the lack of it). This is highly damaging to bonding, even between adults. How to prevent this? If ever you have the urge to compare your child with others, take three deep and calm breaths to allow time to put your thoughts together for positive communication to take place.

Activities to do together: Note at least three positive things about your child/student for the day. It could be something as simple as tidying his own room, being a good team player, etc. Have your child do the same and study the answers together. With this, you can see what the child perceives as his/her good qualities.

Understanding with Compassion

Teens may appear rash and radical at times. This is when adults need to understand that the brain goes through a massive "remodelling" during teenage years. It assimilates and interprets learning and controls the body's movements and activities, hence its growth

should not be overlooked. Being able to understand and be aware of the mind and thoughts of teens involve patience and compassion, and would often yield amazing discoveries about their ideologies.

How can adults help? Take time to listen to their ideas and thoughts, especially their views about themselves and the society. Do your best to understand the rationale behind their perspectives and brainstorm for better solutions if needed. You might just be surprised by the results!

Activities to do together: Pick a topic of mutual interest and list out your understanding about the subject. Have your child do the same. Discuss your answers so both of you can have better understanding of each other.

Advocate Self-Love and Self-Worth

Other than expressing love to others, we need to extend it to ourselves as well. Now, this is not to be mistaken with narcissism, vanity or egotism. It is within the context of minimising self-destructive thoughts or actions and being confident and comfortable in our own skin. There will be a period when teens will experience bodily changes during puberty such as facial hair growth, the change of voice, acne breakouts, etc. Though they are inevitable and are signs of hormonal development, which are in every aspect healthy and normal, teens may feel the most self-conscious during this period.

How can adults help? Be ready to offer guidance when teens come to you for advice, yet allow time and space for them to come to terms with the changes they are experiencing and not breathe down their necks.

Activities to do together: Family members can list out what they mean to each other. This way they can have an insight into what matters most for each person in the family and your teen can see what he/she means to other people.

Note: All the suggested activities are to be done without judgement when answers are revealed. Take it as an opportunity for the family members to understand each other and utilise it to strengthen the bond within the family.

Most importantly, adults will need to lead by example! Minimise (and eventually stop) comparing yourself with others either about material or immaterial things (eg: who and who has a bigger car, house, etc). Children often pick up these subtle behaviours for good or for worse. The way to live is to be happy, confident and contented with even the smallest things in life. Express your appreciation for each other and maintain positive communication! **YM**

Yoga practices:

Deep breathing exercises to provide vitality to the body and to calm surging emotions.

Meditation and visualisation practices for a healthy and confident self.

Yoga asana:

Lion Roaring Pose

Camel Pose

Warrior Pose

Bow and Arrow Pose

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 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).



F eatured Asana

Supta Udarakarshanasana

(Sleeping Abdominal Stretch Pose)

Step by Step:

1. Lie down in the starting position to relax.
2. Bend the knees and place the soles of both feet flat on the floor, directly in front of the buttocks.
3. Keep the knees and feet together throughout the practice.
4. Interlock the fingers of both hands, place the palms under the back of the head and let the elbows touch the floor.
5. Breathe in, and while breathing out, slowly lower the legs to the right, trying to bring the knees down to the floor (the feet should remain in contact with each other, although the left foot will move slightly off the floor).
6. At the same time, gently turn the head and neck in the opposite direction to the left. This will give a uniform twisting stretch to the entire spine.
7. Hold the breath in the final position while mentally counting three seconds.
8. While breathing in, raise both legs to the upright position and turn the head to the neutral position.
9. Keep the shoulders and elbows on the floor throughout.
10. Repeat on the left side to complete one round.
11. Practice 5 complete rounds.



Benefits:

- Gives an excellent stretch to the abdominal muscles and organs, and thereby helps to improve digestion and eliminate constipation.
- The twisting stretch of the spinal muscles relieves the strain and stiffness caused by prolonged sitting.

Chef Yogi's Food Notes!

Cheese Bread Rolls



Ingredients

- Cherry tomatoes (sliced into halves)
- Capsicum (cut into small thin long slices)
- Loose leafy purple lettuce (or any salad of your choice)
- Black pepper
- Minced garlic
- Sunflower seeds
- Dried cranberries
- Bread
- Cheese
- Olive oil
- Butter

Method

1. Place the cut tomatoes, capsicum and lettuce inside a bowl and mix it with garlic, olive oil, sunflower seeds, cranberries and black pepper.
2. Flattened the bread with a roller and remove the crusts.
3. Place the cheese and the mixed salad on top of the bread.
4. Roll the bread and seal the edges with butter/oil.
5. Coat the frying pan with butter and lightly pan-fry the bread roll. (Not deep fry just light grilled effect.)
6. Serve and enjoy the bread rolls.

SCHEDULE OF COURSES: OCT 2015 - FEB 2016

OCT

05-09/10/2015	BSR	Yoga Therapist Certification Course
07/10/2015	SU	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
11/10/2015	DU/BSR	International Yoga Instructor Course - Foundation
11/10/2015	BSR	Partner with Precision Workshop
16/10/2015	DU	Silver Elderly Yoga Programme
17/10/2015	BSR	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
17/10/2015	DU	Nutrition and Healthy Cooking Workshop
17/10/2015	BSR	Dhyana (Meditation) Instructor Course
18/10/2015	BSR	International Yoga Instructor course - Intermediate
19-23/09/2015	BSR	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
25/10/2015	BSR	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
25/10/2015	DU	Effective Communication Workshop

NOV

01/11/2015	DU	Manipuraka Workshop
01/11/2015	DU	Urdhva Retas Workshop
09/11/2015	DU	Yoga Practitioner Short Course (English/Chinese)
13/11/2015	BSR	Pregnancy Yoga Instructors Course
15/11/2015	BSR	MAYI Graduation Ceremony 2015
16-19/11/2015	BSR	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
20/11-01/12/2015	Fraser's Hill	International Yoga Instructor Course- Foundation, Intermediate & Advance - Retreat
22/11/2015	BSR	Anatomy & Physiology Workshop
23-27/11/2015	BFS/DU	Super Yoga Kids Holiday Programme

JAN DEC

03-06/12/2015	Bkt Tinggi	Yoga Retreat 2015
10-13/12/2015	Bkt Tinggi	Advanced Dharana Course Retreat
13/12/2015	DU	Full Intestinal Cleansing Workshop
15-19/12/2015	Cheras	MYS-National Yoga Camp
24-28/12/2015	Yogyakarta	Yogyakarta Ancient Ruins Tour
10/1/2016	BSR	New Year Celebration - Open Day
10/1/2016	SU	Manipuraka Workshop
10/1/2016	SU	Urdhva Retas Workshop
16/1/2016	DU	New Year Celebration - Open Day
16/1/2016	BSR	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
17/1/2016	BSR/DU	International Yoga Instructor Course - Intermediate
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
30/1/2016	BSR	Pranayama (Breathing Technique) Instructor Course

FEB

8-12/2/2016	BSR	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
18/2/2016	DU	Prana Vidya Healing Course
19/2/2016	DU	Silver Elderly Yoga Programme
20/2/2016	BFS	Slimming and Wellness Programme
20/2/2016	DU	International Yoga Instructor Course - Foundation (Chinese)
21/2/2016	DU	International Yoga Instructor Course - Foundation
22/2/2016	BFS	International Yoga Instructor Foundation 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 Course - Foundation

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 for updates

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Selayang Utama | 8-1 & 9-1, Jalan Paragon Utama, Selayang Utama, Bt Caves.

website: www.maiyogaacademy.com

email: yoga@maiyogaacademy.com

+603 2260 5322

+603 2282 4980

+603 7726 6682

+603 6127 5693