



## CHEFS OF YOGA: MALVIKA & PARMITA OF PRANA KITCHEN

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The vegan lifestyle that we have adopted at Prana Kitchen for the past year reflects the inter-relation of food and yoga, and how what we eat translates to how we act or who we become. Eating clean food, committing a certain time period from your daily schedule for your yoga sadhana (practise) are all forms of self-discipline that cultivate a certain environment in your inner being (energetic field) which allows for productivity, creativity and a feeling of success. These are things we believe people of our age yearn for and the inability to fulfil them leads to a lack of purpose.

We went to Mysore to do a 1 month yoga course with Bharat Shetty, Indea Yoga which enhanced our outlook on yoga; (literally translates to union of the mind, body and spirit from the sanskrit root Yajur : to join). Mysore is the birth place of Ashtanga Yoga and a hub for yoga students from all over the world. Most of the yoga schools/shalas are in an area called Gokulam which is also brimming with tons of vegan and healthy food cafes, yoga shops, ayurvedic clinics and spas. Food plays an important role in yoga - the ancient sister science of Yoga is Ayurveda which provides individualised diets for people based on their Doshas (constituency). This is also apparent from the tons of different dietary preferences that all the locals and the cafes that are in Gokulam are familiar with. Imagine walking into a restaurant and going straight up to the dessert counter and being able to pick out any dessert that's on there. Sounds normal to most people right? But for a vegan in India that's just becoming normal today and it's places like Gokulam that really embrace this lifestyle because the people that flock there are yoga students who are almost always conscious of the food they're putting into their system. Food is energy and it plays an important role in yoga.

During the course our teacher, Bharat Shetty kept stressing upon the single most important element being the breath which enables us to achieve this harmony among the trinity of mind, body and soul. On the first day we were asked what our individual goal postures were and throughout the month it was a process of working towards those goal poses with patience and persistence. Learning not to fight with our bodies but acknowledging its limitations and constantly applying right effort. The concept of right effort was introduced to us by our favourite Vipassana teacher Patrick Kearney who quotes the Buddha saying 'right effort is something that is sustainable over a long period of time' which is synonymous to what Patanjali says in his yoga sutra's "sthira sukham asanam" and "prayatnashaitilya anantya sama apattibhyaham" {PYS 2.46 & 2.47}

We signed up for Bharat Shetty's Mysore Style classes which is 2 hours of dedicated practice every morning and every evening, 6 days a week. After learning the sequence we were left to practice at our own pace with teachers and assistants coming around for adjustments and guidance if required. It's an amazing feeling to do your practice in a room surrounded by people pursuing the same path - all at different levels but all inspiring to look at. Whether it was the girl who fell over and got up again or the guy who thought he would never be able to do a headstand... everyone in the room came with one purpose : to let go of ancient, habitual ways of thinking and to work on overcoming their fears in a safe space with lovely people and a great teacher.



Malvika Amin ( right )  
Sir Bharat Shetty (centre)  
Parmita Shroff (left)



Practise at the Yoga  
DhammaShala, Mysore

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Our yoga practise akin to our vipassana practise helped cultivate 'mindfulness' because our teacher Bharat Shetty kept insisting on focusing on the breath and inquiring if we were breathing normally (long, slow, deep breaths and not holding the breath) while doing the asanas. The practice that we did for 4 hours daily translated into our lives and how we react to pain or pleasure. Generally when confronted with a stressful situation the breath becomes irregular, the mind restless and we feel irritable but if in those moments we can continue to focus on the breath; we are able to respond to the situation rather than react; which means we have a choice to either feel victimised or seek the next best alternative/ solution.

It was just recognising these windows of opportunity that we have - to make a choice - that makes you feel powerful, boosts self-confidence and gives a sense of fulfilment. Nothing is a coincidence, thoughts are random but it is what we constantly feed the mind that it most naturally gravitates toward. It's always easier to be negative, but to be positive and to believe always takes effort and understanding that we have a choice. That summarises what Mysore as a yoga haven did to us on a personal level apart from the progress which naturally is made on a physical level with any yoga practice - strength, flexibility and alignment.



We had just completed a one-year Hatha Yoga Diploma from Kaivalyadhama, Mumbai and we wanted to advance our personal practise before we got into teaching full-time. It was our first time practicing Mysore - style Ashtanga Yoga which was physically challenging but it was also very inspiring to see what our bodies' are capable of when we don't restrict our belief to what the mind thinks we're capable of.

During this journey of self-discovery of our physical strengths' and limitations' a skilful teacher like Bharat Shetty was essential and a pre-requisite to keep us motivated no matter

what level of practise we were at. Constantly encouraging everyone that progress is progress; irrelevant of how tiny or big. Overall at the end of the month, I think the term 'Mysore-style' represents a style of teaching that is simple, methodological (i.e. a reason for every adjustment no matter how minor the change is), non-competitive, not comparing with peers but with our own improvements' and cultivating patience.



Since Mysore has played such a pivotal role in our self-development I would definitely recommend it as a destination for all aspiring yogis or those affiliated with yoga to unwind, adopt a slower pace of life where you can enjoy simple pleasures such as watching the sunset, reading in open-air cafes, waking up before the sunrise to start your morning meditation and all in all tracking each breath to follow its rhythms; in turn silencing your body and mind down.



**Malvika** is a certified Yoga teacher from Yoga Darshanam Mysore (200 hr), ICYHC Kaivalyadhama Mumbai (post graduate diploma in yogic sciences) and Vipassana meditator teaching at Prisim Healing Institute. She also runs the raw vegan kitchen at Prisim with her best friend creating awareness about the impact of our dietary choices.

**Parmita Shroff** is a certified raw, vegan food chef from Sayuri Healing Foods, Ubud completed Level 1 and Level 2 of training in Raw Living Culinary Arts. She has successfully completed a post graduate diploma in yogic sciences from ICYHC Kaivalyadhama Mumbai. Co-founder to Prana Kitchen, serving plant-based whole foods which is located at the wellness centre Prisim Healing Institute. She has recently completed a 90+ hours training in Mysore style Ashtanga Yoga with Bharat Shetty, Indea Yoga and is a frequent Vipassana Retreat participant.



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