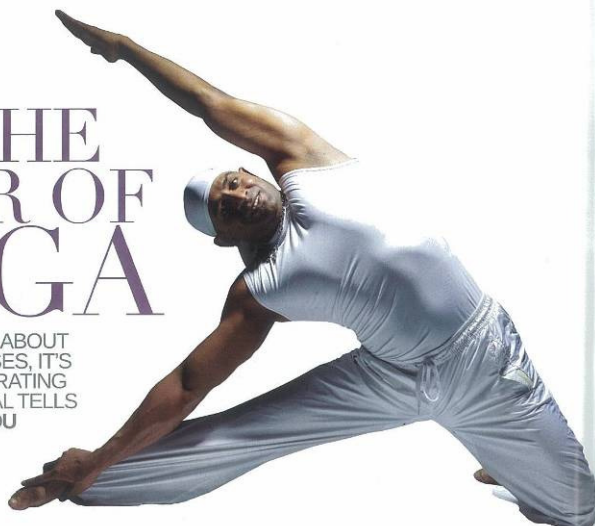


THE POWER OF YOGA

YOGA IS NOT JUST ABOUT PHYSICAL EXERCISES, IT'S ALL ABOUT CELEBRATING LIFE, MASTER KAMAL TELLS SUNUJA NAIDU



Wearing a fitted tee that shows off bulging muscles and a bandanna around his head, Sri Srinivas Suresh Kamal's physique resembles that of a fitness instructor rather than a traditional Indian yogi. He is entirely comfortable with his image as it opens doors that might otherwise remain closed to yoga. It also fits in with his intention to promote the ancient

Indian form of exercise as a discipline that not only stretches the body but also builds strength. Master Kamal, as he is popularly known, was born in India and introduced to yoga school at the age of five by his doctor father who was interested in inculcating in him the art of living rather than just the need to produce excellent academic results. He went on to be initiated by his

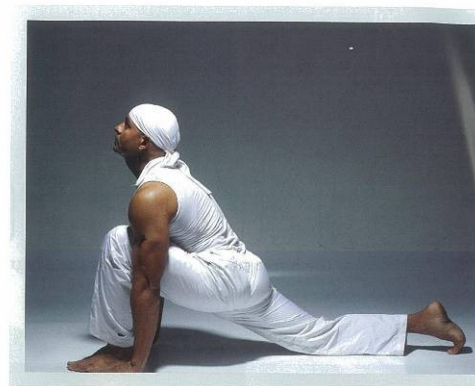
spiritual master Swami Veda Bharati and is well-schooled in various forms of yoga. A fitness enthusiast, he has trained in gymnastics and karate as well. Acknowledged as one of the eight greatest Indian yoga masters in the world, while in Singapore in 1993 he designed his own system of yoga called Kryoga which combines the powerful moves of martial arts and fitness science with traditional yoga methods like hatha and ashtanga yoga. With the many yoga methods around, is there a need for a new form? He replies: "New yoga methods have evolved through the ages to meet the changing needs of people. In the rush of today's world, you need something that enable the body and mind to be fit and healthy. Stretching is not enough, you also need strength." Kryoga improves bone density and also teaches a breathing technique that helps you perform the more difficult postures. Kryoga and its different forms are now being taught at True Yoga to which Kamal has been appointed the master instructor. Variations of Kryoga include Kryoga Warrior and the Kryoga Sun and Moon series. The Sun and Moon series focus on balancing the body's energy and releasing stress. The Sun series which has variations on the traditional sun salutation movements



promise to pep you up for the day. Comprising 14 postures, the Moon series is a great way to wind down and is especially soothing with exercises that open up the chest and focus on balancing. It ends with a hummingbee breath exercise that calms the body and mind.

Kryoga Warrior seeks to firm the body, tightening the arms and abs. Some of the postures in Kryoga Warrior are those one might find in the more advanced classes. Kamal has chosen to dispense with such labels as apprehension may keep students from attending these classes. "It makes it easier for them to learn these postures," points out Kamal. Besides which, he often provides easier options for those not up to the mark.

"With yoga, you can completely train the whole body. It helps reverse the ageing process as well as postpone cell atrophy. Having done gymnastics and martial arts, I understand the power of yoga. It keeps you vibrant and healthy." A walking advertisement for the benefits of this ancient exercise, the 45-year-old's daily routine consists of meditation ("that's my mental tonic"), 1,000 rounds of skipping and a yoga session before he starts his day. If there are no classes in the evening, he practises the more advanced postures, after which he "celebrates life".



YOGA AND PREGNANCY

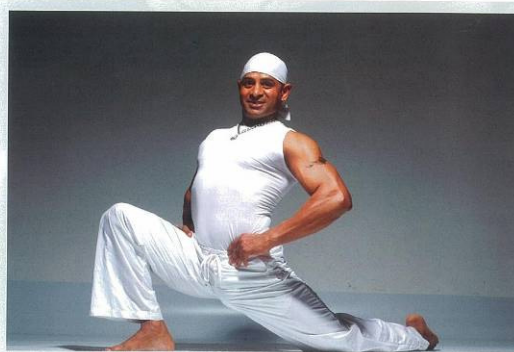
The lively instructor injects humour and profound insights into his classes at True Yoga, peppering his speech with Mandarin and Cantonese phrases, as well as imparting useful tips and advice regarding the benefits of various postures. As a sportsman and recently-turned actor who performs his own stunts in a Telegu movie, he has had his fair share of injuries and is well-placed to help those similarly afflicted. "I once had the managing director of a hospital come to me for help with a slipped disc," he reveals.

When it comes to pregnancy, he advises that yoga can help alleviate back pain, water retention and open the hips, making for an easier delivery. The way

to a painless delivery, ultimately, is to change the way you think about labour. Having spoken to some of his obstetrician mother's patients who have gone through childbirth, he explains that they described it as a blissful experience. "You are creating something, that's the way you should approach labour rather than look upon it as a painful experience." Children from as young as two can take up yoga, he advises, even meditation.

He calls Kryoga "the art of mindful living", pointing out, "God is in the details. Small things can change a life." "The beauty of yoga is that it teaches you the art of living happily. People confuse pleasure with happiness whereas yoga teaches the art of being truly happy." Yoga, he points out, goes beyond the physical. "Yoga is so powerful. Beauty and health are byproducts of yoga but by opening our minds, we can look towards its ultimate goal, namely self-realisation."

Many people take up yoga to de-stress and that, he accepts, is a good start although not the complete picture. With his emphasis on yogic breathing, he tries to leave his students with a calmer, more wholesome approach to life, advising them to practise breathing during their free moments and "look at strangers they encounter on the public transport rather than getting caught up in their own thoughts". And always, reminding them to "celebrate life".



Kryoga is available at True Yoga, Ocean Towers, and Pacific Plaza.