

June 2011 Edition Volume 6 No 2

Namaste Dear Divine Gitananda Sadhak,

I apologise for the delay in getting this newsletter to you, but hopefully you will enjoy what some of our Gitananda members have to kindly share with you nonetheless.

In our last newsletter, we brought you news on the recent Brisbane floods. Since then, the world has endured more natural disasters than we could have imagined; namely the Christchurch earthquake and the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami. Despite immense destruction and loss of lives, the news is not all grim. Such events have truly brought colour to the meaning of yoga; the union, the coming together of people across the globe to regain and retain the faith in our future.

Yoga communities have joined forces worldwide to support people affected by the devastation. In writing a story for the next issue of Australian Yoga Journal on this very topic (which features some tips from our very own Dr Ananda!), I was humbled to hear firsthand recounts from both the helpers and those being helped. The recent Japan Yoga Aid Challenge is a major standout; having raised over \$35,000 in donations for the relief fund, Japan Platform. Altruistic acts of kindness – big and small – are what the spirit of yoga is largely about. After all, Patanjali's Yoga Sutra 2:30 urges us to have 'consideration for all living things, especially those who are innocent, in difficulty or worse off than we are'. This is a refreshing notion; allowing us to remember the bigger picture when confrontation in our own lives leads us to a sense of victimization.

Although my hometown fortunately didn't endure an earthquake in the physical sense, the earth beneath my feet has wobbled somewhat as my year commenced with an emotionally shaky start. My relationship with yoga suffered immensely – right at the point when I needed it the most. Perhaps that was just it? I felt a sense of betrayal in my 'practice' of yoga that I was being confronted by such a barrage of obstacles. But hearing the beautifully inspiring stories throughout my AYJ project redefined for me what yoga is and the role it plays in my life. Yoga is not

just asana (despite common westernized misconception), not just something we do when we have a few spare minutes on our mats, which then gets rolled up and locked away in the cupboard until next time. It's not about being saved or void of painful ebbs and flows, but rather being equipped with the clarity and awareness to cope with arising problems productively. It is not just about having compassion for others, but also having compassion for the self.

The immense support we receive from yoga – both internally and externally – allows us to move on from life's challenges not as a victim, but rather with renewed vigour, growth and appreciation. In yoga, we are truly never alone, and we are all so very lucky to have such a supportive network like the Gitananda Association of Australia. We are always all ears, so do feel free to share your experiences in future newsletters!



- These photos from the Japan Yoga Aid Challenge are with thanks to Eriko Kinoshita.



Thanks to all who have contributed and of course those 'behind the scenes' who have helped out immensely (yes, that's you Bernadette and Jennifer!). Yours in Yoga,
Diana Timmins, NSW (co-editor)



PS ... Of course, hearty congrats to co-editor Yogacharini Devaki on getting hitched!

For more about the core concepts of Gitananda Yoga at: <http://www.gitananda-australia.net/page11.php>





NEWSLETTER FEATURES

Mirta Golic: Yantra ICYER, April visit

Yogacharini Gowri: Shat Ripus

Cathryn Doornekamp: Yoga: Step-by-Step

Contact details of Gitananda Teachers

For Dr Ananda's Books and DVD's; visit www.rishiculture.org and click on 'Dhivyananda Creations'.

'VISIT TO ANANDA ASHRAM': Mirta Golic

I was very fortunate to be able to attend the Yantra course at Ananda Ashram in Chinnamudaliar Chavady near Pondicherry for 2 weeks in February. It was my first stay in an ashram and, at the same time, my first visit to India. I saw it as a holiday where I travelled somewhere new, to learn something new and get recharged by living with like-minded people.

I'd like to say my thanks to Dr Ananda, Amma, Devasena, and the whole ashram 'family' who have created very open, accepting, nurturing atmosphere by simply being who they are. It was very much appreciated. My special thanks go to the teachers who lovingly shared their knowledge with all the students, including myself. My stay in Ananda ashram, as well as trips to the ashram and back, were made easy by Murali's help. I thank him very much for all the help because it has made the entire trip much more care free than it would have been travelling on my own.

The Yantra course was taken by Dr Ananda, and I could not imagine a better teacher to explain such a complex system. We started our learning with clear definitions of dharma and karma, and then looked at the meanings of the Dharma Yuga and Karma Yuga in one's life. Both of these are associated with numbers in our date of birth and numbers in a current year (Karma Yuga). We learnt about numbers 1-9 and that each day in our life is described by a couple of numbers that indicate which sort of day we are likely to have. The course emphasised

the equal importance of all numbers, and that the most important thing was to learn to live with qualities these numbers add to our life, even if they show up as challenges. The course did get more complex when the importance of names and their numbers was added through lessons on Nama Darshana.

Ananda Ashram is placed in a small fishing village near Pondicherry. You can hear the sound of waves at all times, and see the ocean from the verandas and higher floors. It was magical to see the first break of the dawn uncovering the trees, roofs, waves and the sky during morning yoga asana practice. Dogs, Bumi and Akash were regular attendees, whilst the cat Nagapalakala preferred the stillness and quietness of the morning meditation. It was not uncommon to have a dog, or both, at your feet during the meditation, and the cat would crawl under your jumper to warm her little cold paws up. The ashram has several buildings and different classes are taken at different locations, which was rather refreshing. Amma was taking the first morning yoga class and the evening satsanga, dr Nalini was taking yoga chikitsa and pranayama classes, dr Ananda yantra class, and Devasena Sanskrit, dancing and chanting. Murali, Catherine Davis and Vishanvi filled in on several occasions. The other important people included students of teacher's course Hannah and Felix, children – Dhivya Priya and Anadraj who bring laughter and fun to the place, Shanti, the best Tamil cook who liked my strong coffee, and Sangheeta who was assisting Amma.



- Yantra Class at ICYER in Patanjali Kutir





I was privileged to be able to see the Yoganjali Natyalayam Pondicherry (Sun City Yoga School). Many children, maybe 150 or more, were spread out in several yoga classes. They were talking about Patanjali when we entered and I was surprised that history and theory of yoga were taught to children, and some were very young. On the other hand, it is because it is their heritage and they should treasure it. Vashnavi took us to her advanced class for girls and many of them have been attending classes for 5-10 years, although they were still of school age. We ended our visit by entering a large class on the roof top. 60-80 kids were in the class and the teacher made them do all difficult postures so I could take photos.

My favourite was a little girl (7-8) who looked like a candle flame when in Dhanurasana. The teacher picked her up for the feet and hands (still in Dhanurasana!) and brought her to me! She had a grin around her little face.



- Children at Yoganjali Natyalayam Yoga Classes

I saw the other face of the idilic fishing village scenery while walking at the beach for the first time. Murali was showing me where the sea level came to during 2006 tsunami. There are still ruins of the houses right at the beach. Lots of sand had been washed away and ocean is much closer to the ashram than it had been prior to the tsunami. Some people had to be relocated; others were fishing right in front of the ashram walls.

It surprised me to see that most villagers lived in huts built from palm leaves, some in houses. Murali said there was a law which did not allow building unless people owed the land. In my opinion, the palm leaves are heaps better as building material than they sound. Pranayama hut in the ashram has roof built out of palm leaves, and has especially warm and relaxing atmosphere, plus is not as hot in mid-day as tinned or tiled roofed room would be.

Small yards surrounding the huts were quite tidy, but there was lots of rubbish on every public surface. Even the beach was used as toilet by the villagers. It took some time and work before I could pass the rubbish without wanting to do something to change the people's habits, but 2 weeks were not long enough to make me feel comfortable with swimming in the ocean.



- Fishing Village Market (behind ICYER)

Overall, I very much enjoyed the course, and the entire trip, and would like to travel to India again. There was no time for sightseeing, but I had the first taste of India. It is a very rich country in its people and history. Writings on the back of cars and auto rickshaws showed people's originality and mindset. I saw my favourite when we were driving back to the ariport: "It's not a race, live with grace", and thought to myself: "Life is not a race, live with grace".



- ICYER residents with Mirta and Murali





SHAT RIPUS: Yogacharini Gowri (Wendy Snape)

The shat ripus are six destroyers of the human spirit; they are, Kama (desire), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (illusion), Mada (pride), and Maatsurya (malice, jealousy). Becoming aware of, and working to eliminate these obsessions, is the only way to achieve peace of mind and spiritual evolution. As Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharishi said there is no excuse to succumb to these maladies.

The tool to overcome these personal demons is the whole integrated system of ashtanga yoga. Special attention should be given to the fourth ethical observance of Swadhyaya or self-study. Quiet contemplation for ten minutes before retiring and again ten minutes after rising will help become aware of attitudes to adopt for the day, and those needing some attention from the day that is passed.

There are six groups of asanas, mudras, kriyas, and pranayamas; one group for each of the six ripus, that help fight the battle against these inner negative attitudes. In this edition of the Gitananda Association of Australia Inc. newsletter, the method to overcome Kama (desire) is given, and each of the other five ripus will be addressed in the next five editions.

Conquering DESIRE through Asana With SHIVA SURYA NAMASKAR



- Accompanying picture care of Gowri ☺



IMPORTANT NOTICES

2011 AGM: This year's proposed Brisbane retreat has been cancelled but all is certainly not lost. In the absence of an AGM we will be having a phone hook-up in September, and of course some lucky 'Gitananders' will be heading over to Ananda Ashram in August (including me!). More on that soon!

In the meantime, if you have any points you would like to raise or contributions to make to the September phone hook-up, please feel free to contact Murali: murali@gitananda-australia.net.

ICYER AUGUST TOUR – ONE SPOT LEFT!

The upcoming August visit to Pondicherry, Ananda Ashram / ICYER, has been incredibly popular and was fully booked out very quickly. Unfortunately one member has had to withdraw, which means there is now one more vacancy up for grabs. If Mirta's tale of her Pondicherry adventure has tickled your fancy and you are keen to come along, please get in touch with Murali to arrange as soon as possible. A deposit will be required, and you will need to move quickly in order to book your departure for 9th August. For enquires: murali@gitananda-australia.net. ICYER would love to have you! ☺

For those of you already booked and ready to go; we would love for you to share your experiences in the next newsletter. Feel free to send your post-tour contributions through to diana.timmins@gmail.com with any accompanying happy snaps you may have. Thanking you in advance! ☺





YOGA: STEP-BY-STEP - Cathryn Doornekamp

In September last year I had the privilege of attending a retreat in Brisbane with Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani entitled 'Moving from Distress to De-stress through Yoga'. I came away from the retreat feeling spiritually, mentally and physically nourished, and feeling deeply drawn to Ananda Ashram. Being in the presence of Dr Ananda's dynamic being and those who have spent time in Ananda Ashram has set the wheels in motion propelling me forward along the yoga path.

While at the retreat, Dr Ananda reminded me, in a kind and loving way, that although I have received the 'Yoga: Step-by-Step' Correspondence Course from ICYER (Ananda Ashram), they have not received any response from me in reply to the lessons. Dr Ananda's very words, planted a seed which has sprouted and grown to fruition.

Late last year I had a strong calling to take up the 'Yoga: Step-by-Step' course. However, many years ago I put the course material away in what I thought was a safe place, only to not be able to find it. While I searched high and low, I eventually came to the realisation that the universe would make it known to me in the correct sequence of things. Resolute to follow my calling; on New Year's Day 2011, I made a start with the step-by-step yoga practices outlined within the book: 'How to begin a Practice of Yoga' written by Dr Swami Gitananda. At times it seemed as though I could hear Swamiji talking to me as I read the words within those pages.

I was further inspired to systematically work my way back through the 'Yoga Life' monthly publications edited by Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani, and create a file containing Swamiji's words of wisdom. In doing so, I felt a strong sense of Swamiji's presence. Near the end of January, it occurred to me to ask Swamiji to guide me to find the 'Yoga: Step-by-Step' course manual that I put away so safely all those many years ago. I believe he did just that! He answered my calling. The day I put the request to Swamiji, I was drawn to review the August 2006 'Yoga Life' journal, when an article caught my eye entitled 'Comments on Correction of Breathing Difficulties' by none other than Eric Doornekamp himself.

I was surprised to read that Eric has a copy of both the first and second edition of this book. I've not seen them on the Library shelves at The Lotus Yoga Centre, so I asked Eric where I might find them. He indicated where they could be, and low and behold there was the 'Yoga Step-by-Step' manual in the most logical of places.....in fact right where it should be! Many a time I have cast my eyes over that shelf and not seen it! They say when the student is ready the guru appears! Soon after my discovery, I received Meenakshi's blessings by Spiritual Mail (snail mail), encouraging me to undertake the course with vigour. And I have been doing just that! I now have a morning practice firmly established and am reaping the benefits of the 3 R's: Repetition, Regularity and Rhythm in more ways than one.

Starting the day in quietude with slow deep breathing has brought about a huge shift in my consciousness. Prior to taking up the Yoga: Step-by-Step practices and in more recent years, I have had it firmly ingrained in my mind that the start of the day is the most productive time of the day for me. On awakening, I would plough ahead with full steam to achieve supposedly so much before the golden hour of 9.00 a.m., only to slowly peter out as the day progressed, and come evening, I was tired out.

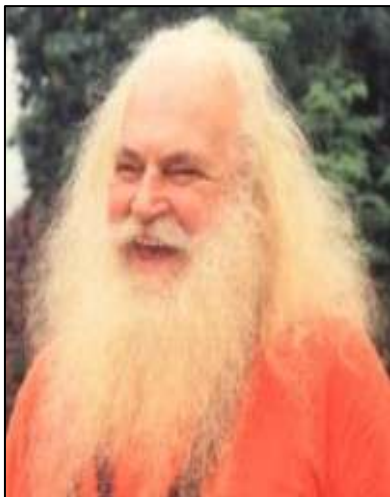
Now the whole day is productive! The momentum keeps going and I find myself working at a steady pace, breathing deeply as I go about my tasks - a much more balanced way of being. Sometimes I still have the urge on waking to plough ahead, but as time goes on it has become unthinkable to even think about omitting these practices from the onset of the day!

Note from co-editor, Diana: Cathryn's beautiful story is a perfectly practical example of a quote I received from the wonderful Petrea King in a recent interview. She said: 'When you get to a place where you say, 'I want peace more than anything; more than doing it the way I've always done it, being right, getting a cure, hanging onto resentment and blame', you'll find that the whole universe conspires to bring it about'.

Or one other quote that springs to mind, this time from American comedian (and apparently yoga-lover!), Lily Tomlin: 'for fast-acting relief from stress, try slowing down...' I think I will try that one myself!



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