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**The Essence
of Traditional
Surya Namaskar**

Universal Life Energy

Naturally Vegetarian



**Message from
Master Mani:
Yoga and Nature**

M

essage from Master Mani

Yoga and Nature

Nature here is explored in the sense of one's personality. Yoga changes the personality of a practitioner so that he grows to a state of clarity. It is not merely change, but an evolution in the nature of the person.

Does that mean he stops doing the work he is engaged in? Not at all. In fact, he does it better. He does it faster and more efficiently while being unperturbed by the results of his action, as he continues with his work.

However, he is not oblivious to his actions, he is aware of everything and therefore he's growing.

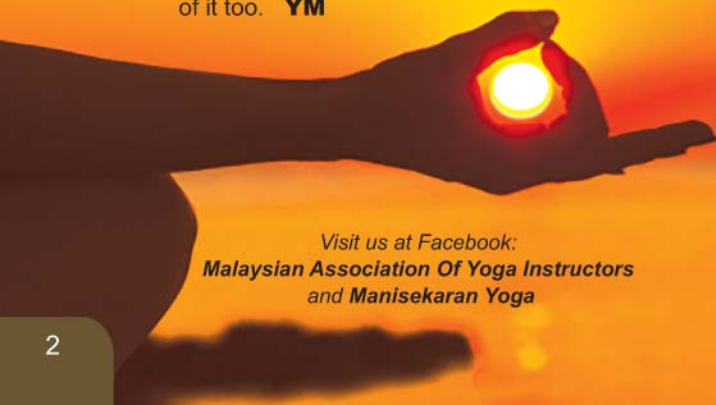
Does it mean he is perfect in his actions or words? It is not a journey of perfection but a process of perfecting awareness through countless situations.

Nature here is reality. If he needs to be firm, he does it, but without being indecent. If he has to fire someone, he does it without revenge or hatred. If he has to hire, he does it without fear or favour. All these seem to be a part of normal life, but with a profound learning taking place all the time within – and changing one's nature into a higher state of awareness.

Therefore nature and yoga is something totally out of the textbooks of looking at external nature, though of course it is absolutely vital to see that we do take care of it too. **YM**



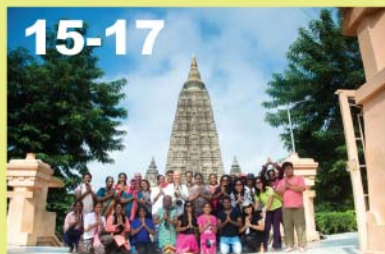
*Master
Manisekaran*



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Content

- 2 | Message from Master Mani
- 5-6 | The Essence of Traditional Surya Namaskar
- 7-8 | Universal Life Energy
- 9-10 | Naturally Vegetarian
- 11-12 | Events: *Ypga Awareness Programme For Trainee Teachers*
- 13-14 | Articles by Practitioners
 - *Seven Wonders of Life*
- 15-17 | - *An Enlightening Trip in India*
- 18-19 | Yoga Therapy: *Nature, Music That Heals*
- 20 | Yogic Wisdom For Daily Living
- 21 | Eco's Echoes: *Animals*
 - *Set Them Free! (Part 2 of 3)*
- 22 | Inner Insights:
 - *Goodbye Hip Surgery*



- 23 | Ayur Oral Care:
 - *Managing Tooth Sensitivity*
- 24-25 | Ayur Yoga: *The Healing Powers of Tumeric*
- 26-27 | Super Yoga Kids Corner:
 - *Of Pregnancy and Yoga*
- 28 | Featured Asana: *Tiryaka Bhujangasana (Twisting Cobra Pose)*
- 29 | Chef Yogi's Food Notes!
- 30 | Schedule of Courses: Nov 2016 - Mar 2017

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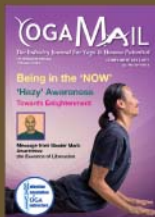
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The Essence of Traditional Surya Namaskar

by Dr Chandra Nanthakumar

In many cultures, light is a symbol of consciousness and self-illumination. According to Newmann and Hull (2014) the world begins with the coming of light. Needless to say, the primary source of light is none other than the mighty sun. Without the sun, plants would not be able to photosynthesize. This, in turn, will eventually annihilate the food chain. In the absence of this magnificent star, the whole world will be in darkness. For millennia people have revered the sun as the spiritual and physical heart of the universe. According to Danielou (1991), since everything that exists originates from the sun, it must contain the potentiality of all that is to be known.

One of the ways of paying homage to the sun is through the dynamic asana (i.e. posture) sequence known as Surya Namaskar in Sanskrit. In the English language, it is known as Sun Salutation. This is a beautiful sequence commonly practised in a traditional Hatha Yoga class to enhance respiration and cardiovascular functions. Also, it teaches one to coordinate rhythmic breathing with body postures into a vinyasa (flow). The word, "namaskar" originates from the verb "namas", which means "to bow". Even though there has been some disparity amongst authorities with regard to the origin of the Sun Salutation, many variations have evolved along the way. Traditionalists contend that it originated more than 2.5 millennia ago, and according to Stenhouse (2001) at least two dozens of adaptations have emerged.

The traditional Surya Namaskar consists of 12 postures, and it is performed after the joint exercise and before the practice of asanas. The transition from one pose to the other is facilitated by inhalation or exhalation. A classical Surya Namaskar always starts with an energy visualisation to activate and smoothen the flow of prana. This visualisation only takes less than a minute.

The sequence starts off with a standing mountain pose (tadasana). While inhaling, one goes into a gentle back arch and upon exhalation, one goes into a forward bend (pada hastasana). This pose helps soothe the nervous system. Holding the breath, the right leg is lunged to the back with the right knee on the floor. The torso is raised up with the finger tips reaching for the floor. This pose is called the crescent moon pose (ardha chandrasana). This mighty pose has multiple benefits. It not only strengthens the ankles, knees, abdomen and spine, it also stretches the hips and psoas. In addition, it helps to reduce anxiety and depression, and improves balance and coordination.

Subsequently, while holding the breath, the left leg is brought to the back to cat pose (marjari) – a posture which relieves stress and calms the mind. From the cat pose, upon exhalation, the knees are raised off the mat, legs are straightened and the heels are brought to the floor. This posture is known as mountain (parvatasana). This asana increases blood flow to the sinuses. That is why this posture is a great exercise to cure colds.

Holding the breath and with the palms and feet on the floor, the knees, chest and chin are lowered to the floor forming the eight-limb pose (astangasana), which works on strengthening the extremities and limbs. Upon inhalation, the body is lowered to the floor and the torso is raised off the mat to cobra (bhujangasana). The cobra pose not only relieves back pain, but also strengthens the spine. While exhaling, the body is then raised to all fours and the buttocks are moved to the back with the forehead on the floor. This forms the moon pose (shashankasana) – a passive relaxing pose that has the ability to soothe headaches as it relaxes the upper torso and neck.

From the moon pose, one progresses into the mountain pose upon exhalation. Then the right leg is lunged to the front while holding the breath. At the same time, the left knee is lowered to the floor. Upon inhaling, the torso is raised to open the chest while the finger tips are in contact with the floor - this is the crescent moon pose. Slowly, the left leg is brought to the front and one goes into a forward bend. Next, the torso is raised into a backbend while inhaling. Lastly, upon exhalation, the body is brought back to its original position with both palms in front of the chest in namaskar mudra. These 12 steps make half a cycle of the Sun Salutation. The same procedure is repeated beginning with the left leg to make one complete cycle.

The beauty of Surya Namaskar is that it can be done in a gentle flow for meditative inner focus. On the contrary, it can also be done vigorously over a duration of 10 to 20 minutes to strengthen the cardiovascular system. Surya Namaskar is not only powerful but also unique in that it strengthens and extends the long muscles in the front and back of the body. It can be a stand-alone practice to maintain health. For purposes of developing muscular stamina, the asanas can be sustained over a couple of breaths. Absolute beginners can begin with one

or two rounds of Surya Namaskar a day, paying special attention to the inhalation and exhalation.

It is best performed outdoors facing east as the sun rises in the east. In countries like India, people practise this first thing in the morning. Nevertheless, in this modern day, Sun Salutation is used as a preliminary warm-up for a hatha yoga session. The sequence, in essence, is a humble adulation for the mighty sun, and it is essential to practice Surya Namaskar with awareness deep within the self. So powerful is this practice that it activates the prana shakti (which flows through the pingala nadi) and the manipura chakra (solar plexus). In order to absorb the full benefits of this magnificent sequence, it is imperative for the practitioner to be mindful of each and every movement to avoid sloppiness, especially when nearing the end of the rounds as fatigue may set in. **YM**

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Universal Life Energy

by Munis

What is universal life energy?

We often hear about energy or life force but have you ever wondered what this energy really is and where does it come from? In other words, what is the source of this energy?

Human consciousness animates and connects all life. Some call it "Universal Life Energy" or "Unity Consciousness". This unity consciousness has a deep seat within our hearts and it's the same energy component permeating all. Gurus, mystics and sages have spoken for centuries about the universal life energy. It has been called many things, including Ki, Ka, Chi, Xi, Prana, Netter, Ihund and Biomagnetic energy, to name a few.

When we raise our vibration and increase our sensitivity, a natural flow of the moment can be perceived as a sense of "rightness". When we follow this flow, we move into alignment with the universe and life feels increasingly harmonious, we feel successful, fulfilled and abundant, we feel complete and at one with all. However, the feeling of completeness exists only when one experiences the present moment. With continuous practice, the experience is enhanced and lengthened.

Aligning yourself with the Universal Flow

As we observe whatever happening around us, we often find that the mainstream of humanity is becoming increasingly dissatisfied, and dis-eased as the seeming relentless struggle to control life and the planet's dwindling resources rolls on. Fortunately, a growing group of people are turning away from this mechanised madness by finding love, peace and fulfilment within. It's all about recognising oneself as part of the greater whole and flowing with that, inside oneself. Understanding how the microcosm of your life fits within the greater macrocosm leads to a sublime way of being. When we start tuning

in to the right frequency, we will find the mystical "nirvana", inside ourselves.

Infinite Creative Potential Exists Inside You

When we let go of the need to control life, the need to be right, the need to find happiness outside of ourselves, the release steadily unwinds us, taking us on a Journey of Enlightenment where ultimately we become the One inside ourselves; we lose attachment to identity, it feels like no one is here. The divine paradox is that in touching base with this void of nothingness, we simultaneously realise the infinite potential of the One — the unlimited creative possibility that caused the Big Bang. The soul then writes a story, a flow, which is uniquely yours and yours alone. Everyone's story is different and unique and that itself is infinite creativity in action.

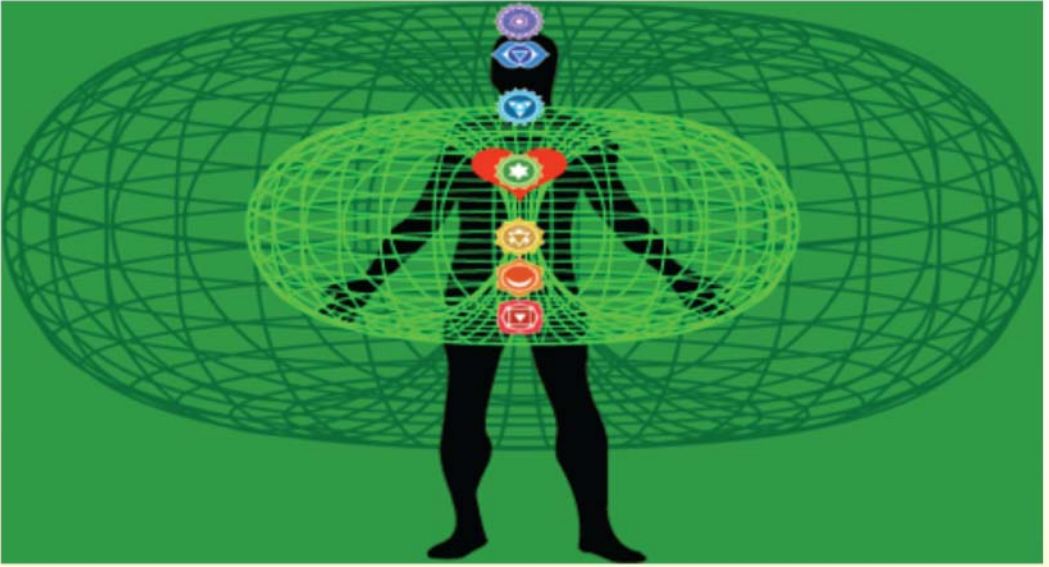
The Journey and Joy of Enlightenment

This 'Enlightenment' is not the end of the story. It is only the beginning of the authentic one. So, when I say, it's the beginning of the authentic one, we need to start looking at our life right now. Are we living life the way we are supposed to or destined to? What would you do if you are not afraid? How would you live your life then?

When we are clear on this answer, we then begin to recognise a sense of purpose, unveiled as divine service to the whole.

It is only when you let go of the life you thought you were creating that the real work and the real service comes gloriously into view.

So how do you live here and now? How do you unfold your real life story? It helps to recognise the bigger universal flow, how it's moving, and to become an active part in that.



You are a Divine Paradox

In this big explosion of consciousness — the Big Bang — you have essentially two contrasting flows creating relativity: one outwards — forming the multiplicity of separation consciousness, and the other inwards, reconnecting with the source — like the undertow.

These relativistic flows create the miraculous awareness of life experience.

However, in many places, unity consciousness gets stuck within the separation consciousness creating eddy currents. It's where the universe becomes convoluted and distorted.

I believe that the universe, of its own natural accord, by its own natural mechanism, is working to unravel that. The energies are working towards a balance — what some call “nirvana”.

Here is a depiction of both the microcosm of a man (connecting through the chakras) into the macrocosm of the universe...

Coming into Universal Alignment

We will be most aligned, most in the flow and most within internal harmony when we are aligned with this macrocosm. It's an entirely natural movement back to the core — Ascension — which just feels “right”.

One way to experience this movement of energy is to keep opening the chakras to allow this universal consciousness to flow into and through you. Then to observe its “pull” guiding you through life. It's so sophisticated, you can even experience it walking through town, or even the supermarket, because the flow exists everywhere!

What I observe is that if there's any separation from this, an identity forms, which then hurts! But if that which is separate — ego — lets go and chooses to flow with the mainstream of one's soul, you ultimately come into alignment with the entirety, inside yourself. And it feels simply “right” and feels like being at home. **YM**

Naturally Vegetarian

by Vijaya

People of wisdom say we are what we eat. What we put into our mouths, we become. This is closely linked to many ancient belief systems that propound vegetarianism for the overall well-being of mankind. Even many modern day health enthusiasts propose vegetarianism.

According to the popular ayurvedic system, food and people fall under the three natures of: rajasic, tamasic and sattvic. Is that totally vegetarian? Can a sattvic, or balanced, person be someone who takes non-vegetarian meals as well? Can we say all vegetarians are perfectly healthy and happy all the time?

The question is, whether to be or not to be a vegetarian? Discussions on vegetarianism have existed for thousands of years. People have been conscious of it even during vedic times. Though many support vegetarianism, there are those who argue against it on the basis of health. But most of the time, it's a matter of personal choice.

Its effects can be physiological in nature,

because I've heard many people say they are not able to eat meat anymore. Their bodies naturally reject all kinds of meat. Strangely, we may have witnessed this phenomenon in babies as well.

Nevertheless, whether it's natural or unnatural for humans to eat meat is also a point of contention because nature itself has always been neutral. Lots of people are born in regions where only meat is naturally available while others live in places where vegetarianism is part of their cultures and lives.

Up in certain parts of the Himalayas, vegetarianism is law, but in places where it's too cold or too hot, what kind of vegetables can people grow?

Based on this, it's baseless to argue that all humans should be vegetarians. What matters is that people who practice vegetarianism should also practice acceptance. It's unbecoming to feel that vegetarianism is superior to non-vegetarianism or vice versa.



My own experience with vegetarianism was a natural process. There came a time in life when I felt guilty about eating meat. In my young mind, it occurred that killing animals for food was cruel and selfish. I felt it deep in my heart that all animals are just like me. They are lives and I felt the need to love and respect them for what they are.

Whether we accept it or not, killing is an act of violence. If we have a choice not to kill, why need we kill?

I don't live in Alaska or in some desert, I live here in Malaysia and I have a choice. I'm a vegetarian only because I choose to be one. I want to give space for the animals and insects to exist alongside me. This sounds high and mighty, but it's not high and mighty, it's just a deep realisation that was born from within, quite naturally.

If people are moved from deep within to stand by some principle, then they will do it, no matter who they are or where they are from. In this manner, this realisation is also a process induced by nature. There's simply nothing to contest.

So why do we feel the need to complain? It's about accepting ourselves and our evolution, and also accepting and respecting others for what they are or what they believe in. What matters is whether there's harmony between the two. Our duty is to create and preserve this harmony.

It's also about living in harmony with nature - the nature we see outside and the nature that teaches and guides from within, at all times.

Below is my friend Shanker's experience and opinion on vegetarianism:

My take on it is very simple. As a yoga practitioner, I learnt that a proper diet will aid

and smoothen the pranic (life force) flow in the body.

I became a vegetarian two months after understanding this concept. I found tremendous changes in the physiological process after embracing this diet. Usually, it's not easy to relax my body after attempting a few asanas, but now, I can easily relax my whole body even after performing many asanas. I find that my flexibility has improved a lot and my body feels light, and I'm able to maintain an asana longer without discomfort.

In addition, after I do heavy activities, I feel my energy is restored very fast. It wasn't like this when I was eating meat. Vegetarian diet also enhances my emotional and mental stamina. I am able to control my anger and my pimples/acne are reduced dramatically and my skin has become more radiant.

After practising yoga for a few years, I took MAYI's International Yoga Instructor Course and became a full-time yoga instructor. I teach yoga every day about 6 hours/per day on average. It is not an easy job, but after 6 hours of teaching, I find that I still have strength to do overtime.

The yoga practice itself gives strength, and the vegan or vegetarian diet is a great contributing factor. I do not have a desire to become muscular, but the diet helps keep my muscles looking toned.

There is a difference in what I have observed in long-time yoga practitioners. My class consists of vegetarians and non-vegetarians. I notice that vegetarians are able to engage in a posture very well and their body shapes are different.

Due to these benefits, I recommend a vegetarian diet to my students. But there is no force involved. It's important to have a good diet and I believe a vegetarian diet is a good diet.

YM

The Institute of Teacher Education, Malay Language Campus, Kuala Lumpur, is one of 27 teacher training institutes under the Ministry of Education which provides degree-level training courses for primary school teachers.

Apart from academic lectures, they have various other activities such as sports and leadership programmes. During the recent fasting month, yoga sessions were introduced as part of activities for non-muslim students. It was carried out for 3 consecutive weeks with a 2-hour session each week for 135 students from all over Malaysia.

Master Nava headed the team in the first session on July 16, followed by Vijaya on July 23 and finally Saandi and Turiya on July 29. Some of the International Yoga Instructor Course students also helped to guide the trainee teachers.

In the first session, the students were exposed to basic breathing techniques and asanas, or postures, by Master Nava. The theme was "Yoga for Personal Health". The trainees were guided step by step to perform Pawanmuktasana (Wind Release Pose), Naukasana (Boat Pose), Supta Pawanmuktasana, Ustrasana (Camel Pose), Shalabhasana (Locust Pose), Dwikosana (Double Angle Pose), Trikosana (Triangle Pose), Gomukasana (Cow Face Pose) and a few other asanas. The session concluded with a calming and soothing Yoga Nidra.

Since it was a first experience for the students,

especially for Sabahans and Sarawakians, they were eager to try all the poses with full excitement. The hall was filled with laughter and giggles as they tried to twist, bend and stretch their bodies. Even some senior lecturers tried some of the asanas. The introduction to yoga was well accepted by the future teachers and they were looking forward for the follow up sessions. Many of them were also enquiring on how to become a yoga instructor as they were keen to be one.

The theme of the second session, handled by Vijaya, was "Yoga For Stress".

By now the students were able to follow all the asanas easily. The trainees were guided to try more intermediate asanas since some of them showed excellent performance on stage. In fact some trainees could do Sirsasana (Headstand), Chakrasana (Wheel Pose) and Bakasana (Crane Pose). It was amazing to watch them perform without any fear or doubt.

In the third week, the teachers had group performances. They were already given enough input in the past two weeks by Master Nava and Vijaya, so now it was time to watch them perform. Saandi and Turiya demonstrated a few advanced asanas before the students were asked to practice in their respective groups. As future teachers, the trainees portrayed remarkable leadership skills as they helped and guided each other on their individual strength and weaknesses.



As an educator myself, I feel the trainees have gained great insight into yoga as a tool for better health and emotional wellbeing. They will be more prepared to face all the challenges in their teaching life, especially in educating the primary school children. Physical and emotional strength contributes to the success of a teacher. I believe yoga will definitely help these aspiring teachers to fulfil their future dreams.

Here's what some of them said about the yoga sessions:

1) Vaishaanee Fenisan, 22, student

We were told that by doing yoga continuously with self-discipline, we will gain many benefits. Physically, the idle muscles and nerves are activated, blood flow becomes smooth and reaches all parts of the body, regulates our breathing and also hormones, strengthens the inner organs, and many more. Mentally, we are able to focus well and generate quality ideas as well as be emotionally stable, and be able to control our stress level. Therefore, I feel that these yoga sessions have been very beneficial to all educators. It has enlightened us about the importance of a healthy body and mind and to be efficient and productive in our daily lives.



2) Chang Kok Hong, 20, student

Physically, I felt that I had become more of myself, being able to control my body much better than I used to. These new feelings frightened me initially and I was shocked to know that yoga had influenced me deeply. I felt more relaxed and lighter after doing all the yoga poses, which were guided by these experienced trainers. The breathing methods helped me become more focused and calmer to perform my daily activities. I believe by repeating and continuously doing yoga practices, I can become a better person in the future. I will certainly incorporate the techniques I learnt from the yoga sessions in my teaching practices.

3) Miss Krishna Kumari Juval, Moral Studies Lecturer, IPGKBM

It was the first time ever such a yoga programme was carried out at our institute. It was not easy to convince the administrators about the benefits of this ancient art, but the MAYI instructors had proven that yoga had universal values regardless of race, religion and beliefs. Our students, especially those from Sabah and Sarawak, truly enjoyed the experience, which was the starting point of a new beginning to explore.



As a test, or quiz, for general knowledge, we have quite often been asked to name the Seven Wonders of the World – be it of the ancient world or the modern world.

How about the Seven Wonders of Life, and what are they?

After some musings and soul searching, the answers to the Seven Wonders of my Life are:

1. Health
2. Flexibility and Mobility
3. Emotional Quotient (EQ)
4. Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ)
5. Intelligence Quotient (IQ)
6. Freedom of Choice and Independence
7. Hope for the better

The next question would be:

What must I do to realise the Seven Wonders of my Life?

For the benefit of health, I had taken up various exercises like aerobic dancing, gym workouts, Pilates as well as Qigong. One day, out of curiosity, I dropped in for a trial yoga class as well. The teacher asked, "Why are you here?" and I answered, "To see if yoga is suitable for me." This is now history.

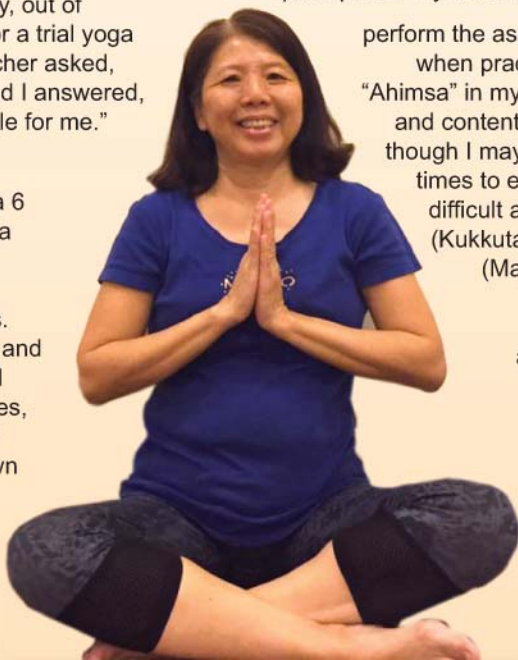
I started practising Yoga 6 years ago. My first Yoga teacher was superb. I attended his classes regularly for three years. Due to various reasons and personal commitments I stopped going for classes, but I still continued with yoga practices in my own space and time.

Slowly, I realised that some sort of transformation was happening within me both physically and mentally. All minor health issues started to disappear and I became a happier and calmer person. As a result of such transformation, I wanted to learn more about yoga and I found MAYI.

My breakthrough and quantum leap with yoga practices happened when I enrolled for the International Yoga Instructor Course (IYIC) and the Yoga Therapist Certification Course (YTCC) early this year. At this juncture, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks, gratitude as well as appreciation to Master Mani; Saandhi, my IYIC instructor; and Surya, my YTCC instructor, for being such great teachers and mentors who have given me the guidance and light for the breakthrough to happen.

My favourite value in the 5 and foremost Yamas (restraints) is "Ahimsa" - DO NO HARM AND CAUSE NO INJURY. I abide by this as a guiding principle for my asana practices. I am able to

perform the asanas in a wholesome way when practising them diligently with "Ahimsa" in my conscience. I feel happy and contented with each asana, even though I may not be flexible enough at times to extend my body to perform difficult asanas like Cockerel Pose (Kukkutasana) and Peacock Pose (Mayurasana). Once I do my best, I feel satisfied and happy even though the asana may not have been performed to perfection.



The next important word for me is “Ahamkara”, relating to ego and egoism and the awareness of “I” in thoughts, emotions and physical functions. When “I” is minimised and reduced in our thoughts and emotions, our ego is less likely to be injured. When our ego is not injured, we can enjoy more happiness and gratitude for being who we are and what we have.

Ahamkara helps to bring our EQ, AQ and IQ into equilibrium. Happiness and harmony in life will be attained automatically when our EQ, AQ and IQ are in equilibrium. We are able to accept our ups and downs as well as our successes and failures to walk in the journey of life with strides of optimism and pragmatism. We can always see a glass as half-full instead of vice versa.

Previously, “Karma” to me was a superstitious belief. However, with the practice of Ahimsa and Ahamkara I came to realise and understand that Karma is actually a law of nature – referring to cause and reaction. Karma is similar to the laws of force and its resultant forces, which have been proven by Newton. And we study these laws in Physics.

Like the common saying: “Everything Happens for a Reason”.

We have to take and choose the right cause of action to get the desired result. For example, if we want to have a healthy body and mind, we have to take proper food and exercise regularly; and have good thoughts and intentions. Practice kindness and gratitude. Be compassionate to ourselves as well as others. All the aforesaid are part of the Yoga Sutra and philosophy, which will manifest in us naturally when we become yoga practitioners.

Unlike badminton, football and basketball, yoga could be practiced either individually or with a group of friends and buddies. To me this is independence and freedom. Yoga trains us to

function excellently alone, yet not lonely in any way.

No sports equipment or special gadgets are required to practise yoga. Therefore, it is cheap to practise yoga, and also it is environmentally friendly. Other than fees paid for attending classes and the yoga mat, there is no expensive exercising equipment to invest in. The practice will not generate additional waste (like used balls, broken gadgets, etc) to increase disposal of waste and will not add burden to Mother Earth.

Pranayama, Manipuraka and Yoga Therapy help us to activate the self-healing power and function of our body. Such power allows us to reduce dependency on allopathic medication. Daily ingestion of medication to control various diseases may also result in side effects causing damage to our vital organs like kidneys and liver.

Our kidneys and liver normally become weaker and degenerate as we age. Overdose of medication will increase the burden of kidneys and liver, leading to faster degeneration. Yoga will help to defer the aging process of our body, allowing us to grow and age gracefully.

Hope is not a wishful thinking but a mindful thought filled with optimism and pragmatic action to achieve our goals. Generally, everyone hopes to live a blissful life with happiness, health and wealth. We also hope our lives will be sustainable until the end of our day.

Yoga will be the alternative choice to consumption of medication and health supplements to avoid illnesses due to aging and degeneration of our bodies. We can also have clarity in mind to realise our hopes through the practices.

I shall end this article with HOPE that everyone will have a better and happier tomorrow. Last but not least, I would also like to wish all my family members, friends and readers of Yoga Mail a “Happy and Healthy New Year” since 2016 is coming to a close soon. **YM**

A

rticles by Practitioners An Enlightening Trip in India

by Vijaya

The auto rickshaw ride on the streets of Varanasi was akin to a daredevil roller-coaster ride. I enjoyed every bit of it. So did Derek, Surya Fai, my mother and 28 others in MAYI India trip 2016.

Isn't it great that thousands of people get such free entertainment there every day? Oops sorry, that's actually survival-skill for them. I've been to India so many times and twice already to Varanasi, but the streets never stop fascinating me. I ran my hand on a cow, giving it a friendly pat as the auto we were in swung pass the animal in the middle of the road.

Surya Fai's description of the traffic there was brilliant:

They go this way, that way, all the way,
And if there's no way (to go)
They go anyway!!

And Roy mentioned this about the constant honking sound: It's noise for us, but for them it's communication.

We broke the tradition this time, when only in the third day into the trip, everyone was giving a very clear account of the changes already taking place within them. Surya Fai, Kavi, Roy, Puspha teacher, Vimala, Mr Foo, my mother, Saresh and the rest shared such heart-warming messages. Usually that happens on the last day.

The sheer shock of witnessing the external environment in Varanasi was already enough to give us each a shake to our very core. It was completely different from the safe, structured, materially-advanced infrastructure and environment we were used to in Malaysia. It was madness.

But this is the gist of what Master Mani said, as a reminder to all of us: Do not judge (the country, its people nor its way of life) and do not pity them either. Accept them as they are and look at the deeper values they represent. Also always comparatively appreciate all the blessings we



are bestowed with. Be kind to people and help if you're able to. Do Karma Yoga. And always be aware.

Kavi said she was wallowing in the reality of what she was witnessing, little by little, and has come to appreciate and love everyone as he/she is. "I'm learning to listen to people and appreciate them without making any judgement".

Roy explained how he had joined the trip expecting to spend more time with Master, but he discovered that everyone and everything can be a teacher. He said he could already feel that the trip was life-changing for him.

Gosh so much of awakening happening already, and we haven't even entered the part where the trail leading to enlightenment begins.

The other purpose of our visit to India 2016 was to trace the pathway walked by the great enlightened soul called Siddharta, who is simply known as Gautama Buddha.

People all over the world are constantly in India for so many reasons spiritual, and Buddha, with approximately 500 million followers around the globe, is a prominent source of attraction for spiritual tourism to flourish in the country.

We, from Malaysia, went on a very enlightening journey from the place where the Gautama gave his first discourse in Sarnath to where he was born (in Lumbini, Nepal), where he was enlightened (Bodhgaya), where he attained Samadhi (Kusinagar), where he lived, where his famous disciples built the many stupa's for him and where the first Buddhist university stood (Nalanda). The places, the stories, the historical and archaeological treasures and the sight of prayers consistently going on at all these places were simply magnificent.

We had our own adventures as well. When we arrived in Nepal, it was already very late at night. The meals in the hotel turned out to be too expensive, so we decided to walk into the town, which was very quiet and in total darkness, looking for food. According to laws in the country, businesses need to wrap up by 10pm. It was already 9.30pm when we ventured out. This one restaurant had to hold on in order to feed us. It was probably an uphill task because the owners, who were also the cooks, took more than 2 hours to prepare our meals. We were starving. Though some of our orders never arrived, we'll never forget their kindness. The owner argued with one of the authorities who was threatening to revoke his business licence, telling that we were guests and it was his duty to serve us. Wow! I was able to figure that out although he was talking fluently away in Nepali language (smile). He had such a nice, big smile, on a very handsome face. Nepalese seem to have such

good looks.

The street experience of India culminated in our feeder bus ride from the domestic airport to the Indra Gandhi International airport in New Delhi. We, all of us, had very big, fat luggage with us. The bus was already full, but all 31 of us had to board the same bus. I was amazed endlessly with the driver and his co-pilots. They helped push us and our baggage up into whatever tiny space left. The baggage space in front was already filled up to the roof and we almost knocked the driver off his seat. And here's the best part: I was still hanging out of the bus at the front door. Suddenly, the co-pilot started pushing me further in as hard as he could and the door started closing behind us. Gosh! How was it even possible? We were completely sardined.

As I was struggling to find space to put my feet down, the guy pushed his way through and climbed up the baggage space at the front of the bus. From there, above everybody's head, he diligently checked all the tickets. My, my, what sense of duty! I couldn't stop laughing. The other co-pilot said this to me: "This is what we do every day." Really?

In between great spiritual attractions, poverty, simplicity and a gigantic population struggling to survive daily, I wondered where India's real heartbeat was. What was the real spirit of the country?

In Varanasi, considered a sacred place people go to in order to attain Moksha or liberation, the streets were chaotic, but when time came for the Ganga Aarti event in the evening, hundreds of people thronged to the main ghat and there was complete silence. No one had to say anything, and there were no policemen controlling the crowd, but everybody found a place to sit either at the banks or in the boats facing the ghat, anxiously awaiting for the prayers to begin. I could only hear the sound of water and a very soothing and enchanting rendering of the prayers and bhajans. The way the Aarti, or fire, was swayed back and forth, up and down, round and round, managed to take some beats off my heart. In that dark, star-less night, it felt completely harmonious and peaceful. A far cry from what the entire streets were like in daytime.

Bodhgaya



In the auto rickshaw, my mother asked the driver "Are you happy?" The auto was shaking, jumping, braking at every car, cow, child, motorbike or lorry in front, and took racing car-like turns at every corner as it veered to a remote temple. The driver, who was apparently having lots of fun, turned to the back and smilingly said: "Yes, I'm happy."



Vulture's Peak

In rich and more developed countries people are dying of stress daily... doing all kinds of harms to themselves, their families and also the society. Even in India, in its big cities where power, education, technological advancements, politics and materialism reign supreme, the same things are happening too.

So, what do we learn from all these? What of our religious or spiritual quests? There's purity in simplicity?

I get excited over the ideas of meditation or prayers. I make myself believe there's some experience of enlightenment waiting for me. I tend to get confused by teachings and philosophies sometimes. Master tells me I'm delusional (smile). I argue with him of course, but he knows best.

Really, aren't we supposed to learn to be kind, be considerate, be attentive, be aware, be loving to every person, be contented, be at peace with ourselves, be simple, be wise and intelligent and be knowledgeable about our own selves and have real strength and inner power, before we talk about enlightenment or about what sage said what or what he proved in his lifetime.

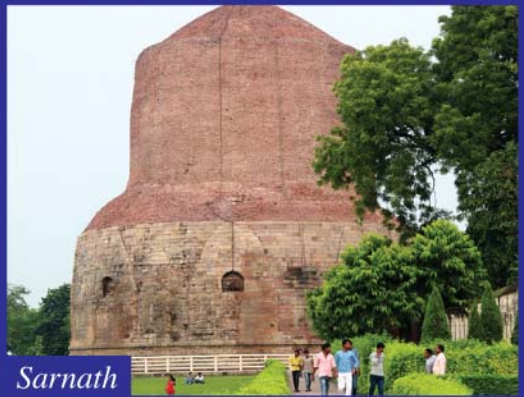
Good looks or good books or well-preserved archaeological wonders do not promise anything. What one needs is actual experience, actual realisation. What a follower ought to do is

completely practice in his life what the saints and sages preached, instead of teaching, preaching or arguing about it with others. Where's your realisation? Where's your experience of what he experienced?

We represented a yoga group in the India journey towards enlightenment. Here's what this small-sized guy with mighty experience said:

"With regular practice of yoga, my mind gradually began to function more gracefully and I'm more receptive to the feelings of others around me.

"Anger predominantly had control over me. With the increase of awareness practice in yoga, I'm learning to develop a cool-headed personality in tensed environments. The training is not as easy as said. The tendency of acting with aggressive actions or words can appear even from the slightest provocation by a situation or from a person we deal with in everyday life. The difference is, with a calmer attitude, resulting from regular practices of yoga, we have more choice to not react and remain unaffected.



Sarnath

"In turn, this develops inner strength and makes one a more loving individual. We can only understand this with direct experience. Reading any amount of books on yoga or philosophy can never teach us all these, unless we put ourselves into actual practice."

Thank you Roy. With every trip, we realise something. **YM**



Yoga Therapy: Nature, Music That Heals

by Dr. Kuga

Mother Nature, a divine gift to humankind, tremendously powerful, enchanting in its beauty and innately healing, is a magical paradise depicting the depth of nothing but pure consciousness. She is alive in each and every creation. My sincere salutations to Mother Nature.

Dear readers, most of you I can confidently say would immediately have a smile carved on your faces when the word Nature falls within your hearing range. Instantaneously, threads of beautiful memories of us engaged in nature surfaces and allows the mind to calm down... transforming the chaotic, noisy and chatty mind into a serene, tranquil garden. I seem to fall short of a precise word to describe the glory of nature, perhaps the silence of the mind alone can sing the true tales of this priceless gift.

Listen... I would like to take you deep through the sounds of still trees, chirping birds, flowing rivers, rainfall on rooftops, dawning of the morning sun, subtle blooming of colourful flowers, gushing of ocean waves and the silence of starry night sky... each with a music that heals the soul and becomes food for the spirit.

Sounds in right frequencies, abundantly available in nature, have therapeutic effect on all layers of the body. Let us explore how the music of nature can dance the internal environment of one's body back into balance. What are the sounds within the body that closely resemble nature and which yogic techniques can further enhance the sounds of nature within us and yield fruitful healing modalities?

A sound wave is a pattern of disturbance caused by the movement of energy through a medium (such as air, water or any other liquid or solid matter) as it moves away from the source of the sound. The source is an object that causes vibration, such as a chirping bird or a person's vocal chords. The vibration disturbs the particles in the surrounding medium; those particles in turn disturb those next to them and so on. The pattern creates outward movement in a wave pattern — like the ocean waves. The wave

carries the sound energy through the medium, usually in all directions, and less intensely as it moves farther from the source.

[1] In physiology and psychology, sound is defined as the reception of such waves and their perception by the brain. [2] An average human hearing capacity ranges between 20 Hz to 20 000 Hz. A study of sounds in a jungle showed that the sounds of animals covered every frequency in the full frequency spectrum of sound (20 to 20,000 hertz). In fact, each animal had its own frequency range. If an animal or insect species dies off, another species would then take over that free frequency range. (3) Sounds from the ocean, waterfalls, streams and wind have been proven to stir and break away blocked emotional frequencies within the body.

Science has proven decades ago that every particulate matter that exists vibrates at a certain frequency. This holds true for the mind and body as well. All internal organs have been proven to have their own resonance. Deviance from their optimum vibration produces diseases. Tremendous amount of fund is now being actively channelled to research on the healing properties of sound by modern scientists. These efforts include melting tumors inside body cavities, washing away cancer cells, regenerating internal organs and many more — all by using Sound Energy!! Amazing isn't it?

It is no surprise that Yogis who had profound understanding on the great power of sounds utilised it for practices of Dharana (focused concentration of the mind) that precede the state of Dhyana (meditative state). Focused concentration of sounds in nature has been proven to gradually shift the fluctuating brainwaves to a deep relaxed state, transiting from Beta waves up to Theta waves and beyond, where intense healing takes place due to release of certain chemicals in the body. Besides the physical body, at these relaxed vibrations of the brainwave, the pranic body is cleansed, chakras are energised and the aura of the body is strengthened many fold — keeping diseases at bay. These ancient techniques have been analysed, understood and are now used with new facelift as brainwave entrainment. (4)



Yogis through higher states of consciousness figured out that sounds of nature have healing capacity. Some pranayama practices (breathing techniques) such as Brahmari and Ujjayi incorporate sounds in them. Brahmari, commonly referred to as a humming bee breath, is a practice which mimics the sound of a bumble bee during the exhalation phase.

Performing Brahmari is proven to calm the mind, wash away anger, fear, anxiety and aggression. It plays a role in edging high vital signs suggestive of fatigue and mental stress. Ujjayi on the other hand, often referred to as victorious breath, depicts the sound of the ocean wave when breathing is consciously conducted with a partially contracted glottis throughout the respiratory cycle.

According to Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, who taught the creators of Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, Iyengar Yoga and others, Ujjayi pranayama is a balancing and calming breath which increases oxygenation and builds internal body heat.(5) This breath enables the practitioner to maintain a rhythm to his or her practice, takes in enough oxygen and helps build energy to maintain practice, while clearing toxins out of the body system. This breath is especially important during transition into and out of asanas (postures), as it helps practitioners to stay present, be aware and be grounded in the practice, which lends it a meditative quality.(6) One other practice worthy of mention here is the chanting of OM. It is said that all sounds within the cosmos originate from the three-syllable AUM, commonly pronounced as OM. This is believed to be the root sound for creation itself, which gives rise to all the range of sounds of nature and man-made machineries. The three syllables refer to three states of human consciousness (wakefulness, dream state and deep sleep).

The Sanskrit symbol of AUM depicts that the true human potential is beyond these three states, only to be realised experientially. Chanting these syllables has been proven to reverberate all molecules within the body back to normal and restore health. When the body vibrates at its best, good health becomes merely a byproduct compared with many other outcomes of higher states this sound can produce. Swami Sivananda wrote in his book Know Thyself: "I chanted OM. I meditated on OM. The individuality slowly dissolved. I faded into the Infinite Being."(7)

Simple AUM chanting technique:

- Sit in a comfortable position (spine erect)
- Close your eyes and have a gentle smile
- Inhale through the nostril. Exhale and produce the sound 'Aaaa' from the base of the throat (x3)
- Inhale through the nostril. Exhale and produce the sound 'Uuuu' from the mid-throat (x3)
- Inhale through the nostril. Exhale and produce the sound 'Mmm' between the hard palate and the tongue (x3)
- Inhale through the nostril. Exhale and produce the sound AaaUuuMmm together (x3)

So intertwined we are with nature. With these enriching yogic techniques, we can find oneness with nature and heal from within, better still to do it out in the heart of mother nature. Enjoy holistic health, bliss and beyond with her. **YM**

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Logic Wisdom For Daily Living

1.16 tatparam purusakhyateh gunavaitrsnyam

by Jamie Spatafore

The ultimate renunciation is when one transcends all qualities of nature and perceives the soul.

If we pay close attention, we'll see that nature is perfect. It operates exactly how it should. Trees fruit at exactly the right time and animals help to move the process along without even knowing it. Seeds buried deep in the soil know exactly where the surface is and how to get there though it may take them a long time.

Nature also has three main characteristics: sattva (pure), rajas (active) and tamas (inert). A lot of teachings tell us to shun tamas and rajas and aim for sattva, but if nature is perfect and contains elements of all three then why are tamas and rajas considered bad? They are not bad per se, however they are impediments. We have to remember that the ancient seers and authors of these texts had transcended nature. They went beyond all three, which included even sattva.

We, as mere novices, are not at that point yet. Ramana Maharishi, as with everything, had a truly balanced view of the situation. He said (I am paraphrasing here): "Do not regret the tamas state for it is a part of nature and fluctuating, but when sattva arises hold on to it tightly and use it for the full benefit of your practice". The fact is, we have not transcended these qualities. They are still there. Is it possible to lessen the effects? Of course it is. You have probably experienced it by now. However, there is no need to be so

aggressive about it. We cannot be like the holy man who saw the prostitute drowning in the river and refused to help lest he became tainted by her sins. This is not the correct way to live and quite honestly this is going against nature, which is perfect.

Instead, as novices, we should understand that nature is perfect and the play of these three characteristics will happen. Everything has a season. All of these are temporary and not binding so we shouldn't take them so seriously. There is one thing we can do and that is practice developing awareness so we know when the "gunas" are at play. That awareness will allow us to take a step back and not be so moved by them. Then throughout the play of all three we are steady.

It's our great fortune that we have developed a taste for a higher, more subtle way of living, but unfortunately we tend to get down on ourselves after some time. We are told that we should strive to be sattvic and if we are not, we have failed. Please go to a country not located near the equator during the winter months and tell me how much sattva you see. Not much. It is the way nature works. Does that mean we just give in and go back to our normal way of "dead living"? No. It simply means acceptance of the way things are and the way nature works. We still strive to move past these things and understand the hold they have had over centuries, no millennia. Peace. **YM**

Eco's Echoes:

Animals – Set Them Free! (Part 2 of 3)

by *Ravin.S*

There is proof of similarity between humans and animals in terms of their fears for death.

Similar to human beings, animals also undergo trauma as death approaches. A man will call for his mother when in an extreme situation or when he is about to breathe his last. When animals are slaughtered, they scream loudly.

When scientists were asked, "Why do animals scream like that?" "They are calling for help," replied these experts. When animals are being attacked, they give out a high pitch squeal to alert the herd. Usually when the wailing is heard, the whole herd will come running to the victims' rescue.

Dear friends, it is really painful to see these animals being butchered for human consumption. Slaughterhouse workers, on the other hand, wear hearing protection to safeguard their own hearing. On the contrary, animals scream and wail in the hope that their lives will be spared. Nevertheless, human beings ignore these cues and go on with the massacre.

Leathers are made from an array of animal skins such as that of cows, pigs, goats, sheep and alligators to name a few. Hence, these poor creatures are not only slaughtered for their meat, but also for their hide. PETA investigation found out when cow's tails are broken, chili peppers and tobacco are rubbed into these animals' eyes. This is done in order to force the cows to get up and walk after they have collapsed from exhaustion on the way to the slaughterhouse. Sad to say, these animals are not even drugged or given any painkillers. Some are skinned and dismembered while they are still conscious.

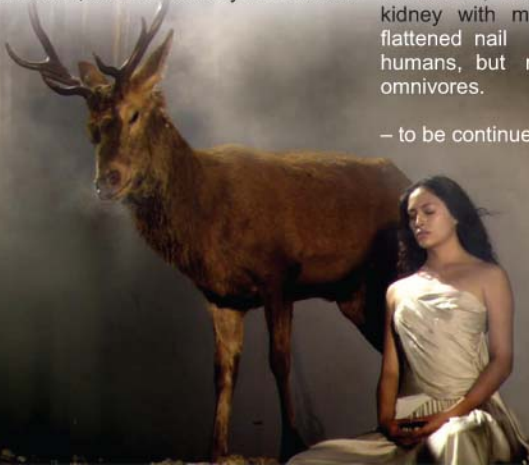
The meat industry not only causes unbearable suffering to farm animals, but also destroys the lives of

fellow human beings whose jobs entails culling these animals. Award winning American author and chief investigator for the Humane Farming Association, Gail Eisnitz, who interviewed many abattoir workers for her book 'SLAUGHTERHOUSE', reported that many of them turn to alcohol or drugs in an attempt to forget the cruel act they perform all day. It is not surprising that the turnover rate at these places in a year is 100%.

On a different note, thousands of questions are asked and excuses are given for being a non-vegetarian. One of the most common questions asked is: "What is wrong in being a non-vegetarian? After all someone else does the killing." Some people say that plants are killed for consumption, and that plants have life too. When we trim our hair or cut nails, we do not experience pain; similarly, plants do not experience pain when cut. Hence the killing of animals cannot be equated to the cutting of vegetables for consumption. Another famous argument is that humans have canine teeth, so why meat cannot be consumed by them. When the anatomy of a human being is compared with that of herbivore and carnivore, it shows that humans are vegetarians by nature.

The well-developed facial muscles, expanded angle of jaw type, jaw join location above the plane of the molars, jaw motion (no shear, good side-to-side, front-to-back), major jaw muscles which are masseter and pterygoids, small size of mouth opening versus head size, teeth incisors (broad, flattened and spade shape), teeth canines (short and blunted), teeth molars (flattened with nodular cusps), necessary of extensive chewing, saliva with carbohydrate digesting enzymes, simple stomach type, stomach acidity with pH 4 to 5, length of small intestines about 10 to 11 times of body length, colon which are long and sacculated, liver which cannot detoxify vitamin A, kidney with moderately concentrated urine and flattened nail are similar between herbivores and humans, but not when compared to carnivores and omnivores.

– to be continued... **YM**



Inner Insights:

Goodbye Hip Surgery

by Murali

The diagnosis shocked me. This was what the doctor had said: "The X –Ray shows a degeneration at both hips. There is reduction in the synovial fluid between the thigh bones and your hips, with some bone spurs around the socket of the hipbone. You have Hip Arthritis".

It was not easy to digest the fact that at 33 I was diagnosed with Bilateral Hip Arthritis stage 2, progressing into stage 3. I felt miserable when informed that hip replacement surgery was the only option besides regular painkillers and muscle relaxants, which wouldn't help improve the condition nor stop the progression of the disease. The doctor gave his contact number and asked me to call when I was ready to face the knife.

My walk was a bit awkward. People around me noticed, but didn't know how to react. Decreasing range of mobility in both legs made wearing shoes, driving a car, getting out of bed, long-hour sitting/standing and squatting in toilets increasingly difficult and this led me into a state of despair. Family members who tried overwhelming modalities slowly lost hope, and tried to console me instead to face the knife.

Fortunately, a family friend introduced me to Yoga Therapy at MAYI Yoga Academy. My wife and I met Master Manisekaran and Dr. Kuga, and I agreed to give Yoga Therapy a try. I had no prior exposure to yoga and did not know what to expect.

Although the first session was fairly new, I felt reassured and comfortable under the professional guidance of Dr. Kuga. To my surprise, after the second therapy, I witnessed tremendous improvement in my range of movement. It marvels me that despite not performing the techniques as frequently as advised, I made progress!

**While still attending therapy,
I successfully weaned
myself off harmful painkillers
as pain had reduced.
I could perform daily
activities with less hassle
and less dependency.**

I'm slowly gaining self-confidence with a great hope for full recovery. After completing the therapy sessions, I'm fully confident that yoga can help reverse the disease and I can say goodbye to surgical knife. I wish I had come to know about yoga and yoga therapy much earlier. I have a busy schedule, but I have learnt to manage time better and accommodate home-practice techniques. I'm grateful that I can heal without medications and no longer have to spend money and time waiting at the hospital. Yoga therapy, in my opinion is the best treatment modality and not an alternative treatment. **YM**

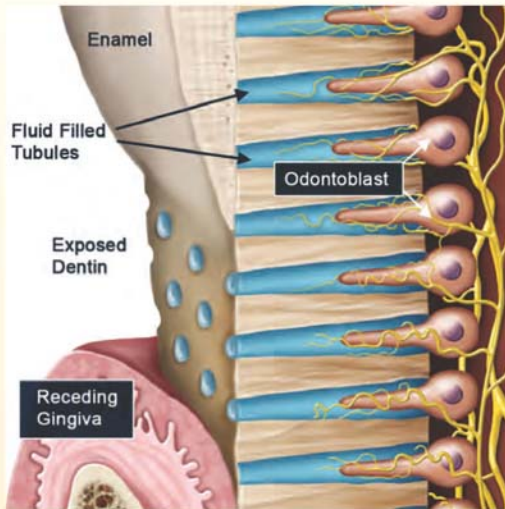
Yoga Therapy –one stop solution
The path to one stop solution.



Ayur Oral Care :

Managing Tooth Sensitivity

Many people experience tooth sensitivity that ranges from a mild sense of pain to severe discomfort. It can affect anyone at any point of time and is usually experienced when drinking or eating something cold, or even when the tooth catches cold air. Tooth sensitivity should be treated the soonest as it could be a warning sign of other more serious dental problems.



Why does tooth sensitivity occur?

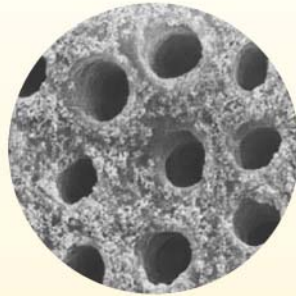
The root cause of tooth sensitivity is the exposure of the dentinal tubule (tiny tubes that lead to the nerve and are filled with fluid) to saliva. Tooth sensitivity is caused by the movement of fluid within the tiny tubules located in the dentine (the layer of tissues found beneath the hard enamel that contains the inner pulp), resulting in nerve irritation.

Exposure of the dentinal tubules can be due to:

- The enamel layer of the tooth getting thinner due to disease or habit.
- When gums recede and the root surface of dentinal tubes are exposed.
- Effect of dental bleaching treatment for teeth whitening process.

How does Ayur Oral Care (AOC) work to manage tooth sensitivity?

AOC treatment uses a concoction of natural herbs, spices, oils and minerals, which creates a miraculous oral environment for optimum absorption of needed minerals and nutrients. This will enable your own body system to create the enamel layers which have worn off. This process is called 'REMINERALISATION'.



Testimony

I came for treatment in view of my tooth hypersensitivity. I've sought many treatments elsewhere but was not successful. I attended 3 sessions with Dr. Shuba and I would say her treatment is unique and has a personal touch. More importantly, it's effective and soothing, with a lasting result! I will definitely seek her advice and treatment from now on any dental issues. Great job and thank you!

Dr. Vijayndhran Balakrishnan

Book an appointment with Dr. Shubashini Ganeson to begin your Ayur Yoga care today!

Dr. Shubashini Ganeson

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Puchong: 03.8080 4742

Subang: 03.8021 7980

Ayur Yoga:

The Healing Powers Of Turmeric

Health Benefits of Turmeric

Turmeric is arguably the most powerful herb used in warding off and potentially reversing diseases. The use of turmeric dates thousands of years back into history. It grows in South India, the home of the ancient Dravidian race. It is a plant with so many potential uses, so it is easy to postulate that it has been used for tens of thousands of years. Documented evidence shows it has been used as medicine, beauty aid, cooking spice and dye.



Turmeric for the Skin

This herb aids in cleaning and purifying the blood and skin. It helps to retain the elasticity and youthfulness of skin. One of the reasons for this is that it is a cleanser that does not dry out the skin, but keeps it moist and lustrous. Turmeric is antibacterial and so can kill the bacteria that may otherwise cause your face and body to break out. It is traditionally used internally and externally to purify the skin and remove skin diseases like eczema.

One excellent way to use turmeric is to apply directly a thick paste of the herb and almond/sesame/coconut oil and leave for twenty minutes on inflamed areas. Then, rinse with water generously.

Turmeric as First Aid

Turmeric serves as First Aid in accidents ranging from cuts to concussions. It helps to

accelerate the healing of and minimise the damage from any trauma.

Turmeric is also known as a Yogi's herb because it helps to make the tendons and ligaments moist, flexible and strong. Having strong tendons will reduce the incidence of strains and sprains. Turmeric will help reduce the swelling, the pain, and will accelerate the healing. You can take large doses internally when you are injured as well as cover the affected area with turmeric. Blend the herb with almond oil and apply the paste to the sprain or wound.

Turmeric for the Nose

Mix a pinch of Turmeric with ghee (clarified butter) and apply it to the mucus lining of the nose to stop the sniffles. This also works for stopping nosebleeds and helps clear the



sinuses and to restore a more acute sense of smell. Almond/sesame oil will also work if you do not have ghee.

In Ayurveda, the brain is often treated with herbs taken via the nose because it is considered direct administration. There are many herb-sensitive nerves that directly connect the nose to the brain. And so it is said that Turmeric applied through the nose helps to purify the mind and the brain.

Turmeric for the Heart and Blood

Turmeric creates new blood and so is good for anaemia. It purifies the blood, which is good for the skin because it is hot, and moves stagnant and impure blood that predisposes the skin to blemishes and varicose veins.

This herb decreases cholesterol. Turmeric can stimulate the conversion of cholesterol to bile acids, an important way of eliminating cholesterol from the body. It aids in lowering blood sugar. Therefore it is good for both

diabetics and those who binge on sweets. Also, as it treats the liver and tissue, it has an indirect effect on correcting diabetes. **YM**

For more information and to purchase this herb at MAYI AyurYoga, feel free to contact us at **03 6127 5693**. Other types of natural herbs are also available at all MAYI centres.

Reference: Jager, P. D., 2011. Turmeric The Ayurvedic Spice of Life. First ed. New Delhi: Full Edition.

Disclaimer: The 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 healthcare professional before you start, stop, or change any prescribed part of your healthcare plan or treatment.

Of Pregnancy and Yoga

by Sumi

"Pregnancy is not a miracle, it can be endured as naturally as possible without any medical intervention or supplements", this is what I always convey to my Pregnancy Yoga Instructor Course students.

How is this possible? Will this affect the babies and the mothers' well-being? These are questions frequently asked by my students.

The answer is: Natural pregnancy includes creating an environment of healthy, positive elements like healthy eating, appropriate exercise, positivity, relaxation and a good massage. A woman's body is uniquely designed to become pregnant and to give birth. Her body is prepared with the ability to have a safe, natural pregnancy and childbirth. Women have the stamina and strength to bring a child to this world naturally. It's a common and natural life experience.



Healthy Eating

Healthy eating should start from pregnancy planning stages. A proper diet rich with all types of nutrients will help in the formation of foetus from day one. Each molecule, cell, organ, bone and skin will form well with the help of nutrients from the food mothers consume. By eating healthy food, the mothers are helping the foetus grow efficiently in a natural way. Since most medicines or vitamins are made from plant-derived ingredients, why not consume them directly from the source itself?

Mothers need to eat even if they are having severe nausea during early stages of pregnancy. The reason is, the nutrients are absorbed by the foetus before the mothers throw them out. Sometimes women are exposed to a number of complications during pregnancy, like high blood pressure, high sugar level and excessive weight gain. These are caused by poor eating habits or unbalanced diet. Eating well can keep blood pressure, blood sugar levels and weight at healthy levels. The lack of key nutrients such as folic acid has been linked to higher rates of birth defects. It is important to eat

natural, unprocessed foods as much as possible during pregnancy to avoid harmful substances. Nowadays, "chemically prepared" dietary supplements are assumed sufficient in the diet for pregnant mothers. They are claimed to be wholesome food for mothers and their babies. However, a balanced whole-food diet can more than make up for these chemical diets. Supplements can have unwanted or harmful effects. Exposure to certain chemicals in some nutrients can lead to birth defects in the baby.

Appropriate Exercise

The most suitable and recommended exercise would be yoga. Yoga asanas help wonderfully during pregnancy, labour and beyond. Yoga can help women get through their pregnancy with minimal discomfort. Yoga helps to prepare for the process of giving birth - it encourages breath and body awareness, reduces worry and teaches women to adapt to new situations. In times of pregnancy, some mothers may experience mood swings, fatigue, sickness, painful leg cramps and breathing problems. Yoga exercises, techniques and postures can ease such conditions - ensuring

a period of relief during pregnancy, followed by easier labour and smooth delivery. Attending an hour of yoga class gives a woman special time to turn her attention inwards - learning to listen to and connect with her baby. It is proven that everything the pregnant mother feels and thinks is communicated through neuro hormones to her unborn child. These gently work on the reproductive organs and pelvic floor muscles to ensure smooth pregnancy and a relatively easy childbirth. At the subtle level, these ensure optimum supply of blood and nutrients to the developing foetus. Studies have shown that women who do yoga during pregnancy are less likely to develop high blood pressure or go into premature labour.

Breathing (Pranayama)

Pranayama is beneficial because women learn how to breathe deeply and consciously relax, which will be helpful as she will face the physical demands of labour, birth and new motherhood. Learning to breathe fully is one of the first things they learn. In the *ujjayi*, air is slowly breathed in through the nostrils, filling the lungs as the belly is expanded, and exhaled completely until the stomach compresses. Another technique is called "*Viloma*". These would help during contraction and labour. *Bramhri*, or humming bee breath, reduces anxiety during pregnancy and labour, bringing down the stress level.

Being Positive

Positive affirmations are statements that build a powerful internal spirit and replay throughout life as they are incorporated into the subconscious mind. Each time positive affirmations are thought, spoken or read, they reinforce positive images of the mother, the pregnancy and the baby inside. Mothers experience a lot of changes during pregnancy, many of which understandably cause stress. Prayer and meditation are all helpful. Therefore, to have a stress-free and a smooth pregnancy, positive thinking is ideal.

Relaxation

To be able to relax is an ART". Woman need to master this art to improve their feelings of well-being. Relaxation reduces anxiety, the effects of fatigue and tiredness, which are caused by stress. The baby will gain a more relaxed Mum and enjoy the benefits of less physical tension within

the body during pregnancy. During labour, relaxation can help to reduce pain and the intensity of contractions. It will help to save energy so that women have more to use during labour. Yoga *Nidra* (Yogic sleep) is particularly effective during pregnancy for physical and mental relaxation as well as for childbirth preparation.

Massage

Massage helps to improve blood flow and relaxes the muscles. This can be particularly useful around the neck and shoulders, or a full-body massage when you are able to have one. This should help you to really relax. Some people enjoy foot massages during pregnancy, and even during labour. Others enjoy their back being massaged during or between contractions to help with the pain of labour. Babies in breach position can be easily assisted to normal birthing position by a proper massage.

Pregnancy is associated with nature. So it's best if we believe in nature to plan and bring a human being into this world. Relaxation, positive thinking and deep connection to nature will nurture a healthier and happier child during pregnancy. Many women find the experience, despite the pain, extremely empowering and rewarding. But many women choose natural childbirth to feel more in touch with the birth experience and to deal with labour in a proactive manner.

This article is written with references from Health Ananda, Fittamama, Natural Birth and Baby Care, and Fit Pregnancy. **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 or find us at

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Featured Asana

Tiryaka Bhujangasana (Twisting Cobra Pose)

Step by Step:

1. Lie flat on the stomach with the legs separated about half a metre. The toes should be tucked under and the heels raised so that the foot rests on the ball of the foot.
2. Place the palms of the hands flat on the floor, below and slightly to the side of the shoulders.
3. The fingers should be together and pointing forward. The arms should be positioned so that the elbows point backward and are close to the sides of the body.
4. Rest the forehead on the floor and close the eyes.
5. Relax the whole body, especially the lower back.
6. Inhale as you slowly raise the head, neck and shoulders.
7. Straightening the elbows, raise the trunk as high as comfortable. Use the back muscles more than the arm muscles.
8. The head should be facing forward, instead of bending backward as in bhujangasana.
9. Exhale as you twist the head and upper portion of the trunk, and look over the left shoulder.
10. Gaze at the heel of the right foot.
11. In the final position, the arms remain straight or slightly bent as the shoulders and trunk are twisted.
12. Relax the back and keep the navel close to the floor.
13. Stay in the final position for a few seconds.
14. Inhale as you face forward again and exhale as you repeat the twist on the other side without lowering the trunk.
15. Inhale as you return to the centre and exhale as you lower the body to the floor.
16. This is one round.



Benefits:

- Relieves muscular tensions and back ache.
- Strengthens and increases the flexibility of the spine.
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles.
- Effective in relieving constipation.
- Beneficial for all the abdominal organs, especially the liver and kidneys
- Gives good appetite.
- Effective for women in toning up their ovaries and uterus, and helps in menstrual and some other gynaecological disorders.
- Increased influence on the arms and the intestines.

Contra-indications:

- Not recommended for pregnant women.
- People suffering from peptic ulcers, hernia, intestinal tuberculosis or hyperthyroidism should not perform this asana without the guidance of a competent teacher.

Chef Yogi's Food Notes!

Chocolate Truffles

Ingredients

- 1 cup raw pecans
- 1 cup raw walnuts
- 1 tbsp cacao powder or unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon (optional)
- 10 dates (buah kurma)
- 1 1/4 cups dark chocolate (real chocolate bar, not chips), roughly chopped
- 1 tsp coconut oil

FOR TOPPING

- 1/4 cup crushed pecans/walnuts, for topping



Instructions

1. Place pecans and walnuts in a high speed blender and process until it reaches the consistency of a meal. Remove and set aside in a dish.
2. Next, place pitted dates in the blender and process until small bits remain and/or it forms into a ball.
3. Add in the cocoa powder and 1/2 of the nut meal and pulse. Continue pulsing and adding the nut meal a little at a time until a loose dough is formed. You may not need to use all of the nuts, which is fine because you can use any leftovers for topping the truffles.
4. Once you have a dough that's easy to form into balls, scoop out 1 tablespoon amounts and roll/carefully form into balls. Set on parchment paper and place in freezer to chill - you should have about 14 truffles.
5. In the meantime melt chocolate in a double boiler or in the microwave in 30 second increments. Be careful not to overheat. Once melted, stir in coconut oil to help the chocolate thin and ease the dipping process.
6. Remove truffles from freezer and, one at a time, dip them into the melted chocolate. Use a fork to remove them and tap away excess chocolate. Transfer back onto parchment paper and top with sea salt, crushed pecans, or cacao nibs.
7. Repeat until all truffles are dipped. Let set at room temperature. Store leftovers in an airtight container at room temperature. Transfer to freezer for longer term storage.

SCHEDULE OF COURSES: NOV 2016 - MAR 2017

NOV	06/11/2016	BSR	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
	06/11/2016	USJ	Treat Diabetes with Yoga Therapy Workshop
	07-11/11/2016	DU	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	13/11/2016	DU	Introduction to Chakras - the Wheels of Life
	14-18/11/2016	USJ	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	20/11/2016	BSR	MAYI Graduation
	21-25/11/2016	BSR	Yoga Therapy Certification Course
	26/11-05/12/2016	Fraser's Hills	International Yoga Instructor Course - Foundation, Intermediate & Advanced
	27/11/2016	BSR	Anatomy & Physiology - the Body from Within
DEC	28/11-2/12/2016	BFS/BSR	Kids School Holiday Programme
	28/11-2/12/2016	BSR	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
	04/12/2016	USJ	Full Intestinal Cleansing Practical Session
	5-9/12/2016	BSR/PCH	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	10/12/2016	BFS	Full Intestinal Cleansing Practical Session
JAN	10/12/2016	Batu Arang	Detox Retreat
	26-30/12/2016	Cambodia	Siem Reap Tour
	12/01/2017	DU	Dhyana (Meditation) Instructor/Practitioner Course
FEB	15/01/2017	SU	Manipuraka Awakening & Universal Healing
	15/01/2017	SU	Urdhva Retas
	15/01/2017	DU	Jala Neti Workshop
	15/01/2017	BSR	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	16/01/2017	DU	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	22/01/2017	DU	Full Intestinal Cleansing Practical Session
	22/01/2017	USJ	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	23/01/2017	PCH	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
	12/02/2017	PCH	Chinese New Year party gathering
MAR	13-17/02/2017	SU	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
	16/02/2017	PCH	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	19/02/2017	SU	Jala Neti
	26/02/2017	BFS	Full Intestinal Cleansing Practical Session
	05/03/2017	SU	Mini Detox Worksop
	05/03/2017	BSR	Super Yoga Kids Instructor Course
	06-10/03/2017	SU	Ayurveda Massage Therapist Course
	7-11/03/2017	BSR	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	12/03/2017	DU	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	13/03/2017	SU	Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course
	18/03/2017	BSR	Kundalini Kriya Yoga Course
	19/03/2017	BSR	Jala Neti Workshop
	26/03/2017	BSR	International Yoga Instructor Foundation Course
	26/03/2017	PCH	Mini Detox Workshop

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* The IYIC syllabus is approved by
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