



Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute (RIMYI) and Light on Yoga Research Trust, India

We welcome you to the first issue of **Yogadoot**, a bimonthly electronic newsletter of the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune, India - the heart and soul of Iyengar Yoga. Doot in Sanskrit means a messenger and **Yogadoot** intends to serve as a messenger between the members of the "Iyengar Yoga" family. The head of the family being none other than Guruji Yogacharya BKS Iyengar, the immediate family being Geeta and Prashant Iyengar and the rest of the family comprising teachers, students and to-be students of "Iyengar Yoga". Our Iyengar Yoga family has grown so big and spread so far and wide that many of its members have no idea as to what is happening in India. **Yogadoot** hopes to fill this gap and keep people abreast with the happenings at RIMYI and also leave behind some precious thoughts for its readers to ponder upon. We welcome your feedback and suggestions to help bring all of us closer to each other.

Celebration Time

Guruji Yogacharya BKS Iyengar's 84th birthday was celebrated at RIMYI on December 14, 2002. It was a short evening function attended by students from Pune, Mumbai and several students from abroad who were present in Pune at this auspicious time. The function started traditionally with the melodious vedic chants. Sri Prashant Iyengar then paid an oral tribute to Guruji. Guruji ended the session by summarizing his "tapas". He explained on how he has taken one leaf, asanas, from astanga yoga and studied it very intricately. How he started asanas on the physical plane for the skeleto-muscular body like any beginner would and then how he progressed to the physiological, mental, intellectual and spiritual planes. His advice was simple, take your practice as your "dharma" and do not leave it even when times are not good. The evening ended with a very fine meal generously provided by the immediate members of the Iyengar family - in their inimitable traditional hospitality.

The 23rd Annual Day of RIMYI was celebrated over the weekend of 18th and 19th January at the Institute. The function on the 18th was a unique blessing by Guruji as he gave a talk with practical examples on "asana and chitta prasadam". Chitta means consciousness which



Guruji teaching how to "spread the chitta" in Ardha Chandrasana

includes the mind, intellect and ego while *prasadam* means "to spread". Guruji showed how the *chitta* is dull at certain parts and aggressive in others even while we are doing the simplest of *asanas* like *Tadasana*. Something which we have and would not have realized even after decades of practice. He then showed how one has to adjust this *chitta* for it to spread uniformly - then and only then can we experience what an *asana* really is. Those 2 and 1/2 hours that Guruji was on stage demonstrating, guiding, teaching, only a few of the standing *asanas*, were lessons enough for us to work on for the next few years. A difficult subject indeed but the experience is worth the effort.

Clearing Misconceptions

There are many words in the Sanskrit language which do not have an equivalent word in English. The translations of these terms are therefore made to convey the closest meaning of the term but sometimes, over the years, the translated meaning gets distorted. So it is with the word **asana**, which has been translated to mean a pose (to remain in a sustained position or a posture). To remain in such a position, whatever manner it be, requires tremendous will, understanding and intelligence. It requires intellectual dynamism to remain static. Unfortunately, this term has been misunderstood as only being a physical positioning of the body. Sage Patanjali, in his aphorism mentions "sthira sukham asanam". Sthira means stable, sukha means delight. The message it conveys is that one should be happy and stable in ANY position. Not, as commonly (mis) understood of sitting in any (only that) position that make you feel stable and happy. For a practitioner it means, the ability to retain one's stability and composure under any circumstance or event that you may face in life. Not just be happy and stable in specified situations !!

Did you know?

The capillaries in the lungs would extend to 1600 kms when placed end to end !

The air sacs in our lungs, when opened out, would cover an area the size of a tennis court!

But, over the years, how many of our capillaries get clogged? How many of the air sacs retain the ability to fill up with the inhaled air. One can now understand why asanas like *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana* and *Sarvang-asana* help rejuvenate even the most fatigued and aged person. After all, the air is *prana*, the life force. It is abundant in nature but we need to "invite" it into ourself, our lungs.

Quotable Quote

The capital we are born with, the human body, remains unutilised for most of us.

- Yogacharya BKS Iyengar

Publications

Yoga Rahasya, the quarterly publication of RIMYI enters its 10th year in 2003. To mark this occasion, a special 116 page issue has been released on January 19th. Of the 20 odd original articles, this issue contains an edited version of Guruji's talk on his tapas, his views on modern medicine, Sri Prashant's explanation on the causes of sorrows and the means to overcome them; a special section devoted to Guruji as a person; Smt. Geeta clarifies doubts about women practicing during menstruation, interviews with famous personalities; the role of yoga in a myriad of fields, in addition to the regular features.

The work on **Asta Dala Yoga Mala** is going on at an astonishing pace. This is the compiled updated version of Guruji's talks, interviews, teachings, lectures, articles etc. The first 3 volumes have already been released. Each of these volumes is a treasure and gold mine not only of information but of deep wisdom. The first volume inspires by the autobiographical articles by Guruji ; defines, describes and explains the various facets of yoga as understood by Guruji. The second volume deals with practical philosophy explaining what is Astanga Yoga, what is hatha yoga and Guruji's vision of yoga.