



GITANANDA YOGA

NEWSLETTER

DOWN UNDER

Official Quarterly Newsletter of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia Inc
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NAMASTE!



Greetings everyone and welcome to the last edition of the Gitananda Yoga Newsletter Down Under for 2006.

Reflecting on the year, it sure has been a monumental one for our Association. We have made lots of inroads.

We now have a website of our own thanks to the hard work of Yogacharya Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, spiritual successor to our beloved Master, Puya Swamiji Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and Yogacharya Muralidharan Giri, champion of Gitananda Yoga Down Under. Another landmark has been the launching of this Newsletter, a Gitananda Yoga missive serving as a means of Satsangha (our theme for this quarter) for our registered members, their students and our supporters nationwide in this our great land called Australia. The Newsletter has made a great impact on many individuals thanks to the contributions of the Association members relating their personal experience and insights as well as the aesthetic talent and time sacrifice of our graphic designer and publisher, Karma Yogini Candida Vassallo.

In this edition, a reminder from Muralidharan of our Yoga meet Down Under next year in March 2007 from **Thursday 22nd to Monday 26th**. This will also be the last get together at Gita's beach house in Southport, Queensland. All members of the Association who have previously attended the meet at Gita's house wish to give her a big thank you for her generosity and hospitality. This would be a great opportunity for all to attend next year's meet to mark the end of an era and the start of new one. I strongly encourage all members to consider it. Please go to the

'OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION' section of the Newsletter for more information.

On this note, please take some time out to enjoy the Newsletter and ponder its messages. The theme for this quarter is **SATSANGHA**, fellowship of truth or keeping company with the wise. Read about the importance of the company you keep from a spiritual evolution perspective.

May you receive many blessings this festive season and plant new seeds of creativity and beauty for and in the New Year.



Yours in Yoga – The Editor

SATSANGHA – CONCEPTS AND BENEFITS

☺ SATSANGHA – In Good Company

The ancients were certain about one thing: spiritual development was facilitated greatly by Satsangha, literally, gathering together with other Seekers of Truth. Of course, folk wisdom in most societies advises the same – Witness the common proverbs. “A man is known by the company he keeps” and “Birds of a feather flock together.”

How many parents have mourned “My son was such a good boy! He was spoiled by his bad company.” Like a tender shoot, thrusting itself tentatively through the hard crust of earth to meet Nature's challenges to its fitness for survival – winds, storms, burning sun, drought and predators, so also, the Spirit newly awakened to Truth is tender, soft and

exceedingly vulnerable. Many a rotten apple lies in wait to spoil the barrels of good ones! And there is many a slip between the cup (of spiritual realisation) and the lip (of the aspirant). Even Lord Krishna announces to Arjuna. "Of the billions of beings incarnated in this world, scarcely tens of thousands will strive to find me (Sat – Reality). And of those thousands, only a handful will succeed in realizing Me (Sa)."

Clearly, one needs all the help one can get on the spiritual path. As the Upanishad warns us, it is like "walking a razor's edge." How easily one is influenced away from one's objective – how weak is the human will. The spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. The spiritual seeker who surrounds herself – himself with worldly companions, will easily falter in his / her resolve. Satsangha company of the good and the wise, therefore, caution the sages, is necessary to progress in one's search.

Yet, the everyday world seems to be one of "Kusangha", literally, the "gathering of evil, (or at least ignorant and worldly) minds." The newspapers, magazines, cinema, glamourise "Kusangha", those who revel in worldliness, glamour, hedonism, self-centeredness, sensuality, self-indulgence, selfishness, greed, ambition, weakness, perversity lust ... is all this not glorified in the lives of the modern gods and goddesses of the silver screen? A "Satsanghi" appears to be a "rare bird" scarcely ever sighted! Where can one seek such company?

Perhaps the last and only resort, as always, is to fall back on one's own self. The Sadhak must "cultivate his / her own inner garden", planting rich values, ancient virtues, strength, cheerfulness, hope, good will, determination, courage, discipline, strength of purpose, one-pointed adherence to the only worthwhile goal in the misty vales of Maya – Conscious, Constant Evolution of Spirit. Such an "inner garden" will bloom and grow, radiant in beauty and glory. One's inner life, one's inner space, becomes a place of "Satsangha" and one becomes one's own "good company." Such a person revels in his / her aloneness, for it glows with Truth. One become one's own "best friend" One lifts one's small self with One's Own Large Self. One realizes that to be alone, is, at the highest spiritual level to be "All One." At that pinnacle of universal, spiritual vision, the entire universe supplies that much needed Satsangha!



By Amma, Yogacharini Meenakshi

Devi Bhavanani

Director and Resident Acharya Ananda
Ashram at ICYER Pondicherry South India



😊 **SATSANGHA – Company of the
Wise**

Satsangha is one of the most important concepts in Gitananda Yoga. The Sanskrit word literally translates as "company of the wise" or "in good company".

This is extremely relevant when we realize that we are multidimensional beings possessed of five bodies (Panca Kosha) four of which are extremely subtle while the grossest, the physical body, is merely energy compacted to the point that it appears at the Earth plane to be solid and 'real'.

This illusion is comparable to a table which appears dense and concrete, when in fact it is mostly empty space

सत्सङ्गत्वे (satsa.ngatve) = in good company

composed of atoms with satellite particles interlocked into molecular formations - all of which manifest as unyielding matter to our limited senses.

Since it is both a literal and a metaphorical-metaphysical truth that "all is vibration" it behoves us to realize that vibrations can impinge upon other vibrations changing the rate at which a given set of vibrations oscillate.

Thus if we consider ourselves as stringed instruments in a quiescent state, rather like violins in a row, then if the highest vibrating string on one violin is sounded the nearby equivalent strings upon the neighbouring violins will sympathetically begin to resonate so all are suddenly in harmony oscillating at the same rate.

This is the whole secret of Satsangha for the vibrations of the master spread to the group so all are in harmony converting Tamas (inertia) to Rajas (awakened activity) and Rajas in turn sublimated to Sattvas (pure light) so all together the group consciousness elevates towards the purest and highest realms of consciousness.

Satsangha often includes group meditations, Bhajans (Hymns)

भजन (bhajana) = a hymn

And Chanting (Kirtan)

कीर्तयन्तः (kiirtayantaH) = chanting

Bhajan and Kirtan produce powerful Mantric vibrations which further accelerate the psychic bodies of the participants producing 'Ananda' (bliss) refreshing, elevating and healing the psychic bodies of the group in a uniquely powerful way that has to be experienced to be appreciated. This is an example of "Chant" leading to "Enchantment" and the accompanying realization that life is a magic gift not to be wasted.

Satsangha reminds us that not only are we known by the company we keep but we become the vibration rate of those we associate with. Negative, depressing, aggressive people produce collectively negative, depressing, aggressive feeling in others resulting in a mutual increase of velocity of undesirable feeling on a mass basis.

Satsangha remedies this situation and teaches us to have **Viveka or discernment** about our associations.

Ananda, Buddha's favorite disciple, asked him: "Lord Buddha, what is the spiritual life?"

Buddha replied: "**Good fellowship Ananda, good fellowship, nothing more!**"



AFTER A SINGALONG WORDS COME EASIER

IF YOU have trouble finding the right words, maybe it's time to join a choir. Singing in a group seems to help people with aphasia to speak again.

Neurologists have long known that people suffering from aphasia, in which brain damage disrupts the ability to produce and comprehend language, can sing words that they cannot produce otherwise. No one is certain why this is, but researchers had suspected it could be because singing slows the rate of speech and makes word retrieval simpler by limiting the number of syllables pronounced per beat. Therapists have tried different methods of getting patients to "reawaken" their powers of speech through singing, but these have met with only modest success.

Isabelle Peretz and colleagues at the University of Montreal in Canada gave people with aphasia familiar and unfamiliar songs to sing on their own and with others. Singing alone did not improve speech, but singing in a choir dramatically improved their ability to recall and pronounce words, regardless of the song (Brain, vol 129, p 2571).

"It is not the singing itself that helps language memory, but the sharing of mood and experience between singers", Peretz says. She believes that choral singing could be a potent method of speech therapy.



Swami Anandakapila Saraswati

Yantrashiromani; Ambassador

Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia Inc

☺ SATSANGHA – Seeking Truth

Yoga Sadhana includes in its aims, revealing the relationship between oneself and the supreme, called in Yoga "Atman" (note we do not have a personal Atman) which makes it all that much harder to comprehend.

Patanjali codified Yoga philosophy, known as Ashtanga Yoga, which consists of eight limbs that form the very foundation of all Yoga practises.

First layer of this foundation is Pancha Yamas (5 Yamas), one of these Yamas is "Satya" (truthfulness).

We are what we think and say is a common phrase, however, Yoga requires more than simply stating or telling the truth. **Real truth is experienced only when we have awareness of our senses, perceptions etc.**

Swamiji said we are a "victim" of our 18 (NOT 5) senses; awareness is a higher mental faculty of being aware of the world, our existence in it, and the ramifications of the two.

The concept of "Satsangha" could be defined as a group of people seeking reality (truth), not a sterile debate or political

correctness. "Satsangha" could also be defined as a Group of human beings deciding to be constructive not destructive.

When a group of people gather there are many views, experiences etc, which can result in a very fruitful discussion. One of the reasons why there may be so many views, is because each person has their own "Dharma" (ones duty or obligation to society) that is required of them, regardless of this we are all bound by the same law of Karma. Satsangha with like-minded people assists us to live by this Natural Law. We may not be able to change the event (past or present), we can change our attitude.

Amma tells us (at Satsangha) that proper timing and ceremony must be observed, whilst Jonn Mumford has shown us the importance of "cycles" (timing), For example a "Yantric" cycle is "9" years, if you are in a "1" year, you plant. In a "9" year you "harvest" and so on. Jonn Mumford has also told us that a 9/2 cycle, is a good time for "Satsangha", explaining why someone may get something special, out of a particular Satsangha.

Therefore, when we have a balanced and structured Sadhana (concentrated pursuit of reality = truth) including Yama, Niyama, Hatha Yoga, Pranayama, Pratyahara, concentration, meditation, combined with Mantra/Bhujans, which all produce their own Shakti (energy) or benefits of Satsangha, or union with Atman (soul).

Satsangha was also a higher form of oral communication/education used originally by Rishis, in preference to the written word.

Recently I advertised my Yoga classes (including our new website) in a local paper. The "ad" appeared in the "Health and Fitness" section of the paper. For the first two weeks an "ad" 4 times larger, for "vasectomy" appeared above my "ad", whilst second two weeks an "ad" again 4 times larger, for "abortion", appeared below my "ad". This is not "Satsangha", so I have relocated my "ad" to another local paper.



Yours in Yoga

Yogacharya Muralidharan Giri

☺ SATSANGHA - CHOOSE WISELY

Humans are social beings who seek and value the company of others. However, nothing is more valuable for the spiritual aspirant than to be in the company of those that are wiser than himself/herself to receive knowledge, clarification on the path and blessings. This is called Satsangha – the time honoured practice of associating with adepts and saintly folk. It is even said that the company we keep is even more powerful than our will. Therefore we should choose well. Just as to develop material wealth, we would seek advice from financial experts or business millionaires themselves and spend time in the company of and interact with those who have made it financially, likewise if we want to develop spiritual wealth, make spirituality a reality and have

examples before us we need to spend time in the company of those who have attained spiritual realization (i.e. Satsangha).

Satsangha, however, is more than just keeping company and receiving knowledge. It is a surrender of the individual self to the present company and a total absorption to the divine personalities and their words of wisdom. Contact with the adepts is actually purifying and uplifting and stimulates the spiritual process – an energy transfer (from a fuller vessel to a more vacuous one) can take place i.e. a blessing, if we are in the right frame of mind to receive it (i.e. get our ego defences out of the way).

The other benefit of Satsangha is the possibility of forming a fellowship with other spiritual aspirants that are present. The opportunity for divine friendship to unfold, a spiritual network of individuals who can encourage one another on the path.

Ultimately, the only company we have is our own, for at some stage we must leave everything and everyone behind. The greatest boon is therefore, the great meeting and embracing of the true source of our being – our soul. The culmination of our Sadhana and where we have chosen to focus our awareness in life. Just like the adepts and our saintly folk, existence itself whispers to us: **We ARE WHAT WE SEEK.** Tat Vam Asi!

‘WHAT THOU SEEST, MAN,
THAT TOO BECOME THOU MUST;
GOD IF THOU SEEST GOD, AND
DUST IF THOU SEEST DUST.’

We should therefore choose wisely the company we keep whether with others or alone (as our thoughts and impressions).



*Prem
Yogacharya Devidasan Giri*

☺ **SATSANGHA –Soul Expression**

Satsangha - being likeminded discourse and enquiry; the chance to explore concepts, ideas, truths, untruths, beliefs, non-beliefs, exercising the brain and challenging the mind and expanding the spirit. I even see it as a way of allowing the Soul expression and challenge.

This time of year especially gives us opportunity for loving-caring based Satsangha, to express love of family and friends socially in the many conversations and interactions that occur, in light-hearted, but nevertheless meaningful ways.

To me there are many kinds of Satsangha in all aspects of life but particularly it is like a vehicle very necessary for mind and spirit in the journey of life generally, but also for making particular journeys; for arriving at particular destinations; and for making particular inroads into uncharted territories in all aspects of life and living.

It is also a way to express who we are, allowing others to see who we are and in doing that we not only liberate ourselves from constraints of the mind, but also offer others the permission and freedom to do the same. By such expression we may also learn that perhaps we are not who we think we are, or perhaps we are more than we think we are.....in short, **it is a way to learn to know our Self** - and afterall, is that not why we are here? Who was it that said in Delphi a long time ago “Man (and I’m sure they meant Woman too) know thyself”.

All this Self exploration then gives us the opportunity to change what we don’t like and build on that which we do. It gives us opportunity to expand and grow and to then positively use that growth and expansion with the people and situations in our life -

Karma and Dharma working together.

Of course life also gives us these opportunities – but unless we are able to digest, make sense of, understand and integrate our experiences into our life, we may not gain and learn what we need to from them - and expressing ourselves verbally, particularly with peers enables this learning and growing process.

The **quality** of this process is also important and so the opportunity is also there to practise discernment and discrimination in relation to choosing our associations. Afterall, the quality of our Satsangha will reflect the quality of our associations. It seems the possibilities are endless – but in conclusion it is my belief that some form of Satsangha is a very important part of the life process for us all and I feel very privileged to be able to Satsangh (if that is a word) with all the people in my life and especially such beautiful spirits as those participating in this newsletter. *Thank you and Much Love*

Candida Vassallo

ASHRAM DIARY DATES

**IMPORTANT GURU PUJAS AND EVENTS OF
THE RISHICULTURE ASHTANGA
(GITANANDA) YOGA PARAMPARA**

December 2006 and January 2007:

7th Annual Swami Gitananda Best Youth and Children competitions conducted by Pondicherry Yogasana Association

2nd January 2007:

Purnima Puja for Srila Sri Gitananda Swamigal

2nd January 2007

Purnima Puja for Srila Sri Gitananda Swamigal

4th to 7th January 2007:

14th International Yoga Festival conducted by Government of Pondicherry

2nd February 2007:

All night AUM chanting at ICYER

3rd February 2007:

Swami Kakananda Jayanthi Puja at ICYER

3rd February 2007:

Inauguration and Introductory session of the Yantra course 2007 with Swami Anandakapila (Dr Jonn Mumford)

14th February 2007:

Prize distribution for the Swami Gitananda Youth and Child Awards competitions 2006

17th February

Valedictory function for the Yantra course 2007 with Swami Anandakapila (Dr Jonn Mumford)

25th March 2007:

Graduation Puja for the Yoga teacher Sadhakas of ICYER

***** Yantra course with Dr Swami Anandakapila at ICYER will be conducted in 1st three weeks of February 2007**



OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

January 8	New Moon
January 14	Makar Sankranti
January 23	Full Moon
January 23	Vasant Panchami
February 7	New Moon
February 16	Maha Shivaratri Vrat (fast)
February 21	Full Moon
March 3	Holi (last day)
March 8	New Moon
March 19	Bikarami Samvat (2064 begins)
March 19	Chetra Navratras begin
March 22	Full Moon
March 27	Rama Navmi

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Our new member Verna Gilbert, will be added to the accredited members page of our website, with this newsletter.

As this newsletter goes to print, we have 4 persons, who have confirmed their attendance, at 2007 Down-Under Get Together/Annual General Meeting. We can also confirm that this will be the last get together at Gita's Beach House, Southport QLD. Therefore it would be grand, if all members could attend (Thurs 22nd thru Mon 26th, March 2007).

For those members, who cannot attend, kindly submit your ideas and concepts, including location, for our 2008 Get Together, to muralidharan33@yahoo.com.au
This input will allow us to make a qualified decision at 2007 annual general meeting, on your behalf.

OZ GITANANDA YOGA SCHOOLS AND CONTACTS



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