

STRANGE ORIENTAL GYMNASTICS INVADE DESICCATED BROADWAY

New York Goes in for Yoga of Orient, Imported From India by Way of Chicago—You Need Guru to Interpret Asana.

With the downfall of Bacchus, new gods have come to Gotham. From the weary, stale and unprofitable aspects of a desiccated Broadway, the forlorn New Yorkers are turning their eyes towards the orient and seeking solace in the ancient wisdom that has its home base over in the Hindu Koosh mountains and which teaches the beatitude of indifference to all earthly things. At morn they are orientating and plucking Prana from the circumambient air through the channels of the rhythmic breath. At eve they are contemplating their umbilicals and concentrating their minds upon the Path. In the subways they are reading the Bhagavad Gita, and everywhere the wise men of the east are in evidence. The jejune parlors are swarming with swami, yammering with Yogi and gushing with Gorus. All of which, being interpreted, means that the Yoga cult has come to New York from India by way of Chicago. And now the newspapers are taking the business up in a very didactic way and are handing the gospel out hot from the haunts of the Mahatmas. The New York World has attached a real Swami to its staff, by the gripping name of Kripananda, none other than the famous disciple of the Swami Vivekananda, and each week through the columns of the Sunday World its readers are being sophisticated in the tenets of the esoteric doctrine of the Yogis.

At the present writing the Hon. Kripananda is putting the Manhattaners through the Asana, which is a branch of the Hatha Yoga.

The Yogi's "Setting Up."

Asana, in the language of the Koosh country, means "setting up" exercises—but they are not ordinary setting up exercises, such as those that became so familiar to the A. E. F. Nothing is ordinary in the Yoga business. Asana is a sort of gymnotheosophical system of physical culture, guaranteed to restore youth without the aid of interstitials, to harmonize the nerve centers and prolong life indefinitely. Just why a New Yorker, deprived as he has been by the rude hand of the law of his chief source of pleasure, should want to prolong his life any longer than is absolutely necessary is not clear. But anyway—

Before we tackle the Asana, let us backup and get our bearings, for this Yoga business is a thing of many terms, and they all mean something or another, and you've got to take everything step by step. There are no short cuts to the Path. In the first place, you must not confuse Yogi and Yoga. Yogi is the man, or rather superman, and Yoga is his doctrine. Yogi, Yoga, Yogum, Yagorum, Yagalorum, Yagalorum—that's the way it goes—with the "h" silent, as in England. And there are two or three main branches of the Yoga. There is Hatha Yoga, and Raja Yoga, and Gnani Yoga, but the Yoga that the New Yorkers are going in strong for just now is of the Hatha variety. You've got to master that before you tackle the others, but why would anybody want anything more than the Hatha brand is guaranteed to furnish?

Purpose of Sun and Moon.

"The practice of Hatha Yoga," says Krip, "is intended to purge the human nature of all impurities. Hatha is a compound word, of which the first syllable, ha, means the moon, and the second, tha, the sun; corresponding respectively with the breath of the left and right nostrils." Clear enough so far. Just bear those distinctions in mind. One side of your nose for the sun and the other side for the moon—there is no possibility of confusion. But wait:

"The purpose of Hatha Yoga is to make men live long, through the control of the breath and thus of the functions of the mind, which in turn control the body. It has power to prevent diseases of the body and mind. Its practice regulates the functions of the heart and lungs and circulation of the blood. It bestows the gift of indefinitely postponing death, although this is seldom practiced by the true Yogi, who resorts to it only to strengthen the body for the more difficult achievement of Raja Yoka, the attainment of divinity. Hatha Yoga aims to bring under complete volition the muscular actions which have become involuntary and to make active and potent the brain centers which through disuse have become atrophied."

For this week's lesson, Swami Kripananda lines out the Asana postures, with illustrations.

A Guru Needed.

They look simple enough, but the Swami warns the neophyte that there are elements of danger in them and they really should not be attempted without the aid of a Guru. And there's a bull market on Gurus right now—they come high. A Guru is a past master of the Yoga business, who was

raised right over there in the Koosh country. He is supposed to know the game from Yama to Nivana, from Alpha to Omaha and from Soda to Hock. The Yoga business is his main line. So a Guru one must have, no matter what the price, for what is price when one is promised an indefinite extension of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

But before you tackle the Asana, there is a preliminary step—pardon the interruption—known as Pranayama, which means the rhythmic control of the breath. The essentials for the acquirement of Pranayama are that the spinal column be held free, with the head, neck and chest in a straight line, and that the breath must be controlled in harmonic inhalations and exhalations. After practicing this for some time it would be well, says Kripananda, to join the repetition of some sacred word to it, such as "Om." Any other good round sounding word would do, such as "bum" or "dam," but "Om" has been the preferred word ever since the first Guru came out of the Koosh country, and perhaps it would be best to stick to that. Get this down fine and then you will learn what "rest" really is.

Then the Postures.

"Once this rest has come, the most tired nerves will be calmed down. The face will change; harsh lines will disappear; with calm thought a calmness will come over the face, and next a beautiful voice will come." A few months' practice of Pranayama and you are ready for the postures—the life prolonging Asana. There are many of these, but the three really important ones are Kuktasana, which acts upon the nerve centers; Viparitarani, which enlivens the gastric fires and restores youth; and Padmasana, which prolongs life indefinitely.

It is not necessary—in fact, it is not exactly easy—to describe how these postures should be performed according to the Yoga code. We must let the illustrations speak for themselves. They appear simple enough, but the charm lies in the esoteric business that goes with them. You must never forget "Om." "Say 'Om,' you son-of-a-gun, say 'Om.'" And do not overlook the Guru—again and again the Swami reminds the student of the indispensability of a Guru and solemnly warns him of the dangers of non-Gurud postures.

"Simple as the exercises of Hatha Yoga appear, the desirability of having the instruction and company of a Guru cannot be too strongly emphasized," writes the careful Kripananda. "Mistakes and errors may prove as mischievous and disastrous as right practice is beneficial. It may all seem simple, but in fact it is very difficult, and few there are who have the fortitude to persevere to the end."



CARE
At
New E
Perfect
yet plain
this new
oxford. E
black kid
leather. C
colonial
Price

