

Gitananda Yoga Association

eNews: Volume 6:3 November 2020

Namaste!

As most of you are aware, on the 30th September, our beloved Ammaji had a fall which led to serious health complications and resulted in hospitalisation. We have all been praying for her to recover and happily she returned home on 30th November where she will continue to be nursed back to health by her loving family. She still needs your prayers and loving messages, and you can keep up with her progress on the Rishiculture Ashtanga (Gitananda) Yoga Facebook Page.

As most of you know Ammaji was not a fan of the computer. A journalist by profession, she did all her writing on a typewriter and resisted all appeals to accept the technology. However, COVID 19 forced many of us to work from home, including Dr Ananda who has embraced technology wholeheartedly, putting several of his courses online, including Swamiji's Step by Step Course as well as having Wonderful Wednesdays, Twinkling Thursdays; Scintillating Saturdays and Tell Me Uppa sessions with Dhivya Priya and regular Zoom Womb sessions with his Global Family.

However it would seem that Ammaji had begun to change her mind, as the following letter was written by her on 23/9/20 - a week before her fall and you can see that she had finally begun to accept that technology might be important.

FROM AMMAJI

Last night little Dhivya and myself spent a few enjoyable hours watching our global family expressing themselves from a place deep, deep down in a dark dark cave – the place where Yudhisthira the eldest Pandava, claimed that Dharma dwelt.

The voices came from souls who strive to find that elusive Dharma and to perform their Dharma – Jewels of spirit in the junkyard of humanity. The last phrase is a bit crude, but it came to me out of the stream of consciousness flowing and I kept it! What can I say, we are all like Ulysses of old embarking on another adventure and seeking, striving, finding, and refusing to yield.

The YSS Correspondence Course Online, it is quite a project - a yearlong commitment to delve deeply into Swamiji's words composed nearly sixty years ago, to guide our souls through the monkey ocean of Samasar – or as John Bunyan put it about 500 years ago in English, the 'The Slough of Despondency'. I believe it was in '**The Pilgrim's Progress**', he said only virtue accompanies the man on his road from birth into the grave. It was John Milton who said, 'Love Virtue' only she is true! This is what came to my mind as I gazed at all the beloved faces – virtuous people, good true people, sincere people who seek to become first and foremost, good human beings!

How rare to find truly good people! The Buddha was asked, “What makes you different from other men?” The Buddha smiled and said, ‘I am awake’. When understood, these words mean with awakened consciousness true spiritual growth begins. But! It is painful to be awake!

This realisation can come through the silver screen which I call Super Maya – some pain, some joy, some hope, some faith... etc all human emotions – as we move through this human incarnation. But we know that we have companions for this long, long journey. Sometimes our roads diverge in the woods, but they meet again at other places in other spaces. I do feel there is a place beyond the body, mind, and emotions – and I feel – we can, we will, we are able to meet there especially through Dr Ananda’s online sessions.

FROM MURALI

Due to COVID-19 our plans for a Brisbane workshop with Dr. Ananda in 2021 have been moved forward to April 2022. Hopefully by 2021 the situation for this will be clearer.

We have updated our Contacts page on our website for 2021-2022.

- We welcome Margaret Willcocks from Perth as our WA liaison officer.
- Our AGM 2020 was not held due to covid-19 so we will be holding a belated 2020 AGM early in 2021.
- Any current financial Committee/Liaison member wishing to stand down from their position Please email Murali.
- Any financial members interested in nominating for any Committee/Liaison position, email Murali.
- Any members with contributions / suggestions for 2020 AGM kindly email Margo ASAP.

TALA -THE AMAZING PALMYRA TREE - *Borassus flabellifer*

Tala Kriya is a four-part full body stretching action which can be done supine or standing and is one of the stress relieving practices learnt in the Step-by-Step course. “*Tala*” refers to the Palmyra Tree and over many times practicing it, and many time hearing Swamiji say it, and several visits to India, it never occurred to me to find out what a Palmyra tree was,, assuming it was just a palm tree from which jaggery was obtained.

I am not fond of palm trees, apart from the coconut palm. Our next-door neighbour on his small suburban block has at least fifteen Cocos palm trees which are a dreadful nuisance dropping huge, heavy fronds and seeds in our yards which make a mess and take root.

However I know that ‘Palms ain’t palms’ so it was time to consult Guru Google where I discovered some amazing information about the Palmyra tree and realised that they were those lofty palms seen all over South India, never realizing they were the Official Tree of

Tamil Nadu and something very special. In Tamil culture it is called *karpaha*, "nungu" "celestial tree", and it is highly respected because all parts of it can be used.

The *Borassus flabellifer* leaves are used for thatching, mats, baskets, fans, hats, umbrellas, and writing material. In ancient times, dried palm leaves were used to write manuscripts known as palm-leaf manuscript. All the ancient Tamil literature was recorded in preserved Palm leaves. The ripe fibrous outer layer of the fruits is edible after boiling or roasting and tastes similar to coconut flesh. The germinated seed's hard shell is cut open to take out the crunchy kernel has an edible jelly that is refreshing and rich in minerals and tastes like a water chestnut but sweeter. When the crown of the tree is removed, the segment from which the leaves grow out is an edible cake. This is called '*pananchoru*'.

The black timber of the trunk is hard, heavy, and durable and is highly valued for construction especially in structures exposed to water, such as wharves, fences and boats. The stalks are used to make fences and also produce a strong, wiry fibre suitable for cordage and brushes.

Dr Meena Ramanathan, PhD (Yoga), C-IAYT, Associate Professor & Deputy Director, Center for Yoga Therapy Education and Research (CYTER) has shared her thoughts on the palmyra tree.

"One interesting fact I have heard (and seen) about the palm tree is that these were the trees that can withstand and have withstood the harsh cyclones, especially those trees close by to the beach. Other trees are washed or blown away, except these palm trees. They are firm and unaffected."

She goes on to add "Two facts I understood well after knowing about this:

1. The tree that bends does not break easily!!! Explaining to us the importance of resilience!!!
2. The ability to balance, remain focussed and BE stable on the toes!! To me this kind of reaffirmed the fact that mind influences the body and vice versa- and when the practice is done wilfully/mindfully, we would be certainly more stable and balanced and all the physical imbalances and limitations in balancing could be alleviated over time. To me personally, this practice reassures my ability to remain still, amidst and despite all the stormy disturbances of day-to-day living. To stay committed and firm even if the ground is shaky!!!"

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From New Zealand Lotus Eco Village Update

At the time of writing, all civil engineering works have been completed, i.e. road building, laying of services (water, sewage, electricity and internet). The first four houses have been completed and occupied and a further six houses are underway and will be progressively occupied from December 2020 through to May 2021. The new yoga centre/community centre is now being used for classes, workshops and community gatherings. Office admin and reception will be moving from the old villa to new centre over the next six weeks (from October 2020).

We look forward to sharing our adventure with you on into the future.

<https://www.facebook.com/LotusEcoVillage>

To learn more about the project and to view the site plan for the new Yoga Centre please refer to the Lotus Eco Village website: www.lotusecovillage.nz



Two of the inhabited eco houses



Opening of New Centre

By Ralph Wallace

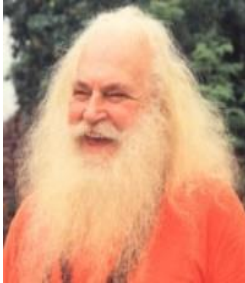
Chairperson of the Lotus Yoga Centre

Fortuitously Sunday morning, 9th of August dawned bright and sunny for the grand Opening Ceremony of our new Lotus Yoga Centre, held in tandem with the opening of the Lotus Eco Village Community Centre. You may have read in earlier issues of *The Lotus* newsletter progress reports on the exciting new initiative taking place here. Perhaps you have read about it on our website: Now all has been revealed! Finally, after three years in the making, our new Centre has been completed. And what a stunning construction it is.

<http://lotusyogacentre.org.nz/future-developments>

DOCTOR SWAMI GITANANDA

By Eric Doornekamp



This is a fitting tribute to one of the greatest and best-known yogis in modern times. I first met the Brighu of the ancient Vedic Order in 1968 at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry, in India.

I was fortunate enough to be accepted as one of his chelas or students. He invited me to train as a full-time yoga teacher under his care. It was a six-month course of in depth classical yoga studies.

We practised the Yoga Sutras and the major branches of Yoga. It fitted in Yoga philosophy and Yoga Chikitsa.

I was born in the Netherlands in 1936 where I began to practise yoga. I migrated to New Zealand in 1959 and continued yoga. In 1971 I established the Lotus Yoga Centre and Whare Ora Retreat in Wellington. It was in 1985 that the Centre moved to Paraparaumu on the Kapiti Coast.

I had also begun to take an interest in natural therapies over the years. This included massage, naturopathy, osteopathy.

Meanwhile Doctor Swami Gitananda encouraged me to pursue with various yoga therapies as a main calling. The emphasis was to Chikitsa.

He was an amazing organiser and belonged to lots of professional bodies. I sort of hung on to his coat tails. Thus, I was appointed to the International Centre for Yoga Education and Research (ICYER). I received an honorary Ph. D. in Yoga, awarded by Vishwa Unnyayana Samsad, India (World Development Parliament).

Meanwhile the “Lion of Pondicherry” passed away in 1993. Now his son Doctor Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani follows in his father’s footsteps.

In New Zealand, the International Yoga Teachers Association made me a life member. The Lotus Yoga Centre also rewarded me with life membership.

I must have done something right in the Yoga world!

*My interest in Yoga has extended to Vedanta
May I meet you on the Path of Enlightenment*



LIFE YOGA – PLASTIC YOGA Zigi Georges

Yoga as a way of life transcends “Plastic Yoga” as done in the West, says Dr. Ananda when in his gangster yoga persona. I would like to offer some remarks as follows:

1. In a broad view, Eastern philosophy has embraced a recognizably holistic approach to life compared to reductionist principles attributed to Western thought. Both systems, Eastern integration versus Western fragmentation, have their individual powers and limitations.
2. Yoga, as codified by Patanjali, emerged from this Eastern mind-set, and was intended to encompass and enrich all aspects of life, not just miscellaneous and disconnected aspects of existence.
3. It is a conceptual challenge to faithfully transpose Eastern derived Yoga principles to a Western consciousness more comfortable with analysis rather than synthesis. This transposition may, in fact, not be seamlessly possible and a degree of compromise seems legitimate. However, any such compromise should enhance, not harm, the teaching and learning of Yoga.
4. Some mystics have declared the core of yoga as sacred/arcane and only to be made available to a never clearly defined select few. A strong refutation of this view declares that the value of yoga extends far beyond its origins in place and time.
5. The cultural guru/chela relationship that starts with childhood cannot be directly applied to adults wishing to practice Yoga in the West. Latecomers to Yoga have a way of life that cannot just be dismissed as insignificant. They may be novices, but they are not children.

Given the above considerations, it is possible to see how errors in transmission of Yoga knowledge can occur due to language and cultural differences, to become a “plastic” yoga.

Furthermore, not all aspiring yogis can go back to the ancient beginnings of Yoga, become Sanskrit experts, translocate to India, renounce their former lives, and live in an Indian ashram as Ammaji has done. What is the way forward?

Fortunately, Dr. Ananda Balayogi, Ammaji’ son, with his embrace of social media, including Facebook, videos, recorded talks, and scholarly papers, is shifting mountains of cultural and language barriers to clear the ether for a greater worldwide understanding of Yoga. Not just any yoga. He is teaching Patanjali’s yoga online as re-codified in the Gitananda tradition in Puducherry after years of teaching Eastern and Western yoga aspirants face to face. Thus, ancient traditional Yoga is being made accessible to all, and is also being preserved from an often-fallible memory.

Hopefully, his unique Step-by-Step approach will enable everyone to go beyond “plastic” yoga to achieve increased integration and peace in their daily lives. Thank you, Dr Ananda!

I witnessed a happening at the Gym yoga I attend regularly. Some people were comparing their efforts to achieve some poses. I mentioned that yoga is not a competition, it is an attempted union of body, mind, and spirit, not a prolongation of the physical competitiveness. The teacher heard me and the follows week she slowed the whole physical process down by getting everyone to shut their eyes whilst doing poses, whenever possible.

She achieved a turning inwards and an awareness of inner processes that had not happened otherwise. The session ended with expressions of appreciation for what she had done. I shall observe with interest how this plays out in the weeks and months ahead.

Zigi and Wally



A YOGIC CHRISTMAS SUGGESTION

Play Secret Santa

The traditional secret Santa is an amusing diversion but playing Santa for real can be a powerful generosity practice. Whether giving to friends, family members, a charity, or people in need, why not do so without expectation of reciprocity or reward - or a shred of resentment, even when that ingrate nephew fails to say thank you again. For advanced training in generosity and humility, give all presents anonymously this season and have yourself a ***MERRY CHRISTMAS***

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A yogi went into Domino's Pizza and says, "I'll have one with everything" He gives the clerk \$20 note but didn't get any change.

The yogi says, "Don't I get any change?" The clerk says,

(wait for it)....."Change must come from within!"

Contributions are welcome for our next eNewsletter, have you a favourite practice, a meditation, a recipe, an anecdote, an interesting story, or **something** you could share with us all? Please email your contributions to Margo at margosyoga@hotmail.com for March 2021