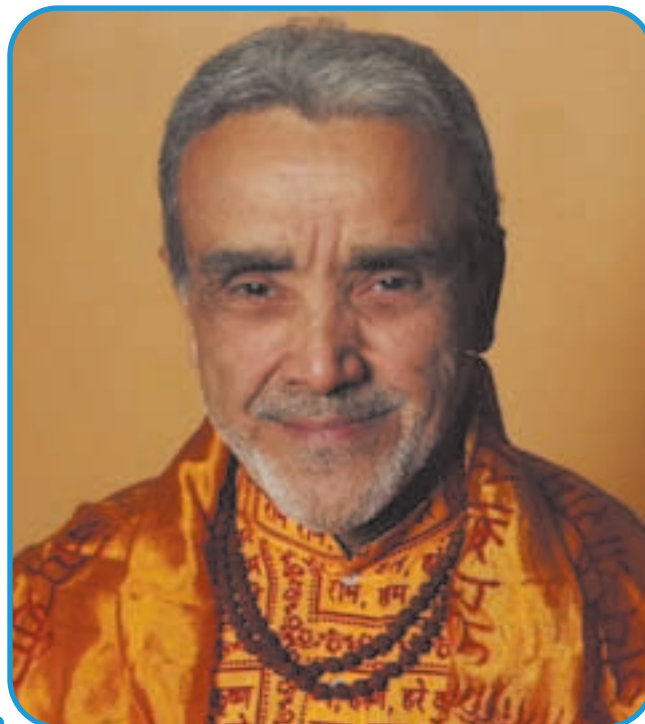


the Yoga of Diet AND the Diet of Yoga



My beloved Guru, Sri Swami Kailashananda, or Yogi Gupta as he is known to his American students and disciples, used to point to the stomach of someone who asked him about diet and say: "Make that your pot, my son, and do your cooking there. That wonderful aroma when you are cooking? That is the best part of your food escaping." As it is said in scripture: "Blessed are they that can copy the teacher physically. Twice blessed are they that copy the teacher both physically and mentally."

BY SRI DHARMA MITTRA

Through this action, psychically you gain all the knowledge of another. I took this advice to heart in many areas in learning from my Guru, diet being one among them.

I was blessed to prepare meals for Sri Yogi Gupta in the 1960's when he visited from India. I studied very closely with him, and saw what he ate and quickly learned to eat in a similar manner. Yogi Gupta ate everything green — I still remember shelling green peas by the handful! There was Romaine lettuce and very lightly steamed broccoli, green peas and asparagus with a good squeeze of fresh lemon over everything. The accompanying “cocktail” was freshly juiced celery and cucumber with more freshly squeezed lemon. So, this is how I was shown by the best example of how to eat. I would go to my job at a hospital outside the Ashram with a quart of fresh green juice to drink. I understand completely as well as believe there is really something great to eating this

way. My Guru is a living example, now in his nineties and still going strong.

Another thing I learned from my Guru was the importance of sprouting anything that can be sprouted. Sprouting something changes the chemistry of the foodstuff as it converts from potential to actual. I love to sprout many things, but my favorite is raw almonds. You rinse them, cover them in water for about ten hours, then change the water and keep soaking them for an additional three to four hours. It takes weeks for the actual sprout to come out, but germination has started and the almonds become very sweet and are then a complete food. Be sure and remove the skin, and you can add a large handful to your smoothie or just give thanks and pop them right into your mouth.

My Guru always recommended that people eliminate sugar and salt from their diet. Most instances where you might add salt to a recipe, try substituting a good squeeze of fresh lemon juice — it makes everything delicious and is so much healthier. Once you stop preparing food with salt and sugar, you'll come to discover how delicious the food itself really is. Any food that “hurts” — is too spicy, hot or cold should be avoided, as it is not the food which will help one find yoga or lead to a state of balanced health essential to the



practice of yoga. Avoid anything frozen, reheated that has already been cooked once and served, twice cooked, fried or not fresh. (If you do eat these types of food, you will end up feeling frozen, cooked and fried!) Eat large salads of fresh vegetables, lots of avocados, tahini, home made hummus, drink lots of green juices, and try and use just a little spice if at all. Try and steadily increase the percentage of your diet that is raw until that number reaches 80% or more — then you really feel great! Every yogi should own a juicer. If you don't yet have one, go out and buy one today! If there comes a time in your life when you don't pay much attention to your diet, you will find that you really feel awful! So, clean up the “house” (the body) by cleaning up the diet, and start feeling better today.

I myself avoid wheat gluten and yeast that has been activated to cause bread to rise, as I have found that both seem to induce soreness in the joints. If there is ever soreness for any reason, fresh pineapple and fresh pineapple juice is the best remedy there is.

The foundational aspect of all yoga begins with the diet and is expressed through strict observance of the first yama, which is ahimsa or non-violence. One can have an advanced practice of postures and breathing exercises, and you may have even acquired

the ability to quiet the mind a little through sensory withdrawal and concentration, but the mind will never truly settle into silence without ahimsa as the primary motivation behind word, thought and action. Constant attention to this principle leads the aspirant to develop that most crucial of attributes — compassion — the attribute which will enable one to come to recognize themselves in everyone and everything.

So, how do we apply non-violence to our diet? By not devouring our brothers and sisters of the animal kingdom. To really understand yoga, your kindness must extend beyond your pets! All animals are like us — they love their children and seek only happiness. We must end this darkness and brutality where it seems acceptable to pay someone else to murder another living being on our behalf, clean up the carcass and wrap pieces in plastic. Then, you

bring it home and put it in your refrigerator, making your home or apartment into a morgue. If most of us were still eating meat and we visited a slaughterhouse, we would stop eating meat immediately!

We must also learn to offer thanks for every morsel of food we are fortunate enough to have before us. To not do so violates the yama of asteya or non-stealing. Offer what you are about to consume to all the gods and invite them to enjoy everything through you. Then the food becomes Prasad or the blessed portion that remains after an offering. This is truly the best sort of food for a yogi.

Legendary yoga teacher Sri Dharma Mittra founded one of the early independent schools of yoga in New York City in 1975. Sri Dharma is the model and creator of the 'Master Yoga Chart of 908 Postures', the author of Asanas: 608 Yoga Poses, and two DVD's to date — Maha Sadhana. Join Sri Dharma Mittra daily, as this living master continues to disseminate the practices of Yoga at the beautiful new Dharma Yoga Temple at 61 West 23 St. in New York City. There are many evening lecture programs for people of all ages. To see his programs, go to: www.dharmayogacenter.com. See Sri Dharma Mittra at the NewLife/Yoga & Raw Food Expo in New York City, June 10-12.