

Physical Culture in India TO THE EDITOR

In India physical culture is a living art, and even in the smallest village, we have what we call "Talims" or the Gymnasium Houses, which are crowded to their utmost, both morning and evening with hot-red-blooded youths. Our Indian system of physical culture may seem a curious one to you Westerners.

The first thing upon entering the "Talim" we smell red mud, a pleasing smell, just as we smell the sun in a hot dusty road, and a fine shower. The second thing is that we are warm and snug. Suddenly our sight is attracted by a short pillar nine to ten inches in diameter, well pitched to the ground, and nicely polished by the hands and legs of those who exercise on it. The pillar is twisted and twined round about it; they hold it between their thighs, their knees, and so on.

The next thing we see is a stone collar of about one hundred pounds weight, which the gymnasts wear and exercise with by revolving their necks round and round. Also they use Indian clubs, ranging in weight from twenty pounds to one hundred and fifty pounds. This gives them ample exercise for their shoulders, biceps, triceps, forearms and wrists. There are many other curious implements, such as kettle-weights, bar-bells, iron balls, and so forth. Indians strip themselves quite naked when exercising, except for their "kachas" or loin clothes. They exercise at least two hours a day, and their main pastime is wrestling. They exercise until they perspire freely and then roll themselves over and over in the red mud, followed by a cold bath, which gradually tones their skins into a bright golden hue. Indians are famous wrestlers and pugilists, the wrestling oftentimes resulting in bloodshed.

The highest form of physical culture with our Indians is breath control and muscle control. Breath control is called the "Prana-Yam," the practice of which is very difficult. A good "Pranayamist" can even raise himself bodily from the ground, without any effort or support. He can make his pulse stop altogether for hours, and goes without food or water for any length of time. He can accomplish the most wonderful feats of strength with ease. It is no joke to say that he can make the biggest elephant walk over his bare chest, without the least injury to

himself. But the one thing that is bad about the Indian wrestlers is that they eat more than their exercise calls for. In short, they are the biggest gluttons and gormandisers, and that brings about their ultimate ruin.

Personally I would forego a day's meal rather than my daily exercise. I am just twenty-one years old and I have made up my mind to become the strongest man in my country in five more years. I enlarged my chest from thirty-five to forty-five inches in less than ten months, and my present chest measurement is forty-five and one-half inches fully expanded. My daily diet consists of nothing but vegetables and I drink nothing but water or milk. I exercise every evening for an hour, which I always follow with a cold bath. I would like to correspond with any physical culturist and would even to write about some of our Indian systems of exercise if you wish.



K. V. Iyer, an intelligent, consistent physical culturist of one of the high castes in India. His letter about the "Talims," the Indian gymnasiums, is particularly interesting

K. V. IYER
Proprietor, A. V. School Tiffin
Fort, Bangalore City,
Pro. Mysore. (India) As