

In ancient India, a young boy would leave home to study with the family guru in his forest ashram. There is a story about one such boy who watched from the forest as the surrounding countryside and villages were devastated by a series of natural disasters. Upset by what he had seen, the boy asked his guru: "Why do these terrible things happen?"

The sage replied: "If you look inside yourself, you will see similar conflicts. Your body is held in balance by the same five elements [earth, water, fire, air and space] you see in nature. Harmful habits upset this balance, causing you to become ill and your mind to be disturbed. This balance is everything and, to achieve it, we must understand how all things function harmoniously. We must respect natural boundaries because the forces that govern the external world also govern the internal world."

The boy thought about this for a while then asked: "How can I obtain this inner balance?" The sage replied: "There are two celestial physicians on earth – proper activity and proper diet. Apart from them, no other physician is necessary."

The celestial physicians referred to in the story represent the two sciences of yoga and ayurveda. These complementary sciences give us the means for staying healthy and achieving tranquillity. Yoga and ayurveda were developed thousands of years ago but their fundamental principles still apply. They provide an analysis of the interconnections between the body, breath, mind, food, the behaviour of the senses, habits, society and the environment.

It is important to understand the nature of the cause-and-effect relationship and to realize that what occurs in the external and internal worlds is not haphazard. On a personal level, actions (including the failure to act) produce results because of this relationship. If we want to achieve a desired result, it is important to understand what combination of things can bring this about. For example, we can choose and adapt the yoga postures to suit each person. Furthermore, their sequencing is not arbitrary because it is recognised that the order and manner in which the postures are performed will have a particular effect. The effect will vary according to our

different constitutions and levels of strength and flexibility. This approach achieves effective and enduring results because of its capacity to provide a personalised and comprehensive practice.

The Sanskrit word "svastha" literally means, "to stay as the self". In yoga and ayurveda, it refers to our inner balance – a state in which we remain balanced physically and mentally. It is a state in which we remain free from disease and mental turmoil.

A. G. Mohan and Indra Mohan established the Svastha Yoga Ayurveda organisation (Svastha) to provide a systematic and integrated healthcare system. Its aim is to teach the means by which individuals can find freedom by practising yoga and ayurveda. Unless we understand how all things function harmoniously and make the necessary effort to address imbalances within our systems we will not be able to achieve this state of freedom.

The teachings of Sri T. Krishnamacharya are the inspiration for the Svastha approach. A.G. Mohan spent 18 years as his private student and Indra Mohan is one of only three women to have received a postgraduate diploma from him. A. G. Mohan is the author of Yoga for Body, Breath and Mind and has also translated Yoga Yajnavalkya, an ancient text dealing primarily with the practice of pranayama. The Mohans continue to study ayurveda and other Vedic sciences intensively.

Students who attend group classes with Svastha teachers learn the general principles for practising asana, pranayama and meditation. The emphasis is on the proper combination of breath with movement to bring about the balance of strength and flexibility necessary for achieving mental focus. Instruction may also be given on how to adapt diet and nutrition according to ayurvedic principles. Students can also attend one-to-one classes to develop a practice more specifically tailored to their own needs.

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