

The Lotus

Extra Edition – December 2010

Celebrating a Retreat with **Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani**

'Moving from Distress to De-stress through Yoga'

24 – 26 September 2010

Brisbane, Australia



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Editorial by Cathryn Doornekamp

Namaste. This special edition of The Lotus released alongside the December 2010 Lotus newsletter pays tribute to a get together with Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani in Brisbane, 24 – 26 September 2010.

I had the privilege of attending this retreat entitled 'Moving from Distress to De-stress through Yoga'. Dr. Ananda's wife, Yogacharini Smt Devasena Bhavanani accompanied him on the retreat.

Some of you may recall Dr. Ananda's recent visit to New Zealand. He facilitated a very successful Three Day Yoga Program at The Lotus Yoga Centre in April 2009.

Members of the Centre appointed Dr. Ananda an Honorary Member of The Lotus Yoga Centre, in recognition of his contribution to yoga.



Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Dr. Ananda was born in Pondicherry, South of Madras, in India. He grew up in Ananda Ashram, founded by his parents Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, one of the greatest yogis in the last century, and Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani, a renowned writer and yogini.

Eric Doornekamp, Founder and Director of The Lotus Yoga Centre studied under Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri at Ananda Ashram in 1968/1969.



Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri

Dr. Ananda is successor to Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga and The Centre For Yoga Education & Research (ICYER). Author of 19 DVDs and 15 books on Yoga, he is a Western trained doctor and a Yoga Therapist - a Gold Medallist in Medical Studies, with Postgraduate Diplomas in Family Health and Yoga.

Dr. Ananda is a Carnatic Vocalist, South Indian Percussionist, Music Composer and Bharatanatyam Choreographer in addition to his duties as Co-ordinator of ACTER (the Advanced Centre for Yoga Therapy, Education and Research) at JIPMER, one of India's top research and medical training hospitals. He is the Honorary President of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia and has travelled extensively, teaching in UK, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, South Africa, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

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Another Lovely Time Down Under

Editor's Note - *The following report is written by Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani.*

In Brisbane, the annual meet of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia was an opportunity for us to reconnect with so many loving members of our Yoga Family. We all enjoyed an intensive three day retreat that dealt with the topic, "Moving from Dis-stress to De-stress through Yoga".

It was indeed a special gathering as nearly fifty Gitananda Yoga teachers and students from all over Australia and New Zealand participated with great enthusiasm. It was special to have seniors like Sri Bala, Dr. June Henry and Gita attend and bless us with so many lovely stories of their unique experiences with Swamiji.

A strong New Zealand contingent made sure that the meet was an integrative one bringing together in Yoga the Trans-Tasman neighbours.

Margo is such an amazing organiser and had everything organised so perfectly that it was all like a walk in the park by the time we got there. She is a source of strength for all of us and a true example of Yogic womanhood for the younger generation.



Margo with Dr. Ananda and Devasena

Riverglen Conference Centre is an excellent venue and the natural ambience added to the intimacy. Talks on various aspects of stress and its pathophysiology both medical and Yogic were complemented by practical sessions on stress busting *Jathis*, *Asanas*, *Pranayamas* and deep relaxation.

Sri Bala led us through an experiential session of the *Pranava* as taught by him in his Chakra Healing Course while Margo enthralled us with Swamiji's Siamese Kriya! Devasena and I really enjoyed performing our music and dance for our dear Yoga family who are such *Rasikas*, real lovers of the cultural fine arts of India.

We also chanted some of the *Yoga Sutras* of *Maharishi Patanjali* and also learnt many *Mantras* to induce healthy vibrations into the universe. It feels so good to have such a devoted and sincere Yoga family Down Under with loving Yoga relatives willing to go to great lengths to be with us on our travels.

A Yogic Gathering

by Cathryn Doornekamp

I feel so blessed to have been reunited with Dr. Ananda in Brisbane and very honoured to meet Devasena, his charming wife. It was indeed a privilege to see her dance as she performed alongside Dr. Ananda.

Three other members of The Lotus Yoga Centre attended the retreat too. It was truly a *yogic* gathering in the highest sense.

We got to meet *yogis* from all walks of life, including members of the I.Y.T.A Australia, the Australian Gitananda Yoga Association, students who have recently completed the six month Residential International Yoga Teacher Training Course at Ananda Ashram and some very dedicated students of the late Gitananda.

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On a personal note, I felt very blessed to meet Gargi (Helen) from Dunedin, New Zealand and Janani (Louise) from Australia, who both completed the fortieth annual International Yoga Teacher Training Course at Ananda Ashram in March last year. The soft, gentle, willing energy emanating from within Gargi and Janani impressed me deeply. They are true *yogacharini*'s in the deepest sense. Nothing was too much for them – they did what had to be done.

Gargi very kindly loaned me one of her saris, and the girls took the time to dress me in the sari on two occasions. Then Gargi very graciously gave me the beautiful sari to bring home with me. I am deeply grateful to have it in my possession, a wonderful reminder of the time spent at the retreat with such wonderful people. So I feel blessed in more ways than one.



Cathryn (Centre)
pictured with Janani (left) and Gargi (right)

I also felt deeply touched by being in the presence of Yogacharya Shivan (Paul Riley). He and his wife are holders of The Advanced Yoga Teacher Diploma from ICYER, having trained for one year (2005 – 2006) under the guidance of Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani.

Shivan spoke of the deep love he has for Amma (Meenakshi). I truly sensed his heart felt compassion and it stirred something deep within

me, a feeling of 'knowing' Amma on a soul level.

I am still bathing in the 'afterglow' of being in the presence of so many who have spent time in Ananda Ashram. I feel so much richer for having attended the retreat. I have come away feeling spiritually, mentally and physically nourished and feeling deeply drawn to Ananda Ashram.

Gitananda Yoga Association Retreat

Editor's Note - *The following report is written by Yogacharini Janani and Yogacharini Gargi, graduates of the 2008-2009 International Yoga Teacher Training Course, ICYER.*

"Be the change you want to see in the world"
- Mahatma Gandhi

This weekend Gitananda gathering incorporated both Aussies and Kiwis from across the Tasman Sea. The group was honoured on this auspicious occasion to have the fabulous and astounding Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani and his beautiful wife (dharmapathni) Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani, Bharat Natyam dancer and teacher.

We were also fortunate enough to have some of Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj's (Swamiji's) pioneering *chelas* (students) to enlighten and brighten up the weekend by offering and sharing their experiences and anecdotes. This provided a special intimacy and insight into Swamiji, Ammaji and Dr. Anandaji.

After registration and the general housekeeping, Dr. Ananda opened the retreat with a welcome blessing followed by everyone joining in to "Om Tat Krishna Arpanamastu" mantra before dinner, uniting and creating a warm sense of togetherness amongst the diversity of *sadhakas*.

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The evening *satsangha* delivered by Dr. Ananda introduced the Gitananda Retreat's topic “**Yoga: Moving from Distress to De-stress**” highlighting the importance of *Yoga* in maintaining stability in everyday life. Dr. Ananda gave us a clear insight into *Yoga* and Stress in Light of the *Yoga Sutras* and *Bhagavad Gita*.

He began by outlining the physiology of stress and how essential it is in keeping us alive, the fright/flight/fight response. Dr. Ananda clarified how stress is necessary for motivating and moving us to reach a state of *sukha-sathanam* (being comfortable and stable with yourself regardless of external stimuli). *Yoga* is perfection in this *asana* of *sukha-sathanam*, regardless of any circumstance or situation and being able to respond to life events and people in an appropriate manner (equanimity) rather than react.

This was further developed when Dr. Ananda described the Stress-Response process and how everything requires an Act or Action. Thus, referring us to the *Bhagavad Gita* where **Lord Krishna** tells **Arjuna** to get up and fight, do his **Dharma**. Dr. Ananda poignantly reminded us to do your action and not care about the fruits of your action. Leading us to the true meaning of **Yoga**: Skill in Action, to just “do your best and leave the rest”, as **Swamji** perfectly put it.

Dr. Ananda elaborated by explaining the negative affects of the Stress – Response. This process that begins with a single thought creates attachment and leads to desire, rage, delusion, loss of memory, loss of ability to reason and thus leads to the ultimate destruction of the very being. This leads to a total surrender to the “**SHAT RITU**” - the six enemies of the spirit. These are **Kama** (uncontrolled passion), **Kroda** (Senseless Anger), **Lobha** (Greed), **Moha** (Blind infatuation), **Mada** (Massive Ego) and

Matsarya (Malice, envy, jealousy).

YOGA INSIDE: This brings us to the essence of *Yoga* and the importance of looking for *yoga* inside yourself. Developing **Santosham** – a sense of Contentment (the second *Niyama*) and **Vairagya** (detachment). Learning to practically analyse situations with objectivity in order to analyse subjective experiences. In other words, having the ability to step back and look at yourself as well as developing the art of stilling the whirlpools of the mind, as according to **Patanjali**, who codified the *Yoga Sutra's*, “**Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha**”.

Dr. Ananda discussed and illustrated the importance of stress **EUSTRESS** – the good stress and **DISTRESS** – the bad stress. **Eustress** breaks our inertia and gets us moving, enabling us to do our best and reach our optimum performance. **Eustress** is a dynamic steady state of balance and equilibrium. There is a limit to this peak point of performance and like everything in life requires moderation. Past this point, continued maximum effort and stress leads to Distress, where an excess of stress inhibits performance, affecting the immune system, and state of well-being. The difference between **Eustress** and **Distress** is a fine juggling act.



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EUSTRESS AND BALANCE: Dr. Ananda elaborated on this fine balance in relation to the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and the *Nadis* (energy flows). *Pingala Nadi* flows up the right side of the body representing the masculine. Conversely, the *Ida Nadi* flows down the left side of the body representing femininity.

We investigated the origins of stress where a separation between the Mind and Body creates a duality, this 'duality' creates a state of dis-ease, potentially leading to psychosomatic disorders. The moment this duality occurs a division is created, unleashing the **Stress – Response**. Dr. Ananda directed us to the *Yoga Vasistha* by identifying the highest aspect of the mind as *Adhi*, the root cause or starting point, whereby disorders can originate from a single thought. Leading to the lowest physical aspects of the body or *Vyadhi*, where diseases manifest.

The higher aspect of the mind or *Adhija* (means giving birth to a thought) can be subdivided into *Samanya* (ordinary or common psychosomatic disorders) and *Sara* (the relentless disease of being born again and again). The anecdote for this birth-death cycle is “knowing thyself” (*Atma Jnana*). It is therefore essential that *prana* flows freely through the *kosha's* to prevent instability and disharmony between the Mind and the Body. Negative thoughts in the *Adhi* creates mental agitation disrupting the flow of *Prana* through the *Nadis*. These imbalances cause a malfunction of the digestion system.

- 1) *Ajeerاناتvam* – lack of proper digestion
- 2) *Atijeerاناتvam* – over-worked digestion
- 3) *Kujeerاناتvam* – malfunctions of metabolic processes

The *Yogic* viewpoint of psychosomatic diseases is that the cycle appears to progress through the four distinct phases; the **psychic stage**, **psychosomatic stage**, **somatic stage** and lastly the **organic stage**, where the organs themselves are ultimately affected, destroyed and the organism die.

BUSY TIMES: The retreat involved a busy but comprehensive schedule of morning and evening *Aartis*, *Hatha Yoga* practices for Managing Stress, Discourses on the Physiology of Stress, *Pranayamas* for Prevention and Management of Stress, the Annual Gitananda Association of Australia Meeting, *Mantras* to Calm and Focus the Mind and some Chanting of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*.

The Saturday evening highlight involved Dr. Ananda's delightful and soulful singing as well as Devasena's angelic *Bharat Natayam* dancing, first time experience for many and a delight for all to witness. The talented team shared and spread their love and skills enlightening and illuminating the venue, de-stressing and re-energizing all beings. It was truly a marvel to behold.



Devasena performing

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As Sunday arrived so did the conclusion of the retreat with **Hatha Yoga** and **Jnana Yoga** relaxation practices. Dr. Ananda spoke about the four-fold nature of Relaxation 1) Letting Down 2) Giving Up 3) Giving In and 4) Giving Over. We all practiced **Spandha-Nispandha Kriya** and in particular, the **Kaya Kriya**, all reaping the benefits and the delights, refreshing the practices and concepts learnt.

Time was allocated for Questions and Answers, coupled with a hilarious **Siamese Kriya** led by Margo Hutchinson making everybody laugh, followed by an introduction to **Vibrational Breath Therapy** lead by the honourable Sri Bala Ratnam himself, whom Dr. Ananda respects highly for his dedication to Swamiji's teachings.

Dr. Ananda also spoke about the controversial issue of all the various **Yoga** schools and their beliefs, receiving a roar of laughter by saying, "Respect their traditions and teachings within their framework and then they'll respect yours. **Now that I've said that My Path is the Only Path!**"

The closing ceremony involved certificate distribution to all Gitananda Members with many shared gratitudes, thank-yous, blessings and until next meetings!



Overall the retreat proved to be a marvellous opportunity for all to benefit from the teachings of **Yoga** as codified by **Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj**. The general feeling of being physically, emotionally and spiritually nourished, as well as being happy, satisfied, content (**Santosham**) and hopefully well equipped to continue in this world full of stress.

DON'T STRESS BUT EUSTRESS

STRESS LESS – EUSTRESS

Yoga is a Way of Life: The regular practice of **Yoga** as a Way of Life helps reduce the levels of physical, mental and emotional stress. This **Yogic** 'Way of Life' lays emphasis on "**Right Thought**", "**Right Action**", "**Right Reaction**", and "**Right Attitude**" is the message carved in all our hearts by the week end's experience.

Many warm heart-filled gratitudes and thank-yous are required for the **Marvellous Margo**, **Mindful Murali** and all the **Glorious Gitananda** members. This would not have happened without your Divine presence. And of course the honourable Dr. Sir Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani himself and his wife Devasena whom we all look forward to welcoming back in the hemisphere down under again in the not so distant future!

Hari Om Tat Sat – May all beings be happy!



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A Yogic Approach to Stress

Editor's Note - The following article is written by Anthony Britton, an active Member of The Lotus Yoga Centre.

There is a laconic joke philosophers like to tell, about the kindly old vicar who for his weekly sermon chose to preach about free will. At the end of the service, as he was leaving, his adored little dog ran tail-wagging happily out the open church doors down the steps onto the busy road, and was crushed and instantly killed by an oncoming truck.

Of course in real life this would be a tragedy, and in that case it is only when there's been some time and distance, both spatial and emotional, that those involved can perhaps begin to see an irony to events.

One of Yoga's eight limbs are *niyama*, the “must dos” in life, which incorporate discipline in actions and conduct, and our attitude to ourselves and others. As *niyama* presuppose free will, the poor vicar might consider one of these *niyama* – *santosha*: which sort of means “look on the bright side”; to help him through his grief at the loss of his adored dog.



It is often little things in life that cause us grief of a different sort. In late September I along with other LYC members attended a weekend retreat in Brisbane. The theme of the weekend retreat was *a yogic approach to stress*. Our very own dear Cathryn was attending and

coincidentally we had both decided to leave on the Friday (the day the retreat started) and, though I was travelling Air New Zealand and she Pacific Blue, our departure times were within half an hour of each other; so we sensibly decided to car pool and travel in together (at 3 a.m.) to the airport.

As it turned out, my Air NZ flight to Brisbane was bang on time, and I arrived around 8.15 a.m. Brisbane time, but it turned out Cathryn's flight was over 3 hours late, arriving towards midday. We all know it's one of modern life's frustrations to have to hang around at an airport because of delayed flights, but I can tell you it is even worse when your own flight has been on time, and you have to wait in the airport terminal for a fellow traveller on a following delayed flight.



There is only a certain amount of sitting around drinking cups of tea, glancing worryingly from time to time at the arrival display board, trying not to think the worst; only a limited number of walks to the toilet, squeezing in small cubicles with over-sized back-packs; and only a limited number of long walks humping those same bags to check on possible times for a connecting train to the city, that you can stand.

It was even worse than that, for once dear unruffled Cathryn arrived, and we had eventually caught the train to central Brisbane, we then spent an hour and a half carting our back-packs and tramping through Brisbane's very busy hot and smelly central city, looking for a suitable vegetarian restaurant, of which there appeared to be a dearth.

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Dear Cathryn's demure at all times displayed the very essence of *santosha*, but I have to be honest with myself and say, it was only after I'd had a good feed, and we were sitting in a taxi heading towards the retreat venue, that I even began to allow myself to look on the bright side.

Once at the venue, catching up with old friends and meeting new ones, all like-minded people, and meeting once more the lively, energetic and brilliantly intelligent Dr. Ananda, and for the first time his lovely wife Devasena, we all began to settle down to, firstly having a good feed, then considering for two days *the yogic approach to stress* – but that dear reader is another story.



After the retreat on the Sunday my flight to Wellington once more departed thirty minutes ahead of Cathryn's but this time, remarkably, you might say, the Air New Zealand flight having a very kind tail wind arrived 15 minutes early. Slightly more predictably, you might say, Cathryn's Pacific Blue flight was this time one and a half hours late.

So I had to resign myself to a two hour plus wait but, even though it was midnight, even though I would have been home in bed in no time had I travelled to the airport in my own car, even though Wellington airport is particularly desolate and silently seedy at that time of night, you can't even get a cup of tea, and the seats are designed so you can't possibly lie down, or so hard you can't even slouch comfortably; in the spirit of *santosha* I, as I hope the poor vicar eventually does, took a big breath and began to look on the bright side.

Firstly, I decided this was a good time to finish the novel I'd been reading for some time, not otherwise finding much time for such pleasure. Then I spent some time blissfully, despite the hard seats, in meditation.



After that there was much time spent peacefully people-watching – those arriving to pick up loved ones, at first anxiously looking at the arrival board then sitting (like me) waiting patiently looking up expectantly as the custom and immigration doors swooshed open and disgorged yet another passenger, who stood stunned carrying huge cases; then the moment when their loved ones suddenly recognized them, and each with broad welcoming smiles rushed to fondly embrace the other, finally leaving the terminus happily chatting; leaving the rest of us in a sudden silence, to turn and once more gaze patiently at the door.

And, at last, as I sighed like a patient dog waiting for its owner, it was Cathryn with her small back-pack who walked through the swooshing door, smiling, looking as unruffled as ever.



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Photo Gallery

