

YOGANJALI NATYALAYAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11

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Yoga and the Indian cultural arts have been made accessible to all sections of the society in Pondicherry thanks to the tireless efforts of the visionary founders of Yoganjali Natyalayam, Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and Ammaji, Kalaimamani Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani over the past nearly five decades. So many children and youth have benefited from their life changing teachings and it is our Dharma to live up to their lofty standards every moment in our life.

As we celebrate the 18th Annual Day of Yognat and 43rd year of Ananda Ashram's Seva in Pondicherry, it is again a 'moment of time' in which we rededicate ourselves to our beloved BHARATAM and its unique, soulful and elevating BHARATIYA SAMSKRITHI. We thank and congratulate each and every parent at Yognat for giving their children this "GIFT OF OUR OWN GREAT CULTURE". It is only the love and blessings of our well-wishers and patrons all over the world that enables our beloved, enthusiastic and talented children to make great strides of progress in Yoga and the fine arts. They have also excelled in their academic studies and many of them are now shining in higher studies and their professional lives.

HISTORY OF YOGNAT: Yognat is the local cultural wing of Yoga Jivana Satsangha (International), an International Organization founded in 1968 with nearly 150 Centres in 30 countries and with its headquarters at the International Centre for Yoga Education and Research (www.icyer.com). Yogamaharishi Dr. SWAMI GITANANDA GIRI Guru Maharaj, one of the greatest yoga masters of the past century established Yognat on 27, March 1993. With the blessings of Pujya Swamiji who was hailed by many as the Father of Scientific Yoga, Yognat has brought national and international fame to Puducherry. The immense interest locally in Yoga, Bharata Natyam and the Carnatic Music is largely due to the efforts of Swamiji and Ammaji, Kalaimamani MEENAKSHI DEVI BHAVANANI over the last five decades. Yognat is the continuation of the Sri Kambaliswamy Yoga and Fine Arts Programme for Youth started by Swamiji and Ammaji in 1975. More than 15,000 youth of Puducherry have received training in Yoga and the Fine Arts freely and have benefited from this programme.

The world famous Yoga and Bharata Natyam Guru, Ammaji, Puduvai Shakti, Kalaimamani, Yogacharini MEENAKSHI DEVI BHAVANANI is the Director of Yoganjali Natyalayam. She brings her nearly five decades years of personal Sadhana and teaching experience into the work of Yognat and is the guiding force behind all successful activities of the institute. The brainchild of Ammaji, Yognat was founded to give the people of Puducherry a chance to learn the wonderful Indian cultural arts of Yoga, Bharata Natyam and Carnatic Music in a modern Gurukula setting. Through many learning situations such as regular classes, summer intensives, camps, competitions, group activities, performances, conferences, seminars, lecture-demonstrations and

excursions the students are taught to imbibe the greatness of Yoga and the Indian Fine Arts. The children are not forced into premature stage performances under the guise of Arangetrams and are allowed to blossom at their own pace. The emphasis is on personality development and learning to be a good human being rather than on results, prizes and performances. Health, positive attitudes, peacefulness of mind, skilled, strong bodies, quest for excellence and perfection are qualities Yognat strives to inculcate. At Yognat, children find a place where they have the chance to express their inner creative urges through Yoga and classical Indian arts and at the same time, learn a unique discipline of body, emotions and mind. Yognat also has an active Adult Yoga Education programme for gents, college students, housewives and working women with more than a hundred adults registered at any time.

Yoganjali Natyalayam follows the Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition as propagated by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and the Kalakshetra Tradition of Smt. Rukmani Devi as taught by Padma Shri Adyar K. Lakshman in the Bharata Natyam training. Carnatic vocal music is taught in the tradition of Kalaimamani Srengam Thiru R. Ranganathan. Yognat has developed a world famous troupe that appears regularly in prestigious festivals all over India and also stages spectacular Bharata Natyam and Yoga performances yearly in Puducherry. Yognat is the only institute in Puducherry that has presented 50 FULL LENGTH (usually 2-3 hour's duration) and MINI DANCE DRAMAS (usually more than 30-45 minutes).

It is note worthy that four of the NATIONAL BEST CHILD Awardees from Puducherry are students of Yognat. Many of our students have bagged the BEST CREATIVE CHILD AWARD from the Govt. of Puducherry. Students of the institution have won various prizes at National and International level Yoga Sport competitions including M NIRAIMATHI and AS ANIRUDH who won the Champion of Champions Award at the International Yoga Festival in 2000 and 2011 respectively. Yognat has instituted various awards such as the SANGEETHA SAMRAT VIJAYA BHASKAR AWARDS for Excellence in Carnatic Music, MICHEL DANCKWERTS YOGA AND CULTURAL EXCELLENCE AWARD to honour students of the institute for their dedication to Yoga and the fine arts. More than 300 students have received silver medals for completing five years at Yognat till date.

Yognat conducts Summer Intensive Yoga and Bharata Natyam Courses every year in May that also features a 3-day Residential Camp at ICYER for selected students. This gives the children an opportunity to practice Yoga in a natural setting on the beach at sunrise and sunset as well as to enjoy the pleasure of a bonfire on the beach under the moonlight. Classes, games and group discussions help the children to learn about Yoga as a way of Life. Yoga Based Therapy is offered by prior appointment with our Chairman and Consultant Yoga Therapist, Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani who is Honorary Advisor of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, USA and Patron and Cultural Ambassador of various International Organizations all over the world.

NEW BUILDING IN PROGRESS: Bhumi Puja, worship of the earth and ceremonial beginning, for the new Yoganjali Natyalayam Annex Complex was done on 5 September, 2010, attended by several senior students and Yognat family, as well as Director of Creations Constructions Shri Gowtham Chatterje and site-in-charge, Thiru Kathiresan. Mantras were chanted and all offered prayers for successful completion of this complex

which will house class rooms, guest rooms and a stage-auditorium. Intricate foundation work and ground floor structure is completed and it is hoped that the building will be ready for use in the next year.

CULTURAL PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES: Hundreds of cultural performances, guest lectures and lecture demonstrations in many universities, Yoga Sport events, competitions and conferences all over the world have kept us on our toes throughout the eventful year. The spectacular 17th ANNUAL DAY and the MURUGA MURUGA Dance Drama were surely the highlights of the past year. They were definitely the best ever productions from YOGNAT and drew great appreciation and tremendous applause from all over the globe. Ammaji has been as dynamic as ever and continues to lead the Yoga and cultural renaissance all over the world with her loving example being more active than ever in her 68th year. Dr Ananda and Smt. Devasena had successful tours to Europe, Australia and the United Kingdom spreading the greatness of Yoga and our beloved Indian culture all over the globe. The usual schedule of classes for the children and adults as well as the Yoga therapy sessions have seen good response from the local community with huge enrolment in all the regular as well as intensive programmes. A rigorous Yoga Sadhana has been undertaken by the Sadhakas from all over the world in the residential Six Month International Yoga Teachers Training Course at ICYER and this year was the 42nd year of this Annual Course conducted without break since 1968. Staff and students of Yognat have won numerous awards and brought name and fame to Yognat, Puducherry and India keeping the flag of Indian Culture flying as high as ever.

SUMMER COURSES 2011: The 16th Annual Summer Intensive Yoga and Bharatanatyam Course was held in May 2011 with nearly 200 students participating in Yoga, Bharatanatyam and Shlokam recitation classes that went on for nearly four hours on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Tremendous changes were witnessed in the children as the intensive gave them an opportunity to work closely with Ammaji and thus manifest their inherent potential. Students were taught the Maha Lakshmi Ashtakam by Smt Meena Ramanathan. Theory classes given by Ammaji on the concept of BINDU, the major points of consciousness on which we can contemplate and meditate to achieve a one pointed and controlled mind. The content of these classes lodged deep within everyone's consciousness as Ammaji hit the nail right on the head in a soft but steady manner. 75 students and staff members participated in the three day residential camp at ICYER conducted in the middle of May with numerous activities such as Yoga individual and team games, Karma Yoga, beach classes, a bonfire and many other holistic activities to broaden the young minds. Yognat also continues to impart quality training in Yoga and Bharatanatyam at our West Branch near JIPMER. Many of these students have come into the main branch and are shining in a beautiful manner. We are also conducting yoga and dance classes in numerous schools and social institutions by sending yoga, dance and music instructors on deputation.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION: The work of Ammaji and Dr Ananda has received wide publicity in the local and national press with write ups their activities and that of the Yoganjali Natyalayam appearing often. Ammaji was honoured on World Women's Day Celebrations with the title SIGARAM THOTTA MAGALIR (Woman who has touched The Peak). Several other prominent ladies of Pondicherry were honoured on the occasion including Mrs. S. Kamalini, Chairperson of the Pondicherry Women's Commission. The

function was held at the Wiseman's School in March, 2011 and the Award was given by the Sigaram Service Society, President Kalaimamani Dr. S. Saroja Babu, Principal, Wiseman School. Ammaji chaired sessions at the 18th International Yoga Festival 2011 and was invited to give a special talk during the National Workshop on Yoga and Diabetes at JIPMER. She was also Keynote Speaker at the National Seminar on Modern Trends in Yoga Therapy held by Tamil Nadu Sports University.

Dr Ananda was awarded SRI AUROBINDO AWARD in November 2010 by the Pondicherry State Artists Association in recognition of his service for the cause of spirituality. Kalaimamani Thiru Iber, President of the Association has been doing wonderful work in organizing numerous artistic events stimulating children to display their creative skills. Yognat expresses its heartfelt support for the Association and its President who has always been a well wisher of our work for many decades. Dr Ananda was honoured for his Yoga Seva by Kumari Selja Union Minister for Tourism during 18th International Yoga Festival 2011 in the presence of Union Minister for Culture Sri V Narayanasamy, Lt Governor of Pondicherry Dr Iqbal Singh, Chief Minister Sri Vaithiyalingam and other ministers. He also received "LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN FIELD OF YOGA AWARD" from the Department of Tourism, during the Festival. He was invited to serve as a member of the Selection Committee, INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS (ICCR) in the Government of India and also appointed as an Honorary Member of the Scientific Board of the International Society for Interdisciplinary Yoga Research and International Academy for Yoga Teachers Education, Belgrade, Serbia. He continues to serve as Faculty and examiner for the SIP programme of the Pondicherry University and MDNIY, Department of AYUSH, New Delhi. He is resource person for the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), Ministry of Culture, Govt of India, New Delhi as Guru in vocal music for R Shalini (since 2007) and Shreya Agrawal in Bharatanatyam (since 2008).

YOGNAT OUTREACH PROGRAMMES: Various awareness programmes and lecture demonstrations were conducted by Yogachemmal Smt. Meena Ramanathan, Co-ordinator Yognat Outreach Programmes and other faculty members during the past year. This included successful programmes for senior citizens at Pondicherry and a workshop at RMV University, Coimbatore on Yoga for Autism. Regular classes are being conducted at ACYTER, JIPMER for senior citizens and at SADAY Special School for special children. An introductory programme was conducted for company executives visiting Zest Big Beach Resort. As they had given bad feedback from earlier experiences with Indian Yoga teachers, this was taken up as a challenge to keep up the integrity of Indian Yoga teachers with successful results. A talk on the role of Yoga in rehabilitation of physically / mentally challenged Persons and heartening demonstration by special children of SADAY School was organised Puducherry Parents Association of Mentally Handicapped and Spastic Persons & NIMH, Secunderabad. Smt Meena also conducted an invited talk and practice session in a women's special programme organised by Aval Vikadan, the women's magazine published by Ananda Vikadan that was a grand success with nearly 500 women in the audience enjoying a real women's day out. Classes for the executives of SBI Life Insurance were conducted in May 2011 while many private therapy sessions are being conducted on a regular basis with individualized therapy schedules as per the patient's needs.

YOGA CENTRE AT MGMCRI: Thanks to the worldwide growing interest in the symbiotic integration of Yoga and Modern Medicine, the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth has started a Yoga Centre in its Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute at Pondicherry. Dr. Ananda is Honorary Advisor of the centre that is being ably coordinated by Smt. Meena Ramanathan with assistance of Dr. R. Balaji and Miss Pushpa, the Yoga Instructors. More than 500 patients have benefited from the Yoga therapy consultations and therapy sessions being offered on a regular basis with immense positive feedback from all concerned. Professor Dr. Vellore Srinivasan, HOD, Biochemistry, has been giving constant support and encouragement for the centre under patronage of the Dean, MGMCRI who is also Vice-Chancellor, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth. Scientific and Academic Forum of the MGMCRI in association with the IMA organized a special module on “Complementary & Alternative Medicine – A Primer” in April 2011. The Programme dealt with a review of adjunctive role of music in medical practice by Dr. A.R. Srinivasan and Dr. Sivaprakash followed by session on the scientific aspects of Yoga and its role as a therapy. Dr. Ananda chaired the session that had a talk by Dr. P. Elanthirayan followed by an invigorating Yoga practice session conducted by Smt Meena. The eminent audience consisting of senior and junior doctors, faculty members and medical students enjoyed the sessions and gave excellent feed back. The secretary of SAF, Dr R. Kannan coordinated the whole programme. In recognition of her tireless service for society, Smt Meena received numerous awards this year including Annai Sivagami Award from Pudumai Magalir Ulagam, Yoga Seva Maamani from the Senior Citizen Association and Yoga Rathna Award from Manamozhi Ramajayam Trust.

STUDY INDIA PROGRAMME: As part of the Study India Programme of Puducherry University our faculty members imparted training in Classical Yoga and Bharatanatyam for international students of Puducherry University. Students from different universities in the USA had chosen to take a semester in India and study at Puducherry University. The programme being conducted for the tenth semester in succession had bi-weekly classes in Classical Dance and Yoga at ICYER by Yogacharini Devasena and Yogacharini Sangeeta with the assistance of Yogacharini Vaishnavi, Yogacharni Shalini and Yogacharini Vibha. Ammaji and Dr. Ananda supervised planning and implementation of this unique programme and feedback received from students and the University has been very positive.

YOGNAT EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2010: Yoganjali Natyalayam has great reverence for our cultural traditions and profoundly respects the eminent personalities who strive to keep such a cultural ethos alive through their selfless service. Each year Yognat and its parent organisation Yoga Jivana Satsangha honour selected eminent personalities as a mark of respect and a heartfelt tribute to these great world citizens. This year Yognat has the proud privilege of honouring great role models who have excelled in their chosen field of endeavour.

Yoganjali Natyalayam honoured our Param Guru, Padmashri ADYAR K LAKSHMANAN with the title award of NATYA KALA RATNA SHIRONMANI in recognition of his multifaceted service for the cause of the Indian classical dance tradition spanning the past six decades. Lakshman Sir is the Param Guru of Yoganjali Natyalayam having been the guru to Ammaji, Kalaimamani Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani as well as Dr

Ananda and Devasena. Commanding high respect in the field as a Senior Guru, every step Sri Adyar Lakshman puts in life is rhythmic aiming at excellence, eminence and enrichment of the Art. Lakshman sir is the epitome of humility and sincerity and it is rightly said that even a lifeless stone will come alive and dance when he conducts the performance with his energetic, spell binding, incomparable Nattuvangam skills.

Yoganjali Natyalayam honoured SMT PREMILLA RAJAN with the award of ACHARYA RATNA SHIRONMANI for her selfless service for the cause of education worldwide. She is an Eminent Educationist with more than 35 years of experience in teaching and educational administration. She has been principal and taught at many schools all over India and in the UAE. Her areas of expertise include Biology, English, Drama & Theatre as well as Public Speaking.

Yoganjali Natyalayam honoured Tamizhmamani ARIMATHI THENNAGANAR with the title of TAMIZH GNANA SHIRONMANI in recognition of his significant and selfless contribution to the cause of the Divine language of Tamil. He is an eminent and senior Tamil scholar and writer who received numerous awards including National Award for Children's Literature from NCERT, Tamizhmamani Award and Best Teacher Award from Govt. of Pondicherry, Pavaendaer Award and Kalaimamani from Govt. of Tamil Nadu. He has published 178 books of short stories, poems, essays etc of which 72 have been honoured with awards from various universities as well as the governments of Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu.

SVAMI YOGANANDA GIRI was honoured on 12th December 2010 at Yognat with the title award of YOGA RATNA in recognition and appreciation of his dedicated efforts to spread the message of Rishiculture (Gitananda) Yoga and Indian Culture and his benevolent guidance of young aspirants through his dynamic and illustrious example. The citation also commended his dedicated efforts towards inter-religious dialogue and communal harmony worldwide through the Sanatana Dharma Sangha of Italy. On the same day SWAMINI MA UMA SHAKTI was honoured with the title award of NADA YOGA CHEMMAL in recognition and appreciation of her dedicated efforts to spread the message of Rishiculture (Gitananda) Yoga and Indian Music and her benevolent motherly guidance of young aspirants through her dynamic and illustrious example. SWAMINI HAMSANANDA GIRI was honoured with the title award of YOGA CHEMMAL in recognition and appreciation of her dedicated efforts to spread the message of Rishiculture (Gitananda) Yoga and Indian Culture and her benevolent guidance of young aspirants through her dynamic and illustrious example. The citation also commended her dedicated efforts towards inter-religious dialogue and communal harmony worldwide through the Sanatana Dharma Sangha of Italy. SWAMI NITYA PRIYANANDA GIRI received the title award of YOGA CHEMMAL in recognition and appreciation of his dedicated efforts to spread the message of Rishiculture (Gitananda) Yoga and Indian Culture. He was commended for being an excellent Yogic role-model for youngsters worldwide through his exemplary skill in action and Guru Seva. SWAMINI ATMANANDA GIRI received the title award of YOGA NATYA CHEMMAL in recognition and appreciation of her dedicated efforts to spread the message of Rishiculture (Gitananda) Yoga and Indian Culture. She was congratulated on her exemplary skill in Indian dance forms of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi and commended for being an excellent Yogic role-model for youngsters worldwide.

CULTURAL PERFORMANCES: Hundreds of music and dance performances as well as Yoga demonstrations were given by staff and students of Yognat at various places. This included the Guru Poornima and Guru Puja Celebrations at Sri Kambaliswamigal Madam, Navarathri and Thiyagaraja Jayanthi Festival celebrations organised by PMDAA at the Sringeri Saradambal Temple, as well as celebrations at Vellanthangi Iyyanar Temple and Salai Amman Temple in Velmurugan Nagar. Special performances were held for the Italian Yoga Sadhaka Group from Milan and various wedding celebrations. The Vijayadasami Ceremony at Yoganjali Natyalayam saw more than 500 students of Yoga, Dance and Music receive initiation into a new aspect of their learning. The cultural troupe of Yoganjali Natyalayam performed a scintillating Bharatanatyam and Team Yogasana tableau performance for the Housing Expo 2010 organised by the DINAKARAN group of newspapers. Yognat was the only cultural troupe selected from Pondicherry for this grand event while artistes from all over Tamil Nadu gave performances on other days. The performance held at Subulakshmi Mahal was witnessed by a huge audience who enjoyed every moment of the show. Ammaji who directed the whole show to perfection was honoured on the occasion for her service for the cause of Indian culture while all the participating youngsters received special appreciation for their exemplary talents that are being cultured in a magnificent way at Yognat. The event was ably coordinated by Sri C. Shanmugam, Smt. Lalitha Shanmugam, Selvi G. Kanimozhi, Selvi I. Krishnaveni and Sri Sivasankar.

DEBUT DANCE PERFORMANCES: As part of the International Yoga Teachers Training at ICYER, students receive optional training in Bharata Natyam with Smt Devasena. This year three of the students decided to perform their Salangai Puja at Sri Kambaliswamy Madam marking their first official debut performance in public. The Salangai Puja (tying the dancing bells for the first time) was performed for them by Ammaji, Dr. Ananda and Smt. Devasena. Lucille of France and Menaka (Hannah Geeclough) of Australia gave their first formal maiden performance on 6 March, 2010 while Yogacharini Dr. Sangeeta of Italy performed hers on 14 March. Scores of devotees witnessed the performance of some Shlokas, Adavu and the Bhajan Dance Hari Bol prior to the final Aarthi of the regular Sunday Puja and was enjoyed by all.

ANANDA'S TOURS AND TEACHING: Dr Ananda and Devasena were invited to present intensive retreats, workshops, seminars, book presentations and musical performances in Italy (Milan, Genova, Livorno, and Savona) and Germany (Berlin) in June-July 2010. They were hosted by the Gitananda Ashram and Italian Gitananda Yoga Federation in Italy and the Gitananda Society In Germany. They also had a successful tour to Australia in September 2010 where Dr. Ananda was the invited Keynote Speaker and Major Presenter at the Worldwide Convention of the International Yoga Teachers Association (IYTA) held from 16-19 September at Manly in Sydney. He presented numerous talks on various aspects of Yoga as well as a Classical Indian Vocal concert with live music at the convention. Devasena assisted him in the presentations and performed a Bharatanatyam recital at the gala dinner. Nearly 200 delegates and invited presenters participated in the convention that truly created an atmosphere of "Re-Union in Yoga". It is notable that previous special invitees have been Swami Satyananada

Saraswathi, Swami Gitananda Giri, Swami Satchitananda, BKS Iyengar, Andre Van Lysbeth, Liliias Folan, Howard Kent, Mansukh Patel and Swami Maheshwarananda. Dr. Ananda and Devasena also attended the Annual Meet of the Gitananda Yoga Association of Australia and conducted an intensive three day intensive retreat on “Moving from Dis-stress to De-stress through Yoga” at Brisbane. This was a special gathering of nearly 50 Gitananda Yoga teachers and students from all over Australia and New Zealand. They also travelled to Europe and the UK in April 2011 to present workshops and cultural performances at Milan, a 5-Day Intensive Retreat at South Wales, Indian Cultural Centre in Cardiff and Cornwall.

Dr Ananda presented an invited talk during “SYNERGIES IN HEALING” an International Conference organized by Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM), Chennai at GRT Convention Centre, Chennai in July 2010. This international conference aimed at an integrative approach of yoga and modern medicine and was attended by more than 300 delegates from all over the country and abroad. The eminent cardiologist Dr. S Thanikachalam from Sri Ramachandra Medical College was chief guest. Keynote was presented by Dr Ishwar V Basavaraddi, Director MDNIY and chaired by Yogashri TKV Desikachar, founder of KYM. Dr Ananda took part in an interactive programme on Right TV Channel and delivered Keynote Address during the 3rd International Seminar on Integral Yoga Psychology organised by Pondicherry Psychology Association, RICE Foundation, Netherlands and ISPA, India at BPK, Puducherry.

Dr Ananda presented an invited talk on “Yoga: A boon for maternal and child health” during the 8th National Conference of the Society of Midwives of India in November 2010 at JIPMER and was also invited to present a lecture on " Principles & Practice of Yoga Therapy for Geriatric Psychiatric Disorders" in the one day workshop on "Yoga Therapy for Psychiatric Disorders" held at NIMHANS, Bangalore in December 2010. In January 2011 he presented invited talks during a CME on Physiological Benefits of Yoga organised by Shri Sathya Sai Medical College and Research Institute, Kancheepuram as well as the Golden Jubilee National Seminar cum Workshop on Role of Yoga in Respiratory Tract Disorders at ACYER, Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar. He also gave an invited presentation at the Yoga Update 2011 organised by ICYHC Kaivalyadhama, Mumbai and was invited Keynote Speaker at the National Yoga Week 2011 conducted by MDNIY at New Delhi in February 2011. This year the theme was on “Role of Yoga in Wellness” and eight eminent institutes including ICYER were invited to conduct workshops and prepare booklets on their approach to the Yogic concept of wellness. Yogacharini Dr. Sangeeta and Yogacharini Vibha conducted the three-day workshop on behalf of ICYER and Yoganjali Natyalayam evoking wonderful response from both the participants and organisers.

Dr Ananda was co-ordinator of the National Workshop cum Seminar on Role of Yoga in Prevention and Management of Diabetes Mellitus at ACTYER, JIPMER in March 2011 attended by 200 participants from all over India. The workshop was organized in collaboration with MDNIY, an autonomous organization under the Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India. The workshop deliberated on the role of Yoga in the prevention and management of diabetes with keynote lectures, invited talks, lecture-demonstrations, panel discussions and practice sessions that were given by a team of 30 resource persons. Smt Lalitha Shanmugam, Smt

Devasena Bhavanani, Smt Meena Ramanathan and Shri G Dayanidy of Yognat assisted in the conduct of the practical sessions under guidance of Dr Madanmohan, the Organising Chairperson and Programme Director and Dr Ananda the Programme Coordinator of the Advanced Centre focussing on the role of yoga in the prevention and management of cardiovascular disorders and diabetes mellitus. More than 8000 patients have benefited from the Yoga therapy consultations and practical sessions till date. The centre also aims to popularize the science of Yoga among medical professionals and general public and has conducted workshops and awareness programmes to this effect.

18TH INTERNATIONAL YOGA FESTIVAL: The tranquil, spiritual shores of Pondicherry were the kshetra, the field on which was played out the magnificent success of the 18th International Yoga Festival organised by the Tourism Directorate of the Government of Pondicherry from 4-7 January 2011. This was the 18th edition of this annual event held every year since 1993 when Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri, Swami Dayananda Saraswathi and Shri MP Pundit launched the first edition under the patronage of Thiru V Vaithiyalingam, the then Chief Minister of Pondicherry and Sri Har Swaroop Singh the then Lt Governor. Such a festival is unique for it is the longest and maybe only such directly Government sponsored and organised International Yoga Festival anywhere in the world where all traditions are represented and various facets of Yoga brought to light under the same umbrella. This year was the most successful one in the festival's history with more than 1100 delegates participating in discourses, workshops, lecture demonstrations and Yogasana championship. The highlight of the cultural evenings was the 'Muruga Muruga' dance drama presented by Yognat.

Ms Kumari Selja, Union Minister for Tourism inaugurated the festival in the presence of Thiru V Narayanasamy, Union Minister of State for Culture. Other dignitaries present on the occasion included the Lt Governor of Pondicherry Dr. Iqbal Singh and the Chief Minister Thiru V Vaithiyalingam. Both the Union Minister Thiru V Narayanasamy and Chief Minister paid rich tributes to Swamiji and Ammji for their unparalleled service for the cause of Yoga in Pondicherry and the Chief minister announced that his government is considering setting up a Yoga University in response to the requests for the same that have poured in from all parts of the globe. The dynamic former minister of education and tourism, Thiru S P Sivakumar reiterated his plea that the Government of India must honour Ammaji with an apt National Award at the earliest. During the festival, workshops were conducted on different traditions of Yoga allowing Yoga enthusiasts a glimpse of the important highlights of each tradition thus realising the 'Unity in Diversity' of such illustrious, living traditions of Yoga. On the first day the Gitananda tradition was represented by Ammaji, Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani.

The Yogasana Championship is always a tedious affair and hundreds of competitors vie for the top honours. In categories ranging from 10-15 years till 50 and above, they display their skill in various Yogasanas such as forward bending, back bending, hand and leg balancing and twisting postures. They also take a written theory examination and public viva-voce that tests their knowledge of the Yoga theory thus making sure that those who win have both the practical and theoretical awareness of Yoga. This is another unique aspect of the Pondicherry Festival for most other such competitions are a mere test of ones flexibility only. This year was historical as AS ANIRUDH of Yoganjali

Natyalayam bagged the CHAMPION OF CHAMPION AWARD thus bringing name and fame to Pondicherry after 11 long years since M Niraimathi had won the female championship award. Other stars of Yognat who made it to the final round by virtue of winning first place in their respective categories included Sri G DAYANIDY, M SIDDARTHAN and G SURENDRAN while S SABRAISHREE bagged second place in her highly competitive category. This was a record of sorts for never have so many students from one institute been part of the final rounds in this festival! On behalf of ICYER, Yoganjali Natyalayam, Pondicherry Yogasana Association and the Worldwide Gitananda Yoga Family we offer our sincere thanks and congratulations to the Director, officials and staff of the Tourism Department for their great service for the cause of Yoga and our Indian culture.

17th ANNUAL DAY OF YOGNAT: We must have broken dozens of world records during the 17th Annual Day on June 13th 2010, though that was not the aim of our endeavours. A continuous programme without a break from 2 pm to 11 pm of Yoga Asana Demonstrations, Carnatic Vocal Music, Classical Bharata Natyam and Folk Dances involving at least 300 participants must be a record of some sort! Then, there were all the supporting staff of make up artists, costume designers, tailors, musicians, light and sound, stage decoration, canteen management, teachers, memento makers, printers and so on! More than 1000 persons thronged the Subhalakshmi Marriage Hall creating a Festival ambience. It was a huge work, as all the dance items were original to our Institute with original music composed by Dr. Ananda with the dance choreography a joint effort of Dr. Ananda, Devasena, the teachers and Ammaji. More than twenty dance items were presented and five levels of proficiency of Carnatic vocalists were presented. Yoga Asanas were demonstrated by kids as young as 4 years to senior boys who are now working professionals in their late twenties. It was a mind boggling variety of Carnatic Arts of all kinds, with acrobatic difficult Asanas performed on a rope hung from the ceiling, complicated tableaux of Asanas in four tiers, and scenes from Mahabharata enacted with Asanas. The composite Asana group showing a battle between men seated on elephants was electrifying and a hit of the show. The Chief Guest Thiru P. Kannan, Member of the Upper House of Parliament gave an inspiring speech to the gigantic audience and was gracious in his presence. Dr. Latha Satish, Managing Trustee of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram in Chennai, came down with her family to be with us and her intelligent, cheerful presence gave Shakti to the show. The presence of Smt. Mangalagowri to present the Annual Sangeetha Samrat Shri Vijaya Bhaskar Music Award for Carnatic Music was most welcome. She and her husband Shri C.K. Manoharan and their children Padma Prashanthini and Thribuvan have been an important part of Yognat since its inception. The award is presented annually to upcoming singers who excel in a competition in memory of Smt Mangalagowri's father Shri Vijaya Bhaskar who was a famous music composer. This year's award was won by K.R. KANAGALAKSHMI (senior category) and DHIVYA PRIYA BHAVANANI (junior category). The Michael Danckwerts Award for Yoga and Cultural Excellence instituted by his parents Chris and Annette Danckwerts of Australia in memory of their son who was a lover of Indian spirituality, was given to S. DIVAKAR and S. GEETHAKALA. Other major Awards given on the occasion included: Best Boy 2010 M. SIDDARDHAN; Best Girl 2010 I. KRISHNAVENI; Yoga Veerya Award 2010 Selvi G.

KANIMOZHI; Yoga Family Award 2010 Thiru V. RATNAM and Family (Smt. Ratna Kumari, Selvi R. Swati and Selvi R. Shalini).

25th PONDICHERRY STATE YOGA SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP: A special milestone was achieved by the Pondicherry Yogasana Association when it organized the 'Silver Jubilee', Pondicherry State Yoga Sport Championship on 27-28 November 2010 at Sri Subulakshmi Mahal. The much awaited event was very special for it was the resultant flowering of the pioneering Yoga Seva of Swamiji manifesting through the yeoman service of our beloved and most respected Ammaji. All credit for such a grand success lies at the lotus feet of our beloved Ammaji who continues to stimulate all of us to do our best for Yoga. The competitions were conducted on three different stages and the audience comprising of the parents, participating students and teachers as well as Yoga enthusiasts kept moving around and enjoying the grand spectacle. More than 600 participants took part and were divided into various age and gender-based categories so that the competition was amongst equals in age and gender. Each group had separate prizes for male and female competitors who could participate in the general competition where they did three compulsory and two own choice Asanas or in the special category where they performed five Asanas of their choice from a list of 50 Asanas belonging to the front bending, back bending, twisting, hand balancing and non-hand balancing varieties. There was also a demonstration event held for children under the age of 5 years to stimulate them to adopt the Yoga life. There was also a special free Yoga session conducted by Shri Mohanakrishnan and Smt. Lalitha Shanmugam to benefit parents and visitors who had come with the participants with so many expressing their appreciation of this novel idea of involving parents and relatives this way.

Apart from all these groups another special group consisted of the 35 mentally-challenged special children, from the SADAY School for Children with Special Needs run by the dedicated Dr. Sugatham. More than 20 dyslexic children with various learning disabilities also participated in a special event from the Bridges School. Smt Meena has been working with these Divine children for the past five years teaching them Yoga on a regular basis. Dr. R. Balaji has also joined in this Yoga Seva by teaching dyslexic children. This is a very special and significant event, a trendsetter to encourage the enthusiasm of such mentally and physically challenged children of Pondicherry who stand to gain so much through Yoga.

All the competitive events got over the same evening with the cooperation and support of all the jury members and the dedicated volunteers who worked in tandem to have everything go forward as smoothly as possible. The theory exam was conducted in the evening and the children had to write a paper on Yoga philosophy, theory and psychology as well as technical aspects based on the Primer of Yoga Theory compiled by Dr. Ananda. Students had to be proficient in both the physical as well as theoretical aspects of Yoga in order to succeed. At the end of a grueling and hard fought event, Master A.S.ANIRUDH and Miss DEBOLINA PAL emerged as the well deserving "Champion of Champions" in male and female categories respectively. They both received glittering trophies in the valedictory and prize distribution ceremony held in the afternoon on the second day. More than 200 winners in each of the 32 age group and gender categories were really pleased to lay their eager hands on these awards that were a

fitting reward for all the hard work put in by them. All jury members and volunteers who had contributed towards the grand success of the event were honoured with shawls and special mementos, exquisite wall clocks with Swamiji's photo celebrating the silver jubilee event of PYA. It truly represents the manifestation of Swamiji's dreams of taking the message of Yoga to all sections of our society in an inspiring and enlightening manner.

SWAMI GITANANDA YOUTH AND CHILD AWARDS : For the eleventh year young people of Pondicherry received an opportunity to exercise their Yogic muscles by participating in the Swami Gitananda Yoga and Child Awards 2010 Competitions. More than 100 young ones showed their Yogic skill in action through seven kinds of individual events and three team events. The categories were: Yoga Art Designing, Yoga Fancy Dress, Yoga Novelty and Surprise Yoga Event while team events included Team Quiz, Team Dumb Charades and Yoga Demo Work. The award and prize distribution ceremony was held on 13 March 2011 at Yoganjali Natyalayam, Pondicherry. The chief guest was Prof. Dr. M. Ramadass, Former Member of Parliament and current Director Studies and Dean School of Management, Pondicherry University. S. SABARISHREE won Best Youth Award while DHIVYA PRIYA BHAVANANI bagged the Best Child Award for the Year 2010. Krishna Kumar and A.S. Anirudh bagged 1st and 2nd Runner Up Awards respectively in Youth category while P. Preethika and S. Surega bagged 1st and 2nd Runner Up Awards respectively in Child category. Yogacharini CATHY DAVIS of the UK was honored with the commemorative title award of "YOGA CHEMMAL" for her service for the cause of Yoga. The competitions were spread out over a time frame of two months and multiple events were held each weekend in December 2010 and January 2011. A tremendous amount of organizational effort was made by senior students of Yoganjali Natyalayam in promoting all the events. Dr. Ananda supervised the event under the guidance of Ammaji. Shri G. Dayanidy and Smt. Reena Dayanidy, both now young professionals but still offering their selfless service to Yoganjali Natyalayam, organized all the events in an excellent manner in cooperation with other senior students and faculty members of Yognat. The aim of the Swami Gitananda Youth and Child Awards Competition is to stimulate the youth of India to take up the study of the wholistic concept of Yoga. This ensures their present and future health, happiness and well being, and enables them to avoid the pitfalls of modern living, that is, various bad habits like drug addiction and alcoholism etc. Furthermore, the Project aims to educate the public as to the true meaning of Yoga.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Ammaji's "**The History of Yoga from Ancient to Modern Times**" is 690 printed pages. This huge book has been "two decades in writing and research plus forty five years of Yogic Sadhana" according to Amma: We feel it will become an internationally respected research work on the **History of Yoga**. The scope is vast – from Vedic times, through the Upanishads, Itihasas, Puranas, Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutra, Tantric literature, Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Avatars of all religions and cultures, mystic science and Yoga philosophers in the West. The second volume is now in press and will trace modern Yoga movement from 1700 to the 21st century. These are books all serious Yoga Sadhaks will

appreciate Amma has made a powerful intellectual contribution to the Yoga movement with this amazing approach.

Dr Ananda authored three new books, 13 papers and an audio CD in the past year. The new books are the second edition of Dr Swami Gitananda Giri's **SURYA NAMASKAR, YOGA AND WELLNESS** (A Yoga Module for Wellness by ICYER & Yoganjali Natyalayam published by MDNIY, New Delhi for the National Yoga Week- 2011) and **UNDERSTANDING THE YOGA DARSHAN**, an exploration of the Yoga Sutra of Maharishi Patanjali. (2011). He coordinated and led **CHANTING THE YOGA SUTRA**, a two disc Audio CD compilation produced and distributed by Super Audio, Chennai. He was supported in the chanting by Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani, Yoga Chemmal Meena Ramanathan and Yogacharini Dr Sangeeta while the recording engineer and flute music was by Shri Rajkumar Rajamanickam.

YOGNAT SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS: Yoganjali Natyalayam each year selects from its hundreds of students, one boy and one girl who have shown outstanding Yogic qualities as well as a student who has shown Yogic valour in trying circumstances. Recipients of these awards for this year are: **BEST BOY 2011 – M SWAROOPARAMANAN**; **BEST GIRL 2011 –S DEVASENA@ SOWMIYA**; **YOGA FAMILY AWARD 2011- Dr Durairajan Family (Dr Gowri Durairajan and Selvi Darshini)**.

Ananda Ashram has completed forty three years of community service through Yoga and Cultural Arts in Puducherry, India and the world in 2011. Yognat was founded in 1993 by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj as a continuation of the Sri Kambaliswamy Youth Yoga and Cultural Arts Programme founded in 1975 by Pujya Swamiji and our beloved Ammaji at Ananda Ashram, Thattanchavady. Hundreds of students who were freely trained in that program have now become professional Yoga Teachers, Bharatanatyam masters and Carnatic vocalists. Many of these students are now on the teaching staff at Yognat. It is our keen observation that unlike most schools where the ordinary are slowly edged out, in Yognat it is seen over the years that many "ordinary students" have been transformed into "dynamic, skilful and talented" youngsters who can hold their own against the best. This has resulted in our adopting the motto

**"MAKING THE ORDINARY – EXTRA-ORDINARY!
AND THE EXTRA-ORDINARY - GREAT!"**

It is our heartfelt prayer that Pujya Swamiji continues to bless us to achieve this objective with each and every student who enters our institution and that our beloved Ammaji will always guide us at all times towards this noble goal.