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august 2005

kerala's wisdom
shades of green

IN UBUD BALI

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Seoul Sparkles

Hong Kong HK\$40
Singapore \$6 (inc GST)
Malaysia RM33 • Thailand B200
China RMB160 • Philippines P220
Thailand 100 baht • Indonesia 15,000 rupiah
Japan Yen 1,200 • Korea 10,000 won
Cover 100 baht • Malaysia 10 ringgit



spa profile

Live as if you were to die tomorrow.
Learn as if you were to live forever.

MAHATMA GANDHI

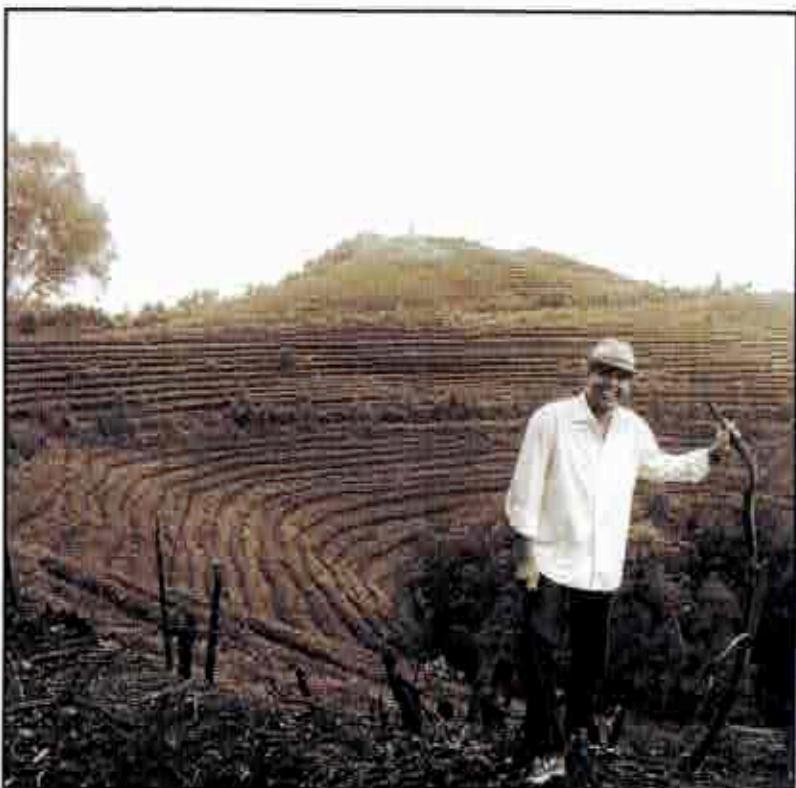
passionate ABOUT wellness

Manoj M. Murjani is an extraordinary man, who at the tender age of 35 has already lived an extraordinary life. Born into one of Hong Kong's prominent Indian families, he knows privilege, and grew up an entrepreneur, juggling companies for the Murjani empire. But recently he has come back to basics, set his family as top priority, and started a spa and health related business called TWG (The Wellness Group). It seems the savvy businessman has found his softer side.

Looking back, Manoj's formative years were humdingers. Nurtured by a hugely supportive and successful family, "it all started with my grandfather, who is my idol", at the age of ten he was sent from a Hong Kong he knew and loved to Cheam and then Harrow, both exclusive schools in the UK. Ironically, it is partly the tortuous journey through the public school system he has to 'thank' for his phenomenal success later on. Racism and bullying were everyday occurrences, and ostracised by his peers, despite, or perhaps also because of his sporting success in tennis, cricket and soccer, he developed an internal strength that was to see him strong through many difficult times in the future.

The family businesses spanned several different industries, including launching the

global brands of Gloria Vanderbilt (jeans), Tommy Hilfiger and Coco-Cola Clothes; while peers of the Murjani's sound like a Who's Who of twentieth century icons: Andy Warhol, Deepak Chopra, Michael Jackson, The Forbes Family and The Estee Lauder Family, among others. The result? His life has been anything but normal. "It is an amazing blessing I've had," he says in his characteristically humble tone of voice. "Somehow I've been in the right place at the right time and I've been surrounded by people who can guide me through."



To the world,
you may be one person;
but to one person, you may be the world."

UNKNOWN



On September 11th 2001 he watched, with horror, the second plane hit the second World Trade Centre tower. This motivated him to shift his priorities to begin and end with his family, health and wellness.

Fast forward to 2005 and he has taken this advice to heart with TWG. "I've been to the greatest corners of the world and seen the finest things, but it is amazing how beautiful nature is. If you want an answer just look at how nature does it."

TWG's first commercial step has been to launch hand picked and sown teas. "Tea is a passion of mine," says Manoj, "and this is the finest grade of tea. Warm the cups," he demonstrates, "so that when the tea is brewing there's no cold shock to the leaves." He goes through the ritual with practised, gentle hands in front of a crowd at ISPA Asia in Singapore and then smiles

with satisfaction at the oohs and aahs as the osmanthus blossom opens in the glass cup. "It's like champagne bubbles, so I've called it Celebration."

But this is just the tip of the wellbeing iceberg. "We want to be the Estee Lauder of wellness," he says, confident at aiming so high, and focusing on sourcing top quality products from around the world, creating a responsible and desirable brand and distributing effectively, he is well on the way. "We've launched the world's first wellness brand," he says, "Music, tea, skincare, spa products, candles, apparel..."

But this time there is far more at stake for him than commercial and financial success.

"Each person has amazing things inside them. Only they can unlock them, but others can give them the tools. The best quality music, tea, skincare and products help them get to that place," he explains. "There's a lot of heart and soul in this. I'm doing it out of pure passion."

And passion is written all over his face as he explains the philosophy behind how he lives his life these days. "We should be doing the things we want to every single day. Some people don't have the courage —

it takes a lot to stand up for yourself and defend what you believe in against the crowd. I know how to go against the crowd and stand strong."

"The world is materialistic but I believe in karma, and spirituality and roots are very important. They pulled me through from when I was ten. Now I want to spend time living each day to the fullest."

It's not in Manoj not to excel. A combination of genes and environment has shaped this pioneering entrepreneur, who has peaked and troughed and learnt and who continues to learn and, more importantly, help the rest of us learn too.

"It doesn't matter how small you are you can achieve anything you want," he says, smiling, clearly influenced by the wisdom of Gandhi. "Believe in yourself and have courage."

www.thewellnessgroup.com

