

## PROMINENT RESEARCHERS NO.11

### PROFESSOR MARTHANDA VARMA SANKARAN VALIATHAN

*By Dilmani Warnasuriya*



Prof Valiathan is an eminent cardiac surgeon, having being trained in cardiac surgery in the UK and US, and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in UK, and Fellow of Canadian Royal College of Cardiac Surgeons. In the US, he was trained in cardiac surgery in the John Hopkins, George Washington and Georgetown University Hospitals. Notwithstanding his fame as a surgeon, he is most renowned for his original research work on cardiology and the development of Medical technology, laying the foundation for the medical devices industry in India, and most significantly for his pioneering contribution in synthesising Ayurveda with modern biology. The new discipline of Ayurvedic Biology has thus emerged, with Prof Valiathan. This work has earned him the post of National Research Professor in India for two consecutive terms. He is currently the Chairman of the Task Force in Ayurvedic Biology of the Department of

Science and Technology and Hon Advisor, Manipal University. He was previously the Professor of Cardiac Surgery and Director of the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute of Medical Science and Technology for two decades. It was here that he developed unique medical devices for cardiovascular diseases. He is the recipient of many awards, medals, fellowships and honorary doctorates in India and abroad for his contribution to the field. In 2005 he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

Prof Valiathan has an intense passion for Ayurveda, which he attributes to his upbringing in an Ayurveda friendly environment. His initial studies in Medicine however did not include the field of Ayurveda, and his interest was rekindled only around the 90s, when he was lamenting over the fact that after the advent of modern medicine in India over 200 years ago, there was no significant original contribution from an Indian towards the development of medicine. Searching for a time where Indian medicine showed some innovation, he came across the Charaka, Susrutha and Vagbhata. He commenced his studies on Charaka Samhita with an eminent scholar and Ayurvedic physician, and these studies continued for over two and a half years.

Prof Valiathan is of the view that Ayurveda should be included in the curriculum of a medical or basic science course. He believes that Ayurveda being a holistic science would provide scintillating opportunities for research by investigating ayurveda through the perception of contemporary science. He firmly believes that when new science and new techniques are applied to old science, new sprouts of knowledge would appear, and indeed he was able to show that this was so, through his research work.