

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



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.

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

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. ”

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