



Dr. C. D. Siby has passed 7 years of Ayurvedic Medical Degree Course (B.A.M.S) and now holds a Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery from Madras University. A Senior Ayurvedic Physician in the Ayur Centre Sdn. Bhd. in Petaling Jaya, Dr. Siby is actively associated with conducting Medical Camps in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. He also has a sound understanding of Modern Science including modern medical and Paramedical Sciences and Yoga. Under the guidance of Dr. K. Raja Gopalan (Ayur Director, Amala Cancer Institute, Trichur) Dr. Siby has got the experience in treating cancer, kidney failures and connective tissue diseases. He has also conducted several Seminars in India, Malaysia, Switzerland and Singapore on Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchakarma and different subjects related to health.

Question : I have been suffering from rheumatism for a long time now but I am still mobile and active. I do not want to succumb to my pain and disability because I grew up seeing my mother suffer the wrath of rheumatism. I have been told that yoga is the better exercise option and it can to a certain extent cure my rheumatic condition. Is this true?

Serene Cooi 50, Penang

Answer : Rheumatism is of many types and in your letter you did not mention any details of your condition. In certain conditions you may incorporate exercise, but in certain conditions it is not advisable. And selecting yoga for addressing rheumatism is not something easy to advice, because yoga is not for treating the sick, it is for healthy people to maintain good health and to prevent disease from developing and also to take you into higher levels.

Question : Alternative therapy is rather new in this country and yet there is quite a huge demand over this form of practice. In fact, I think more and more people are becoming aware of caring for themselves via the alternative methods. But in the case of acute diseases like heart, diabetic and cancer patients, should alternative therapies be recommended to them?

Jeevan Thambyrajah 55, Johor Bahru

Answer : No system of medicine is complete. I may not be able to comment in the broad sense of alternative therapy, but I will try to talk with the limited knowledge I have in Ayurveda. Ayurveda's system of medicine has a major role to play in the main stream of treatment. In certain conditions of heart, diabetes, and cancer, this system of medicine can help to some extend. But in some of the acute conditions it may be difficult to address.

Question : There is so much hype about organic produce today that every body is becoming more organic conscious. But is it really true that consumption of organic produce will promise us a healthier lifestyle and a longer life?

Lisa Mohammed 27, Kuala Lumpur

Answer : Organic food is becoming more widely accepted, because of the limited use of pesticides used for its cultivation, processing and packing. But whether its consumption alone will promise better health is still something very difficult to predict. There are many other factors which are more important than just organic food for healthier, longer life.

Question : What is the best way, in terms of diet and exercise, to maintain a healthy weight?

Joanne Wong 32, Kuala Lumpur

Answer : Healthy weight varies from individual to individual, according to Ayurveda's BMI index formula and it will not be able to assert the same. In your case you may have to see an alternative therapy physician to programme a diet and exercise suitable for you. In general there are certain rules which suits everyone which you may try and follow with the guidelines below:

- Eat only when you are hungry;
- Take light meals and avoid reheated food;
- Exercise regularly; and
- Sleep early and wake up early. YL





Manoj Kaimal comes from a family, who has long been entrenched in the various traditions of yoga. He had his first exposure and tutelage under his grandfather, Mr. Sridhara Kaimal. Later, he took the teachers training certification from the Sivanada Ashram in Kerala. This was followed by frequent trips to Mysore and Pune, from where he received direct understanding of the great systems of Ashtanga, Vinyasa and Iyengar Yoga. In the year 2000, Manoj along with his wife **Sandhya** opened their own yoga studio in SS2, PJ. Along the years the husband and wife team has taught yoga to thousands of students. They describe their practice and teaching as Manasa, meaning, with mindfulness. In the quest of spreading the message of Yoga, Manoj has been a regular columnist, first for 'the Edge', and then for three years for 'the Star'. Sandhya has been featured in a 7 part yoga documentary in TV3. Manoj regularly gives workshops on different aspects of Yoga, including anatomy as well as the ancient scriptures, to instill the spirit of self-enquiry in each student. To promote the value of yoga as a therapeutic science, he regularly gives presentations such

as at a recently held Stroke Convention by the MHAS, High Blood Pressure Association of Malaysia, and most recently to the elite team of doctors at Monash Medical University. Both Manoj and Sandhya regularly conduct teachers training course, and so far has trained 90 highly trained students to become full fledged yoga teachers.

Question : I noticed that everyone who goes for yoga classes eventually loses weight. Is this something that happens on its own or is there a special sequence of poses that one needs to do to lose weight?

Jayshree Manickavasagam 30, Kota Tinggi

Answer : Yoga is a discipline, meant for improving your self awareness. Normally excess weight is due to lack of discipline - for example laziness to continue on a regular exercise programme, inability to refrain from snacking or eating wrong types of food etc. Those who are regular in yoga classes will slowly find that along with better body and breath control, their ability to control the mind also improves. And a certain body wisdom spontaneously will arise in the practitioner. You will instinctively know certain types of food which are not good for you. Along with it, the dynamic exertions of yoga such as sun salutations, standing postures etc., can help a lot in toning your body. Postures such as shoulder stand, though appearing passive, through its effects on the thyroids has an indirect effect on weight control by balancing your metabolism. So to answer your question, just do yoga in its complete way - by being moderate in eating and being regular in your daily practice. The results will come.

Question : What is the best yoga sequence for us to practice at home, where we can get a total body workout?

Kim Abdullah 26, Kuala Lumpur

Answer : In the first place, Yoga is not just a body workout thing. If it is purely a body workout that one is looking for, there are plenty of other exercise systems available. You can call what you are doing or teaching Yoga, only if you are paying balanced attention to the eight limbs of it, which comprise of moral restraints, ethical observances, energy angles, breathing practices, withdrawing an unfocussed mind, concentration, meditation and total absorption. However it can't be denied that while using the body to improve one's self awareness, certain body benefit do occur. And on that basis, I can answer your question. By a 'total body workout', I surmise that you mean a programme that can improve stamina, strength and flexibility. For this, like most yoga classes are sequenced, the initial sun salutes can help a lot in improving your endurance. And if you can stay a bit longer in some of the sun salute positions like Down Dog, it will do wonders to improve the strength and tone of your arms, shoulders and chest. Then if you continue to do a few standing postures, like utkatasana, parsvakonasana, virabhadrasana etc., it will improve the strength of your legs. This can be followed by Navasana which will strengthen and tone the abdomen. You can then do one or two back bending postures followed by one twist and then a closing forward bend. This will ensure a very good overall body work.

Question : I am paralyzed waist down and have been wheelchair bound for almost 5 years now. I believe I will walk again someday and I wonder if yoga can realise that dream for me?

Betina Lam 35, Petaling Jaya

Answer : First of all, your sentence, "I believe I will walk..." is so heartening. With such a positive attitude, I am sure you will realize that dream one day. However due to lack of details as to what exactly is the cause of your paralysis it is difficult for me to give a proper answer. As a general answer, I can point to three aspects where we should focus on, as per the ancient Yogis scriptures of India. They are tapas (committed effort), svadhyaya (self study) and iswara pranidhana (surrender to God). Briefly, tapas imply making an effort to be regular in your practice. Svadhyaya implies observing yourself while practicing. Be aware of your whole body, try to breathe into your immobile areas and visualize that life energy is flowing there. And lastly iswara pranidhana requires you to acknowledge that the body actually doesn't belong to you, but rather to that universal creative intelligence which is pulsating within each one of us. Surrender everything completely, including your body, its deficiencies, your practice, your prayers everything to that higher self within. And then we will experience what sage Patanjali says as *tanu klesha*, meaning a thinning of mental afflictions and pains. And this will then allow the unfolding of the higher self within, in whatever way it chooses to, perhaps as an awakening of insightful wisdom or perhaps as a healing. But remember, the first step is to start practicing. Wish you all the best. YL