



Members' Newsletter

- PERSATUAN IYENGAR YOGA MALAYSIA -

Iyengar Yoga Association of Malaysia

FORTH ISSUE • JULY 2020

We are delighted to present our 4th edition of PIYMs newsletter to the Malaysian Iyengar Community to learn and progress together and harness the togetherness with joy.

As countries are taking stronger measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, self-quarantine and the temporary closing of businesses may affect normal food-related practices. Good nutrition is crucial for health, particularly in times when the immune system might need to fight back. Limited access to fresh foods may compromise opportunities to continue eating a healthy and varied diet. In order to support individuals in eating healthy during self-quarantine and isolation, we are sharing articles which are food related.

For optimal health, it is also important to remain physically active, so continue a regular yoga practice at home.

#We welcome any inputs from members who would like to share their artworks, reflections, photographs, etc. all relating to Iyengar yoga.

*Love,
P.I.Y.M. Team*

STICK TO YOGA : IT GUIDES YOUR DIET



I was undernourished throughout my childhood and even after I began teaching as I ate for survival with no idea of nourishment.

There is plenty of literature on food and diet for yogic practice. For them food comes first and then yoga. But for me, it is yoga first and then food. My diet depends upon what type of practice I plan to do. I avoid that food which affects my practice. Āsana practice guides one in having sensitivity in eating what the body needs each day.

There cannot be a single type of food congenial to yogic practice. Hatha Yoga Pradīpika said to avoid too much food. Eat only when hungry and only when saliva oozes from the mouth as one sees food. Only eat when the system demands.

Regular disciplined and genuine practice of āsana and prāṇāyāma for some months makes one indifferent to one's favourite dishes even if they are placed in front of him. Stop practice for eight days, then indiscipline sets in and old habits return. After yoga, the system needs less fuel.

If we feel pain or stiffness, we restrict our movements. Similarly, if the organic body restricts the movements, know that we have overeaten or the food that is consumed is not digested. This way we learn to take what is right food. But we don't try to trace the root cause of these problems for example chillies irritate one in back-bends.

Vegetarian food is good for health. It is certainly cleaner than non-vegetarian food. First, if the bowel movements are correct, half the health is gained. Second, eat foods which nourish the seven constituents [sapta dhātu] of the body namely: chyle, blood, flesh, fat, bones, bone marrow and semen. The secret is that the subtlest part of food is meant to build up the intellectual faculty. Hence, you have to learn to balance food that is congenial to practice.

Where physical health is concerned, one can have varieties with limitation but the moment one goes towards spiritual aspects then one has to check not only the stomach but also the taste. Varying food habits brings variation in mind thoughts. Different tastes of food make the tongue indiscipline and also affect the mind to indulge in tastes. The food we take should give that strength to develop the mind to reach towards the higher goals in life.

As practitioners of yoga, discipline yourselves. Eat only when you are hungry and eat only as much as is essential for sustenance. That is how I live.

As practitioners of yoga, begin to watch the subtle changes that occur within. Learn what to eat and what to practice to be energetic. That is why I am not fussy regarding food.

Stick to yoga – it guides your diet.



As I sat down to write this article, my thoughts went back to the time when Guruji was honored with the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India and I had the good fortune of interviewing him on behalf of a newspaper. “What kind of food should a yoga practitioner eat Guruji?” I asked.

“I never say anything about food’, he said, ‘most of my practice has been without any food in my stomach and without the guarantee of getting a square meal on that day. But I will tell you this - yoga satiates all hunger while keeping the fire of hunger alive. Even if you learn to do Samasthiti properly, it will change not just the way you stand but the way you eat. We think it is about bringing a balance in the right and left side of the body, from the top and the bottom, but it is also about a balance in eating, digesting, assimilating, excreting, everything. There is nothing that yoga practice will not uplift. Yoga is about being in a state of harmony with all that is around.’

It does take a man of genius to simplify the most complex issues. If Yoga for everyone is the dharma that Guruji lived by then food for everyone, for every being, has been one of the yama-s of the yoga shastras since time immemorial. Yama, as every yoga student knows, makes for the founding principle of yoga practice and accounts for self-restrain. Mitāhār, the idea of a balanced diet to create a balanced individual is one of the ten yama-s as listed by the Hatha Yoga Pradīpika. Eating in a state of balance, not too much, not too little.

Every Iyengar yoga student is aware that she is either guilty of under-doing or over-doing in her āsana practice. Which is why every yoga class is a call to pay attention to our muscles, our strengths, weaknesses and more importantly to our tendencies of over or under doing. In 2011, Guruji said to a packed convention of over 1200 students in China, ‘if you don’t follow Yama, Yama, the god of death, follows you.’ And once again, I was awestruck at how simply the man could break down the most complicated of topics.

All around us are people, who are keen to make food what it is not, complicated! In fact, we have almost begun to believe that if it is not complicated then it is not worth doing.

All around us are people, who are keen to make food what it is not, complicated!

Diet theories are thrown around every day, in every conversation, be it a party, wedding or a funeral. There is a diet for Diabetes, Cancer, weight loss you name it. It’s like having one āsana for back pain, another one for neck pain and a third one for the kidneys. An Iyengar yoga student knows better than that, right?

So, what should we eat? According to the time-tested wisdom of our culture, food should be chosen as per the three types of hunger or bhookh –

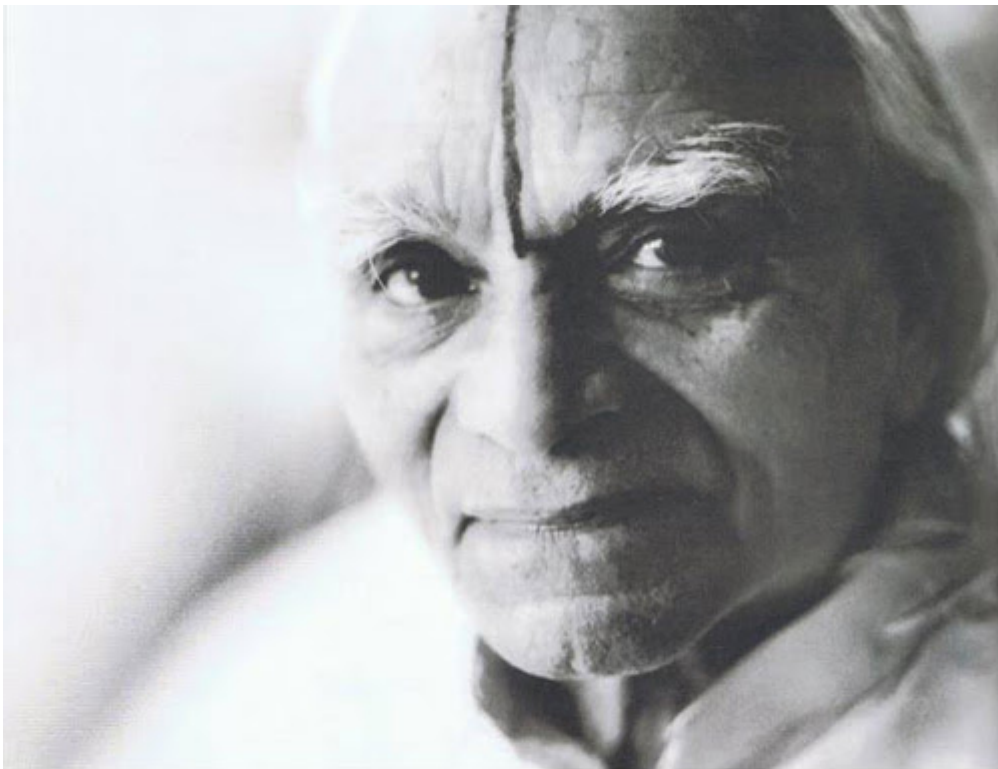
1. Hita bhookh – one that is good or leads to wellbeing of all. In modern terms, it would mean limiting consumption of packaged and ultra-processed foods. This would ensure that the environment inside the body and outside is not polluted as all these foods – breakfast cereals, biscuits, chips, etc., come with plastic packaging and offer no nutrient value.
2. Ritu bhookh – one that is in tune with climate and season. Our appetite typically decreases in summer and increases in winter, we crave for bhajjis in monsoon and sherbets in summer. Respecting the rhythms of nature and eating foods which are local and seasonal is an essential part of eating right.
3. Mita bhookh – Eating in a state of balance, not overeating, not shy of eating either. This would mean paying attention while eating, chewing slowly and self-terminating the act of eating without help from any app or gadget.

The power of yoga lies in its ability of be versatile and timeless. Applying the above concepts would essentially encourage a diverse diet based on the region a person lives in, their age, state of mind, practice, etc. It isn’t a formula to crack weight loss, it is a set of recommendations to free yourself from ever changing diet dogmas.

***"Yoga satiates all hunger while keeping
the fire of hunger alive."
- Guruji BKS Iyengar***

Honestly, I had a tough time writing this article because Guruji, the phenomenon behind the vast yoga wisdom that is now accessible for so many of us, remained hungry but remained unwavering in the pursuit of his practice. His sādhanā for years has now become a sādhan (instrument) for many young aspirants to quickly become yoga gurus or start yoga cafes. But what may get lost in the instant glory of our Instagram world is that the man who nurtured so many beings through yoga, preferred to keep his food simple and stayed grateful for what was on his plate.

May we all learn this from him.



*Life means to be living. Problems will always be there.
When they arise navigate through them with yoga-
don't take a break.*

BKS Iyengar



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Malaysia on Saturday, 25 July 2020.

Due to the ongoing pandemic and the crowd restrictions under the Recovery Movement Control Order, many of our members are not able to attend the upcoming AGM. As a result, this year's AGM will be conducted online via Zoom*:

Time: 3.00pm to 4.30pm (GMT+8; Malaysian Time)

Date: Saturday 25th July 2020

**NOTE: The link will be shared to your email, prior to the meeting on the above date mentioned.*

We hope all of you will attend and support the AGM and continue to support the future of Iyengar Yoga in Malaysia and South East Asia region.

If you have any questions, kindly reach us at
pymprotmcomm@gmail.com



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