

Nov 2009 Edition Volume 4 No2

EDITORIAL

Namaste Dear Divine Gitananda Sadhak, **“Yoga: A Way Of Life”** is our focus in this newsletter and what an interesting, juicy Satsangha of articles this has yielded!

Dr. Ananda kicks off this topic with an in-depth fascinating discussion on the origins of Yoga and the tools it has provided humans to live. I must say here that we are still celebrating the recent wonderful news of Dr. Ananda's return visit to Australia next year-I mean how lucky are we to have Dr. Sir all to ourselves so soon again?! More details of this special event are within.

One all encompassing aspect of life and Yoga is the journey of giving life. AmmaJi shares her own personal story of Yoga and Motherhood. She weaves her story creating a patchwork quilt of images and vivid impressions to wrap yourself up in and experience.

Swamiiji was a great expounder of living a Yoga life in our day-to-day errands, whatever the circumstances are. Gowri goes into more details of how Dr. Swami Gitananda explained Yoga as a way of life in his writings.

Zigi's impressions of the Aussie Sadhak tour to Ananda Ashram is upfront and asks some interesting questions regarding Eastern and Western concepts and what really is important.

I couldn't but help throw in the very serious topic of Hatha Yoga and Alcohol Binge drinking being compared as similar...! A real 'eye opener' some of those drinking 'Asanas'!

So is Yoga one 'way' of life to expand or is it 'the only' way of life for the lofty ideal of Samadhi? (How many people practicing Yoga truly want Samadhi or even know what that is?! Or can a Yoga life also be twisted into escaping 'away' from reality?! I think “Yes” can be argued for all of the above and once again good ole 'Viveka' our sense of discrimination needs to be brought into play...and that I guess is the beauty and the bane of being human and having our own consciousness-it is up to ourselves to discriminate when we are using a tool or

pathway to evolve or when it is being misused to distract the ego or feed it's puffed up sense of 'self-importance'

Having a lot of energy I love the limb of Asana in the Ashtanga or 8 limbs of the Yoga system. But I can't tell you the number of times after a “Yoga' class (a class with Asanas and a brief Shavasana) the number of people I overhear discussing how much better they can now do Chakra Asana etc etc. It is great to strive for goals with Asanas but I also can't help thinking of the Rishis who

introduced Asanas only after the foundation of Yama and Niyama were firmly established and then it was for the main purpose to fortify the body to assist with long meditations or Puja ceremonies lasting days. Would they be horrified at today's fascination with Asanas to the point where that is all “Yoga' means to many, many thousands that practice 'Yoga' ? Or simply amused? Or not fussed either way?!

I remember how one evening Amma very bluntly stated that Asanas make you better at whatever you are at that present time. So if you are an athlete it will make you a better athlete, a trader will become a better trader. But if you are already a thief it will also make you a better thief...a liar will become a better liar etc. That is when the power of Asana and the real necessity of ensuring we combine it

with the other limbs of Yoga really hit home for me. This realisation was powerful but ensuring it is put into practice as a “Way Of Life” and not running 'AWAY' from life is an on-going challenge that I'm sure many of you can identify with that (well maybe some of you...a little?!)

Anyhow brew up that favourite cup of chai you love and enjoy reading and further contemplating the ideas within this issue.

Next newsletter due in March 2010 will be on the theme: **“Yoga; the Fuel For Human Evolution?”** Have a think about that topic and do try to scribble down and send me even a few lines or thoughts that may come to your mind, especially if you haven't contributed before. Remember we love receiving your treasures of thoughts be they short n sweet or long n loopy!

Yours in Yoga,
Yogacharini Devaki,
Gold Coast





NEWSLETTER FEATURES

- Dr. Ananda's article on Yoga: A Way Of Life
- Details of Dr. Ananda's next visit downunder!
- Amma's view of Yoga and Motherhood
- Congratulations to Margo Hutchinson!
- Gowri's interpretation based on Dr. Swami Gitananda's writings
- Zigi's impressions of the Aussie Sadhak tour to Ananda Ashram
- Can the practice of Hatha Yoga and Alcohol Binge drinking be compared as similar? Find out how!
- Contact details of Gitananda Teachers
- Teachers Books and DVDs



Yoga As A Way Of Life...By Dr. Ananda

The science and art of Yoga, has for millennia guided man in his search for truth. Even in his personal and social life, Yoga has given him the tools and techniques with which he can find happiness, spiritual realization and social harmony. Various Yogic concepts have guided man towards shaping his life and the interpersonal relationships in his social life.

Vasudeva Kudumbakam- The whole world is one family. This is an excellent concept which helps one to understand that division on the basis of class, creed, religion and geographical distribution are all 'man made' obstructions towards oneness. One can then look upon all as his own and can bond with everyone irrespective of any barrier.

Pancha Kosha - The concept of our five sheaths or bodies helps us to understand how all our actions, emotions and even thoughts can influence our surroundings and that "No man is an island". The concept of "nara" or psychic disassociation help us to be aware of why things happen to us and others in our daily life.

Chaturvidha Purusharthas- The four legitimate goals of life tell us how we can set legitimate goals in this life and work towards attaining them in the right way, following our dharma to attain artha (material prosperity), kama (emotional prosperity) and finally the attainment to the real goal of our life, moksha (spiritual prosperity).

Chatur Ashramas -

This concept of the four different stages in life, helps us to know how, what and when to perform the various activities in our life. **Brahmacharya** is the period from birth till 27 years and is the period for study, conserving the creative impulse and channeling it towards elevating spiritual pursuits. **Grahasta** is the period of responsibility, spanning the period from 27 - 54 years in which we learn to care about others in the family and the social network, fulfilling our dharma towards both the young and the old. **Vanaprasta** or retirement is the period after 54 years when one's life can be played over again and again in the mind with a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction having not to worry about anything at all. **Sanyasa** is the period of life when after performing our duties to the best of our ability for 81 years and after having attained perfection in life we renounce everything for the divine.

The Pancha **Kleshas** : Avidya (ignorance), Asmita (ego), Raaga (attraction), Dwesha (repulsion) and Abinivesha (urge to live at any cost) are the five Kleshas or mental afflictions with which we are born into this human life. Through Yoga we can understand how these control our life and see their effects on our behaviour. These 'Kleshas' hinder our personal and social life and must be destroyed through the practice of Patanjali's Kriya Yoga which is Tapas, Swadyaya and Iswar Pranidhana (Atman Prasadhanam).





The Panchas: Pancha Yama -Pancha Niyama:

Yama and Pancha Niyama provide a strong moral and ethical foundation for our personal and social life. They guide our attitudes with regard to the right and wrong in our life and in relation to our self, our family unit and the entire social system. *(please read Gowri's article for more details on the Yamas and Niyamas-Ed)*

Other important aspects of Yoga: Living a happy and healthy life on all planes is possible through the unified practice of hatha yoga asanas & pranayamas, dharana, dhyana and bakthi yoga especially when performed consciously and with awareness.

Asanas help to develop strength, flexibility, will power, good health, and stability and thus when practiced as a whole give a person a 'stable and unified strong personality'.

Pranayama helps us to control our emotions which are linked to breathing and the Pranamaya Kosha (the vital energy sheath or body). Slow, deep and rhythmic breathing helps to control stress and overcome emotional hang-ups.

Dharana and Dhyana help us to focus our mind and dwell in it and thus help us to channel our creative energy in a wholistic manner towards the right type of evolutionary activities. They help us to understand our self better and in the process become better humans in this social world.

Bhakti Yoga enables us to realise the greatness of the Divine and understand our puniness as compared to the power of the Divine or nature. We realize that we are but 'puppets on a string' following his commands on the stage of the world and then perform our activities with the intention of them being an offering to the divine and gratefully receive HIS blessings.

Conclusion: Yoga is not just performing some contorsionistic poses or huffing and puffing some Pranayama or sleeping our way through any so-called meditation. It is an integrated way of life in which awareness and consciousness play a great part in guiding our spiritual evolution through life in the social system itself and not in some remote cave in the mountains or hut in the forest.

It is therefore fitting to end with Pujya Swamiji Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj's statement:

"Yoga is the science and art of right-useness of body, emotions and mind"

A Yogi wishes peace and happiness not only for himself, but for all beings on all the different planes of existence. He is not an "individualist" seeking salvation for only himself, but on the contrary is an "universalist" seeking to live life in the proper evolutionary manner to the best of his ability and with care and concern for his human bretheren as well as all beings on all planes of existance.

Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani Chairman of Yoganjali Natyalayam and Hon General Secretary of ICYER.



Dr. Ananda with Swamiji in Ananda Ashram

ATTENTION!! STOP THE PRESS!!

Dr. Ananda has been invited to present at the IYTA Conference in Sydney next year which means...Dr. Ananda is coming back to us here 'downunder'!! He will be holding another very special weekend workshop in **Brisbane 24th-26th Sept 2010**

PLEASE NOTE; THIS IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO GITANANDA MEMBERS. So please encourage any family members/friends or Yoga students to join the Gitananda Association to experience Dr. Ananda and the wonderful wisdom of his Paramparai lineage he so easily and warmly shares.

We are taking deposits now in order to guarantee your place:

\$30 membership for 2010 & \$100 deposit= **\$130**
Bank details are as follows:

Acc name: Gitananda Yoga Assoc
BSB:015-025
Account No: 4985-69383

Important! Please ensure you write your name in the deposit description so we can hold a place in your name



THE YOGA OF MOTHERHOOD: MY OWN EXPERIENCE

By **YOGACHARINI MEENAKSHI DEVI BHAVANANI** Director of International Centre For Yoga Education and Research (ICYER)

Introduction: Though I often jokingly refer to myself as a “reluctant mother”, I must confess that bearing, delivering and raising our son Ananda Balayogi has been the single most significant spiritual experience of my life, my first real initiation into the blissful state of Yoga – a oneness and communion with the Universe on a nearly mystical level.

At, the age of twenty-eight, I had “practised the techniques of Yoga” for nearly four years before my son’s birth. *Yet, it was in the most real sense only a “practice”, and not a realisation. It was a preparation for the experience of that sense of oneness, rather than a realisation of that blessed state.* I can, with all honesty, say that from the moment of Ananda’s entrance to this Karma Bhumi (earth plane), I have experienced an “inner wholeness”, a “completeness”, a fulfillment and a peace which I would never have dreamed possible.



Amma teaching with grandchildren Dhivya Priya and Anandraj

This personal account of the pregnancy and delivery of my son thirty-two years ago may inspire some of our modern ladies to take up the practice of Yoga in order to prepare themselves for the greatest spiritual experience of them all – mother hood.

Born in the USA, I traveled to India in 1967 to take up the study of Yoga. Luckily, I found my Guru and I took to the practice of Yoga as easily as a bird on wing takes to the sky. The concepts of Yoga which I encountered through my Guru (later to become my husband) were those thoughts and feelings for which I had hungered for my whole life. In those days, I saw Yoga as Tapas, difficult austerities – long periods of silence, meditative practices, solitude, extreme Hatha Yoga Asanas, Pranayama and fasting. This I felt would culminate in that blissful state of Samadhi, which I assumed I could achieve within a year or two of intense Sadhana!

After three years of marriage, I found myself pregnant. My pregnancy was very easy, thanks to my Yoga Abhyasa. I had been practising Yoga Asanas, Pranayama and the usual Yoga Tapas, fasting, Mauna, etc. for four years prior to the pregnancy, so my body was strong, flexible and healthy. Indeed, it was not till the end of the sixth month that anyone other than my husband even realised my state. At the end of the fifth month, however, one of our good friends, a Swamiji, had casually remarked, “Meenakshi, you are getting a little fat. That is not becoming to a Yogini”. I simply kept quiet, and suppressed my smile.

Yogic Life Style Prepared Me Well for Delivery: I kept a good figure and never did become too big, even at the time of delivery. I was able to carry out all my normal, heavy workload, including riding on my bicycle to Pondicherry town, nearly five kilometers away, once and sometimes twice a day up to the end of the eighth month. I participated in all the Ashram’s daily 6 a.m. Hatha Yoga Asana classes right up to the very day of delivery, and was able to do all of the Asanas, Kriyas and Mudras up to the end of the fifth month. After that time, my body began to change its shape, so that some of the face-prone positions, such as Dhanur Asana, Shalabha Asana, where extreme pressure is placed upon the abdomen, were not possible. After that, I performed whatever Asanas, Kriyas and Mudras that my body shape would allow. I was able to do Hala Asana up to the beginning of the eighth month, and the Sarvanga Asana, Nava Asana and its variations, Nikunja Asana, and Vyagraha Asana, with relative ease. I found those positions done from a four-footed position (hands and knees-Chatus Pada) were especially beneficial. I worked hard on strengthening and loosening up my pelvic area and lower back and strengthening my stomach muscles. I performed Aswini Mudra (tightening and releasing the anus) and also Mula Bandha regularly. I did many standing postures. I worked hard on sitting postures and sat often in the Utkat Asana, the Squat, at any time of day or night, whenever

possible. Baddha Kona Asana and variations were very useful in loosening the pelvis. I concentrated on performing as many Pranayamas as possible, especially using the various types of Bhastrikas to cleanse the body of toxins; Savitri Pranayama, the Rhythmic Breath, to calm and harmonize systems; Loma Viloma, Aloma Viloma, Nadi Shuddhi, to clean and purify the nervous systems; I felt Sukha Purvaka gave my mind great depth and clarity. The various Vibhaga Pranayamas, Sectional Breaths, and Mahat Yoga Pranayama, the Complete Breath, stimulated Pranic flow into body organs. I also used often the Kukuriya Pranayama, the Dog Pant, sticking the tongue out and panting like a dog, breathing in and out through the mouth, to deliberately strengthen the solar plexus.

Goals for a Healthy Pregnancy. I wished to keep my system relaxed, flexible, and free of toxins, my pelvic area and lower back flexible, my lower back and stomach strong. I wanted my legs to be strong enough to support the added weight and prevent varicose veins. I wanted plenty of Pranic energy flowing through my body and breathed as deeply as I could whenever possible. I participated in as much Mantra chanting as possible and tried at least to begin and end my day with a short period of concentration. I actually only had two hours in the morning for my Hatha Yoga Sadhana, though by participating in the Ashram Sadhana, I also had some time at the high noon Sandhyam for concentration-meditation and again at the sunset Sandhyam for Mantra Chanting. The rest of the day I carried on my busy work load: Ashram administration, Swamiji's private secretarial work, supervising the printing of books and our monthly YOGA LIFE magazine; teaching classes, receiving visitors, etc.

I did not go to a doctor until the eighth month. I only went then because I wanted to have some idea of the delivery date. At that time, the doctor told me I was in good health and should have no trouble. I found that my body did start to feel heavy towards the end of the eighth month and I found it difficult to take the deep breath to which I was normally accustomed. Swamiji told me this was because the child was now pushing up against the diaphragm. Two weeks before the actual delivery, the child dropped in the womb and the pressure against the diaphragm and lungs lessened considerably, allowing me to resume once more my various Pranayama routines. About that time I was starting to feel "crowded" in my body. I gave vent to my feelings in a poem to my unborn child, asking the child how it had the audacity to choose me to be its mother without consulting me! In the poem I complained to the child, that there was "*scarcely enough room for me in this body, let alone for thee!*" I was feeling cramped for space, in spite of all my Yoga! During that last month my husband would often take me to the sea-beach where I found taking bath in the salt water made my body feel light and

buoyant and gave a great relief from its heaviness.

Diet During this Important Time: I was careful of my diet, eating much fresh foods and drinking much fruit juice and vegetable juice and eating many salads. I was eating only whole grains and chewed the food carefully. If I was what I ate, then surely, my child would be what I ate as well! I was a vegetarian, and though my parents expressed concern that there would not be enough protein in my diet to build a child properly, our little Ananda later proved that all their fears were false.



Amma with Anandraj sharing Prasadam

I used to see, occasionally, European women in Pondicherry who were expecting, sitting in the coffee shops smoking, and gorging themselves on pastries and ice cream. Many of our students coming from the West had horror tales to tell of the life style of many expectant mothers in Western countries, who thought nothing of drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, taking drugs and eating the grossest of foods during their confinement. Swamiji cautioned me that I must be very careful of what I put into my system, for he explained that everything which entered my blood would pass via the umbilical cord into the child's body! "*Those women who smoke in pregnancy are pouring nicotine into the clean, pure tissues of their child! Then they wonder why their child cries so much after delivery! The poor thing is suffering from "nicotine withdrawal"*.

Apparently, pregnancy in the West is a traumatic time for most women. What a terrible shame! I was most grateful, when I heard those tales, and remembered my own experience, that I was privileged to experience this wonderful time in "Mother India", where a pregnant woman is treated as a "priceless jewel". The Hindu style of life, spending much of the time squatting on the floor, or

sitting on the floor; the light, cotton saree, which makes such a graceful and beautiful maternity dress, the vast amounts of time spent outdoors in lovely, cheerful sunlight and fresh air, and the great innate respect that the Hindu people have for all “mothers” is a reassuring, comforting and supportive atmosphere in which to bear one’s child. I felt sorry for all those women in “less civilized countries” who found pregnancy so traumatic that they needed tranquillizers to get them through the experience I was finding so rewarding and spiritually enlightening!

Importance of Positive Emotions and Thoughts:

I was fortunate to have my Guru as my husband, for it was he who really initiated me into the spiritual subtleties of “motherhood” and made me aware of the more subtle aspects of mother-child relationships.

‘You must be very careful of your emotions and thoughts during this time’, he said, ‘If you are happy and contented, your child will also feel those positive feelings as surely as if he is being bathed in sunlight. If you keep your mind on a high level of thought, your child will also imbibe those spiritual aspirations from his birth itself.’

Swamiji told me stories of the wives of Rishis in ancient days, and how they would sit for hours during their confinement, listening to their husbands chant the VEDAS and the sacred scriptures, deliberately exposing the unborn child to the holiest of vibrations. I especially loved the beautiful story of Ashtavakra, who, when he was but a child in his mother’s womb, not only listened consciously to his father chanting the sacred scriptures, but actually called out one time, “Father, you are making a mistake! It is not chanted like that at all!” much to the amazement of all. Such charming stories with a moral such as that are common in India, and delightful paintings, drawings and sculptures of the various gods and goddesses in their infant stages abound, drawing the mind and the heart to rest on their beauty.

Folk Wisdom Is Sometimes Real Wisdom: Thus, my time drew near. I had no senior woman friend or advisor close to me in whom I could confide, and for those things that only women know I could turn only to my old Ayah, a village lady of considerable personality. I had some misgivings about emerging from my experience with a misshapen body, and was gratified to meet later in my pregnancy a young woman who not only looked trim and slim, but had returned to her practice of Bharat Natyam only four

months after delivery. Meeting women like this, who had come through this experience intact, joyous and loving, had a profound effect upon my state of mind. I received advice from all quarters, however, and was always happy to listen to the experience and thoughts of others. One old Russian lady in particular pleased me with her folk wisdom and humour.

“You should treat your son,” (she naturally assumed my first born would be a son,) ”as a god for the first six years of his life; like a king for the next six years; like a slave for the next six years, and as a friend ever after.”

This attitude towards the “ego development” of a child at various stages I have found quite accurate and have seen its wisdom in the passing years. This same woman also gave me a formula for producing a genius. “If you want your child to be brilliant”, she said, “you must breast feed him for three years and during that time have no sexual contact at all. This power from your own body will pass through your milk to the child”. As things turned out, I later fulfilled these conditions and our little Ananda today does have a rare brilliance of mind. I used to ponder these concepts carefully, for they also had their harmonic thought in Yoga philosophy.

Motherhood – Nature’s Way of Subjugation of the Ego:

The various students and friends passing through our Ashram used to share their experiences with me, and I slowly built up confidence that I too could go through what women since Eve have endured as their part in perpetuating the race. It was a sacrifice, giving up my own body to another being for nine months, and I understood full well why the Hindus had so much respect for motherhood. Is there any other human experience in the world in which one can so willingly and joyously put every single need and desire of another living being before one’s own welfare? This constant subjugation of one’s own ego to the needs of another is itself a spiritual discipline unparalleled. I slowly felt the presence of another life growing close to my own and empathized with the Biblical description of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who “kept these things in her heart and pondered them deeply”. One does feel an immense closeness to the Universe at this time, a feeling of the utter mystery of creating, the perfection of the unfoldment, which has nothing to do with one’s mind. I could never consciously “create a baby”; even the most brilliant scientist with all his test tubes could not create life. Yet, here I was, on automatic pilot, so to speak, bearing witness to the slow unfoldment of another human life within the protective cocoon of my own. I could not help but meet each new stage, each new development with

awe and thanksgiving for this rare opportunity.



The Yogic Experience of “Labour”: One day in the middle of April, the 16th of the month, 1972, I was wakened about 3 a. m. with strange rippling sensations in my lower back. They were pleasant; my mind was drawn naturally to dwell on them, to contemplate their movement in my body. They were similar to the swells of the ocean, the mighty rhythm of waves beating upon the shore. I lay awake till dawn, absorbed in the sensations, which were like none I had ever felt. I attended the Hatha Yoga class and participated in whatever postures were possible for me in that state. After breakfast, I sat at my typewriter to take dictation from my husband, for we were working on several books, our monthly magazine as well and had to do several pieces of mail before lunch. The “rolling sensations” in my lower back became more and more pronounced, but they were not painful and I wondered if this could possibly be the “labour pains” about which all women speak. There was nothing painful about them, but they were becoming more and more intense. I started to squirm somewhat uneasily in my chair, but continued with the typing. Finally, when I felt they were becoming too powerful to sit still, I told my husband. “I think the labour pains have started, though they don’t hurt.” They were coming very closely by then, about one minute apart. “I think we had better go to the nursing home”, I said. My husband sent for a taxi and by 10 a.m. we were on our way to the nursing home, about five kilometers away. This clinic was run by Catholic nuns in Pondicherry, and they took one look at me, and directed me to the delivery room. By 11 a.m. the sensations had become very intense, by that time breaking through the pain threshold and I became conscious of very powerful, now painful muscular thrusts of the body. I was “working very hard” even involuntarily and could appreciate the significance of the term “labour” pains. The body was hard at work to sever a connection which it had maintained so intimately between two bodies for the last nine months and the partition would not be easy.

The nuns did not give me any medication nor did I ask for it. I wanted to be conscious and aware. I walked around the delivery room. I did the Kukuriya Pranayama, much to the astonishment of the attendants, who had to be reassured that it was a Yoga practice and I had not indeed gone mad. I performed some shallow Nasarga Bhastrika and Nasarga Mukha Bhastrikas. I even got down on my hands and knees and crawled about the delivery room. These were rather strange antics for the staff and I suppose I should have prepared them better for the sight. I simply gasped, “Yoga practice” between breaths, through my clenched teeth, and they relaxed their anxious glances in my direction. I was in the delivery room for one hour, when at 12:45, the little one made his “big break” into Karma Bhumi, and let out a lusty cry to let us all know that he had arrived. My husband was standing directly outside the room on the balcony of the second floor of the clinic, and rushed into the room at the sound. The nursing sister put the small red bundle with an immense mop of black hair on its head into his hands, and he took it to the balcony and showed his child to the sun, chanting appropriate Mantra all the while.

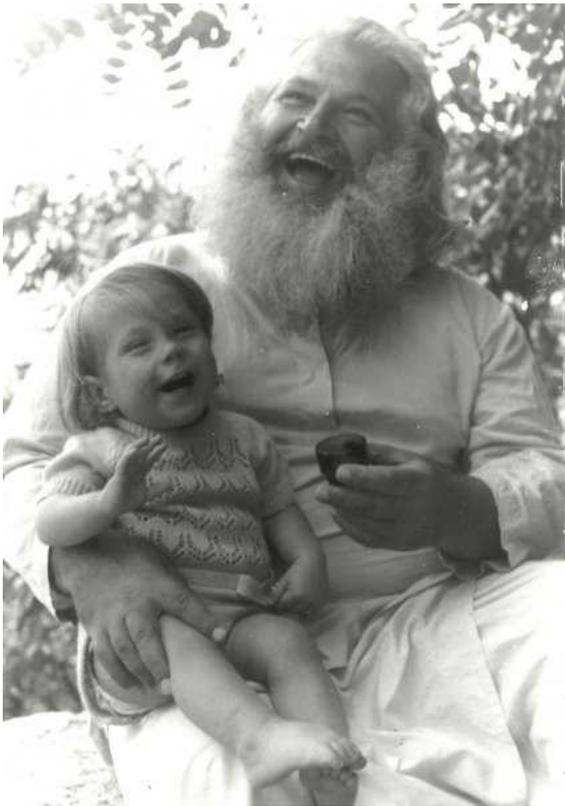
Sahaja Samadhi – A Natural State of Bliss: I really felt as though I had slipped into a Samadhi by mistake. Completely drained, relaxed, limp, receptive, I felt a bliss, which I had never felt before in my whole life. As though a purpose had been accomplished, as though I had achieved what I had set out to do, difficult though the task had been, as though I had somehow repaid a debt, which I had contracted by my own birth. I felt tremendous love for everyone, for my husband, for the doctors, for the nurses, for the Universe, for the good green earth, and the beautiful warm sun...but most all, I felt an immense, overpowering love and devotion to the small little creature that the doctors immediately put into my arms. It was mine, and from that day, I would be responsible for the growth into light of another little human soul. My baby smiled at me, he really did, even though he could not see, and I smiled and smiled back at him, for surely, he was the most beautiful, perfect, intelligent and fantastic child ever born to the Universe! And even as I

thought that thought, I realised how many others must have experienced the same feelings, looking for the first time at the first child born to them, and I felt wonderful communion with all mothers who had ever lived and all those who would ever pass through this marvelous experience. Certainly, we shared a secret; certainly, we had something more precious than the most rare of gems; certainly, we were blessed by life itself to be brought so close to that mystical core which creates, out of nothing but a few cells of matter and a few sparks of energy, such a marvelous creature as the new-born child.

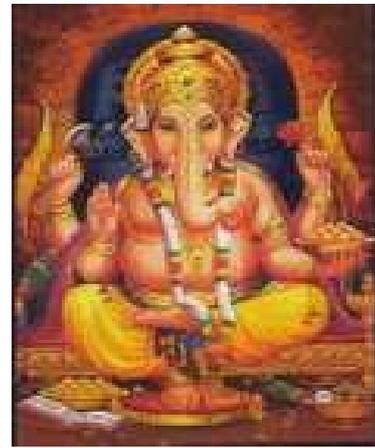
Little Ananda (whose name means the “Universal,

Blissful State of Cosmic Consciousness”) slept. I laid him carefully by my side, for in Indian clinics and nursing homes, the child is given to the mother immediately after delivery and never separated from her again. I took my pen to paper and wrote these words. “I was given life... I gave life... a debt repaid with interest... I have returned what I was given a hundred-fold. Was there such perfect beauty in my own body... once, long, long ago...Did my mother also see...God move one step beyond herself...in me?”

And thus, on the crest of these overpowering, ecstatic emotions, did the *Yoga of Motherhood* rush into my life... a whole new phase of my Yoga Sadhana had begun... with Ananda!



Swamiji with Ananda (many moons ago!!)



Congratulations to Margo!

*Last month in the midst of a Night of Felicitations at Ananda Ashram Brisbane-based Yoga teacher Margo Hutchinson there with the Australian Sadhak tour received the highly regarded **Swami Gitananda Senior World Citizen Yoga Excellence Award**. Margo was a student lucky enough to study directly under Swamiji and has continued to teach Yoga in the Gitananda tradition and was instrumental in organising the very special Gitananda Yoga Weekend with Dr. Ananda this year. She maintains until they read out her name and the reason*

‘ in recognition of her lifelong commitment and dedication towards Yogic principles so well expressed in her life’

that she had no idea whatsoever!

Well done Margo and keep up your inspirational Yoga lifestyle!

Margo (centre) sharing a heartfelt moment with Dr. Ananda, and Dawn at the Gitananda Certificate closing ceremony in Brisbane -May 2009



Yoga: A way of life...

The word, Yoga, is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yuj', which means to join, unite as one or unity. The goal of Yoga is to have mind, body and emotions working harmoniously with the real self within. Yoga is not a religion, a materialist science, or philosophy, but includes aspects of all three.

Originally Yoga was learnt directly from a realised master, the Guru, in his Guru Kula or Ashram. It was handed down by word of mouth from one Guru to the next, creating a Parampya (lineage), some of which reach back into antiquity. The Guru would impart their teachings to those they deemed worthy.

Yoga was never intended to be learnt from textbooks or be reduced to a weekly class, or a two week course. Sometime, possibly about the eighth or ninth century B.C., Maharishi Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras, codified a system which allowed a more scientific, wholistic approach to the study and practice of Yoga. The sutra in this context is a thread that holds together 195 Sanskrit aphorisms. These aphorisms are such precise yogic and scientific statements, they leave no room for speculation or alterations to accommodate personal tendencies. As Dr. Swami Gitananda says in his book, 'The Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali', this integral Yoga system is a 'no option Yoga'.

Ashtanga means eight limbs, and Patanjali has listed eight specific aspects to practice along the yogic path. The Bahiranga is the first four outer limbs, and the antaranga is the last four inner limbs. Yama, Niyama, Asana, and Pranayama are the outer limbs, and Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the inner limbs. Yama consists of five morals, and The Niyamas are five ethical observances. The Yamas are:

Ahimsa (non violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non stealing), Bramacharya (sexual purity, or non adultery, non lustfulness), and Aparigraha (non greed).

The Niyamas are: Saucha (cleanliness), Santosha (mental serenity), Tapas (disciplined life), Swadhyaya (self analysis), and Atman Pranidhana (attentiveness to God, or interpreting the inner reality). Asana literally means, firm seat, (achieved by Hatha Yoga practices), Pranayama is control of Prana (life force), breathing practices. This completes the outer awareness practices.

Pratyahara is sense control, which helps the Yogi be aware of his inner mind, leading to Dharana

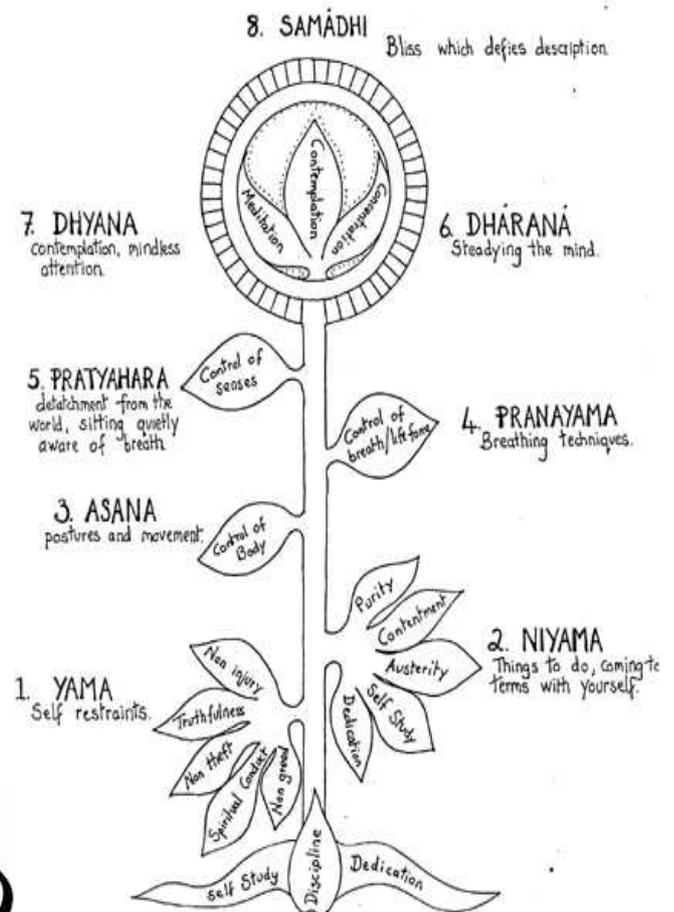
(concentration), and then to Dhyana (meditation), which is a state beyond the mind. Samadhi is cosmic consciousness or universal awareness. Samadhi may manifest as fleeting moments of bliss in the early stages, and an unlimited natural flow of euphoria in the deeper, higher stages.

A person experiencing this state of Samadhi is known as a Jivan Mukhta (free soul, realised one)

This integral system of Yoga encompasses every aspect of one's life. Being 'yogically' aware leads to health and happiness, self-realisation and liberation.

Written by Gowri (based on the texts *Yoga, Step by Step*, and *The Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali*, both written by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda and available to order)

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA





Ananda Ashram 40 years later

I still had strong memories of Swamiji and Ananda Ashram from 40 years ago, so this initially coloured my impressions of Ashram life.

Many things had not changed: 5am arising, Aarti, Hatha Yoga on the rooftop. Breakfast. Pranayama class. Lunch. Bhajans and Mantras. Light supper. Satsang.

The Ashram life pattern was still there. **How Yoga is presented had changed.** Forty years ago all the material was there, but now it was classified, systematised making it more comprehensible to a Western trained mind. A more graduated approach was being presented, all for the better I would say.

The biggest change was, perhaps, in myself. I realised there was no need to be in India to get and give the best of Yoga.

I cannot see that a so-called, Yoga life, is very different from many another life. For instance an educated, thinking, creative person's life concentrated on kindness to all creatures, non-harming, feeling awe with aspects of the natural in this world, and so on. This can be had without the mental and emotional weight of ideas/facts about reincarnations, worship of one or multi gods, using right hand for eating because the left is "dirty" and so on.

In the West, a humane creative life can evolve spiritually and does not require Yogic concepts to do so. They might enhance the process for some people, but are not absolutely essential. I imagine that this is the case for many in the East as well.

It certainly helps to have an environment with Yogic or meditational practices like an ashram or a monastery, especially in the early stages of growth, but it is not necessary for sustained and continued growth.

These musings aside, the **10day residential course** was certainly varied and most interesting. Exposure to a multitude of cultural aspects was inspiring in the sense of what can be done when Yoga is promoted into the wider community.

I particularly found the Carnatic music vocal rendition by Dr. Ananda and the Bharat Natyam dance by Smt Devasena Divinely inspirational. The yoga tableaus were out of this world in the twists and turns and patterns achieved.

Yogacharini Shobana Devi of the Czech Republic had a very gentle yet firm manner in her presentation of the various Pranayama classes, and she certainly re-activated some of my 40 year old brain patterns in this area. I think I overdid it on several occasions, confusing what I once could accomplish with what I can do now as I had not been particularly diligent in some of these practices. Lesson learnt.

I have to thank everyone, organisers and participants, for tolerating a severely allergic



person who had to twist some established patterns to accommodate weaknesses over which, as yet, I had very little control. I am hoping that a slow increase in Pranayama practice may alleviate some remaining problems in the future.

Many thanks to all the other people involved who are not specifically mentioned, for instance, Muralidharan, Meenakshi and all the other staff who made our stay exciting, comfortable and enjoyable.

I pause to wonder about the differences in Indian and Western brain structures as regards what is and is not important in this life cycle. As a Westerner, one of the first improvements I would have made to Ananda Ashram is to install a hose with nozzle attachment to the existing water supply and provide everyone with a hand towel to remove the "bog" aspect of wading through constantly wet toilet floors into the ashram, after dragging wet feet through the outside dirt. That would have been my first priority.

Instead we get aesthetic improvements, a beautiful green marble floor (fabulous) and now intended stained glass windows (which also will be out of this world no doubt).

That still leaves the boggy toilet complex to deal with from a Western perspective. Or, is it just me?!

I mention this, because it is an Indian cultural aspect that every Westerner has to come to terms with. I merely wonder about the necessity for it when it can be so very easily ameliorated to the comfort of all. But perhaps comfort and notions of hygiene are not the point? Maybe they are notions we need to transcend?

Again, thanks to all for an enjoyable, educational and inspirational experience. May everyone prosper in their chosen lifestyles.

Yours in Yoga,

Zigi Georges

(participant of the 10 day Australian Sadhak Tour to Ananda Ashram-Sept 09)





Can the practice of Hatha Yoga and Alcohol Binge drinking be compared as similar?

Lately I had the dubious honour of receiving these pictures to argue this point from a friend (not on the Yoga path with a healthy sense of humour!)

These images of so-called comparisons did spark several reactions in my mind all at once-initial horror and repulsion was not far off and while they are amusing in being so far from the truth it did make me wonder if when the body is abused to the point of blind-drunk stage does go into this inherent self-protective mechanism and adopt some sort of beneficial posture?! I know I can recall several times seeing people in Shashanga Asana (also known as child's pose) on the floor in the toilets after a bout of toilet hugging...so maybe there is a grain of some sort of truth in this or maybe I am being way too serious about this ridiculous topic...?! Let you be your own judge!

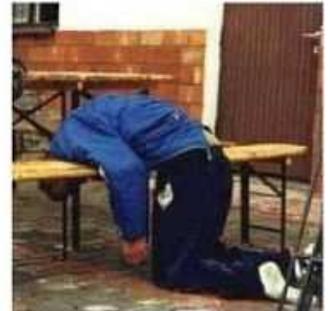
Shasanga Asana: Position that brings the sensation of peace and calm.



Setu Bandha Sarvangasana: This position calms the brain and heals tired legs.



Chatus Pada Asana: Position stimulates the mid-rift area and the spinal column.



Salambha Asana: Great exercise to stimulate the lumbar area, legs, and arms.



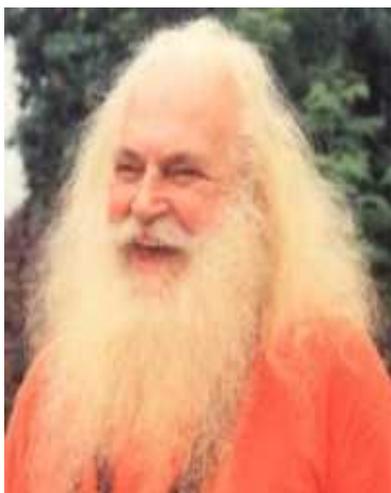
Malasana – This position is beneficial for the ankles and back muscles.



Utkat Asana: Tones the body, strengthens the thighs and diaphragm, builds flexibility and helps get rid of 'stress'.



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Daily Thoughts & Prayers by Swami Paramananda

(Some beautiful uplifting thoughts contributed by Sri Bala to finish your reading on~Ed)

“Our life flourishes when it is



connected with its Source.”

Lesson to consider:

We can only receive in exact proportion as we give. We must give fully, if we are to receive fully. The Divine Mother knows Her own and when she attracts, No power can resist. Blessed are those who are attracted to be blessed. The Divine Mother will take all possible care of us and give us Her Divine protection, if we will only put our trust in Her and pray to Her unceasingly.

Prayer

May the Divine Mother who is the Source of my life and strength,
 May She surround me with Her wise protection.
 May I look to Her for all things,
 And never lose hold on Her Divine Hand.
 May the veil of selfishness never blind my eyes to Her glory;
 May my heart never be closed to Her all-filling love.

I share this with you, because I believe in these words of wisdom. They are most reassuring. May they inspire you too!

Love,

Sri Bala Founder of Vibrational Breath Therapy
 (based on Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga)

