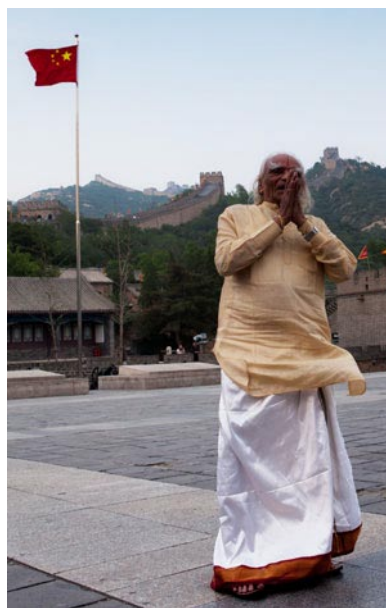


Yogacharya BKS Iyengar historic visit to China: June 2011



Fifteen hundred years ago, a South Indian Buddhist monk entered the city of Guang Zhou in Southern China. Buddhism had already been in existence in China much before that but the arrival of the Buddhist monk Boddhidharma changed the face of Chinese culture for centuries to come. Mr Chen Si, the Secretary General of the first China-India Yoga Summit, an historian as well a journalist could foresee a similar impact of 93 year old Yogacharya BKS Iyengar's visit to Guang Zhou, China last week.



In the modern era, Yoga was introduced to China about 30 years ago but the last 5 years has seen a tremendous interest in this ancient Indian science, art and philosophy especially among the younger generation. It is estimated that there are 100,000 yoga teachers in China and of these 30,000 claim that they are following Yogacharya BKS Iyengar's teachings and methodology. It was a dream come-true for these young yoga enthusiasts to see and directly study under the legendary Guru.

The China-India Yoga Summit was organized jointly by the Ministry of Health, Government of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Guang Dong Province as a part of the celebration of the 60 years of the diplomatic relations between India and China. This 4 day programme started with the Yoga Summit which was a wonderful exchange of

ideas from the Masters of the world's old civilizations. Guruji Iyengar summarized the entire philosophy of yoga leading to a thundering applaud followed by speeches by the very popular Shaolin Master Ruan Jizheng and the Taiwanese Master Qiu Xianfeng on the Bhagavad Gita and Classic of the Virtue of Tao. It was quite amusing for the Chinese audience when the Tai Chi Maser asked Guruji as to why yoga was much more popular in China but not their very own Tai Chi?



The Guang Zhou gymnasium, the venue of the 16th Asian Games reverberated with the voice of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar for three days. Guruji Iyengar himself taught 1300 students, of which 800 had come from the different parts of China and the remaining from 30 other countries with large contingents from Hong Kong and Macau. The China – India Yoga Summit appeared like a mini-UN!



He started with the basics as most of the students were relatively new to yoga but in just three days showed the way to the Summit leaving some of his students of over 30 years realizing how much more there is to learn from their Guru. His energy clearly indicated the power of yoga.

He was on his feet consistently talking and teaching for over three hours. On the second day he walked through the entire 6000 square meter hall to personally meet and correct the students. His passion for the subject, his energy, his commitment to teaching and his love for the subject and his students left the participants spell bound. The end of the last class was charged with emotional scenes. Within just three days, he had won the hearts of the Chinese people. It was not just the students that attended the convention but the millions of Chinese as this event was extensively in the Chinese print as well as the internet media.

To honour his visit, the Beijing Postage department honoured Gururji with a collection of eight postage stamps bearing his iconic *yogasanas*. Four of his books have already been translated into Mandarin. His 'Light on Yoga' considered as the Bible of Yoga was translated into Mandarin in 2006 and 10,000 copies of this book were sold within 6 months!



Yogacharya BKS Iyengar taught his first public class outside of India, exactly 50 years ago in London on June 19, 1961 where there were just a handful of students who then became the first batch of certified Iyengar Yoga teachers. Since then there are certified Iyengar Yoga teachers in 65 countries in Americas, Africa, Europe, Australia, Middle East and South East Asia. It is quite a coincidence that exactly 50 years later on June 19, 2011,

Yogacharya BKS taught 1300 students and 27 teachers from China who had started their training 3 years ago received their certificates.



Guruji Iyengar was equally touched by the affection and response that he got from the students. Very healthy seeds of yoga have been planted and time will show how these grow into healthy trees.
