

Gitananda Yoga Australia

ENews: Vol 2.4 December 2016

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FROM AMMAJI - Some general news from us to you!

We are well, wading through Samskaras, internal and external which resemble Tsunami waves. We had cyclone warnings in December, December 2nd and third weekend. No cyclones, but torrential rains, which felt as though a giant had poured buckets of water over our heads. Then, on Sunday, December 4th and Monday December 5th, the unbelievably charismatic Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Ms. Jaya Lalitha expired after two months hospitalization. Every single thing in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry state totally shut down and a quietude descended upon us all similar to the night before Christmas – all through the house (state) not creature was stirring, not even a mouse. Usually when someone of her stature dies there are riots and disruptions for many, many days. To our surprise, there was no violence or roaming of gangs, only millions of grieving people mourning the death of their mother ... AMMA!

Underlying all this was the “shock move” of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji announcing 500 and 1000 rupee notes were no longer legal tender! This has thrown the whole society into disruption. Between cyclones, torrential rains, bandhs, holidays, no money and now deaths, the kids have had hardly any school for a month. This is the “outer tsunamis.” Then we have our own “internal tsunamis” and also our institutional tsunamis.

We are learning the skill of karmic surfing. We wake thinking each day will be a “perfectly peaceful” day but usually, the great teacher in the sky has other plans – especially for those enrolled in the “advanced Course in skill in living –Yoga”! Our weather is extremely cold now. We feel it deep in our bones! Yet... we go on ... cheerfully facing the moment and trying to turn it to our evolutionary advantage!

Team 48 moves smoothly along guided right now very nicely by Yogacharini Latha of Berlin. Our Annual Dance Drama is scheduled for December 25. It is “Five Great Women” of Indian mythological history. The Annual Guru Puja is on December 28th. So big days ahead! One major difference in this year’s routine is that we “have no puppies in the house.” Bhumi and Bheemi were “family planned” last year. Usually we get two batches of Christmas puppies- one from each –about 20 new souls – but this year there are none! I miss them, but to find good homes each year is simply “too great a task.”

FROM MURALI: “DO WHALES SLEEP?”

The question, whether or not whales sleep, is asked by someone each year as we watch the whales breach off Mermaid Beach. To answer the question (which is often asked due to the fact that whales

live in water) we first need to explain what affects a whale's ability to sleep when compared to land animals such as humans.

Whales like humans are mammals and share many of the same physiological traits including the need to breathe air, however one major difference between humans and whales involves the difference in what affects a human or land animals ability to breathe and what affects a whales ability to breathe and this primary difference is the fact that humans live on land while whales live in the ocean.

In fact this one difference has a major impact on both the sleeping and breathing habits of whales and humans. Because we humans live on land most of the time we do not have to be conscious or in complete control of our breathing; in fact breathing comes naturally to us whether or not we are aware of the fact that we are always breathing.

Unlike whales, we do not have to consistently fear drowning or worry about coming up for air when we go to sleep and we usually only become aware of our breathing when we are swimming or running to exhaustion. Whales do not have this luxury and unlike fish, whales do not have gills which fish use to extract oxygen from the water, so they must come to the surface get their oxygen. This consistent need to be aware of their oxygen requirements causes whales to always be conscious of their breathing because if they were to ignore their need to surface, they would drown.

In order to help these marine mammals survive in the ocean, whales have specialized lungs which allow them hold their breath significantly longer than most animals; and to extract more oxygen from the air than humans and other land animals; which helps them transfer blood to vital organs. In fact some researchers believe that a whale can use up to 90% of their air they inhale while humans can only use around 15% of the air they inhale.

In addition to this whales also have the ability to consistently monitor their oxygen level and shut down non-vital components in order to maximize their blood flow; they are also extremely efficient swimmers so they can minimize the amount of energy they use in order to stay submerged underwater for longer periods of time.

Depending on the species, whales are able to hold their breath anywhere from 5 minutes to over an hour, but are limited in how long they can stay submerged before they run out of oxygen or drown; therefore whales are considered conscious breathers. That means that whales are always aware of their breathing and need for oxygen.

How does this affect sleep? Because whales are in a constant state of awareness scientists believe that whales are never able to fall completely asleep. Studies using electro-encephalography on dolphins have shown that half of a dolphin's brain does indeed shut down when resting, just as a human's does when they fall asleep. However the other half of the brain remains active allowing the dolphin to remain semi-conscious of its breathing so that it does not drown. This same process of semi resting periods is also believed to be a part of all cetaceans (cetaceans include all species of whale, dolphin and porpoise).

While it may be possible for whales to rest almost anywhere, it is likely that whales will be found at or near the surface of the water either still or barely moving during this semi-resting state so that they may easily replenish their oxygen when necessary. You can imagine how a whale would be affected if it fell asleep the same way a human does. If a human were to fall asleep in the water he or she would likely sink and drown because the body is not adapted to this type of lifestyle and would have trouble responding to this type of emergency on a regular daily basis.

At the very least we would wake up in a panic failing to swim in the right direction and startled by any predator that tried to attack us. Eventually we would end up tiring ourselves out from constantly

swimming and/or panicking which would cause us to use up our oxygen much faster; plus our thin layer of fat compared to the thick layer of blubber whales possess would do very little to protect us from the cold/freezing waters that might surround us.

This is why it is so important that whales always remain conscious and alert as their need for oxygen greatly affects their ability to sleep. Aside from having this level of control over their breathing whales are also fairly buoyant making it easy for them to stay upright and near the surface when at rest so that it is easy to replenish their oxygen supply.

This ability to remain buoyant and float also makes it easier for whales to rest in the water when compared to humans, polar bears and other animals that consistently use their energy to remain surfaced above the water. All of these factors work together in order to provide whales with an easy and seamless way to stay alert; react to predators and threats; and remain prepared, even when resting.

In conclusion, whales do rest, however they do not fall asleep the way humans and other animals do because they must remain conscious of their need for oxygen as they live in the ocean. When they rest they remain partially conscious so that they can react to danger and obtain more air when necessary and their body is designed to allow them to hold their breath for extended periods of time while minimizing the amount of energy they use when swimming. Their body also allows them to remain buoyant when at or near the surface of the water so that they can rest without using any energy to stay afloat.

2016 YOGA RETREAT - GOLD COAST – Member contributions

Our days at Mermaid Beach are now a collection of lovely memories of fabulous sunrises, playful whales, beautiful full moons, delicious meals, lovely relaxing classes, great company and lots of laughs. Please visit the Gallery Page www.gitananda-australia.org to see photos of our Oct 2016 get-together at Mermaid Beach. Here are some of the reports received from those who attended.

Jenny Lloyd – Sydney

It is with fond memories that I reflect on a wonderful five days recently at Mermaid Beach on the Gold Coast. Cheerful smiling faces all around as a small group of 13 of us reunited for what has become an almost annual event to practise, to improve on what we know and to instil into us the ashram lifestyle which is living simply without the distractions of the outside world (well as best we could in the western world).

The day began with morning Aarthi at 5.00 am followed by saluting the sun as it came up from the sea and various Asanas culminating in quiet time and meditation. Breakfast followed with free time until pranayama at 11.00 am. Free time was spent tatting, colouring in, knitting, reading, going for a walk along the beach or shopping for groceries for lunch and evening meal or even just sweeping the floor of sand which in that environment is relaxing. Lunch was usually taken together, then more free time until Murali taught us Yantra (number name and form) always an interesting subject to study.

Dinner followed on occasions eating out but otherwise very kindly prepared by Gowrie (Wendy) and her kitchen hands. Grateful thanks to Gowrie for taking on this role, we also learned that in her days as a very young adult, she cooked for many in a remote mining town. It was also interesting to hear of people's experiences in life, some of them sad but also to see how the spirit is strong in overcoming obstacles that have come our way.

I particularly enjoyed the experience of Yoga Nidra and time devoted to exploring the Chakras, focusing the breath on colour and shapes. Having the time not usually afforded to us in our normal yoga practice in class proved to be very beneficial in achieving a sense of total relaxation as a result of the emphasis on having the breath follow the different angles. As usual Swamiji's DVDs of his lectures were always a pleasure to listen to, particularly as I have never had the pleasure of meeting him.

Special thanks go to Margo and Murali for leading us along the path of light. All of this would not have been possible without their help and dedication. So it is with fond memories of numerous pods of whales heading south, seeing the full moon in all its glory shining on the water and most exciting for me, seeing the sun rise every morning providing us with the energy needed for another day. Of course special thanks are conveyed to my yoga family, it is always a pleasure to catch up with you all.

Dawn Williams – Sydney

Firstly many thanks to the facilitators/organisers, Murali and Margo, of our very successful Gold Coast Retreat, it was most uplifting to be in communion with "souls" who were so steeped and practised in the tradition of Gitananda Yoga. I felt like a "babe in the woods" amongst such dedicated people who all had a variety of life experiences and talents. The beautiful beach environment with its magnificent sunrises added to the meaning and impact of the practices.

Of great significance to me personally was the experience of having 3 nights of positively changed sleeping patterns. During the weekend there was the opportunity to practise Pranayama techniques especially Yoga Nidra in greater depth than is possible in weekly yoga sessions. I believe this contributed to my improved sleep. Following the retreat as well as being very relaxed I have a greater understanding of yoga as a "multidimensional concept" and the importance of balancing and building energy. It was truly an inspirational weekend.

Louise Sharman – Brisbane

The Retreat: Arrival at the retreat - on bus and off - catch train - miss connecting bus - wait half hour in cold wind – arrive – finally. Here we are!

The change from busy, busy - to not having anything to do but sit - is a bump - a missed gear change and the engine spins in neutral trying to grab at something.

As the retreat progresses and the yoga soaks in, I settle down. I have nothing to do but what is in front of me now. I know when I go home, back to my "to do" lists; housework and hobbies, that I want to keep this calm centre, this "eye of the storm".

Meditation and Whales: We were sitting doing a meditation practice and I was struggling. How can it be so hard to just sit here and breathe in and out? I was losing the count continually and getting mixed up.

I opened my eyes and looked out at the water and there were the whales just in front of me. I quietly got my binoculars and started watching. They were breaching and tail slapping. There were mothers and their calves. I watched this amazing show for a while. Then took a long breath, closed my eyes and went on to the next practice.

Once again we had a lovely retreat thanks to the efforts of Margo and Murali. We did some longer yoga practices because we had plenty of time for them and this was very good.

Wendy cooked some lovely meals for us. The weather was colder than last year and quite windy some days so our yoga on the beach was replaced by yoga sessions inside, still looking out at the immensity of the ocean. Thank you to all the participants for a memorable and enjoyable retreat.

Gowri (Wendy Snape) - Cooktown

Our Gitananda Yoga Retreat on the Gold Coast lived up to its name, "Retreat", as it was held in a beautiful beach location where it was possible to create our own yogic space away from the stresses of everyday life. There were 13 participants including one long term student of Murali's and one other new student. Most of us arrived early afternoon on Thursday 13th October, with cool blustery weather making the beach less inviting for yoga practice.

Our days were spent using much the same timetable of activities as at the I.C.Y.E.R. ashram, i.e. morning Aarathi, followed by whale watching or Surya Namaskara at sunrise, hatha yoga, breakfast, and pranayama at 11 am lunch at 1 pm, followed by free time 'til 3 pm. then various yoga practices. The AGM was held on Saturday afternoon. The evening meal was served at about 5.30 pm which we self-catered in the most adequate kitchen. Margo brought many fresh herbs from her garden which enhanced the already delicious meals. Evening Aarathi was chanted at approximately 9.30 pm.

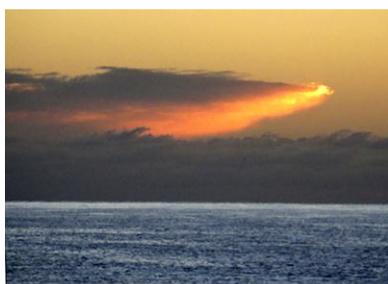
Murali led two or three sessions of Yantra in the afternoons. The extra time allowed a thorough explanation and practice of the deeper techniques of Hang Sah Kriya and breathing whilst visualising the colours and shapes associated with the six chakras. Margo took us through the practices set out and universally accepted for the World Day of Yoga which is celebrated on 21st June each year.

The weather improved from the second day onwards which allowed for beach walks and swimming. Some practices were suspended temporarily when the whales put on their spectacular displays during their annual migration south. As that was a rare sight for most of us, it was a natural choice to make, as were all the activities which flowed in a natural way making it a real holiday atmosphere. Many thanks and credit must go to Margo and Murali for organising a most enjoyable and valuable Yogic weekend.

241 Hodges Ave - Sunrise & Moonset



Last sunrise Mermaid Beach



Visions



Group 2016



Images by Zigi Georges

I do not feel I have anything to add, has ALL been covered. For me, the yoga reunion was an occasion for an upwelling of joy and gratitude at finding myself amidst such an amazing group of people, so different, and yet uniting to a higher Self that can often be missed in the daily minutiae of life. Thanks to everyone.

Zigi Georges – Sunshine Coast

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**

We hope that many of you will be able to attend this retreat in Adelaide. Bookings are to be made via Linda and Cc'd to Murali. Please see the Retreat Flyer attached with this Enewsletter for details

NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND - Cathryn Doornekamp

All is well in New Zealand as the weather is getting warmer in preparation for summer. Despite having an unusually wet winter and spring, droves of people still flooded in to attend classes at the Lotus Yoga Centre, in Paraparaumu. In fact two of the largest yoga classes of the year were observed on the mornings following a 7.8 earthquake that hit NZ at 12.02 am on Monday 13th November. Many were unable to work in Wellington due to the CBD being closed, so they opted to de-stress and relax. As the aftershocks continued for days, the practise of yoga helped to calm the nerves.

The Centre has been a hive of activity during recent months, with groups booked in most weekends. Todd Stewart from Harmonious Health held a series of experiential Qigong and Reiki workshops at the Centre which were well received.

The 3rd annual Wellington Free Yoga Day, observed at the Centre on Labour Day, Monday 24th October 2016, was a great success. The two classes drew much interest from the community with a full house for both sessions. Mariana Vetterli graced us with another successful Sound Healing Concert, the fifth in five concerts she has held at the Centre during the last few years. The room was booked to full capacity.

She then accompanied Jesse James and Wiley Beveridge, a New Thought Musician, with her crystal bowls when they presented the first of a series of "Leaning In" gatherings. Through music, meditation and poetry, the trio created a wonderful mystical experience. Wiley then composed some music on his keyboard to go with the Centre's Healing Mantra which will be available on CD sometime in the near future. A devotional music and kirtan, interfaith concert was held at the Centre in November with newly formed group Ananda Groove. The evening ended on a good note with herbal teas around the fire.

In recent weeks, my brother Colin has been accompanying the meditation, chanting sessions with the sounding of his conch shell. The acoustics in the Sanctuary lend them well to such sounds.

Two Body, Mind and Soul retreats held on Sunday 25th September and Sunday 27th November proved popular. I was blessed to be able to attend another Feng Shui workshop in October at the Centre with Rosemary Nelson, local land and house feng shui alignment practitioner. The refreshing experience inspired me to clear a number of spaces which have been holding stagnant energy, and low and behold, new energy is flowing in creating more abundance.

"Where intention goes, energy flows". With Christmas approaching and the busyness of the 'silly season' it is important to find some time to nurture our well-being. At the Centre our teachers and therapists are dedicated to providing ongoing therapies, and classes in yoga and taichi qigong.

Enjoy the festive season and have safe holidays. May Peace, Love and Joy prevail.

Aum Shantih

Cathryn

Margo's Fruit Cake Recipe

This delicious no-fail cake which Margo made for our retreat is moist and rich but has no added eggs, butter or sugar. It keeps well and could easily be converted into a Christmas cake by the addition of nuts, glace cherries, or whatever you like and you possibly substitute gluten free flours such as almond or coconut, although I have not tried this.

Ingredients:

1kg dried mixed fruit
450-500 mls chocolate milk (I have used orange juice, coconut milk, coffee)
2 cups self-raising flour

Method:

1. Soak fruit for a few hours or overnight
2. Pre-heat oven 140C
3. Line a 21x21 cm tin with baking paper
4. Add flour to fruit and hand mix. If it seems too dry add more fluid
5. Bake 1¼ hrs. Check with a skewer,

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 would like to share with us all please email it to marg0yoga@bigpond.com by Feb 11 for the next edition which will be March 2017.

Wishing you

Peace, Love and Joy in Abundance

this festive season and for 2017

Margo, Murali & Cathryn