

Gitananda Yoga Australia

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The 13th of September was our Divine Ammaji's birthday and Murali telephoned to wish her Gratitude and Blessings on behalf of all our GYA members.

FROM AMMAJI

Divine Souls linked in desire to evolve in consciousness! Namastey! I salute you brave souls for continuing to forge through the jungle of Samaskara with cheer and courage, determined to remain awake, no matter how painful the wide-awake- conscious state is! Your presence in my life, your affection and love, gives me the hope to continue this existence. Seventy- three years have been spent in this body which is continually changing. I suppose I must keep it at least two more years to complete a respectable 75 years. There are tasks to complete! Still, as Dr. Jonn Mumford has said: "Growing old is not for cowards". It is a Tapasya, a working out of old karmas, a paying of old debts!

There are many compensations of course! Seeing the flow of generations seeing the grand children of my students in my classes! Witnessing marriages and even deaths as a Spectator in the Grand Parade of Beings!

To be human and asleep is not a problem. There is no one there to feel the problem, to feel the pain, to know that one is suffering. But- how difficult it is to wake up, to know, to see, to feel. Even more difficult to be the one to awaken others! To ring the bell! Therefore, it is said, let sleeping dogs lie! But what can one do when the Guru lives in our hearts and commands us to be a bell- ringer? Ay! There's the rub!

Many of you are sharing the difficulties of this path! I am so happy to see all the lessons life is giving you and how well you are learning them. It is said, life is a classroom, but we all are given a different question paper with different answers! That is the beauty of it!

I have written an essay, **The Obstacles are The Path**. This essay is my birthday gift to you! Thank you for your loving birthday greetings and thank you for sharing your precious life with me! I am privileged to have the best of ring side front seats at your own personal one-man show!

We are “one in our aim” to grow in spirit into beautiful beings! Let us all enjoy a wonderful year together!

FROM MURALI

The Gitananda Yoga Association will hold the Annual General Meeting on Sunday 16th October at our Mermaid Beach Retreat. Contributions or suggestions for discussion from members would be much appreciated. Kindly forward your items for discussion to me at Murali

Yoga is also admiring "Natures Beauty" - here are some facts to ponder:

- Wild dolphins call each other by name.
- Butterflies can taste with their feet.
- Owls don't have eyeballs - they have eye tubes.
- Honeybees can flap their wings 200 times every second.
- A single strand of spider silk is 5 times stronger than steel of the same width.

DR ANANDA TOUR 2017 - SYDNEY and ADELAIDE

- 12-15 October 2017 Adelaide retreat with Integral Yoga Academy of Australasia
- 20-21 October 2017 – IYTA Convention Sydney

Early in 2017 we will begin planning for Dr. Ananda's October 2017 visit and it is hoped that many members will be able to attend the retreat in Adelaide. Bookings for this event are to be made via Linda and Cc'd to Murali. Please see the Retreat Flyer at the end of this Enewsletter.

NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND: Cathryn Doornekamp

All is well in New Zealand as the spring weather propels us forth with our yoga Sadhana. Eric Doornekamp, the Founding-Director of the Lotus Yoga Centre, celebrated his 80th birthday on Saturday 10th September with family, friends and members of the Centre.

It is nigh on 50 years since Eric's search for inner peace led him to meet Dr. Swami Gitananda and study with him in 1968 at Ananda Ashram in Pondicherry, South India. It was not long after Eric's return to New Zealand in 1971 that he established The Lotus Yoga Centre in Wellington with the assistance of several keen students. Eric's birthday celebrations were attended by some of those founding students.

And looking forward October is shaping up to be a busy month with a great line-up of events. The Centre will be participating in the 3rd annual Wellington Free Yoga Day, to be observed on Labour Day, Monday 24th October 2016. Other events include a Feng Shui Workshop, a Sacred Sound Healing Concert and a Mystical Experience through Prayer, Meditation and Music.

The introduction of a one-day Body, Mind and Soul retreat at the Centre on Sunday's continues to be a popular draw card, with the August and September retreats booked to full capacity. Another is scheduled in November. We begin the day with relaxation followed by yoga, breathing and relaxation. After a shared vegetarian lunch, there is an outdoor walking meditation in the bush leading to the Sanctuary (an octagonal shaped building with a glass pyramid roof, overlooking a pond) where we do a seated meditation.

Every Thursday evening a group of devotees meet in the Sanctuary to meditate and chant 108 Aums. This practice has been observed on a weekly basis without fail since it was inaugurated in December 2014

THE OBSTACLE IS THE PATH By: Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani

Why does life have to be so difficult?

This is not question which was recently asked me by a world weary, professional family man, beset with personal, financial and professional problems! No indeed! It was asked by my thirteen-year- old granddaughter Dhivya Priya who has all the protection, comfort and love in the world!

Why indeed! The great Greek philosopher Plato more than 2000 years ago wrote: “Be kind to all you meet for all are engaged in a life and death struggle.” Who is fighting whom? What is the struggle all about? Does anybody know? Lord Krishna realized the tremendous inner conflict Arjuna was engaged in even before the battle of Kurushetra began. Arjuna came to an amazing realization at the end of Krishna’s counseling. He was fighting to regain his sanity! That is, he had to fight ferociously in mind and heart to see clearly the reality of the terrible dilemma he faced on that ancient battle field – to fight or not to fight!

But what is the essential meaning of the obstacles, the hardships; the sense of pain, suffering and suppression which it seems everyone feels? This is what religion, philosophy and the spiritual life is all about! Discovering the solutions! Various masters and Gurus have offered many answers.

One beautiful example was given by the Sufi master Mevlana Rumi, of Konya, Turkey about 800 years ago. Rumi’s collection of poems seeking mystic meanings to the struggle in the Masnava has been called the Quran in Persian. Rumi told a beautiful story explaining the purpose of pain and hardship. This famous parable is called the “Parable of the Chickpeas.”

The chickpeas are being subjected to the fire for cooking. Raising a hundred cries, the chickpeas ask the housewife why they are being turned upside down. Hitting them with a ladle, she says, “I do not burn you because of hate but to make you useful to others. In those blows you get taste. I do this so that you become nutritious and mingle with the spirit.”

The housewife continued “O, chickpeas, did yourself not feed in springtime on other life? Perhaps they also felt pain. Now pain has become your guest! Entertain him well, so that the guest may return home thankful and relate your generosity in the presence of the King; so that the Bestower of Favours may come to you. Continue, O chickpeas, to boil in tribulation, that neither existence nor self may remain in thee. If you have laughed in the earthly garden, you are the rose of the garden of the spirit. If you have become food in the mouths of good and noble souls and have entered into the living beings you are well blessed.” The chickpeas then gladly submitted to the boiling-cooking – painful process till they were soft and worthy of being assimilated into living flesh and become a boon and benefit to the universe.

Our hearts are like the chickpeas, hard and in need of being cooked in the fire of Divine love. Sufis and other mystics understand the need of trials and tribulations in life as the burning needed to purify the hard heart of spiritual maladies. Being cooked requires getting rid of one’s ego, which is a painful process. Only by committing oneself to the Divine, do we become soft and worthy of becoming part of another human being in a sublime manner.

In Yogic lore another metaphor describes this process. Only when a clay pot is baked in a hot oven will the pot become hard enough to become useful as a vessel for carrying water. Tapasya

(conscious disciplines) and the natural struggles of a human life will provide the “heat” necessary to “bake the pot” of the human spirit in its evolutionary struggle. Therefore it is said: not only are there obstacles on the path, but more correctly, **the obstacles are the path!**

INDIA AND “I” - Dr Jonn Mumford

In 1961 I was ensconced in an Ashram on the outskirts of the most magical city I had ever encountered – Bombay (or Mumbai as it is called now)! This was the “Post-Raj” era and the atmosphere was electric, complete with beggars wall to wall, and an olfactory spectrum that defied imagination. I was only twenty-something and the Bombay of my youth, like Hemingway’s Paris, was a “movable feast” ever full of enchantment and excitement.

I was studying at the Yoga Institute, Santa Cruz, founded by Shri Yogendra in 1918, and the source of the scientific Yoga renaissance sweeping India. The school was proudly acknowledged, even then, as the oldest International Yoga Foundation in India. I was there at the behest of my first Guru, Swami Gitananda, known as “The Lion of Pondicherry” and the experience was rather like being passed from one Lion’s mouth to another! I was beginning to think my true purpose in life was to be Lion fodder!

Shri Yogendra, well into his 60’s when I arrived, could be described as “the Lion of Bombay”. He was a man totally dedicated to propagating traditional Yoga values and techniques while wedding them to Western science and educational methodology. He had a nasty habit of throwing politicians out the front door of his Ashram at the slightest provocation – and hence the institute was less well supported by State and National government than some of his more amiable neighbours.

Shri Yogendrajii was the first advocate of Yoga as therapy to ever tour the USA in the 1920’s and he also coined the term “Bionergy” (later to become known as “Bioenergy”) to help Western scientists understand the concept of “Prana”. He was the first person to demonstrate for Western Medical Doctors, the transfusion of Pranic energy from himself, through a wall, to a patient in another room. This was in the 1920’s, at a famous hospital in America, and well documented in his writings. It was apparently a “shocking” experience for the staff! Demonstrations like that did not appear in the West again, until the mid-eighties with the advent of a few touring Qi Gong (pronounced “chee-kong”) masters from China.

Santa Cruz included Bombay Airport and in 1961 the heaviest traffic was turbo-jets landing and taking off. In fact we meditated on the Ashram roof utilizing a beautiful technique of Nada Laya (sound meditation) called “Nishspandha Bhava” by deliberately focusing upon the sound of the Turbo-jets taking off until the mind attenuated out on the very last scrap of sound and then – nothing! Perfect, blissful silence; the “peace that surpasseth understanding” That was using technology for inner evolution – uniting East with West and conjoining ancient and modern – it was called “Yoga”!

Shri Yogendra ran the Ashram with an iron fist and was very adamant about his methods. I am eternally grateful to him because he actually taught me how to apply scientific method to Yoga and an organizational scheme for lesson planning that was the latest in educational theory at the time.

Flanked by his two sons and his wife (beloved “Matajii” as we called her) and assisted by an assortment of medical doctors and philosophy lecturers from Bombay University, he presented a formidable array of classical yoga technology. No modern 1990’s approach of diluting everything with “Moderators” and “Facilitators” mixed in a gooey mush of misguided egalitarianism – he was a teacher, an Acharya, a Guru – and by God you “shaped up” or you “shipped out”. Thank heavens all

my Indian Acharyas have been like that – it saves huge amounts of time, you actually learn something, and you evolve through “the pursuit of excellence”.

A case in point was “chundering” Yoga style. We were taught a very precise system of stomach cleansing (Vamandhauti) through induced vomiting. (In Bihar a variation is used called Kunjal). The technique involves an accurate ratio of salt to warm water and a strict fluid balance monitoring so that what went in always equalled what came out. This is the physiological equivalent of the computer axiom “GIGO” (Garbage in – Garbage out).

Six o’clock every morning was Vamandhauti time and any Western student at the Ashram who had difficulty with the practice was considered “neurotic” and not quite suited for studying Yoga. Fortunately I had no difficulty with the practice and thus they missed discovering just how “neurotic” I really could be!

Shri Yogendra had a marvellously simple approach to Yoga and the possible benefit’s to society. The equation went something like this. Yoga makes a better person, a better person makes a better Community, a better Community makes a better City, a better City a better State, a better State a better Nation, and a better Nation a better World. **LET’S ALL PRACTICE YOGA!**

I was not a favourite of Shri Yogendrajii, although he always treated me kindly – I think he considered me one of those “too smart” Westerners who would just go off and write a book – which of course is exactly what I did! The man was awesome and I am deeply grateful for everything he taught me. My regret is that I was in Bombay, 1982, at the Transpersonal Psychology Conference and I did not go and see him – he was still alive – perhaps I felt shy about having been in the presence of such a great one?

As each sunset commenced I would go to the Ashram rooftop with my best friend, Roy Lundin, who had come over from Canada to join me in studies at the institute. We would practice the classical eye exercises known as “Trataka” to strengthen the extra-ocular muscles of the eyes – this was the basis of the famous Bates Eye Therapy system that Aldous Huxley had made so popular in the West.

We practiced assiduously for three months, always ending with gazing directly upon the orange globe, now half embedded in the Western horizon. At the end of the time we had our Eyes tested: Roy threw his glasses away having gained 20/20 vision and as for me? Alas - not an iota of change and I am as myopic today as I was then! When the results came in one of the lecturers looked at my chart and walked away sadly muttering something about “Yogis always have ‘I’ problems!”

SOJOURN IN THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS

Zigi Georges

I slowly plod through the white landscape as around me figures hurtle themselves on boards and skis in all directions down groomed slopes of the relatively quiet Charlotte Pass. Then it is up Kosciuszko triple chair lift, or Pulpit T-Bar, or Guthries high speed Poma, to madly charge down again, seemingly endlessly - Maya.

<https://jollyturns.com/resort/australia/charlotte-pass/maps/lift/guthries-high-speed-poma>

Eventually, I leave civilisation behind and enter the world of nature. Today it was icy winds burning the face as I struggle to reach the icicles on the Trig at Mt. Stilwell at 2054 metres. Visibility from there is zero as a whiteout blankets the normally panoramic view. The world with texture has totally gone. Everywhere is the same as everywhere else. One does not even know up or down, as I tumble

down the mountain side landing on soft snow. I have reached a base for my feet. But where is a direction? Nothing!

I stand up and laugh. This is exactly oneness with nature, with the Cosmic Energy of our being. There is no fear; just sheer joy of some sort of attainment – Oneness - Yoga, right there in the wilderness. I think of recording my experience, but how does one photograph white on white? Might as well photograph a white wall!

Slowly shadows appear granite boulders that are friendly landmarks in the white coldness. And then I see a line that looks like an imprint from my snowshoes, and slowly I follow those knowing that they will lead me home, eventually.

Back at Pygmy Possum Lodge, after showers and replenishment I sit on my mat, doing yoga poses and contemplate Emptiness; Oneness; Bliss. May all sadhaks find the ground of their Being.



Early morning whiteout *Zigi Georges*



Your contributions are welcome for our next eNewsletter, if you have a favourite practice, a meditation, a recipe, an anecdote, an interesting story or something you could share with us all please email it to marg0yoga@bigpond.com for the next edition which will be late November/early December.

With love and blessings'

Margo

When asked what gift he wanted for his birthday, the yogi replied "I wish no gifts, only presence"-----
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