

INTO THE HEART OF A YOGI

Yogi Tirumala Krishnamacharya lived till the age of 101. His guru, Swami Rammohan Brahmachari, lived for more than 130 years. His son, TKV Desikachar, is in his 70s now. *TSI's* N ASOKAN goes knocking on Desikachar's door...

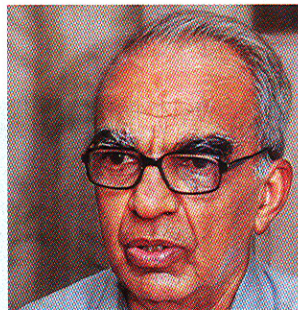
PHOTO: PAGER KRISHNAMURTHY



Is it true that your father's guru, Swami Rammohan Brahmachari was more than 130-years-old when your father met him? Did you ever try to locate him?

My father had heard about Rammohan Brahmachari and wanted to meet him. At that time a British Viceroy was suffering from sugar problems. My father cured him with the help of breathing ex-

ercises. When the Viceroy asked him what he could offer in return, my father told him that he wanted to go to Tibet to meet Rammohan Brahmachari. The Viceroy had him escorted to the great Yogi. It was a long walk of three and half months. When my father saw Rammohan Brahmachari, he prostrated in front of him, and was taken in by him as his disciple. It was a seven-



and-a-half-year long association in which my father learnt all types of yoga practices. Rammohan Brahmachari was not alone, he had a few children. It is believed that he was more than 130-years-old when my father met him.

It was my dream to meet my father's guru and I went to Manasarovar in 1992 but couldn't find him. So I visualised him in my mind and prostrated. He must have died long ago.

Why did your father not live as long as his guru?

He did not live as long because he was sad. My mother died of cancer when she was in her seventies. He stopped eating in his last days and on February 28, 1989 he died at the age of 100 years and three and half months.

How much of Rammohan Brahmachari's yoga is still alive in the yoga you teach and the yoga being taught by your father's students?

My father practiced whatever was taught by his Guru. I learnt from him for 29 years. My father taught his students, including me, on a one-to-

one basis to cure people from different diseases. He also taught Indira Devi, who was a very famous yoga teacher and lived for 102 years. I teach what my father's Guru had taught hundred years ago.

What do you recommend people should eat to live a long and healthy life?

Even though vegetarianism is ideal, it is very difficult to be a vegetarian. In Tibet, you cannot grow any vegetables because of high altitudes. Generally, a person must follow vegetarianism; if nothing is available you have to accept whatever is available.

Your father was able to stop his heartbeat for two minutes. Did you ever try it too?

In 1964, when he was 76 years old, upon my insistence, he stopped his heartbeat in front of me. He asked me to check his pulse. I did. Then he asked me to check his pulse after 15 minutes. When I checked after 15 minutes, there was no pulse for two minutes. He had stopped his heart for two minutes!! Then it returned. I pleaded to him to teach me how to do it too, but he refused. He said that he did it only to prove the power of yoga. My mother told me how father used to perform some yoga practices daily, which would have helped him to achieve that feat.

Do conjugal relationships impact health and longevity?

In the ancient texts it is said that at the end of a student's studies, the Guru asks his disciples to have children, or else there would be a discontinuity. This is what Rammohan Brahmachari told my father too, who in fact was thinking of not having a relationship. He then married my mother and had six children.

Do you think longevity is important?

Our wish is to live long. We never know what happens... ■