

Like any young boy, this person too got interested in martial arts after watching the movie 'Enter the Dragon' and joined karate classes at the age of 10. With time, this great swimmer not only mastered karate but also became a Tai Chi master. As of now, he is the only master qualified to teach Tai Chi in India, having been trained by the grand master himself. At 46, his life is completely inclined towards his passion - Tai Chi. Meet **George Thomas**, whose hair, eyes and skin speak volumes about his fitness levels.

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is the highest form of martial arts. It is about graceful, meditative and light, natural movements, which relax and stimulate every part of the body. Tai Chi Chuan (as it is called) has various meanings: Supreme ultimate fist, great life force, cotton fist and soft continuous fist... A moving meditation set in motion by the constant interplay of two vital energies: Yin, the passive; and Yang, the active. Tai Chi is especially known for its ability to strengthen and improve one's health. With a history of over 5000 years, Tai Chi is widely known as the 'Mother of all Martial Arts'.

How did you come to know about Tai Chi? How did you become so passionate about it?

Fascinated by the movie 'Enter the Dragon', I joined karate when I was 10. I practiced karate with such sincerity that I was sent to Japan to receive my black belt. There, I happened to see a group of people swaying in a rhythmic way. It was



George Thomas

poetry in motion. The whole sequence looked very beautiful... I just couldn't take my eyes off it. I enquired about it and got to know that it was called 'Tai Chi'. I had no idea about where to learn this art from and my thirst to learn became insatiable. From nowhere a man landed up in India and I happened to meet him... he knew many martial art forms and Tai Chi was one of them. He taught 15 people, of

The Man who got Tai Chi to India



Tai Chi - is it just a martial art, or is there more to it. Get your answers from the master himself.

which only I was regular. A couple of years later, I underwent rigorous training in Australia from grand master Fu Sheng Yuan (a 5th generation teacher). It was indeed a great blessing. He corrected me, checked my postures and taught me techniques. I used to practice Tai Chi for 12 to 14 hours a day. I was fortunate to learn the use of the sword, the king of all weapons. It enriched me. One fine day, seeing the passion and fire in me, the grand master insisted that I go and teach in India. A few months later, he invited me to China. There, I learnt by seeing the Chinese practice. I came back and started my first branch in Chennai in 1998. Today, we have three centres apart from Chennai - Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mumbai. We will shortly be in Pune and Delhi. None of this would've been possible but for Viji, my wife. She has been extremely supportive and is a huge source of strength.

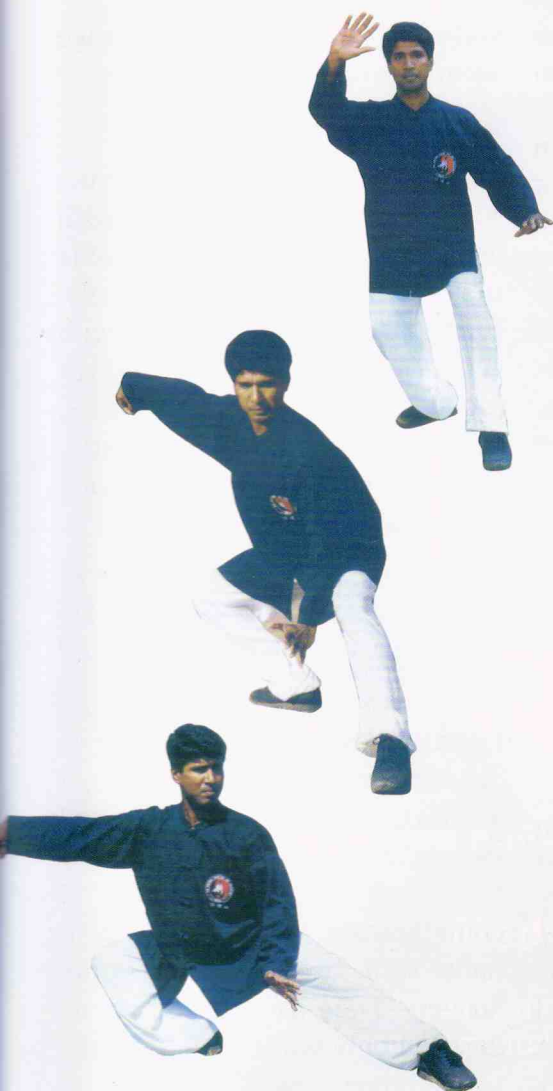
How does Tai Chi work on the body?

Tai Chi is a combination of physical exercise, breathing techniques and meditation. It comprises slow, relaxed, flowing movements of opening and closing forms, advance and retreat, attack and defence, canalising energy through the body's natural movements to attain a high degree of fitness, both mental and physical. Tai Chi works directly on the central nervous system, thereby giving the person a very strong rooting. When you incorporate Tai Chi into your lifestyle, it exercises your body,

nurtures your personality and refreshes your mind. Originally developed as a martial art, Tai Chi looks like a slow graceful dance, but behind the deceptively simple movements is a wealth of Philosophy, Medicine and Science. Tai Chi is about balance and harmony. Generally, people perspire while performing the art, but the pulse rate comes down gradually.

What is the difference between Tai Chi and Yoga?

Tai Chi is from China. Yoga is from India. Both ancient art forms focus on the mind and the body. Yoga has



“The root cause of all diseases is stress. Stress at various stages in life creates an imbalance in the body. Probably that's why it does not show up in the early years; one notices the effects as he ages. It could be insomnia, asthma, diabetes, back pain... we know them by different names. Each chakra (energy centre) has divisions and energy must be canalised. Stressful lifestyles cause an imbalance in gland functioning.”

INTRODUCING



**YUMMY
POPCORN
AT HOME
IN 5 MINUTES**



**MAKES
GOOD TIMES
EVEN BETTER!**



R.S.PRODUCTS

The Popcorn People

134, Govindappa Naicken st.,
1st Flr, Chennai-1. M-98410 82330

Tel: 2536 9330, 2539 1303

popcornworld@sify.com

**Enquiries Solicited for
Superstockists all over India**

pranayama, asanas and meditation at different stages. There are a few asanas that not everyone may be able to do. Tai Chi also believes in breathing, physical movement and meditation, but all the three are performed with movement. The whole sequence is slow and lasts up to 21 minutes. If a person can walk, and is between 6 and 70 years of age, he can do Tai Chi. No prior fitness level is required.

Why is it that despite all this talk about health, fitness and diet in today's world, diseases are still on the rise?

First and foremost, the root cause of all diseases is stress. Stress at various stages in life creates an imbalance in the body. Probably that's why it does not show up in the early years; one notices the effects as he ages. It could be insomnia, asthma, diabetes, back pain... we know them by different names. Each chakra (energy centre) has divisions and energy must be canalised. Stressful lifestyles cause an imbalance in gland functioning.

Over the years, man has broken three golden rules:

Body - The moment man came into existence, the first thing he did was walk... he walked for food, shelter and between places. With advancement in automobiles and other facilities, man has broken this golden rule.

Diet - Man has redefined eating. Today, we have business lunches. Busy schedules are killing appetite and fast foods are gaining popularity. Food has life; every morsel of food is energy. That's why if a person can take time to eat his food, experiencing the taste,

texture, smell... what he is eating will get digested. Our traditional system of food (*thali*) has everything, balanced in its own way. Some cuisines start their meals with a small piece of sweet, for the moment a person sees a sweet, his mouth starts salivating - and saliva is nectar. Digestion starts in the mouth and then sends positive signals to the stomach. These days we dump food into our stomachs without even relishing it. No wonder food hardly gets digested. We are breaking our traditional habits of eating.

Rest - By nature, we are supposed to rest at night. All living things have been doing this for aeons - birds, plants, animals, and human beings... unless nocturnal in habit. With time, this rule has also been broken. We don't give enough rest to our body. With so many entertainment options, night shifts, BPOs, studies and office work, people are up way beyond midnight. 'Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy

and wise' still holds good, but we seem to have forgotten it.

Is Tai Chi therapeutic?

Tai Chi is definitely therapeutic. Students who had come with ailments have gradually been able to stop their medication completely. It has achieved great results with certain medical conditions like high blood pressure, heart diseases, spleen dysfunction, arthritis, backaches, posture problems, insomnia, etc.

Teaching, I'm sure, plays its part in taking care of your health. Do you, however, have a personal routine?

I start my day at 5.00 a.m. I practice Tai Chi everyday. Sometimes, I also do floor exercises, walking and swimming. I don't measure my food, but I eat on time. I communicate with my system rather well. I never suppress my hunger. Food has life and it gets digested only when eaten with the right attitude.

Just for laughs!!!

One afternoon, a man went to his doctor and told him that he hadn't been feeling well lately. The doctor examined the man, left the room, and came back with three different bottles of pills.

The doctor said, "Take the green pill with a big glass of water when you wake up. Take the blue pill with a big glass of water after you eat lunch. Then just before going to bed, take the red pill with another big glass of water."

Startled to be put on so much medicine, the man stammered, "Jeez Doc, exactly what is my problem?"

The doctor replied, "You're not drinking enough water."