



A journey of self-discovery

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### Hindu Business Line: September 2010

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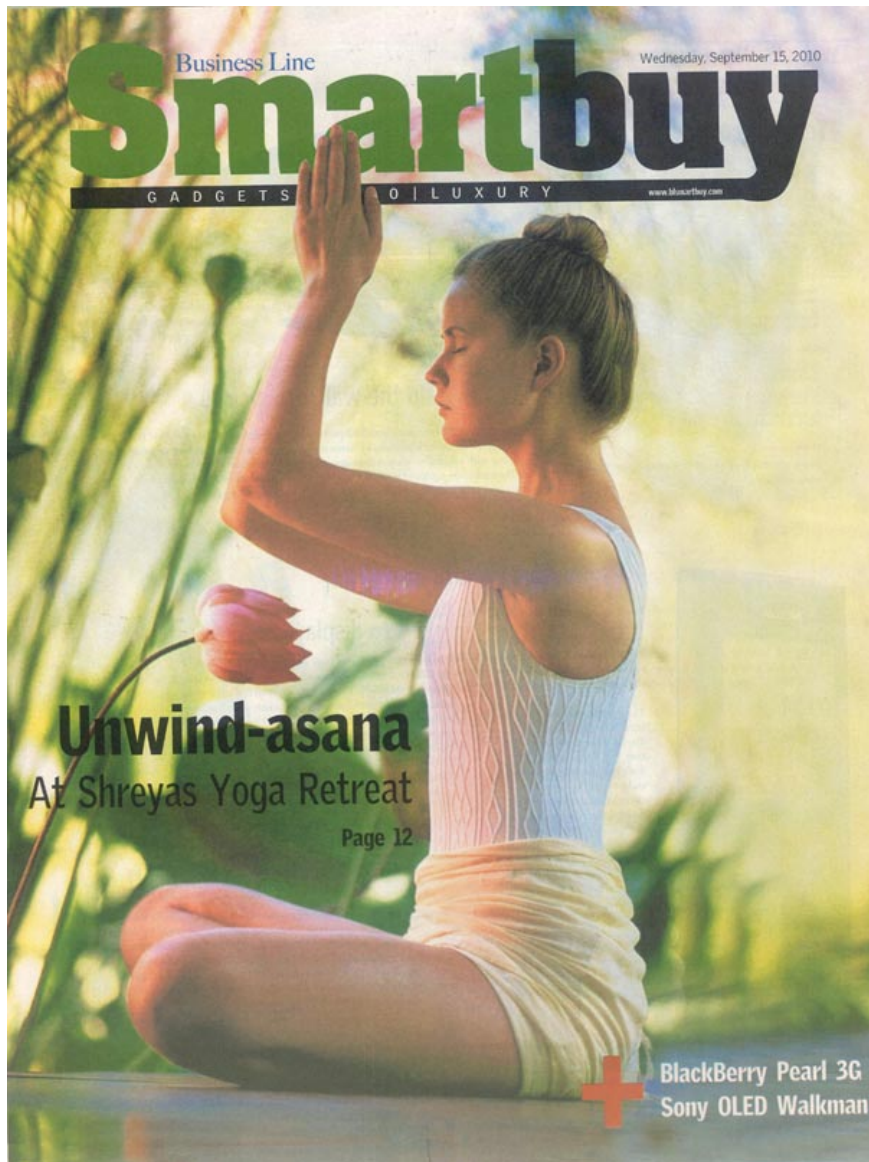
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#### RETREATS

- Wellness for the Soul
- Yoga Retreat
- Ayurvedic Rejuvenation
- Silent Retreat
- The Joy of Giving
- Weight Management

#### Video Tour

##### Video Directions





Whether it's mastering the art of Yoga or learning the pranayam for a healthy lifestyle, Shreyas Yoga Retreat gives you a glimpse of the ancient Indian discipline and lets you explore it in its luxurious little haven, says ANUSHYA MAMTORA

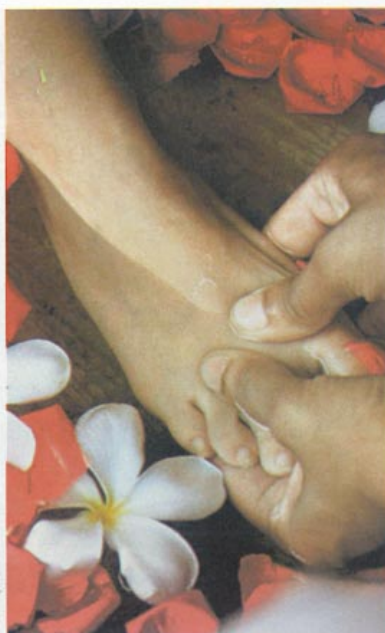
**A**nna S, a Russian born art consultant, sat perfectly in the Yogic 'chin mudra' posture as she echoed the 'Aums' with utmost devotion. While I shifted my legs clumsily and fidgeted with my hair, she meditated with the composure of an expert. Anna was not new to Yoga and certainly not new to the little 'machaan' we were seated in for the meditation classes. She had learnt the poses of the art in London, been to Mysore for a teacher training programme and also experienced Yoga at ashrams in Bihar. But this was her fifth visit in three years to the little known yet popular Shreyas Yoga Retreat. This luxury retreat not only helped in nurturing her interest in Yoga but has also been her recharge point every time she flies by the continent on work.

Anna is not alone in looking to Shreyas as a source of rejuvenation. Since its inception in 2004 there have been plenty of international travellers who head to this 25 acre lush green space near Bengaluru, forgo their favourite meat dishes, alcoholic nightcaps and lazy holiday mornings, just to blend into the surreal spirit of the retreat.

Eager to witness how it feels to bring a sense of order and healthy routine into our lives, I headed to Shreyas to experience the latest they have to offer, as well as learn a lesson or two in Yoga and Ayurveda.

#### Ashram, the luxurious kind

One always associates retreats with barefooted orange-robed inmates, mantras chanting in the background, a day packed with yoga and meditation classes, simple Indian food, a room with basic amenities and an atmosphere of



unnerving quiet and peace. Shreyas too, at first glimpse, oozes Zen-like simplicity, albeit replete with antique doorways, stone pillars and life-sized Balinese wood sculptures.

But explore further, and you find that it also boasts of a plush library with coffee table books, an enticing swimming pool, a home theatre with a wide collection of movies (yoga CDs too), beautifully designed tent cottages and most importantly, also serves fresh quesadillas and kiwi tarts for dinner! Shreyas sure is the retreat of the luxurious kind where the emphasis on Yoga and Indian spirituality is subtle and a matter of choice.

With two Yoga classes chalked out everyday in the morning and evening and a session on meditation, guests can spend the rest of the day opting for community service in the 'Joy of Giving' package, helping out in the organic farm, meditating in 'mauna' in the 'Silent Retreat' package or doing their own bit of Yoga. Alternatively, one can go for a swim, read books from the varied collection of fiction and non-fiction, watch a movie or indulge in the spa which offers traditional western and Ayurvedic massages as well as interesting scrubs and masks like chocolate, honey and coconut, coffee and aromatic spices.

#### Weighty issues

Within half an hour of my arrival, I struck a pose in front of the in-house Ayurvedic expert, secretly hoping she would miss noticing my generous waistline. "Pitta" she smilingly announced after I told her of my BMI's tendency to yo-yo and showed her my acne-prone skin. I was promptly

trained in some Yogic 'asanas' and was put through the Udwartanam massage (a forceful reverse body massage using powdered herbs to eliminate adipose tissue deposits). I was treated to the healthiest of organic and non-refined food, and yes some freshly brewed ginger, pepper and cinnamon tea – ideal for my body type.

I was getting a sample of what guests who opted for the weight management package at Shreyas are offered, a latest in their list of packages. While I just had a day to experiment with the package, guests have to enrol into 14-nights or 21-nights programs. Apart from the customised low-calorie diet, asanas, pranayama, kriyas, yoga nidra and meditation, and traditional Ayurvedic treatments, you can also expect to hear a knock at the door at 6 am to remind you of a morning jog.

**FarmVille, for real**

Food plays an important role in Shreyas' scheme of things. With a sprawling three and a half acre farm that grows everything from fruits to vegetables and herbs and rice, a walk around can be quite engaging. So engaging that Shreyas actually lets guests opt for a community service package where they can work at the farm, help in sowing, watering and picking, and even cooking and serving.

Rame Gowda, GM (Operations), took me around as he pointed out to rosemary, asparagus, celery, thyme, sweet basil, lemon grass and fennel shrubs that serve as ingredients in the kitchen. There's also a cattle shed, so the milk, yogurt, butter and fresh cream you savour at the dining room is fresh.

With a fixed menu on the cards, the chefs at Shreyas



serve wholesome vegetarian food with minimal oil and one cuisine per meal.

During my stay I was served authentic North Indian roti, paneer tikka and dal makhani, Mexican broth and burritos and South Indian rasam and lemon rice.

When Shreyas uses 'a journey of self-discovery' as its tag line, realisation can be small and big. I for one 'discovered' that I have a penchant for reading about Indian spiritualism, am flexible enough to do the Surya Namaskar and my new found love for 'avial'!



**IN A NUTSHELL**

**What:** Shreyas Yoga Retreat. 14 pool-facing and garden cottages that attracts the who's who from around the world for an anonymous getaway as well as those looking to acquaint themselves with Yoga

**Where:** Santoshima Farm, Gollahalli Gate, Nelamangala, Bengaluru

**How:** About an hour by road from the Bengaluru air-

port and one and half hours from the City railway station

**When:** Anytime one feels the need for a break from routine and connect with nature and oneself

**Why:** For some well deserved 'me time'. The packages are interesting and includes Wellness for the Soul, Joy of Giving, Silent Retreat, Yoga Retreat, Ayurvedic Rejuvenation and Weight Management. One can customise the packages to suit one's needs

**How much:** \$400 per night for a room for two, depending on the season. The packages for October to March, 2010 are priced at \$3,470 (The Joy of Giving), \$3,970 (Wellness for the Soul), \$3,390 (Silent retreat), \$3,740 (Yoga retreat) and \$4,760(Ayurvedic Rejuvenation).

(Rates are for two persons for a 7 night and 8 day duration) The packages can be customised too.