

TKV DESIKACHAR

a t r i b u t e

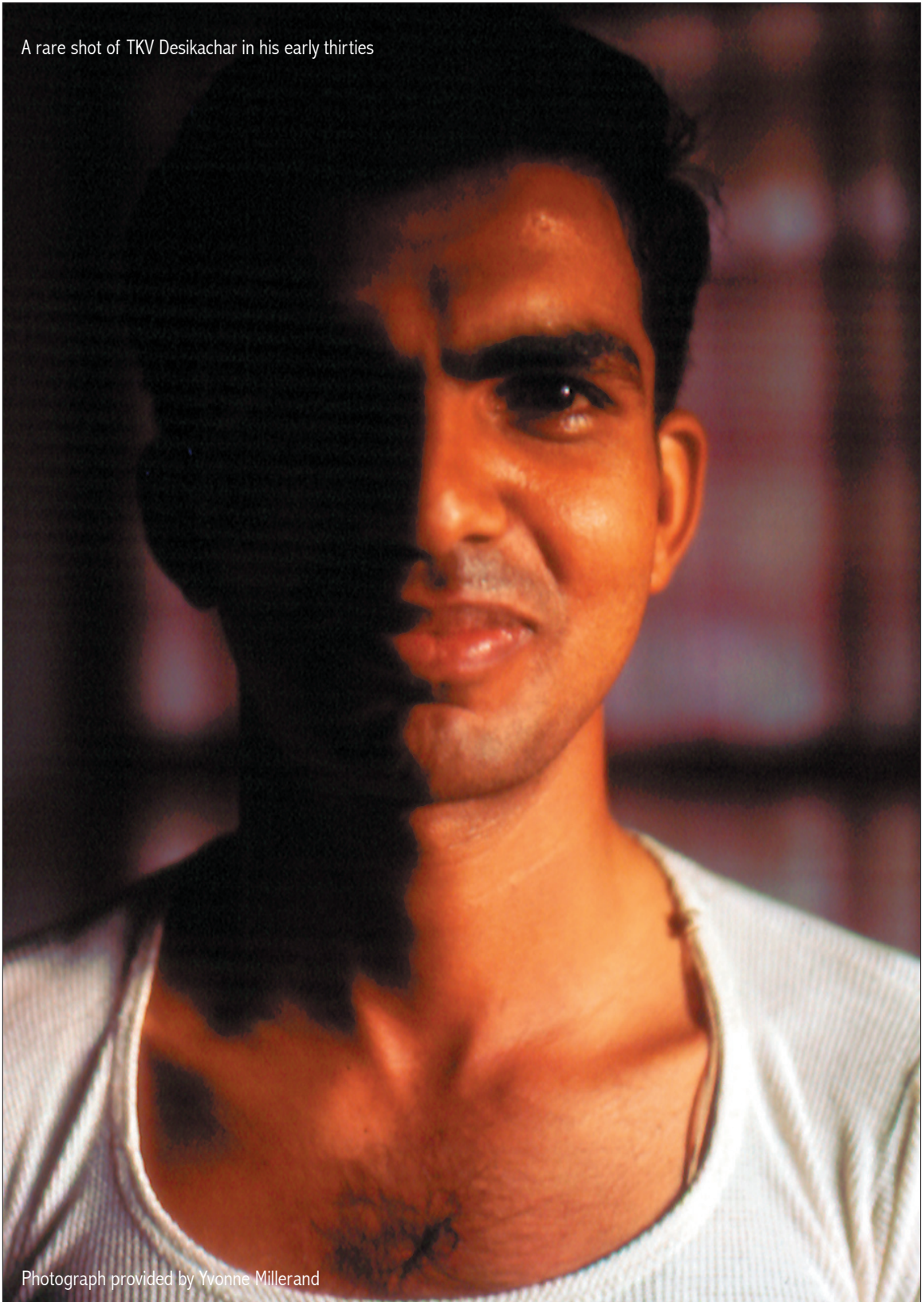


The average gives the world its substance.
The exceptional, its value.

Oscar Wilde

TKV Desikachar A Tribute

A rare shot of TKV Desikachar in his early thirties



Photograph provided by Yvonne Millerand

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

“A person’s worth is not determined by what he takes away from this world, but by what he leaves behind for it.”

- Tirukural, A Tamil Treatise on social and moral conduct

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) is a reflection of the commitment, compassion, and excellence of its founder and teacher, Sri TKV Desikachar.

Desikachar enjoyed the unique privilege of studying privately with his father, the legendary Yoga master, Sri T Krishnamacharya, for three decades. In gratitude for the gifts he’d been given, Desikachar founded the KYM, so that he could share his father’s wealth of knowledge and experience with others. Because of his generosity, the legacy of Krishnamacharya – the full spectrum of Yoga’s teachings – is available to those who want to learn and to serve their community through the practice of Yoga.

Now a world-renowned Yoga master, Desikachar brings a creative and contemporary eye to this ancient system of holistic healing, while at the same time honoring the heart of Yoga’s timeless teachings. Like his father, he emphasizes that Yoga is personal: Yoga must be adapted to suit the needs of the individual and not the individual to Yoga. This has meant operating outside of the boundaries of today’s norm, which is to teach generic, group Yoga classes.

At the KYM, each student works with a teacher in a one-to-one setting, ensuring quality of attention and teaching, which is critical in the healing process. This aspect – relationship - is another element of Yoga Therapy and practice that Desikachar considers essential. Beyond technique, the method of working one-on-one with a teacher in the context of a relationship based on trust and confidence contributes to the student’s healing. This has been the KYM’s experience for thirty years, and it supports Yoga’s teaching that each person is a unique and whole person. For this reason, in order to bring healing to a student, we must address the whole person and adapt Yoga’s tools to suit their unique needs and abilities. Thousands of records detailing the healing process of individuals who have been treated at the KYM over the years show clearly that there is no asana or pranayama technique that will work for every person experiencing the same problem: this idea is a myth. Teachers must develop an individualized yoga program for each student in order for Yoga to be effective.

In the same spirit, Desikachar feels strongly that it is important for the Yoga community and the general public to understand that Yoga is not a religion, it is not confined by cultural or spiritual boundaries: it is available to anyone and its appeal is universal. This is written into Yoga philosophy and was practiced by Krishnamacharya. Yoga respects the uniqueness of the individual and this includes the individual’s religious beliefs – the presence or the absence of them.

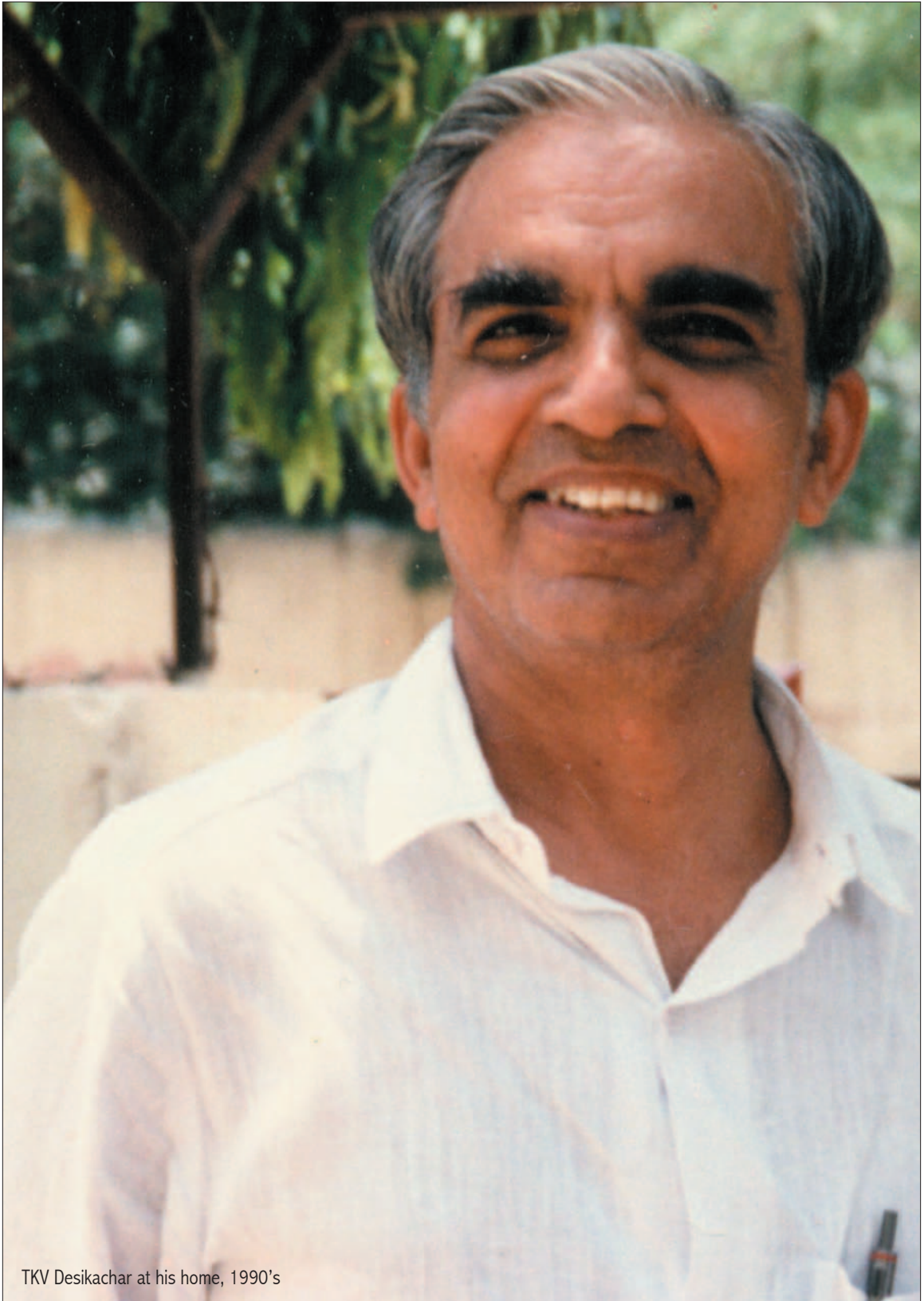
Yoga, for Desikachar, is not only Astanga Yoga, it encompasses other teachings, as well, that have been passed down through the ages and that emphasize respect for humanity, for the uniqueness and worthiness of each of us. Often, Desikachar will suggest that a student go on a pilgrimage or go for a walk outside and take photographs of nature as part of their unique healing process. At the time, this request might perplex the student, but they will do as he asks and later find that they are feeling better when for years, they had thought there was no solution to their problem. Always, Desikachar shows us that Yoga, above all, is the practice of respect and compassion for the person in front of us, looking for our help.

Sri Desikachar has a great heart, always open and welcoming of any student who truly desires to learn. We offer this tribute in gratitude for his unique and outstanding contributions to the world of Yoga.

S Sridharan

Managing Trustee - Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

April 14, 2006



TKV Desikachar at his home, 1990's

THE BEGINNING

The year was 1938. It was June, and people in the northern hemisphere were celebrating the summer solstice, the beginning of a long-awaited new season. It was a time for change.

In a little town called Mysore in South India, a young man was waiting eagerly, too, but not for the changing of the season.

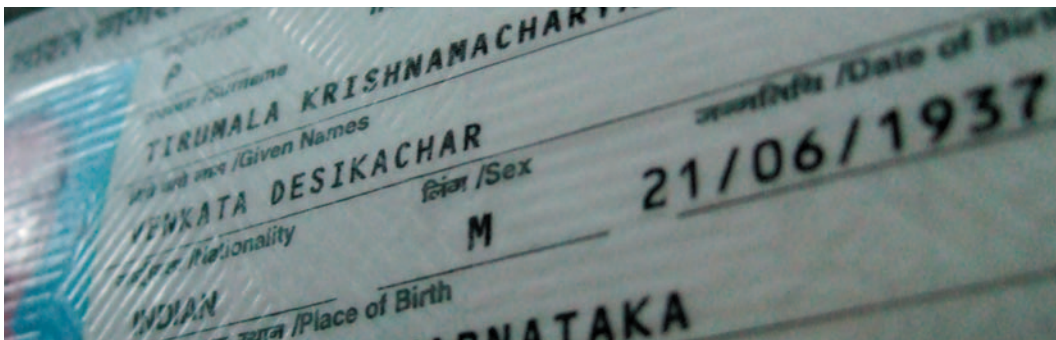
Tirumalai Krishnamacharya had dreamed something extraordinary. This was not unusual in itself; he often dreamed of gods, their angels or prophets, and typically, these dreams were linked with specific events in his personal life.

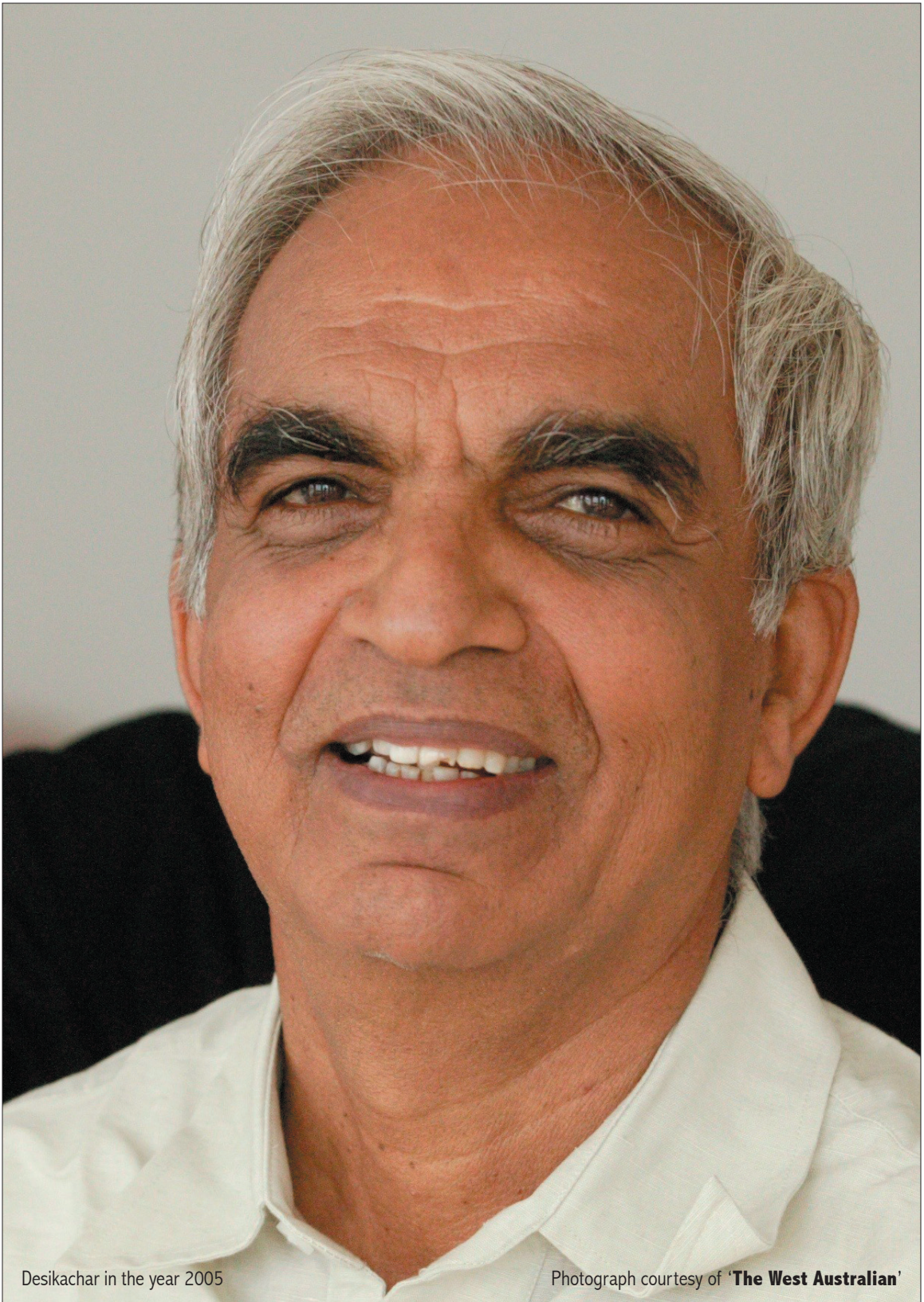
Most recently, he'd dreamed of Vedanta Desikacharya. Desikacharya was one of the greatest Indian acarya-s (spiritual teachers) and poets. He was born into a famed lineage of spiritual leaders, and he revolutionized the Vedanta school of philosophy, just as the sage, Ramanujacharya, had done long before him. Desikacharya infused fresh meaning and life into the Visista Advaita philosophy with his poetry. He wrote thousands of verses on every aspect of life, religion and spirituality, and he remains a popular figure in Indian cultural and spiritual life today.

Krishnamacharya knew that his current dream was linked to an event that he and his wife were waiting for with eagerness and joy: the imminent birth of their fourth child. Because of the dream, Krishnamacharya determined that the child must be a boy, and he decided that they would name him after Vedanta Desikacharya. Clearly, in Krishnamacharya's mind, the destiny of his child was linked to his dream of the great acarya.

Although Desikachar was born in 1938, his passport gives his year of birth as 1937. Krishnamacharya enrolled Desikachar in school a year earlier than was traditional for young children of that time, and the headmaster, assuming Desikachar was a year older than he actually was, wrote his date of birth down accordingly on the school's documents. These turned out to be the first legal documents in Desikachar's name (Desikachar was born at home, so the family does not have any hospital record of his birth).

Thus, all legal documents bearing Desikachar's name and birth date indicate 1937 as the year of his birth.





Desikachar in the year 2005

Photograph courtesy of **'The West Australian'**

On June 21, 1938, the child, the family’s second son, was born. He was given the name Venkata Desikachar. This name combines the name of Vedanta Desikacharya with that of Lord Venkatesvara, the reigning deity of the Tirumalai region, which is the ancestral home of the Krishnamacharya family. The child would become known as **TKV Desikachar**, a simplification of his full name: Tirumalai Krishnamacharya Venkata Desikachar.

Becoming

Desikachar’s father, the legendary Yoga master, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, revolutionized the modern practice of Yoga. Several of his earliest students carried his work beyond India, where they established successful schools of their own based on the teachings of their teacher. Today, as a result of Krishnamacharya’s pioneering work and the efforts of his students, Yoga is practiced in thousands of homes, studios, and centers all over the world by men, women, and children of every nationality and creed.

Desikachar’s role in this process has been much quieter, perhaps, than the roles played by his father’s other students, but it has been equally critical, if not more so. He studied with his father longer than any other student and understands better than anyone the breadth of Krishnamacharya’s work and its relevance to modern-day life, particularly in the area of healing. Increasingly, Desikachar’s life-long work is being recognized by the broader Yoga community as the heart of Yoga’s long history, as well as its unfolding future.

Like his father, Desikachar has carried on the work of Yoga primarily in India. His name is well known in the European, Asian, and South American Yoga communities, but not as familiar to North Americans, although this is changing quickly. He travels each year to share the teachings of Yoga with others, but his first commitment is to the healing work of Yoga, to his father’s work. For thirty years, Desikachar

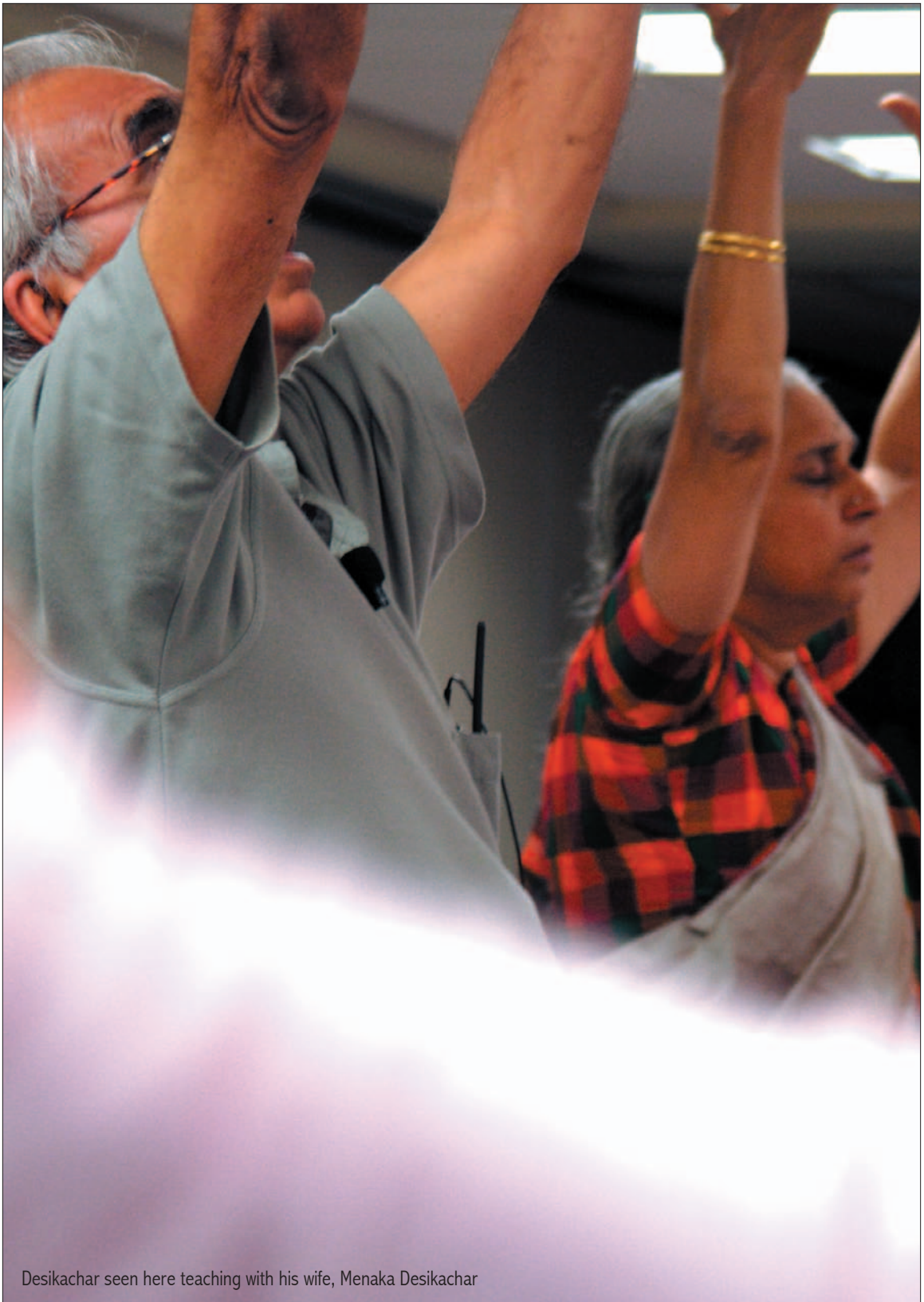
“I don’t have special stories to tell about my teacher. Special stories, spectacular episodes one can find in books and articles about Gurujis and men who do wonders on stages. What is so special about Desikachar is exactly that there are none of these stores to tell about him. Why? To me he is a model of modesty and unpretentiousness. One of his big contributions to the spreading of Yoga is that he shows how one can teach Yoga quietly, steadily and fullheartedly.”

Dr. Imogen Dalmann
Berlin, Germany

Yoga Teacher

Founder Berliner Yoga Zentrum





Desikachar seen here teaching with his wife, Menaka Desikachar

has been the respected and creative steward of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, a non-profit charitable trust, which he founded in 1976 in honor of his father.

The central work of the KYM is bringing health and wellbeing to others through the healing practice of Yoga Therapy. Over the years, demand for the KYM's services and knowledge has led to the growth of the KYM from a single-room facility to a multi-department institute. The KYM houses departments of Yoga Cikitsa (Therapy), Yoga Studies, Publications, and Chanting, as well as KYM-Mitra, a philanthropic organization that brings the healing benefits of Yoga to the economically and socially underprivileged and the differently-abled. The KYM's newest department is Research, where teachers are using scientifically approved protocols to study the effects of Yoga on health, thus ensuring that the message of the past remains relevant for the future.

A Thank You from the Heart

This tribute was created not only to thank Sri Desikachar for the many gifts he has brought to the world-wide Yoga community, but also to increase awareness of his unique contributions. This is not a biography of TKV Desikachar: it is a gesture of thanks from his students for the work he has done with such grace, gentle humor, and compassion. He has surely lived up to the name constructed for him from his father's dreams of the past and for the future.

The year was 1967. Desikachar was summoned by his father into the living room of their house. As Desikachar entered the room, he saw his uncle, his mother and a few others standing there, including a young woman he had never seen before.

Krishnamacharya gestured to the young woman, and she stepped forward and prostrated to Desikachar. In those days it was the custom that a new student would prostrate to the teacher, so Desikachar assumed that this young woman was to be his new student.

But then his father turned to him and said, "This is the woman you are going to marry."

Without a moment's hesitation, Desikachar accepted. Desikachar and Menaka have been happily married now for almost forty years.



TKV Desikachar A Tribute

TKV Desikachar offering his book, **The Heart of Yoga**, to Ms. Kay Malvenan



Photograph provided by Anna Sandle

THANK YOU, NEW ZEALAND

Desikachar's childhood was a lot like that of other children in India in the 1940's and 50's. He went to school, stole jackfruit from the neighbor's garden with his friends and spent a lot of time climbing the coconut trees that abounded in his neighborhood or hiking to Chamundi Hill. A favorite trick that Desikachar and his school friends liked to play on their teachers involved placing a hot Vada (similar to a doughnut) on the instructor's chair and watching for their reaction when they sat down on it. Krishnamacharya had little tolerance for his son's pranks, but Desikachar's mother, Namagiriammal, would always step in and bail her son out of trouble.

There was one thing about growing up in this household that set Desikachar's experience apart from that of other children: the fact that his father was an influential, strict, and demanding Yoga master. Desikachar did not take much interest in Yoga as a child, and his father did not force him to practice. However, Krishnamacharya, in his own way, nurtured even that small flame of interest. He would tempt Desikachar to practice by telling him he needed for him to demonstrate some asanas in front of the King of Mysore. Sometimes this worked and sometimes it didn't. Sometimes, he inspired his son to practice by appealing to his competitive side, inviting him to join the Yoga competitions he would hold for the young students of the Yoga Shala in Mysore. All of this piqued the interest of the adolescent Desikachar only temporarily.

When he turned eighteen, Desikachar began his studies in Civil Engineering at the University of Mysore. By this time, his family had moved to Chennai. In order to complete his degree, Desikachar had to remain in Mysore, and he enjoyed this time away from family life. He was a bright, promising student, and he graduated at the top of

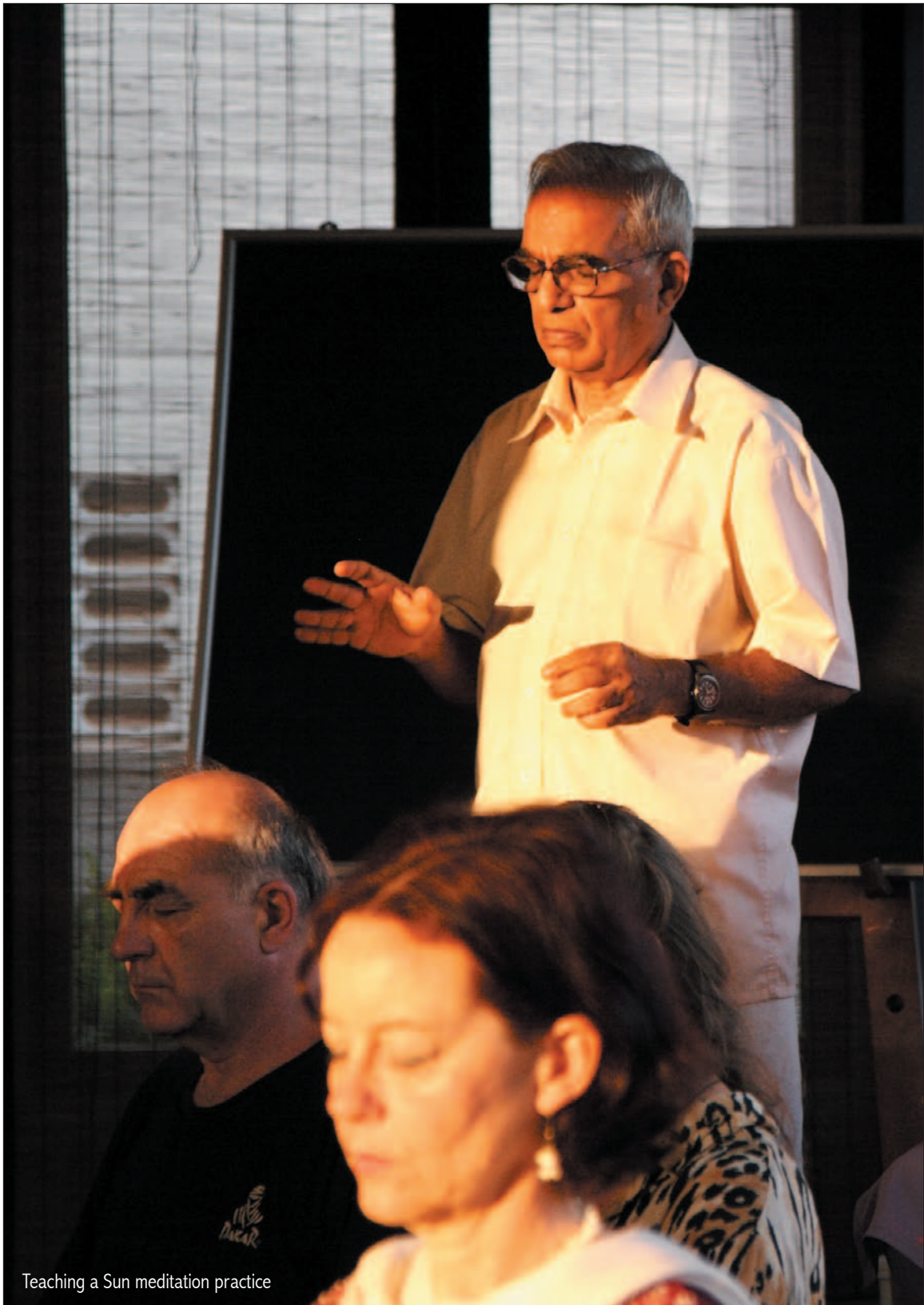
"The difficulty Mr. Desikachar had to master was not only to 'inhale' his father's immense wisdom and to hold it inside himself, but also 'exhale' it in a vivid manner to us in the west. Fulfilling this task makes a big difference to most of the other people who in my point of view are just teaching a technical version of something they call yoga. In fact, I do not mean this as a reproach to others, because I see how difficult it is to avoid deeper misunderstanding."

Dr. Michael Steinbrecher
Koln, Germany

Psychiatrist, Psychoanalyst

Yoga Teacher





Teaching a Sun meditation practice

his class. Immediately, he was offered a lucrative job in North India, which would have taken him even further away from his family. His parents were excited for him; Desikachar was the first engineer in the family. And Desikachar was pleased that he would be able to help support them.

Krishnamacharya was content with his son's choice. He never insisted that Desikachar become a Yoga teacher. After all, he had struggled because of his choice to teach Yoga - both financially and in terms of social status. Yoga was not one of the preferred professional paths in those days. It had never occurred to the family that Desikachar would choose to teach Yoga as his father had done. Everyone expected him to become a civil engineer and build bridges.

But a holiday in Chennai changed the course of his life. Desikachar was home visiting his family. The year was probably 1961. It was early in the morning, and he was sitting on the verandah reading the newspaper. Suddenly, a large, expensive-looking car pulled up in front of their humble home. Desikachar watched in increasing surprise and some alarm as a Western-looking woman in her fifties jumped out of the car and ran towards their home. He could hear her shouting, "Professor! Professor!" Before Desikachar could approach her and find out what she wanted, Krishnamacharya walked out and welcomed the dignified-looking lady. She hugged him and exclaimed, "Thank you! Thank you very much!" Krishnamacharya led her into the house, leaving a perplexed and shocked Desikachar standing alone on the verandah.

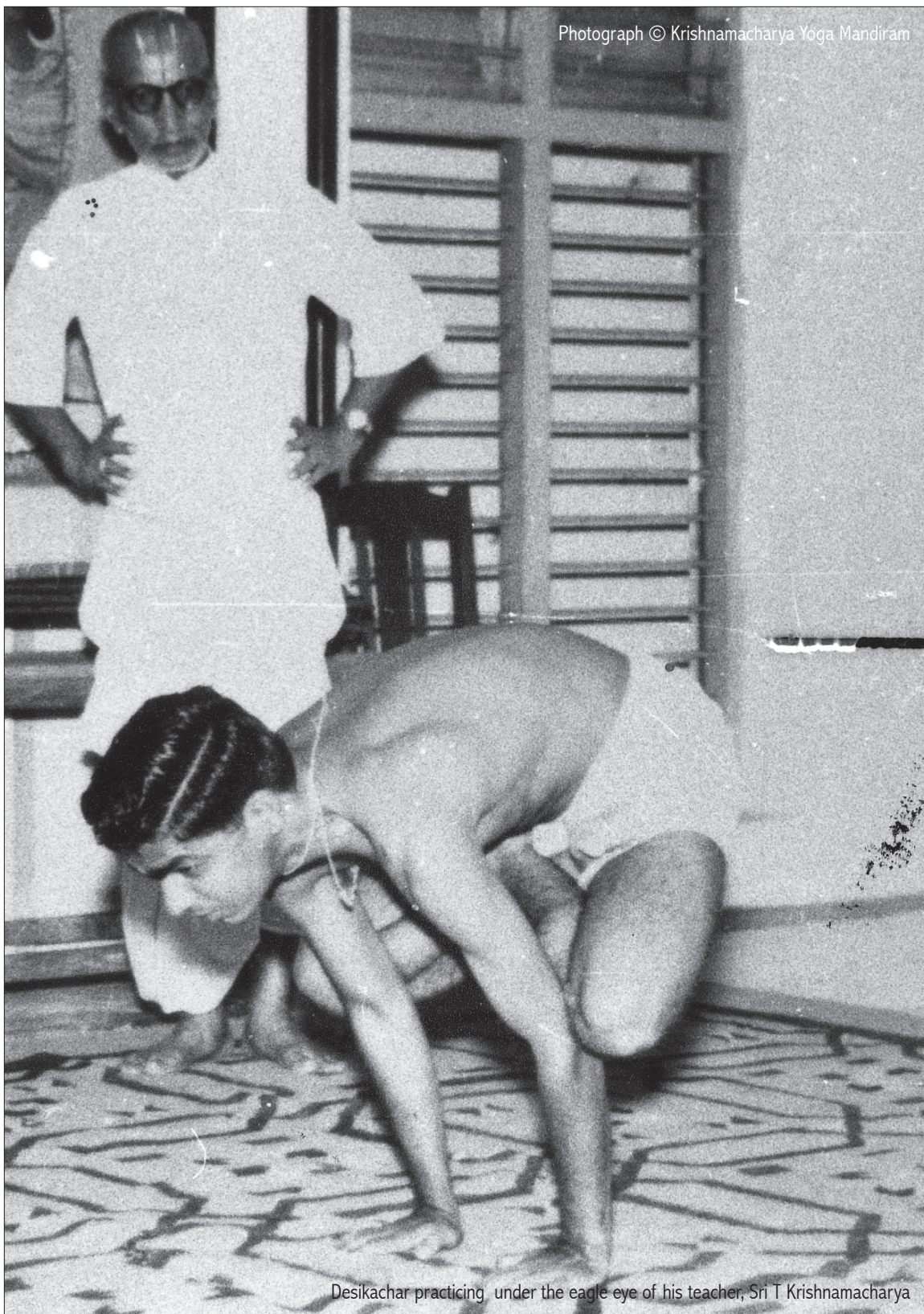
It is still uncommon in India to see men and women touch each other affectionately in public. This is true even for married couples, which is why Desikachar was so taken aback to see a Western woman embrace his very conservative father. After Krishnamacharya bid farewell to the woman at the gate of their house, Desikachar asked him who the

Desikachar has been observing a special ritual every Sunday since he moved to Chennai in the 1960's. He jokingly refers to it as his "visit to the temple."

Every Sunday, the Desikachar family eats breakfast at the New Woodlands Hotel. "When I first moved here," he will tell people who ask him about this Sunday ritual, "this was the haven of good food for me and my friends. I just continue to have the same feelings for the place."



Photograph © Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Desikachar practicing, under the eagle eye of his teacher, Sri T Krishnamacharya

woman was and why she had hugged him. Krishnamacharya told him that the woman was a New Zealander. “She is Mrs. Malvenan,” he said. “She has been suffering from insomnia. Last night was the first night in many years that she was able to go to sleep without taking a pill. Overcome with great joy, she came to thank me. I have been treating her for the past few months.”

At that moment, something changed for Desikachar. He had heard many times before of his father’s healing abilities, but this was the first time he had seen the power of his father’s work in action. He later recalls about the incident, “I was amazed that this wealthy woman, who could afford the best Western medical treatments, was finding a cure with my father who was such a simple man, who knew no English or modern medicine. This is when I realized how great he was, and how great a teaching he had to share with people. It was at this moment that I decided to completely give up my career and become a Yoga student.”

At first, Krishnamacharya was reluctant to accept his son’s decision, but Desikachar’s dedication to his studies convinced him of the seriousness of his son’s intention. It was the beginning of a long and important relationship between the two men. Krishnamacharya was now more than a father to Desikachar, he was also a teacher.

Desikachar was no longer an engineer of bridges, but he would soon begin building bridges of another kind - between the teachings of his father and students around the world. Often, he will share the story of how he decided to become a teacher of Yoga with new students and thank the lady from New Zealand for opening his eyes to the true value of his father’s work and teachings.

“Many yoga teachers have had a deep individual training. Some of them remain hidden and are eager to transmit their experience and knowledge. Others spread the Message widely, teaching groups within large audience and institutions. Between these two extremes, Sri TKV Desikachar took a big chance. Faithful to his father, he has had the wisdom to take the middle path. He transmits his teaching accurately to all students worthy of it, within a one to one relationship.”

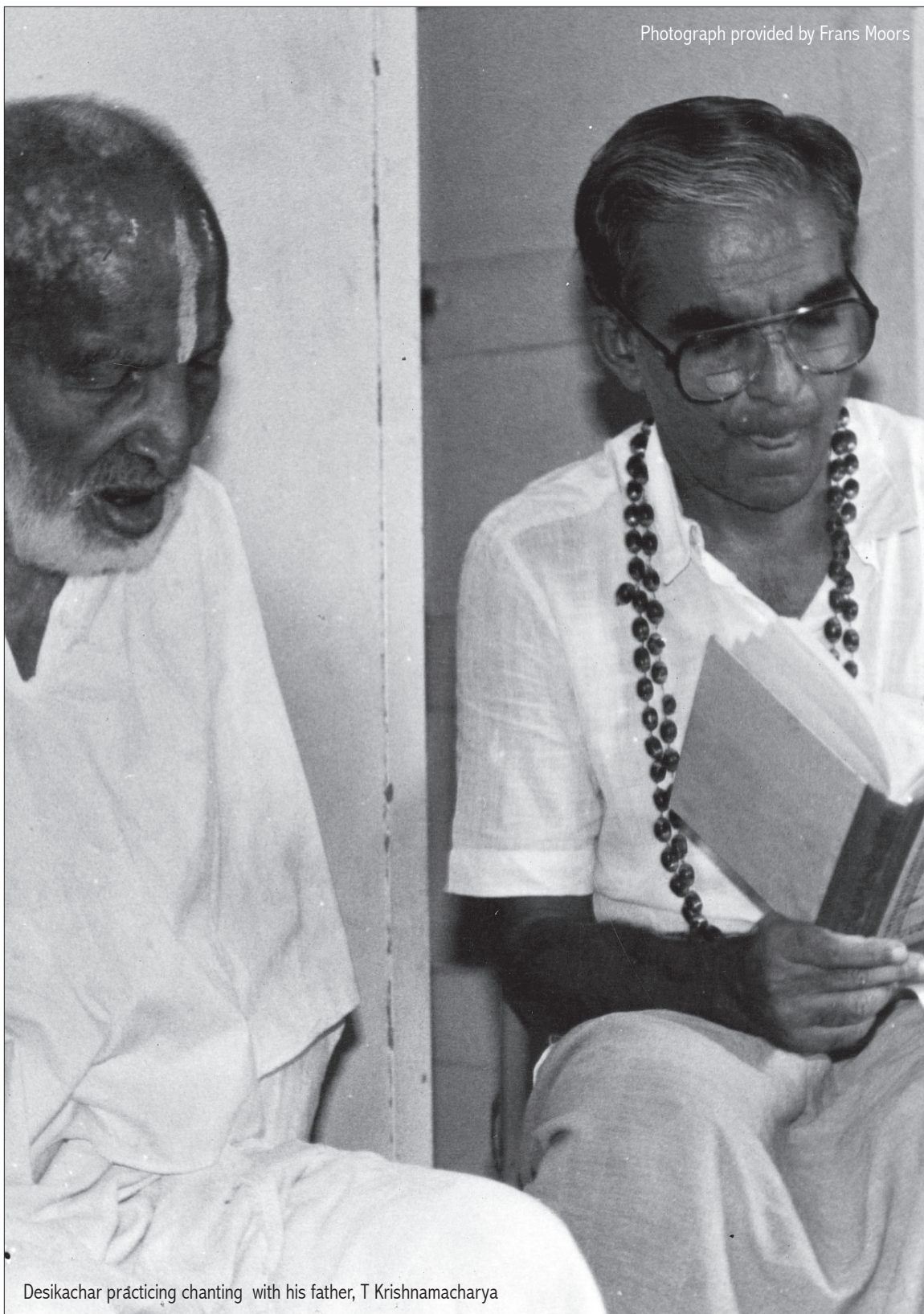
Bernard Bouanchaud
Paris, France

Yoga Teacher

Yoga Author



Photograph provided by Frans Moors



Desikachar practicing chanting with his father, T Krishnamacharya

BECOMING A TEACHER

Although Desikachar decided not to pursue his job in North India so that he could be a Yoga student, he still needed to work in order to help support his family. He took a part-time job in a local construction company and dedicated the rest of his time to being his father's student.

Desikachar recalls that his first lessons involved learning and memorizing some of the classical Yoga texts. Later, his father taught him asana, pranayama, meditation, and other Yoga tools. The more Desikachar studied with his father, the more he realized how much he still had to learn.

One day, Desikachar decided he needed a break from his work and studies, so he made plans to go to the movies with his friends. However, just before closing time, his boss asked him to stay behind and finish up an important job.

Desikachar was looking forward to a night at the movies with his friends, so he made up an excuse; he told his boss that he couldn't stay because he had committed to teaching a Yoga class that evening. The lie worked.

The next day when Desikachar arrived for work, he was told that his boss needed to see him immediately. Worried that the truth had been found out, Desikachar made his way to the man's office.

His boss greeted him and said, "Tonight, I want you to teach me Yoga."

Desikachar had not anticipated this, but he had to to agree to his

Papaya is Desikachar's favorite fruit. Every day, at least one or two papayas find their way through his digestive tract. He often jokes that he is addicted to them, and considering how much effort he puts into finding just the right papaya and the best fruit shops, it is probably true.

Cheapest papaya Desikachar has ever purchased: Rs. 5, India

Most expensive: 2500 Yen, Tokyo





Desikachar teaching at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

boss's request, because he'd already lied and told him he was teaching a class.

That evening, Desikachar's boss accompanied him home for his first Yoga class. It was Desikachar's first class, too – as the teacher. He had no idea what to offer his boss, so he taught him the practice he'd been doing for himself. Very quickly, his boss began panting and within a few minutes, he passed out. Desikachar rushed to his father's room, confessed his blunder and asked for help.

Krishnamacharya attended to the poor man immediately. When the man was feeling better, Krishnamacharya turned his attention on his son. The words he spoke then, became the most important lesson that Desikachar ever learned from his father:

“Don't ever assume that what works for you will work for everyone else, as well. Yoga must be tailored to suit the student, not the other way around.”

Then Krishnamacharya added, “And henceforth, consult me before you teach anyone else.”

So began Desikachar's internship with Krishnamacharya as a Yoga teacher and healer. From that point on, Desikachar never failed to consult with his father when he needed help and their relationship continued in this way until Krishnamacharya's death in 1989. If you ask Desikachar today, he will tell you that he still consults his father, whose teachings and lessons remain with him, challenging and guiding him.

“I once met Indira Devi in the UK when she was 92. She asked me who my teacher was and I answered that I followed the teachings of Desikachar. She replied 'Wonderful! He is the greatest teacher to come out of India today. Excellent!' I know this to be true.”

Gill Lloyd
Crawley, United Kingdom

Yoga Teacher

Founder - Yoga Journey



J Krishnamurti assures Krishnamacharya of Desikachar's safe arrival abroad

ri Krishnamacharya-ji, Thank you very much for your letter. Mr Meudé went to meet Desikachar in Geneva and brought him to Gstaad by car. We have settled him as comfortably as we can.

He looks well though he is a bit tired after the journey and is taking two or three days complete rest. He eats with us all and we are very strict vegetarians as you know. He is being well looked after. And also please please be assured that he is being well looked after.

23 Les Caprices GSTAAD. 15 June, 1967.

With much affection,
Krishnamurti

TEACHING LEGENDS. BEING HUMAN.

In his four decades as a teacher, Desikachar has worked with thousands of people from all walks of life, each one a unique individual. To help each student, he becomes the teacher that they need him to be, offering them a healing practice that addresses their personal needs, abilities, and goals in a way that appeals to their interests and personality.

The names of some of Desikachar's students are well known. One famous student he often recalls with fondness is the late philosopher, J Krishnamurti. The two men, teacher and student, were also good friends, and their close relationship continued until Krishnaji's death in 1986.

Their association began with a request. One December morning in 1964, a man approached Krishnamacharya and introduced himself as Krishnamurti's secretary. He said that Krishnaji wanted to meet with Krishnamacharya and discuss the possibility of becoming his student.

Krishnamacharya agreed to meet Krishnamurti at Vasant Vihar (the headquarters of The Krishnamurti Foundation and the residence of Krishnaji when he would visit Chennai). He also told the secretary that he would be bringing two of his sons with him.

Krishnamurti had been practicing Yoga for many years with BKS Iyengar and was adept in the practice of many asanas. However, he was nearing the age of seventy, and he had developed some health problems. He heard that Krishnamacharya was a great healer and wished to meet with him and seek his help.

Desikachar loves walking. Wherever he is, he always takes his early morning walk. Usually he wakes up at around 4:30 am, does his yoga practices and begins his walk by 6:00 am. Though often accompanied by his wife and son, he will not give it up even if he has to do it alone.

There are days when it rains, yet you can find him walking. He travels to places in the winter that are frozen over with ice and snow, and still he will find a way to take his walk.

His dog, Tulsi, who died just a few months ago, was his faithful companion for over eight years, walking with him wherever he went. You could tell Desikachar liked a particular route if you saw him walking with Tulsi's leash in his hand while she ran ahead of him, leading him along the same track day after day, month after month, year after year.



Photograph provided by Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Interviewing the Dalai Lama on Dharma and Spirituality

The next day, Krishnamacharya, Desikachar and his younger brother, Sribhasyam, went to Vasant Vihar. After thanking them for coming, Krishnamurti expressed his desire to see how Krishnamacharya taught Yoga.

Krishnamacharya asked his sons to demonstrate a variety of asanas and pranayama. Impressed with what he saw, Krishnamurti formally asked Krishnamacharya to teach him. Or, he added, if travel was difficult for the elderly Krishnamacharya, he would be happy to have one of Krishnamacharya's sons teach him. The next day, Krishnamacharya asked Desikachar to begin teaching the famous philosopher.

Over the course of their long relationship, the two men worked together regularly, both in India and in other countries. In fact, the first time Desikachar ever traveled outside of India – to Switzerland – it was at the invitation of Krishnamurti.

Through his relationship with Krishnamurti, Desikachar came in contact with many other legendary personalities, some of whom would become Yoga students and teachers. Rukmini Devi Arundale (the legendary dancer and founder of The Kalakshetra Academy) took Yoga lessons with Desikachar, as did Gerard Blitz and Vanda Scaravalli. Both became his students, and later, exceptional and influential teachers of Yoga.

Politicians, sports personalities, artists, scientists, doctors, business magnates, and movie stars have sought out Desikachar's company over the years for healing or to study with him. When asked about his interactions with people who are well known or especially influential in some way, he will typically reply, "They are special people, no doubt, yet they are also as human as you and I." His answer confirms what one of his famous students said when interviewed for this tribute.

"When I met Desikachar, I was puzzled because he did not look the way I expected a great Indian yoga teacher to look. His appearance was entirely contemporary. Yet the deep peace that radiated from him touched me from the start. He allowed me to accompany him to a session where he was seeing patients. I watched a master diagnostician and clinician at work.

Perhaps Desikachar's greatest contribution, in my judgement, is a yoga that is entirely shaped to meet the unique needs of the individual person or patient... Desikachar's greatness as a teacher is astonishingly offset by his modesty as a person."

Michael Lerner

Bolinas, California, USA

President, Commonweal



ST.-MICHAEL'S FOUNDATION
INTERNATIONAL THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
VALKEVEENSELAAN 19 - HUIZEN (NL) - 3821
Station: Naarden-Bussum

Desikachari - I was very glad to hear
arrived here early in June - I am going
Belgium - on the 15th of this month & returning
for London on the 2nd of July - I can
arrange for a room to see you. Do you want to meet
me who is doing & teaching Yoga asana here?
With all best wishes
Rukmini Devi
Madras
by from Geneva

A Letter from Rukmini Devi Arundale, the renowned dancer and founder of The Kalakshetra Academy

“The world around me treats me like I am God, which makes me uncomfortable, as every move I make is being watched and judged. Sir (Desikachar) reminds me that I am human, and I feel so comfortable in his presence.”

“It seems to me that TKV Desikachar is the [kind of] professor who makes you more intelligent, not only in [your] understanding of yoga teaching, but also in your daily life.

He is able to connect the light of the Upanishads and our modern western thinking. He takes care of the student's progress in so many aspects: physically, mentally, health-wise, spiritually, professionally. Nowhere have I found a professor like him. And, really, after each time we meet, it seems to me that [I become] a little more efficient in yoga teaching and also in my daily life.”

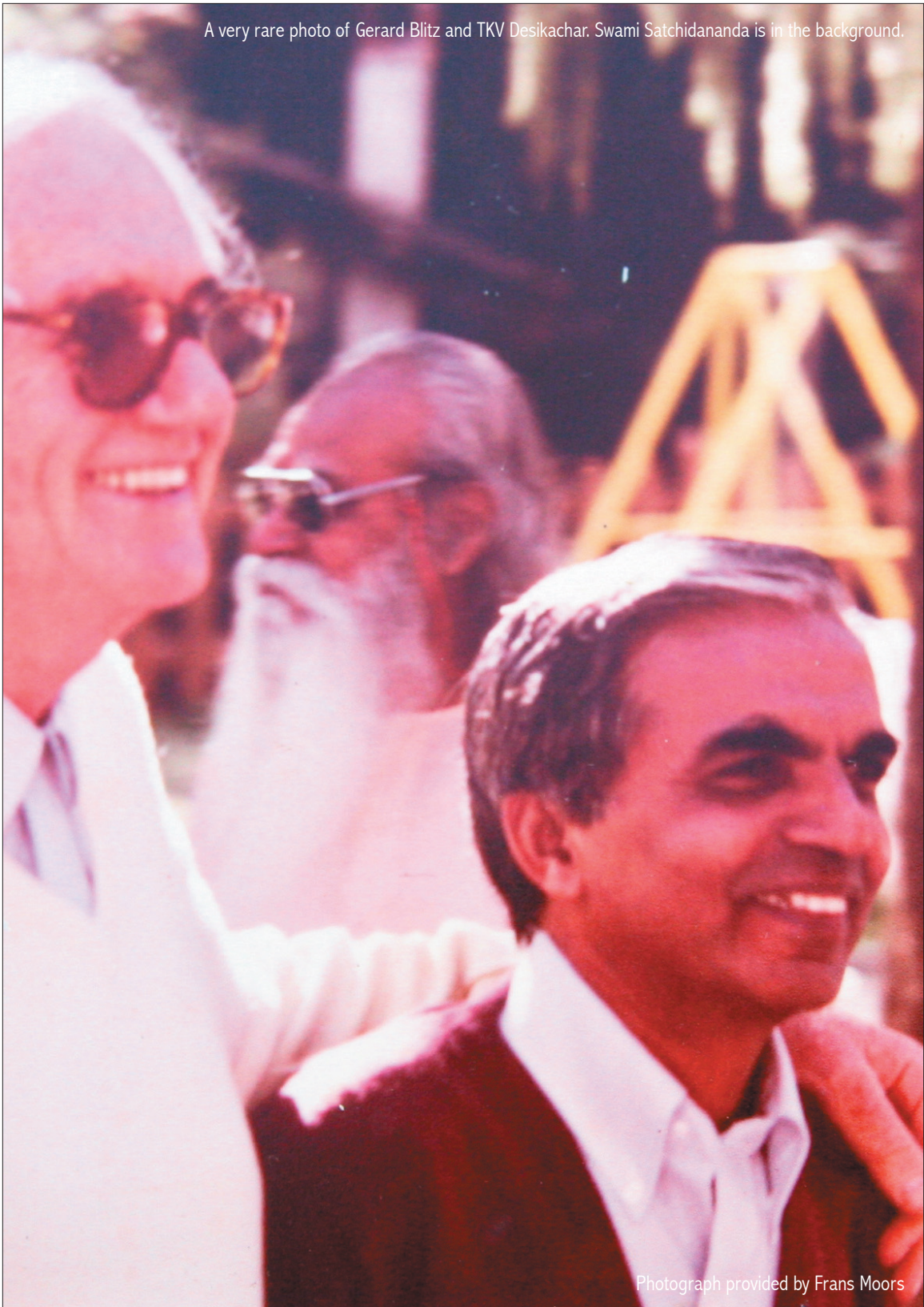
Boris Tatzky

Aix en Provence, France

Yoga Teacher



A very rare photo of Gerard Blitz and TKV Desikachar. Swami Satchidananda is in the background.



Photograph provided by Frans Moors

UNIVERSAL. AND PERSONAL.

Each year, a group of yogis from all over the world, most of them from Europe, gather together in a little town in Switzerland to present their teachings to nearly four hundred students. There was a time when this meeting, the Zinal Congress, was considered one of the most important events in the world of Yoga. The primary organizer of the Zinal Congress is the European Yoga Union (EYU), founded by Gerard Blitz, a student of Krishnamacharya and later, of Desikachar.

Gerard Blitz, who hails from Belgium, was the chairman of Club Mediteranee (Club Med as its more commonly known), a resort chain, when he first heard J Krishnamurti speak. From that moment on, he became a regular attendee of Krishnamurti's events at Saanen, Switzerland. On Krishnaji's recommendation, he met with Desikachar in Switzerland and told him of his desire to learn Yoga from Krishnamacharya. Desikachar invited Blitz to come to Chennai and meet his father.

Desikachar recollects the meeting between Krishnamacharya and Gerard Blitz vividly. Krishnamacharya asked Blitz to begin his studies in May (the hottest month of the year). Then, he assigned him classes beginning at noon (the hottest time of the day).

So here was a wealthy Belgian man in his early sixties in Chennai for the very first time, quite unused to his surroundings, the food, the language, and, especially, the hot weather. Desikachar remembers how Blitz suffered terribly from the Indian summer heat, yet he never complained and devoted himself to his new studies. Desikachar knew his father had been testing the sincerity of Blitz's desire to learn by asking him to study in Chennai in the summer and take classes during the hottest part of the day, and Blitz had come through the test with

"In this world of instant communication, I had forgotten what it takes to communicate meaningfully. Sir stands as a living example helping me remember how to connect. Without communicating, connecting, and appreciating there is no relationship. I am very grateful to Sir for helping me understand this."

Amala Akkineni
Hyderabad, India

Founder of Yoga Jyoti

Animal Activist



TKV Desikachar A Tribute

Photograph provided by Larry Payne



Desikachar with Devi (R) and Larry Payne

flying colors. After this, Blitz was always asked to visit during milder months and his classes took place at a more comfortable time of day.

Inspired by his study of Yoga, Blitz eventually left the day-to-day functioning of his company to his executives and became a full-time Yoga student and teacher. He began studying with Desikachar, in addition to his studies with Krishnamacharya, and the men became good friends and colleagues. Blitz would often invite Desikachar to come to Europe to teach seminars, hoping that their efforts would create a greater acceptance of Yoga practice and study. To help that vision along, Blitz created the European Yoga Union (EYU) in 1973.

It was during this same period (the early 1970's) that other Yoga masters were gaining popularity, both in India and the West. These included BKS Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, Indra Devi, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Venkatesananda, Swami Visnu Devananda and other students of Swami Sivananda, as well as Yoga teachers from other traditions.

Blitz decided it was time to organize an event that would bring these extraordinary people together. This is how The Zinal Congress was born. Its purpose was to bring the greatest Yoga masters together in one location where they could share their expertise and experience with each other and with the public.

The Zinal Congress soon became 'the event' in the Yoga community. Everyone looked forward to attending each year. Among its participants in the early years, Desikachar was a regular, as were many of the other well known Yoga masters.

During one of the first congressional gatherings that Desikachar participated in, he noticed two things that disturbed him. First, almost all of the Yoga teachers were teaching the same practices to

"TKV Desikachar is the true heir to the legacy Sri Krishnamacharya and the future of Yoga. Like his father, he is a master at adapting the ancient principles of Yoga to fit our modern society."

Larry Payne, Ph.D.

Los Angeles, USA

Yoga Author

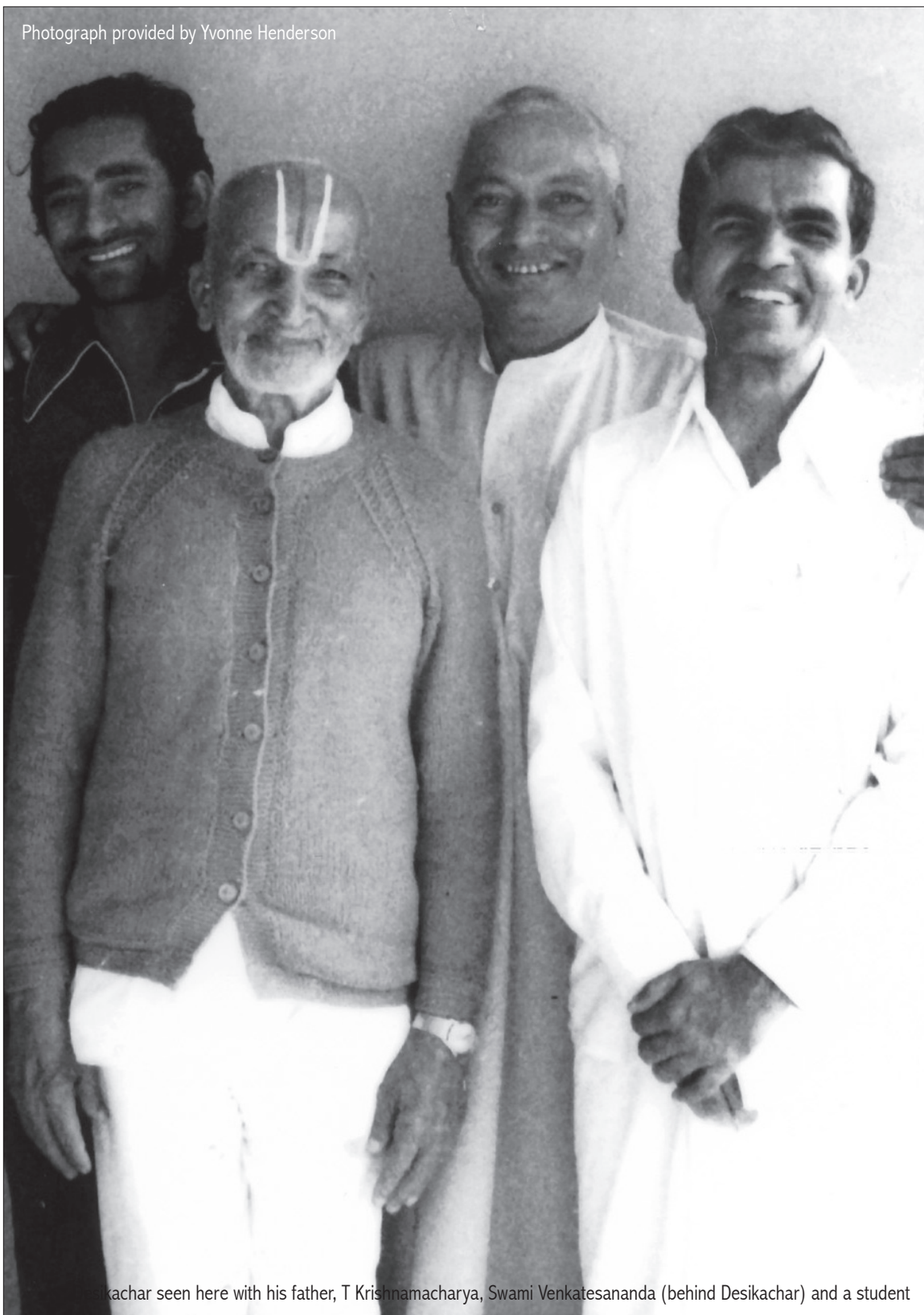
Co-Founder International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT).

Director of the Yoga Therapy Rx certification program at Loyola Marymount University.



TKV Desikachar A Tribute

Photograph provided by Yvonne Henderson



Desikachar seen here with his father, T Krishnamacharya, Swami Venkatesananda (behind Desikachar) and a student

every student, irrespective of the student's age, abilities, or interest. Second, a vast majority of the teachers were mixing Hindu religion and Yoga and presenting them as one, implying that if people wanted to practice Yoga, they had to follow Hindu religious beliefs.

From his work with his father and from his personal experience of Yoga, Desikachar knew that neither practice was consistent with Patanjali's **Yoga Sutra-s**, the 2500-year-old classical text of Yoga philosophy, considered the authority on Yoga practice and teaching.

When it was time for Desikachar to make his presentation to the Congress, he took the opportunity to discuss these issues. He quoted from the sutra-s, and emphasized that even Patanjali offered belief in God (Isvara Pranidhana) as only one of the tools of Yoga and that it was not compulsory. In this spirit, imposing Hindu religious practices on Yoga students was not an acceptable practice. Religious affiliation was a choice the student must make for himself or herself and using any spiritual tool in Yoga practice was also the student's choice, not the teacher's. By offering religious faith as a choice, Patanjali was being open and respectful to people of all faiths (including those who do not believe in God).

Desikachar's presentation outraged the masters who believed that the practice of Yoga must be linked to the practice of Hinduism. However, his words resonated with those students who, because they wanted to learn Yoga, had been trying to practice Hinduism, even though they were uncomfortable with it. Eventually, even some of the Hindu masters began to reconsider how they looked at the relationship between Yoga and Hinduism, and over the years, many of them formed close friendships with Desikachar.

In yet another presentation, Desikachar challenged the practice of offering standardized Yoga sequences to students. In the classical

Krishnamacharya was a traditional Brahmin man, but he never forced his personal beliefs on others. Sometimes, however, he would try to encourage his family to follow some of the orthodox rules. One such rule had to do with the wearing of the forehead mark, which represents a special feat of Lord Visnu.

There are two variations of this mark representing the traditions of two religious schools. Although these two schools worship the same god, they differ slightly in their interpretation of certain philosophical texts, and over the years these differences became a source of conflict between them. Interestingly, the families of Krishnamacharya and his wife, Namagiriammal, belong to these two different schools.

When Desikachar was about to be married, his father wanted him to wear the forehead mark. His hope was that, eventually, his son would choose to wear it all the time.

Desikachar politely told his father, "If I wear the mark in your style, my mother's family will get angry. If I wear it in their style, your family will get upset. So when the two sides resolve which one I should wear, I will start wearing it."

That is why, to this day, you will not find Desikachar wearing the forehead mark.





Participating in an interview

tradition, the teacher respects each student's unique abilities and needs and offers them a practice appropriate for them. This method of teaching, where what is being taught is continuously adapted to the changing needs of the student, is highlighted in every Indian school of philosophy, not only in Yoga philosophy.

The concept Desikachar was talking about is viniyoga, which means appropriate utilization. Patanjali acknowledges the importance of viniyoga in the sutra-s, stating that we must do the viniyoga of Yoga (appropriate use of Yoga), so that Yoga serves the purpose for which it is being offered. This is possible only if we personalize Yoga practices for each student.

Desikachar's presentations were extremely controversial and upset people at first, but as he continued to develop his arguments at other presentations during the Congress, many began to see the truth in his words. For most of the participants at the Congress, the majority of them Western, this was the very first time they had heard these essential teachings – that Yoga is Universal (open to all faiths) and Personal (individualized) - teachings from the earliest teachers and the guiding principles of Krishnamacharya's work.

"Guruji [Krishnamacharya's] soul must be happy in heavens watching the work of his son [Desikachar] at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram.

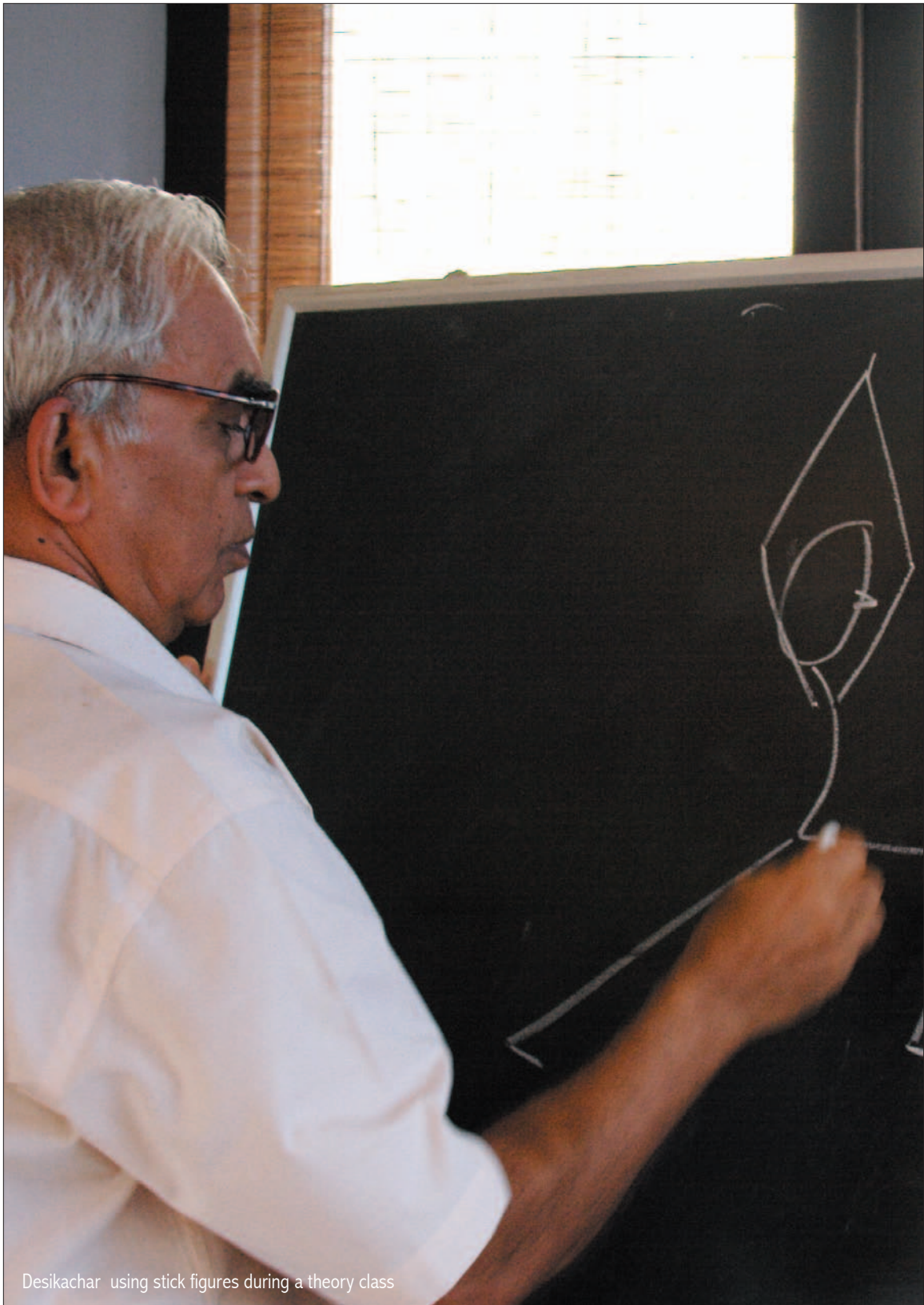
Desikachar, being a son of a yogic titan, is carrying on his father's work further in educating the lovers of yoga, as well as those who live in yoga."

BKS Iyengar
Pune, India

Yoga Teacher

Yoga Author





Desikachar using stick figures during a theory class

YOGA IN STICK FIGURES

“Are you teaching technical drawing or Yoga?” retorted one of Desikachar’s colleagues when he first saw it. “This is not going to work. People are not going to like it, understand it, or use it. You are wasting your time.”

Desikachar was not deterred. He continued to use it and kept trying to perfect it - to create a consistent and efficient system. He could see that people were busy, and they often had difficulty remembering oral instructions given by him or his father, or any other Yoga teacher, for that matter. Also, many students could not remember the exact positions of the hands and legs in different postures. Too much information to remember, they would tell him. And for the teacher, it is not easy to illustrate every posture with words only. It’s like writing an essay for each posture every time you teach a class.

Desikachar knew that a visual image could communicate more than a thousand words. He was familiar with the power of working with visual aids from his years as an engineer. Why do engineers rely on drawings for their constructions? Why not use words? One of the main reasons is that a drawing is visual and easier to comprehend and remember than verbal description or explanation. This inspired Desikachar to create the stick figures that are so commonly used today in Yoga classes everywhere.

With the help of his wife, Menaka, Desikachar began experimenting with simple drawings. Together, they designed a series of drawings to represent different postures. In the beginning, the process was awkward and hard for some to accept; they thought Desikachar was trying to replace the ancient system of oral transmission with a set of drawings. However, Desikachar’s only intention was to

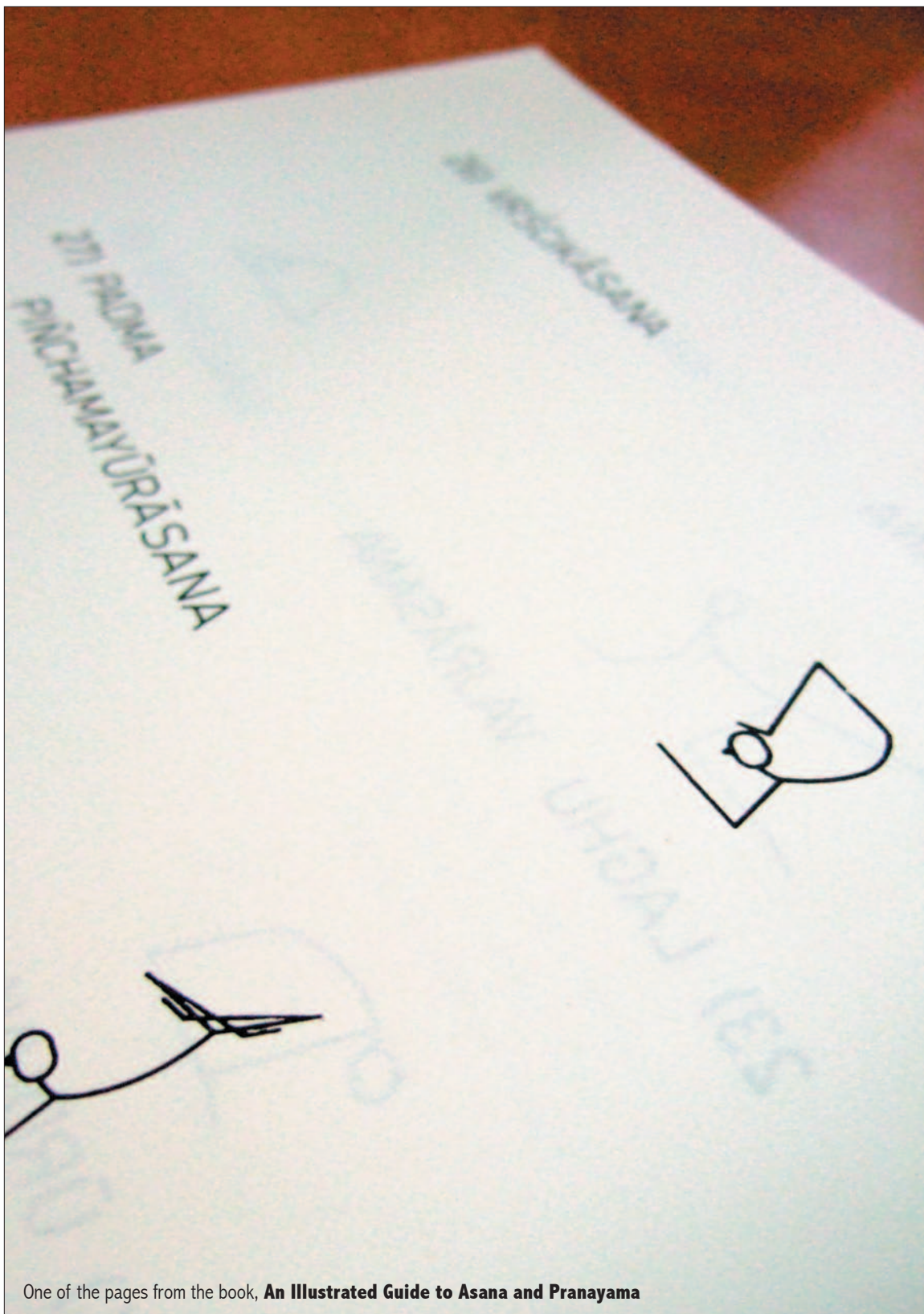
Of the many places in the world that Desikachar has visited, two are particularly special for him.

One is **Mt. Kailash** in the Himalayas and the other is **Jerusalem**.

About Mt. Kailash, he says, “It’s not just because my father was there for so many years, but also the majestic presence of this holy mountain. The experience I had when I visited it was magical, and it gives me goose bumps each time I think about it.”

About the holy city of Jerusalem, he says, “It is a melting pot of so many religions, of so many cultures. When I chanted at the wailing wall, I was surrounded by so many religious Jews reading their own Torah. It was a remarkable experience that cannot be explained in words. One visit to this city was enough for me to realize why so many prophets had walked its streets.”





One of the pages from the book, **An Illustrated Guide to Asana and Pranayama**

help people remember their practice better and also to help them practice correctly. Krishnamacharya did not see any problem with this innovation and approved of his son's project.

It took many years of experimentation and practice before the final set of drawings was released in 1981. With the help of a Canadian Yoga student and artist, MJN Smith, Desikachar presented these stick figures in a book: **An Illustrated Guide to Asana and Pranayama.**

Desikachar did not patent or copyright these drawings as his own. Instead, he offered them freely to students and teachers of Yoga as an educational tool. Everyone using some form of these stick figure aids today probably does not realize that they have Desikachar to thank for them.

Some of Desikachar's books

The Heart of Yoga

published by Inner Traditions

Health, Healing and Beyond

published by Aperture Foundation

The Viniyoga of Yoga

published by KYM

Reflections on Yoga Sutra-s of Patanjali

published by KYM

What Are We Seeking

published by KYM

In Search of Mind

published by KYM

Vedic Chant Companion

published by KYM

Nathamuni's Yoga Rahasya

published by KYM

Adi Sankara's Yoga Taravali

published by KYM

Yogayajnavalkya Samhita

published by KYM

Audio CDs by Desikachar

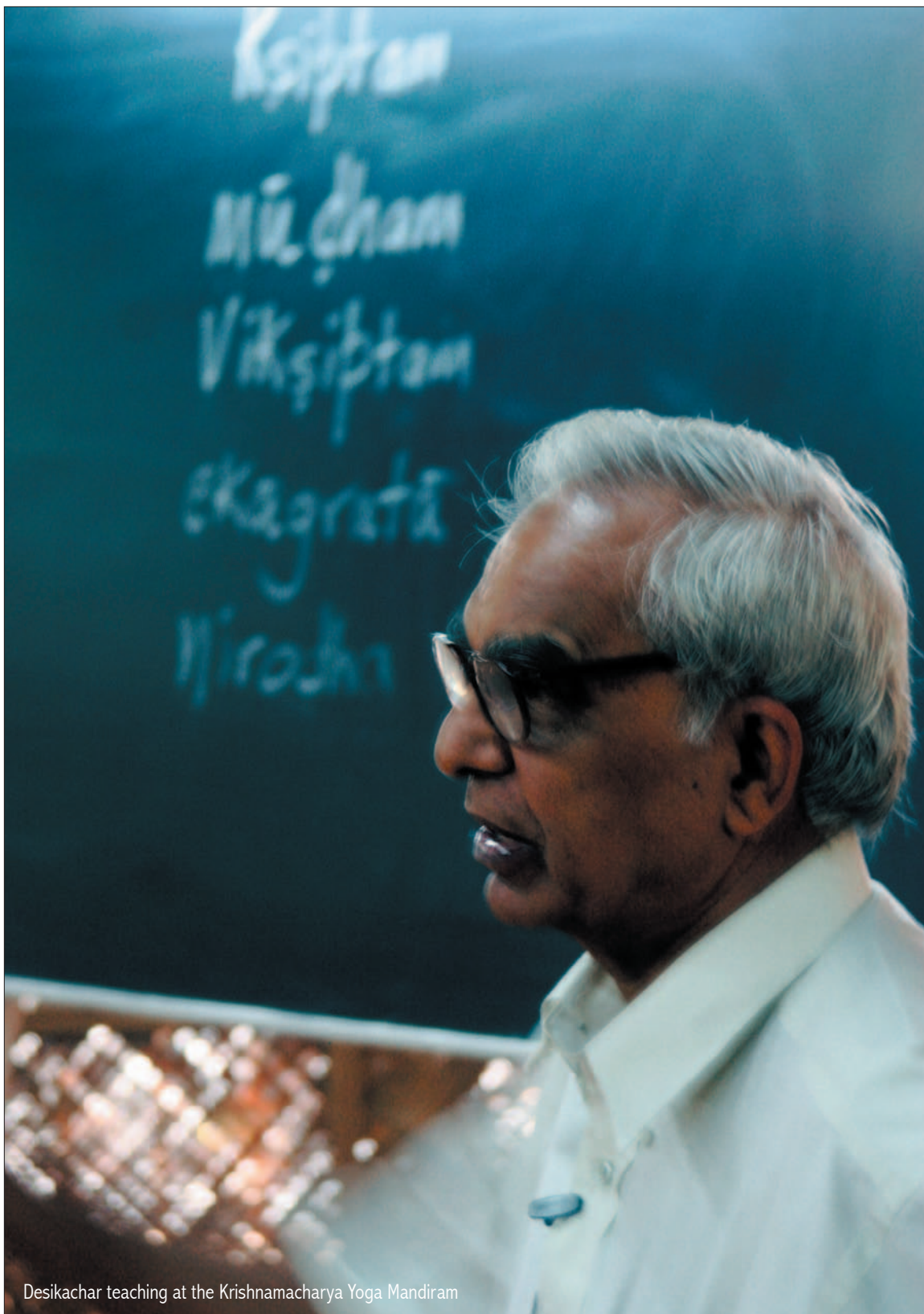
In Union

Swathi Soft Solutions

Pilgrimage of Sound

Swathi Soft Solutions





Desikachar teaching at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

BUILDING THE HOME OF YOGA

As a student of Yoga, Desikachar always felt very grateful. His father was the best teacher he could ask for, and he lived with him in the same household and could observe him at his work whenever he liked. If he needed help with a difficult case, Krishnamacharya was never far away. Desikachar had been given a unique and special opportunity to learn Yoga that few have experienced.

Desikachar decided that he wanted to do something to show his gratitude for all that he had been given. No amount of money would be sufficient, and even if he had a lot of money to give, his teacher, being his father, would not accept it. He had to think of a better way.

So on April 14, 1976, Desikachar and a colleague founded the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) with an initial investment of what is today the equivalent of fifty dollars. He wanted the KYM, a non-profit public charitable trust, to be the home of his father's work, helping to bring Krishnamacharya's teachings and healing skills to those who needed them the most.

The KYM began as a single space on the top floor of Desikachar's residence, because he could not afford to rent a separate building. A few years later, after an international fund-raising seminar, the KYM moved to a building on St. Mary's Road, where it remained for the next ten years. Then in 1986-87, the KYM moved once again, this time into a big house on Fourth Cross Street, Rama Krishna Nagar, its present location. And now, after renting for twenty years, the KYM finally owns its home after purchasing the property in January 2006.

Over the course of thirty years, the KYM has evolved from a gesture

The first home of the KYM was in Desikachar's own house. Desikachar and his family lived on the ground floor of the two-storey home, and the KYM operated from the top floor.

After a few years and a fund-raising workshop, the KYM was able to move to a larger, separate space on St. Mary's Road. This was its home for nearly a decade.

Finally, in 1986-87, the KYM made the move to its present location, just a few doors down from the Desikachar family residence. Recently, the KYM purchased the property it has been renting for almost twenty years and plans are underway to rebuild the center and create a state-of-the-art home for healing.





Desikachar demonstrating the use of gestures in meditative practices

of thanks in the form of a single room and a dream into a multi department institute that includes a Yoga Therapy Center - the only one of its kind in the world – offering Yoga as a holistic and complimentary system of healing. Over 50 teachers and consultants along with an administrative staff of nearly 20 offer therapeutic Yoga in a professional, caring setting to people from all over the world.

Physicians frequently refer patients to the KYM for help managing their ailments, and the center is noted for teaching healing techniques to people with epilepsy, gynecological problems, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and other mental and physical ailments. The KYM's client-base also includes people seeking to deepen their personal, spiritual practice and improve their general health and athletic performance.

In addition to Yoga Therapy, the KYM houses departments of Yoga Studies, Chanting, Publications, and the outreach organization, KYM-Mitra, which brings Yoga to the socially and economically underprivileged. The KYM's newest department, the Department of Research, is studying the effects of Yoga using protocols approved by the scientific community. Currently, the department is involved in a study on the effects of Yoga on epilepsy.

Every person who seeks out the services of the KYM is welcomed, and each person is treated as an individual, in the spirit of Yoga's teachings. The KYM is probably one of the few centers in the world where teachers utilize the complete range of Yoga's tools for therapy, tools like asana-s, pranayama, dhyanam (meditation practices), mantra-s (chants), svadhyaya (counseling), mudra-s (gestures), bhavana (visualization) and ahara niyama (dietary recommendations), to name only a few. Working with the full range of Yoga's tools helps to increase the probability that the student's needs are being met.

"As the torchbearer of the Krishnamacharya lineage, [Desikachar] has actively propagated the art and science of Classical Yoga throughout the world and I admire the way he has propagated it as an inseparable part of Indian culture especially through the Vedic chanting. I also deeply appreciate his work with the mentally challenged special children who can benefit tremendously from Yoga. His approach to Yoga therapy as a "one-to-one" method is to be appreciated when the modern key words in therapy seem to be mass appeal and mass application."

Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani
Pondicherry, India

Chairman, International Centre for Yoga
Education and Research



Desikachar guiding his daughter, Mekhala, in Bakasana



The success and positive spirit of the KYM is based on the good relationships between the members of the KYM team. From the very beginning, Desikachar understood that the only way the KYM would create a lasting legacy of his father's work was if it functioned as a team and not as the vehicle of one personality. This is why he has nurtured a strong, but flexible sanga (community) at the KYM. In addition to eighty staff members, the KYM has a seven-member Board of Trustees. The Trustees are highly respected people from a variety of fields and only one is from the Desikachar family. In founding the KYM with an open spirit, Desikachar has ensured that it will remain a collection of diverse, dedicated people working together for a common goal.

Desikachar himself has taught and served at the KYM in an honorary capacity from the beginning. Today, the day-to-day functioning of the facility is in the hands of the KYM's capable staff, but Desikachar's expert and compassionate guidance is always there when needed. He felt that this would be the best way to show his gratitude to his teacher and father, whose example of wise and caring guidance was his inspiration.

The KYM is all about teamwork. The administrative staff and teachers consult with each other and provide one another with support on a day-to-day basis. They collaborate on larger programs and projects, as well, including the KYM's educational programs and its volunteer projects conducted through KYM-Mitra.

Currently, the KYM has nearly twenty administrative staff and a roster of over 50 teachers. A majority of these teachers and staff are women.



Photograph provided by Masakatsu Kinoshita



Taking the pulse of a student: a vital part of Yoga Therapy

BUILDING BRIDGES OF HEALING

“They’re all a bunch of quacks,” responded a medical doctor when told that the KYM was going to offer individual Yoga classes for healing.

Krishnamacharya had been offering Yoga for therapeutic purposes since the 1930’s. Hundreds had sought his help, including kings, the Viceroy deputed to India, leading industrialists and many others, all of them seeking treatment for a wide range of illnesses. It was because of the fame of his work as a healer that Krishnamacharya had been invited to Chennai and eventually, why he settled there. His work was well known and respected in the community of that time. However, times change.

The KYM, despite the negative attitude of the medical community, was doing extremely well, and Desikachar was not discouraged by the resistance of local doctors. He frequently invited them to visit the KYM and observe what went on there, so that they could make a fair assessment of the KYM’s work.

Above all, Desikachar wanted to bring the health and healing professions together to see how they might cooperate to help patients who were suffering. Desikachar believes strongly that the system of healing being used is not the important issue: it is the patient that is important. So it does not matter if one system helps more than another, it only matters if the patient is healing and their life is getting better.

To help bridge the communication gap between Yoga and the medical community, Desikachar began studying aspects of Western Medicine with his family doctor, Dr. V Raju. He felt that if he could present Yoga

“I have always been impressed by two aspects of [Desikachar’s] approach. First, his openness and an uncompromising willingness to use the best of any healing tradition, without ego, without the walls that most healing professionals place between their chosen discipline and others around them.

The other aspect of his healing approach [lies] in his unshakeable, abiding faith in the capability of the human body to repair itself. But, he firmly believes that this gift cannot be taken as given, but is something that each individual has to work on and find for himself or herself. As a result, he never makes promises regarding outcomes from his advice, an ego trap that the overwhelming majority of healers regardless of tradition, consistently fall into.”

Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan

Chennai, India

Trustee and Medical Director
Sundaram Medical Foundation





Teaching a student individually

and its techniques in the language of medical doctors, they might be more willing to listen.

At the same time, Desikachar organized several seminars and conferences on the role of Yoga in healing both in India and internationally. He invited professionals from various healing fields to attend, including Western medical doctors, psychologists, Ayurvedic doctors, practitioners of Chinese Medicine, etc. He emphasized the importance of looking at the patient as a whole, unique person, rather than fixating on a disease or technique.

By the time the KYM set up the Department of Studies in 1987-88, the doctors and other healing professionals asked by Desikachar to serve on its Board of Studies felt no hesitation in accepting. Many were already practicing Yoga at the KYM. With patience and expert attention, Desikachar had built a bridge between the healing professions.

Today, the KYM sees hundreds of clients each year on the recommendation of their doctors or other healing professionals. Many of these same health professionals come to the KYM for healing or to study Yoga and learn how to integrate its tools into their own healing professions.

Sri Desikachar's students remain grateful that he didn't become a civil engineer and build bridges for a living, but, without a doubt, we know he would have been a great one.

"I could even say that [Desikachar] has helped lift the veils of mystique that keep getting reinforced even today; and has made yoga be understood as something far more than mere physical postures: making it both simple and personal."

Navtej Johar
New Delhi, India

Classical Dancer

Director, Studio Abhyas





Statue of Patanjali in the courtyard of the KYM

SUTRA-S FOR ALL

The Yoga Sutra-s of Patanjali is the most important text on Yoga. Composed a few thousand years ago, the sutra-s present the philosophy of Yoga in a simple, aphoristic style. The classical masters used the sutra-s to develop the principles of Yoga practice. So revered was this text that any technique a teacher wanted to introduce into Yoga practice had to be consistent with the teachings in the sutra-s. If it wasn't, the technique was rejected.

The Yoga Sutra-s is presented in such a way - the language itself is sometimes cryptic and highly symbolic - that it is difficult to grasp the full meaning of its message. Anyone hoping to gain a clear understanding of the sutra-s needs to study with a competent teacher, who himself/herself has studied the sutra-s with a competent teacher, and so on.

For Krishnamacharya, who was a master of the sutra-s, their message was absolutely critical to right Yoga practice and teaching. The teachings of the sutra-s were close to his heart and influenced every aspect of his teaching and his life, and he wanted Desikachar to be a master of the sutra-s, as well. This is probably why he taught this text to Desikachar nine times over three decades, each time leading his son to the next, deeper level of understanding. Desikachar cherishes the time he spent with his father studying the sutra-s, and like him, he uses the sutra-s as a guide in his work and his life.

However, Desikachar recognized that the Yoga Sutra-s is not easy to understand and wanting to make the text more accessible to the public, he wrote **The Heart of Yoga**, which presents the principles of Yoga in a way that allows the reader to see their relationship to the sutra-s more clearly. **The Heart of Yoga** also includes the entire

"Mr. Desikachar, like his father, Sri Krishnamacharya, has revolutionized the practice of yoga with the simple yet radical and neglected idea that since everyone is unique, one's yoga practice must be individualized to meet the specific needs of a practitioner, rather than the other way around.

But perhaps Mr. Desikachar's greatest contribution to the world of yoga is that he is a living embodiment of the spirit of yoga."

Dr. Jeffrey B. Rubin
New York City, USA

Psychoanalyst

Author



I. समाधिपादः

अथ - योगानुशासनम् ।

योगः - चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ।

तदा - द्रष्टुः - स्वरूपे - अवस्थानम् ।

वृत्तिसारूप्यम् - इतरत्र ।

वृत्तयः पञ्चतय्यः - क्लिष्टाक्लिष्टाः ।

प्रमाण - विपर्यय - विकल्प - निद्रा -

I. Samādhipādaḥ

1-1. atha - yogānūśāsanam

1-2. yogaḥ - cittavṛttinirodhaḥ

1-3. tadā - draṣṭuḥ - svarūpe - avasthā

1-4. vṛttisārūpyam - itaratra

1-5. vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ - kliṣṭā -
kliṣṭā

1-6. pramāṇa - viparyaya - vika -
smṛtayaḥ

1-6. anumāna -

Yoga Sutra-s, but in a simplified format. Desikachar's hope was that this simplified introduction to the sutra-s would allow readers to better understand the text's message without getting discouraged or confused by the language of the original text with its layers of meaning. The book was extremely well-received, and now many Yoga schools and centers use it as a basic reference text.

Desikachar also observed that, perhaps because of the nature of the times we live in, people were not inspired by the complex process of learning the Yoga Sutra-s. This process is based on the classical method: first the student memorizes the text, then lessons in meaning follow. Desikachar discovered that this model was particularly difficult for his foreign students, who were not familiar with Sanskrit and its rich, complex grammatical structures.

Desikachar himself had learned the Yoga Sutra-s in the classical manner with his exacting father, but, to his mind, this did not mean that this method worked best for everyone. With his father's permission, he broke down the sutra-s into shorter phrases, consistent with the grammatical and phonetic rules of Sanskrit, so that it would be easier for people learn them. When teaching a new student the Yoga Sutra-s, he would use this simpler method first and then, when he felt that the student was ready, he would introduce the classical method. Desikachar strongly feels that if a student is serious about learning the sutra-s, he or she must learn them according to the classical method eventually. The simplified method is just a tool for helping the student to make the transition to learning in the classical form.

In 1985, Desikachar published **Yoga Sutra-s of Patanjali** through the KYM: the first book that presents this simplified method for learning the sutra-s.

Every Saturday morning at 8:15, Desikachar delivers a lecture on Yoga Sutra-s at the KYM. Known as "Sir's Lecture," this free class has been drawing a healthy crowd of students and locals for many years now.



Photograph © Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



Some of the special students of the KYM. Here they engage in weaving and camaraderie.

YOGA FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Years ago, a local psychologist who works with special needs children was looking for new ways to improve the daily life of his young patients. A German colleague who was familiar with Yoga suggested that he try practicing Yoga with them, and the psychologist promptly began to look for Yoga teachers to collaborate with him on a program for the children.

The first Yoga teacher he met told him, “Don’t worry, we can cure these children through Yoga.” The psychologist walked out of the meeting; he knew that the condition the children suffered from could not be cured. Anyone who tried to tell him they could cure his patients was unreliable.

The psychologist visited numerous Yoga centers, and every place he went, he was told the same thing: “No problem. We can cure them.” He was beginning to doubt that Yoga had anything to offer his patients.

Then, on the recommendation of another friend, he arranged to meet one more Yoga teacher. This teacher told him, “Sir, Let us try. I am not an expert in Special Needs like you are. I am proficient in Yoga. Let us both work together and see if it helps.”

The teacher was Desikachar, and his words moved Professor P Jeyachandran, who had been on the verge of giving up hope. But finally, here was a Yoga teacher he felt he could trust to do what was best for his patients.

This is how the KYM’s work with developing Yoga practices specifically for children with special needs began.

“Sri Desikachar, himself a teacher par excellence, follows the yoga lineage of his father Sri Krishnamacharya, one of the best yoga teachers of his time”

Indra Devi

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Yoga Teacher

Yoga Author

Quoted from the foreword to **The Heart of Yoga**





Desikachar in a reflective moment during a class

Over the next decade, Desikachar and Professor Jeyachandran, with guidance from Krishnamacharya, discovered that Yoga could be helpful for special needs children in more ways than they could have imagined when they began their collaboration. Although it cannot cure their disability, Yoga helped to improve every other aspect of life for these children. For many, the drooling stopped and they had fewer seizure attacks. Yoga also gave them more confidence and helped improve their clarity of speech. They began to learn faster and some even managed to complete graduation. In Professor Jeyachandran's eyes, these were remarkable results, and he recommended Yoga as a healing practice to all of his colleagues.

Based on their work with special needs children, Desikachar and Jeyachandran hosted several conferences and workshops and invited social workers, psychologists, parents of special needs children and volunteers to come and learn about Yoga's potential to help the special needs community. Their work was so successful that the program continued to grow. Today, the Indian government officially supports this program and recommends that it be modeled all over the country to improve the lives of special needs children.

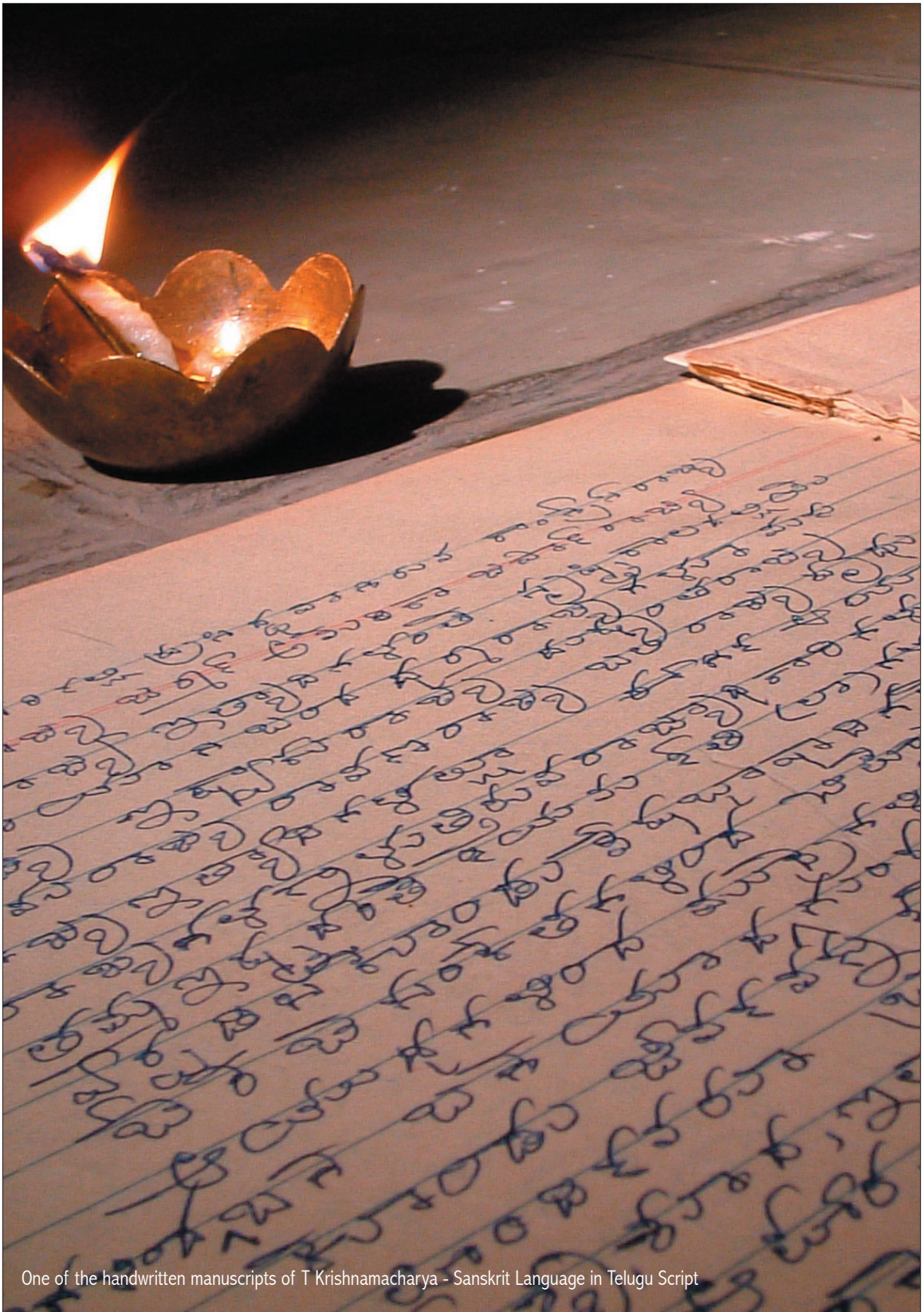
A Poem on Desikachar

Dharma and excellence
Excellence and Service
Service and Inspiration
Inspiration and Kindness
Kindness and awareness
Awareness and Communication
Communication and healing
Healing and affection
Affection and respect
Respect and relationship

Sonia Nelson
 Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

Director of the Vedic Chant Center &
 Antaranga Yoga





One of the handwritten manuscripts of T Krishnamacharya - Sanskrit Language in Telugu Script

TRANSLATING A GENIUS

When Krishnamacharya wrote, he would do something very curious. He would write in the Sanskrit language, however, the script he used was not Sanskrit, but his native script, Telugu (the language used in the state of Andhra Pradesh, the home of Krishnamacharya's ancestors).

This meant that a Telugu reader might be able to pronounce the words, but would be unable to comprehend what they meant. And a Sanskrit scholar would not be able to read the writings, as the script was in Telugu.

Why would Krishnamacharya do this? And who could make proper sense out of it, so that Krishnamacharya's writings would not be lost?

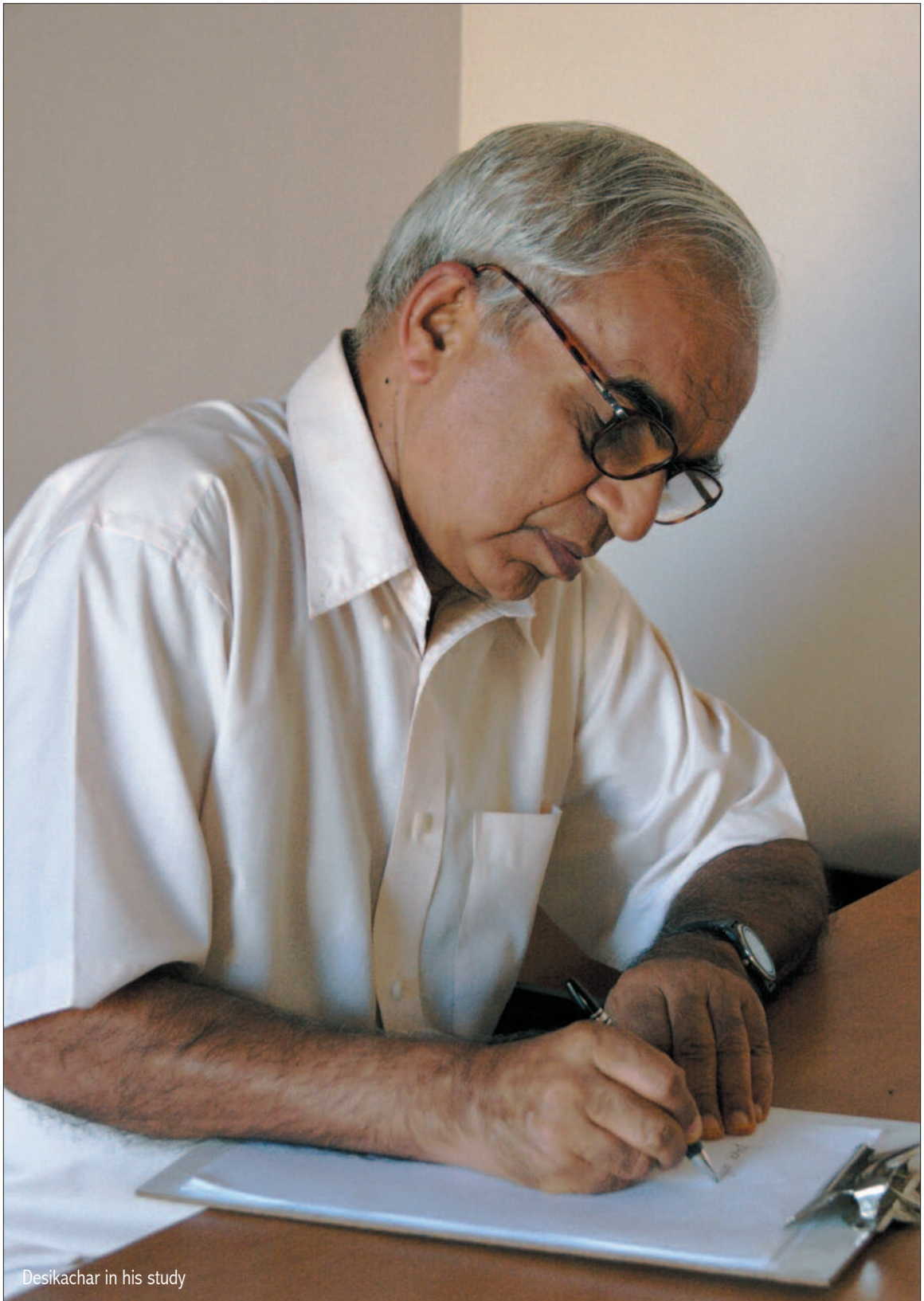
There are two reasons why Krishnamacharya wrote in this way, and one reason may be linked to the other. First, Krishnamacharya had promised his spiritual teacher that he would write only in Telugu script. Why he made this promise, we don't know, but it may be linked to the second reason: the teachers of the past held sacred teachings to be more precious than anything else. Such teachings were not made easily available to students, especially those who did not have the capacity to understand them. This is why most ancient teachings were steeped in symbolism. Only those who were serious enough, only those who had the capacity to grasp these powerful teachings would go deeper and eventually, understand them. For the others, the teaching would seem mundane, even trivial or absurd.

This could have been Krishnamacharya's intention when he decided to write using this unusual method: he wanted only the most serious

Desikachar reads, writes, and speaks three languages fluently: English, Kannada, and Sanskrit.

He also reads and writes fluently in the language of Telugu, but he is not at home conversing in it. And though he does not read and write in Tamil, the language of the state of Tamilnadu where he makes his home, he speaks it perfectly.





Desikachar in his study

and deserving students to have access to these teachings. Even if a translator knew both Sanskrit and Telugu, they would not be able to unlock the meaning of his writings, because everything Krishnamacharya wrote, like the Sutra-s, has many layers of meaning. For this reason, the translator would need to have a master's experiential knowledge of the subject matter, as well. In addition, anyone hoping to translate Krishnamacharya's teachings would have to have worked with him for a long period of time and have a solid grasp of how he approached teaching and how he spoke about the teachings in order to present his work in its fullness and complexity.

Only Desikachar has all of these qualifications, and for the last twenty years, he has been working to translate the genius of Krishnamacharya. He spends long hours alone in his study converting this coded teaching into a format that serious students will be able to read, so that Krishnamacharya's work can be shared with everyone. Of course, Desikachar intends for the next generation to find in Krishnamacharya's writings their own challenge, so he is translating them into Sanskrit - the language of Yoga and the majority of India's traditional teachings.

The source of the Yoga practiced by the world-wide Yoga community today is embedded in the rich heritage of teachings we inherited from Krishnamacharya. Thanks to Desikachar's quiet work of twenty years, more of these teachings will be available soon for us to study, experience, and share.

Desikachar's favorite travel destinations are **British Columbia, Sweden, Japan, and Germany**. He shared his feelings about these places:

"British Columbia was breathtaking in its beauty and magnificence. The nature is exquisite and so good for walking."

"Sweden is so special, because the local people are so friendly to me and are always ready to help me find my way whenever I get lost during my walks."

"The Zen Gardens in Japan are a testament to yoga in action. It touched me deeply."

"I love the organized manner of Germany. Nothing goes wrong there. As long as you follow the rules and guidelines, there are no surprises waiting for you."





The sandals of T Krishnamacharya, a symbol of the teaching lineage

CONTEMPORARY TRADITION

Most of Yoga's teachings originate from a tradition of Indian teachers who lived thousands of years ago. Their experience of everyday life, their view of the world and their beliefs were different from ours in ways we can never fully understand or appreciate. Can these teachings, whose source is in the distant past, still be relevant to us – to the way we live and our experience of life today? This is a question many of us ask.

Traditionally, teachers presented the teachings to their young students in the form of richly symbolic stories and representations. At the age of seven or eight, it is easier to learn something new if it is given to you in a creative format. But it was expected that as they matured, the students would begin to understand the subtle meaning behind the symbolism.

Today, we are not taught this way - at least, not directly and typically, not in the classroom. There are very few who understand the symbolism behind the ancient teachings. If more people understood, it would be easier to accept that certain traditional practices may have to change. This is a sensitive subject. We need to create a workable balance, where we are clear when traditional rules must be respected, and when exceptions can and must be made.

Desikachar has learned how to create this balance. The way he lives his life and teaches Yoga embodies the message of the classical teachings, yet he understands that these classical teachings must be adapted to our modern lives.

One of Desikachar's students, an Indian woman, was diagnosed with breast cancer. When the woman came to see him, Desikachar took

"One of Mr. Desikachar's greatest contributions to yoga is not only the depth and broad range of his teachings and how clearly he presents them, but how he embodies the lessons as a living example of how yoga works.

Witnessing Mr. Desikachar simply engaging in the world, observing his interactions with students, colleagues, friends and family, as well as executing mundane tasks such as shopping for food, have shown me the power of yoga in action."

Kate Holcombe
San Francisco, California

Yoga Teacher

Founder, Healing Yoga Foundation





Desikachar chanting with a student during a Yoga Sutra-s Class

her to a holy place so that they could pray, because he knew that she believed in God and that this would bring her some comfort. The woman, however, hesitated to enter the temple. She told Desikachar that she was menstruating, and so she was 'not clean.' In India, it has long been the custom that women must avoid entering any spiritual sanctum during menstruation.

Desikachar explained to his student that the reason ancient society considered a menstruating woman to be 'unclean' was due to the fact that, in those days, sanitary practices were very different and much less effective. And what truly mattered, he told her, was to 'be clean' in thought and intention. Reassured, the woman entered the temple to pray. She was able to let go of a traditional teaching that no longer applied and that had been misrepresented over the years, yet she remained firm and respectful in her faith.

Krishnamacharya himself is considered a traditional, conservative teacher by today's standards (his contemporaries, however, thought him too liberal). All classical protocols between students and teachers were followed in his presence: the student had to sit at a level below that of the teacher, lessons began with prayers that honored the traditional masters and sometimes, even religious deities or icons, and the students addressed the teacher in a respectful manner and never by name (this is why sometimes we hear Yoga teachers being addressed as Guruji or Swamiji). These traditions are meant to support an atmosphere of reverence and seriousness for the teacher and the process of learning.

While this is how Desikachar learned from his teacher, he does not expect his students to follow these same traditional protocols. Many students call him by name and sit across a table from him at the same level when learning from him. Religious or devotional prayers are chanted only if that is what the student wants. In a sense, he is

"Over the last decade, I have been involved in a small way with the [Krishnamacharya Yoga] Mandiram, the institution created by Sri Desikachar to perpetuate the teachings of his father. He, the teachers [of the KYM] and more recently his son, Kausthub, are carrying this great treasure to as many people in the world as possible, maintaining the true ideals of the great teacher while embracing change that comes with technological advances and societal transformation."

M M Murugappan
Chennai, India

Industrialist





Explaining the finer details of Yoga Philosophy

an “un-guru.” His strong belief is that there can be reverence when there is no protocol and following protocol is not always an indication of the presence of reverence. So he addresses the element of reverence in his own way, choosing to teach it through example.

Reverence also guides how he lives the teachings and how he applies them, always working to preserve the heart of Yoga’s teachings, yet always willing to adapt Yoga’s tools and practices for our contemporary world.

“For myself and countless others, you [Mr. Desikachar] have become the direct pipe line from India to the USA. You have fed us who are thirsty for authentic yet modern therapeutic approaches to the practice and teaching of yoga. Today, your books continue to be a fresh source of knowledge. They are the cornerstone of my yoga foundation!

Thank you, Mr. Desikachar”.

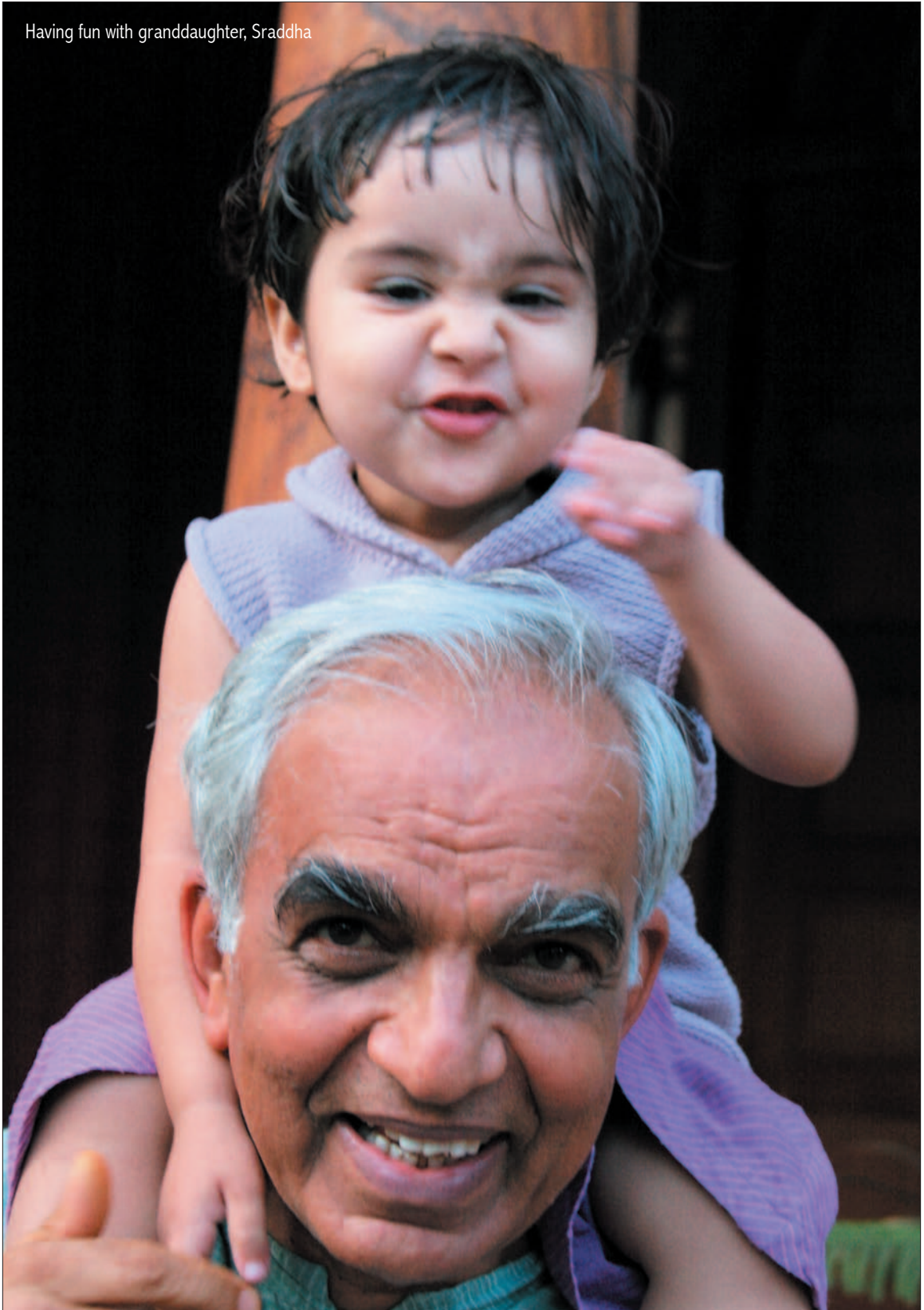
Lilias Folan

Los Angeles, USA

PBS host and Author



Having fun with granddaughter, Sraddha



THE GREATEST THING

In May 2005, Desikachar was teaching a seminar in Montreal with his family as part of their eleven-country world tour. The crowd in Montreal was a mix of English and French-speakers, so Desikachar was using a translator.

The translator, Daniel, was seated on the stage between Desikachar and his son, Kausthub. Daniel was the organizer of the event and a long-time student of Kausthub, and he is known for having a wonderful sense of humor. On stage, however, he appeared to be more nervous than anything else. Perhaps, he was feeling a little agitated, because there were two hundred people in the audience, and he was sitting between his teacher and his teacher's teacher

While translating, Daniel began to make a few small mistakes. Realizing this, Desikachar asked him to come closer, hoping it would help Daniel to hear more clearly. However, being even closer to Desikachar only made Daniel more nervous, and he continued to make mistakes.

"Come even closer," Desikachar told him.

Daniel, falling back on his sense of humor, walked over and sat in Desikachar's lap.

The audience was dead silent. It was as if every person in the room was holding their breath, waiting to see how Desikachar would react. Would he be angry? Would he walk out?

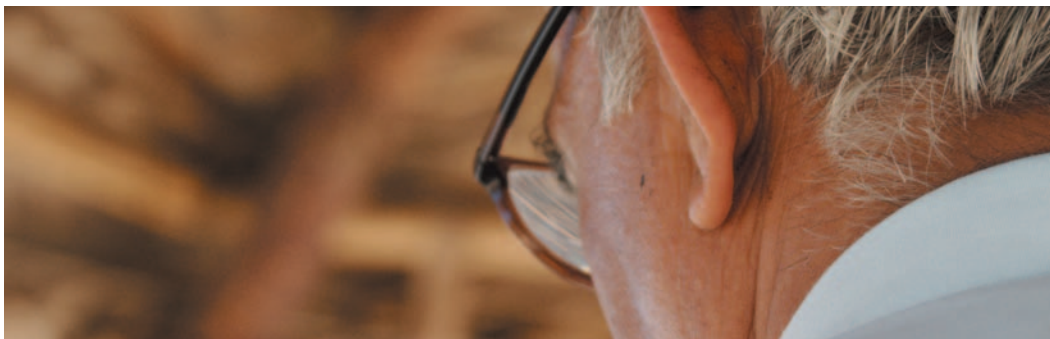
But Desikachar just smiled and patted Daniel on the back. "Relax. Take a deep breath," he said.

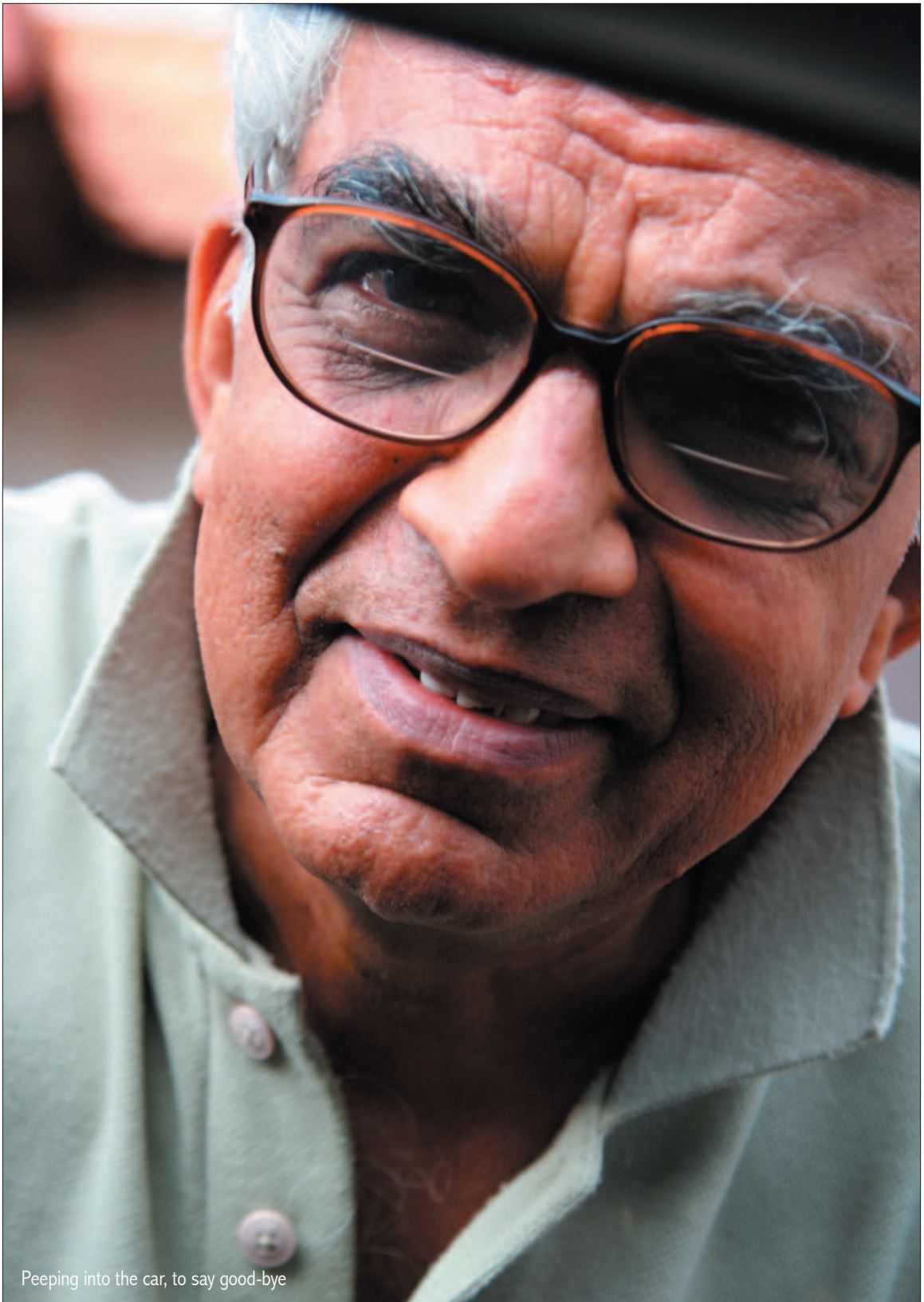
On the morning of September 11, 2001, as he was about to leave Atlanta for New Mexico, Desikachar heard the news about the twin towers. When he realized that he could not travel that day, he decided to go back to his hotel and wait until a clearer picture emerged.

This tragic event affected him deeply and also caused him concern on a very personal level, as his youngest son and his daughter-in-law were staying in New York just a few miles from Ground Zero. His wife, Menaka, was in Dallas, and his eldest son was at home in Chennai worrying about all of them.

Desikachar decided that the best thing for him to do was to take a walk, so he headed toward Piedmont Park in the heart of Atlanta. In the park, people were starting to gather, their faces filled with sadness and worry. Desikachar found a tall, old tree and sat beneath it. After a little while, he closed his eyes and began chanting.

When he opened his eyes, he discovered that several people had joined him under the tree and were listening to him intently. One of them said to him: "Sir, we feel touched by your chanting. As we listened, we felt a sense of calm during this tough time. This was the best thing that could happen to us now."





Peeping into the car, to say good-bye

The ice was broken. Everyone laughed, and Daniel, feeling much better, continued translating.

Desikachar is a master of Yoga, there is not doubt about this. But what makes him great is his humanity.

As a student shared with me, "What is so wonderful about Desikachar is his humanity - is his ability to bring a sense of happiness to people just by being in the room. When I think of him, I think of a man who is always smiling. At first, I was intimidated by him (and I still am a bit), but something about him reminds me not to look for the answers in him, but to look for them in myself. He totally deflects ego. What is good in him is the same in me, too."

A woman had sought an appointment with Desikachar at the KYM, and she was waiting for him at the appointed hour in the lobby. She had never met Desikachar before, nor seen his photo. A man walked by while she was waiting, and she asked him, "Will Swamiji Desikachar come soon? I have an appointment with him."

The man assured her that Desikachar would indeed meet her at the appointed time. A few minutes later, the woman was escorted to the consultation room. She met the same man she had spoken with in the lobby. He introduced himself, "I am Desikachar. How can I help you?"

The woman was shocked. "You can't be him. You are not wearing orange robes, you do not have a long and flowing beard. You are just like me. You cannot be Swamiji Desikachar."

Desikachar smiled. "Madam, I am not a Swamiji, but I am the Desikachar with whom you have an appointment. And yes, I am just like you."

Someone once asked Desikachar what his role has been in the world of Yoga. He told them, "I am a postman. I am just delivering my father's great teachings to the next generation. If I finish this task successfully, I will be the happiest person."



Photograph provided by Masakatsu Kinoshita

HOW THIS TRIBUTE WAS FUNDED

This tribute was made possible through the generous support of students and well wisher's from around the world. Many contributed articles, photographs, support and other resources to bring this tribute to publication. In order to make sure that this brochure was printed and could be distributed freely around the world, the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) wrote to Desikachar's friends and to many of the students who have studied with him and benefited from the healing work of the KYM and asked them to help us raise funds to subsidize this publication. The response was tremendous – a testament to the strong bonds between Desikachar, the KYM and the community they serve and to the friendships they have made.

Below is a list of some of those who have helped us to bring out the first edition of this tribute.

Sraddha Kausthub Gill Lloyd M V Subbiah Malini Parthasarthy Ann Rogers Students of Central Valley Yoga Ann Brice Rose Mary Jeanes Antze Amala Akkineni S Sridharan Dr.Imogen Dalmann and Dr. Martin Soder Muruguppa Chettiar Trust Madras Auto Service The Mrs.Madhuram Narayanan Charitable Trust Patricia H Miller Barbara Brian Piluca Enriquez Frederike Sugimoto Lynn Carole Milich Sonia Nelson Larry Payne Frans and Simone Moors Daniel & Isabelle Pinealt Chase Bossart Usha Narayanan Radha Sundararajan Shobana Srinivasan Geetha Shankar Padmini & Divya Narendran Saraswathi & Sundar N.Chandrasekharan Anuradha Swami Ramamani Kalyanaraman Nrithya Jagannathan Usha Sundar Arthi Sanjay Vani Rao Jayanthi Sudhakar Ramesh Rema Devi Srinivasan Lara Kala Badri Latha Satish Nagarajan Prabhavathi Reddy Sangeetha Kannan Ganga Gurumurthy Akhila Ramasubramaniam Dwarkanath Sivaraman Piraimudi V.Srinivasan Renu Dawar Nirmala Devi Rajeswari Ranganathan Anapuma Das S.Anand Asha Tilak Suresh Parthasarathy Rajendran Ranjith Ramakrishna Bhuvanewari Pushpa Ajith Kumar Karthikeyan Bernard Bouanchaud Hellfried Krusche Todd Stellfox Raghu Ananthanarayan

Those individuals who sent in checks that arrived after this edition went to print will have their names published in the next edition. In addition to an online version of this tribute, you can find the complete, up-to-date list of all those who contributed towards it at www.kym.org/tribute.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Publication of further editions of this tribute will also require support, and we welcome the community's help. If you would like to support this project, so that we can continue to distribute this tribute without cost, please send your donation to the address listed below, along with your contact information as you would like it to appear in subsequent editions. All funds collected will be credited to a separate account to be used solely for the purpose of printing and distributing this tribute booklet.

Please make your cheque payable to **“Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram.”**

For more information on the KYM or its activities and how you can participate, please contact:

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