Namaste. Welcome to the winter edition of *The Lotus* newsletter. So much has transpired since the release of the last newsletter.

As I sit here to write, I have a much greater appreciation for the process of life and death.

Most of you will know that I was called away in April to be with my ailing father. I had the good fortune of being able to spend two days by his bedside (in Tokoroa hospital) alongside other family members, before he slipped away.

The experience of being in the company of my father during the moments leading up to his ‘parting of ways’ has brought our family much closer together. Living in the moment, minute by minute, one second at a time took on a new meaning as every moment was savoured and lived to its fullest.

Eric, Ananda and I really appreciated the loving support, cards and messages we received from members and friends of the Centre. We are truly blessed to be surrounded by such kindred and caring souls.

A special thanks goes to Robyn Moore and Selwyn Williams for taking the classes while we attended the “Celebration of my father's life”.

It was heartening to be able to go away knowing that the classes were in such capable hands. And speaking of hands, we are always more than grateful for helping hands around the Centre.

This newsletter features a lovely poem entitled *Swadharma* written by Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani and some thoughts on *swadharma* taken from the editorial she wrote for the February 2012 Yoga Life Journal. Meenakshi is the Director of ICYER, Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry, South India.

This edition of *The Lotus* newsletter also contains news of an Iridology workshop Eric Doornekamp is offering in August. Iridology is a science that reveals conditions of the body, inherent weaknesses and levels of health through the iris of the eye. It is a simple way of observing the whole body. The greatest advantage with Iridology is that you can see changes long before they manifest in the body. In this way it is used for prevention of disease. Please refer to page 7 for more details.
Swadharma

By Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani

I favour joy, old Washer woman that She is, fierce and bold. On worn hands And torn knees She scrubs and polishes Till she sees Her reflection In perfection!

Joy in perfect, simple work. Doing one’s own swadharma, no matter how humble, is the best antidote to heaviness of spirit. Contentment in the now, the present, with what is in front of us. After breathing in, breathing out, ride the joyous waves of Prana and realize with the Zen monks: “Before enlightenment we chop wood and carry water. After enlightenment, we chop wood and carry water.”

In that realization, joy springs again to water the parched heart. Eyes again sparkle and shine ignited by such understandings! Anandam is our birthright as humans! We must be bold enough to claim it.

Dharm and the Bhagavad Gita

Krishna teaches in chapter 3, verse 35 of the Bhagavad Gita that “It is better to strive in one's own dharma than to succeed in the dharma of another. Nothing is ever lost in following one's own dharma. But competition in another's dharma breeds fear and insecurity”.

Dharma is one of the key concepts amplified by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

The Sanskrit word dharma stems from dhri, meaning “to support, hold up or bear.” Dharma can be defined as “The Cosmic Glue”, or literally “that which holds everything together”.

“Cultivating the proper attitude, or bhavana towards life” and applying it to each and every one of life’s situations is the underlying basis of dharma.

“Dharma is “right-use-ness”, using everything with right manner, with righteousness.”

“Dharma is knowing what to think, when to think, how to think.”

“Dharma is knowing what to say, how to say, when to say.”

“Dharma is knowing what to do, when to do and how to do!”

Ref: Yoga Life, March 2008, pages 28, 29

In the context of the Gita, dharma means “Duty”, “law”, “righteousness”, “moral merit”. “Dharma is that which one is obliged to do by birth and status in society. It differs from one individual to another and is fixed by the Inner Law of One's Being (swadharma), by samskaras and vasanas acquired from previous births.” Ref: Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani, The History of Yoga From Ancient to Modern Times.

(Samskaras are habits. Vasanas can be described as “latent tendencies (good and bad) that influence habit patterns and behaviour”.)
The Gita, is the common name for the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, otherwise known as the 'Song of the Lord' or 'Song Celestial'. Authored by Maharishi Ved Vyasa and containing 700 verses, the Gita is embedded within the Mahabharata, one of the great classic Sanskrit epics of Hinduism. These days, the Gita is considered to be a free standing text. It is regarded as one of the most important texts in the history of literature and philosophy.

The Gita contains 18 Chapters, each devoted to a specific yoga. The story is set on a battlefield where a dialogue takes place between Krishna and Arjuna.

Arjuna the hero, represents the consciousness of the human mind. His doubts, questions and despair reflect the “great eternal struggle between the mind and the Soul common to all men”.

Sri Krishna is an incarnation or avatar of the Supreme Reality, Vishnu who assumes a bodily form when adharma or unrighteousness is predominant in the world, so that dharma or righteousness may be re-established. Devoid of worldly qualities, Sri Krishna represents the Super-Conscious mind of each of us. Acting in the role of Arjuna’s charioteer he gives instruction in moral and spiritual principles.

The battlefield of Kurukshetra, where the epic unfolds in a war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas represents “the plane of human existence”. The war is between sanity and insanity. Krishna tells Arjuna in the ensuing battle that he cannot win by himself, and that in order to survive he must use super-intelligence and power.

Arjuna is overwhelmed by the prospect of fighting relatives. Krishna wants Arjuna to understand that the path to enlightenment includes duty (dharma), so he urges Arjuna to fulfil his dharma by fighting. Arjuna is disillusioned by his attachment to family and the mortal body.

Krishna enlightens Arjuna to several important truths:

“We are not the mortal body.”

“We are the spirit that never dies, that pervades everything.”

According to Acharya Vinoba Bhave, “The purpose of the Gita is to remove the illusion that stands between us and our swadharma.” In his book ‘Talks on the Gita’, Vinoba says “Arjuna was perplexed about his dharma; a delusion had arisen in his mind over his swadharma. As soon as Sri Krishna points this out, Arjuna himself admits it. The Gita’s main task is to remove this illusion, this sense of “mine”, this attachment.”

He concludes by saying “This is why, after Arjuna has listened to the whole of the Gita, Sri Krishna asks him, “Arjuna you have got over the illusion, haven’t you? And Arjuna replies, “Yes, Lord. The illusion has left me; my swadharma is clear to me.”

The difference between dharma and swadharma Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani describes as follows:

“Dharma is the way we live in tune with the universe and when we live in tune with our inner universe, it is swadharma. Both are inclusive and not exclusive to each other.”

“We can say, swadharma deals with the small i, the individual while dharma deals with the big I, the universe.”
Swadhyaya

“Through introspectional self
analysis we become one
with our inherent divinity.”

Yoga Sutra 2.44

Editor’s Note – Swadhyaya is the fourth of the five niyamas or personal observances.

The niyamas form the second limb of the eight limbs of yoga, as codified by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras.

An overview of the niyamas and the eight limbs of yoga can be found in the article entitled ‘The Yamas and Niyamas’ published in the March 2010 edition of The Lotus newsletter.

Swadhyaya traditionally refers to the study of the scriptures.

The literal translation of swadhyaya is Self-study.

Swa means “Self or one's own true nature” and Dhyaya is “Deep, one-pointed study”.

Another way of looking at swadhyaya is the study of our self. In order to know our true Self, the Divinity within, we must get to know the self.

The stories imbibed within the ancient texts remind us of our “all too humanness” and help us to understand the “causes of our sufferings”.

Therefore, study of the scriptures is a necessary tool of conscious evolution. While there is often mention of war, like in the stories of the Mahabharata, they are essentially speaking of an inner war happening right now within each and every one of us, none other than the “battle of the dark and light side of the human soul”.

But as Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani says “We can learn about various life situations and the right attitudes to be adopted towards them by reading the scriptures, but if we don't apply these to our own life, what is the use? If learning remains in books, it is not swadhyaya.

It becomes swadhyaya only when it enters our consciousness, and is applied to every moment of our lives. When we live in such an aware and conscious state we are in higher communion. Hence, Patanjali says we merge with our inherent Divinity in the perfection of swadhyaya. Ref: Understanding the Yoga Darshan.

Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani says “In its most profound sense swadhyaya means introspection into the true nature of one's being. This idea is embedded in the meditative question Koham or Who Am I? Which is designed to turn the mind upon itself. The mind may then pierce all the conditioned notions of self-hood and find the real Essence of Being.”

Ref: The History of Yoga.

Self-analysis, self-contemplation and witnessing are all aspects of self-study. By analysing our self we come to know the true Self.

Meenakshi says in order to do this we must cultivate observation, without condemnation, justification and identification.

Swadhyaya is about watching our thoughts. In the mode of witness, we stand back and 'study the studier'. In the words of Dr. Ananda, “We must learn to look at ourself with objectivity, vairagya or dispassionate detachment towards our own personality. The moment we become subjective we loose objectivity”.

Cultivating awareness is one of the most important aspects of self-study, for without awareness, growth is not possible. Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri advocates the concept of “Four-
fold Awareness”; Awareness of the Body, Awareness of the Emotions, Awareness of the Mind and Awareness of Awareness. There is a stage that precedes Four-fold Awareness and that is being 'Aware of how Unaware we are'.

**Awareness of the Body** requires conscious knowledge of how the body works and what we must do to nurture the body and keep it in good health.

Gitananda says this conscious knowledge of the body involves awareness of “right diet, right habits, right exercise, right environment, right rest and relaxation”. He also says that awareness of the body includes knowing what the body is doing. He says “When you breathe in, know that you breathe in. When you breathe out, know that you breathe out. When you move, know that you move. When you walk, know that you walk. When you talk, know that you talk. When you sit, stand, sleep, eat, know exactly what you are doing at every moment”.

**Awareness of the Emotions** is being aware of the effect the emotions have on the body. We must foster positive emotions which have an uplifting, healing effect on the body and curb negative emotions which have a detrimental, harmful effect on the body. This requires being aware of the emotion as it arises and before it takes ‘a hold’. The emotion can then be curbed by keeping the mind fixed on one thought. The example Gitananda gives, involves concentrating on the thought “shanti” repeating it over and over silently as a japa.

**Awareness of the Mind** is being aware of the influence our thoughts have on the emotions and the body. We really must be so careful what we think as repetitive thoughts become a mantra. If they are negative they can only have a detrimental effect on the body. We must foster positive thoughts over negative. Negative thoughts can be curbed in the same way as emotions.

Our thoughts have no power over us, unless we give them power. Thoughts are just a string of words. Words have no meaning – it is us that gives words meaning. Thoughts shape our future. The point of power is always in the present moment. Each moment is a new beginning so let us choose to think thoughts that support and nourish our being.

To develop **Awareness of the Body, Awareness of the Emotions** and **Awareness of the Mind** we must be totally present to the moment. This may take a conscious effort in the beginning.

**Awareness of Awareness** comes about through the inner practices of yoga: pratyahara, dhārana and dhyana. Gitananda refers to this last stage of awareness as samadhi or Cosmic Consciousness.

Only when we are able to observe with awareness, our “thoughts, feelings, behaviour, desires, motives and attitudes”, will we see the “delusions, false attachments and ignorance that prevent us from realizing our true soul-nature”.

Ref: Stephen Sturgess, *The Yoga Book*. 

**Editor’s Note** – *Swadhyaya* is the fourth article in a series of five articles to be published on each of the niyamas.

**Articles published to date are:**

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**The schedule for publication of the remaining niyama is:**

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<tr>
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Editors Note – Most Lotus readers will be aware that the Centre’s resident yoga teacher, Cathryn Doornekamp is currently participating in the Yoga: Step-by-Step Correspondence course with Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry, South India.

Cathryn had the good fortune of attending a ten-day intensive course in yoga sadhana at Ananda Ashram in August, 2011 and plans to go back for further yoga studies.

The following article is the response Cathryn gave to lesson 7 of the Yoga: Step-by-Step course when evaluating herself on swadhyaya.

The Ashram experience has been life-changing in many ways. Attending the satsangha sessions and re-reading the notes taken of those sessions, combined with reading Dr. Ananda's book Understanding the Yoga Darshan and various articles published in Yoga Life journals, have woken me up to the Importance of swadhyaya. I write Importance with a big I, as it is through swadhyaya that we learn who we really are. The more I contemplate on swadhyaya, the deeper my appreciation has become of the simple statement Ammaji made during satsangha: “Swadhyaya is the starting point of Yoga”. Even though I've read it many times that vairagya goes hand in hand with swadhyaya, I've only really just discovered this for myself, by way of being able to distance myself from situations, places and people. I have Dr. Ananda to thank for this advice. He calls it 'the gap'. He also said to think of vairagya as 'unglueing' – “knowing the right distance to keep from certain situations, places and people”. This has been most helpful.

It is not always easy to 'look at one self'. I am getting better at observing myself without condemning, justifying and identifying. I'm starting to see some habitual patterns and in the mode of witness, I find I have the freedom to act otherwise. It's early days yet and while the study of the self requires persistent effort, it is a necessity if I am to evolve.

Newsletter Disclaimer

Please note that the contents of The Lotus do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or The Lotus Yoga Centre.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Lotus Yoga Centre is scheduled on Friday 27th July at 7.00 p.m. followed by supper. We would appreciate your support and attendance at this meeting.


Housekeeping

A few housekeeping reminders to those that attend classes and courses at the Centre.

Cellphones

Please turn cellphones off out of consideration for others while the class or course is in progress.

Parking

Parking is inside the grounds either alongside the Centre or in front. There is room for 8 cars to park comfortably: five in the driveway alongside the Centre and three in front. Any extras may park on the grass verge outside the front gate, or on the grass area to the immediate left just inside the front gate. Please do not park on the road.
News from the Centre

Congratulations are due to Member Graeme Richardson. Graeme recently gained Level 3 understanding of Reiki. When students complete their 3rd training they undergo Reiki attunement in a space that is special for them. Graeme chose to receive his Master attunement in the Sanctuary behind the Centre.

In Graeme's words: “There is within the Sanctuary, a natural energy, and a sense of calmness and peace. I couldn't think of a more fitting place to receive my attunement”.

Rocky the Terrapin

For a few years now, the tank in the hallway entrance to the Centre has been the home of two 'budding' terrapins. The larger terrapin Kurma, a female would often 'mother' the younger smaller terrapin, Rocky. It was not uncommon to see Rocky parked on top of Kurma facing the same way, resembling a 'Stack of Terrapins'! When more active, they liked to launch off their 'pad' and bat at each other in the water, a rather entertaining sight for onlookers.

Sadly, Rocky's life was short lived. He passed away two days before the Easter Break in April. Kurma has settled down to hibernate in peace over the winter months.

Upcoming Workshops/Courses

**Iridology Workshop**

Iridology, the reading of the eyes reveals:

* Constitutional strengths or weaknesses. Which one of the five iris types are you?
* Nutritional requirements
* Inherent (genetic) strengths and weaknesses
* Toxic build-up in the body
* The condition of your elimination channels. Which ones can you improve?

Course Facilitator: Eric Doornekamp

**Sunday 5 August 2012**

10.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.
followed by an optional shared vegetarian lunch

Cost $35.00 prepaid

**Bookings Essential**

Please bring a torch and magnifying glass for active participation in the workshop.

**Meditation Course**

Regular 4 week introductory block courses in meditation are held on Thursday evenings 7.30 p.m. - 9.00 p.m. at The Lotus Yoga Centre with facilitator Eric Doornekamp. Cost $45.00

The aim of the course is to reduce stress and achieve peace of mind, increasing energy levels. Prior enrolments are essential.

**Course starting dates:**

The Lotus Newsletter June 2012

Massage Workshop
Relax those knotted muscles and unwind those frayed nerves.
Treat yourself to a one-day hands on Massage workshop for family and friends with facilitator Eric Doornekamp.

Sunday 23 September 2012
9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. Cost $70.00 prepaid.
The content of the workshop is ideal for the beginner or an excellent refresher for those wanting to brush up on their techniques. It covers the basics in Swedish massage: back, neck, shoulders, face, arms and legs; both theory and practice. Numbers are limited. Bookings essential.

Available from the Centre
Organic Produce
Surplus organic produce from the orchard and vegetable garden is available by gold coin donation. There is plenty of red silverbeet available on request.

Supplements
Malcolm Harker's Herbal Remedies and Life-stream Spirulina tablets and powder are available on request.
Practitioner range supplements are available by appointment.

Books
The Centre publishes books on yoga and health; such as the Amrita Cook Book, Relax with Yoga, Be Fit with Yoga and many more. A full price list is available under publications on our website www.lotusyogacentre.org.nz

Full Members of The Lotus Yoga Centre receive 10% off supplements and books

Reiki Healing

with Graeme Richardson
Level 3 Reiki Master - Teacher
Member of Reiki NZ

Reiki is a wholistic form of healing that enhances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. It utilises the presence of the universal life-force energy to support the body's self-healing ability. The recipient draws on this energy as needed, taking an active part in the healing process.

A deep sense of relaxation, inner peace, increased vitality and improved sleep patterns are amongst the benefits reported. Stress, tension and worry are alleviated. Reiki also assists in the relief of physical pain or discomfort caused by injury, illness or disease and speeds up recovery after surgery.

Graeme is available by appointment on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons during term time and most afternoons during the school holidays.

Cost
$40.00 – 40 minute session
$160.00 – Five session concession

For more information or to make a booking please contact Cathryn Doornekamp.
Massage

Eric Doornekamp has 40 years experience in massage. Swedish massage involves deep tissue therapy to relieve stress and Oriental massage on pressure points stimulates the flow of qi or energy in the meridians. The benefits are well documented such as soothing nerves and relaxing sore muscles, increasing circulation.

Cost
$30.00 – ½ hour  $45.00 – 1 hour

Back/Neck/Shoulder Therapy

Eric has 40 years experience in treating backs, necks and shoulders. Muscular and skeletal structures are examined and massage is applied to loosen up tight muscles and to relax the body. Gentle manipulation is applied to free up the neck, spine, and limbs to realign immobile joints. Specific programmes including flexibility and strengthening exercises are suggested to improve fitness.

Cost
Initial consultation $45.00 – ½ hour
Subsequent consultations $40.00 – ½ hour

To make an appointment please contact Cathryn or Eric Doornekamp.

Naturopathy/Iridology

Eric Doornekamp is a natural therapist with 35 years experience as an alternative health practitioner. His motto is "Nature Cures".

The aim is to draw on the curative powers inherent in each person. Using a holistic approach, Eric assists in this process by prescribing a health regime, such as detoxification programmes with herbs. Vitamins and minerals are used as complimentary medicine. Iridology may be used as a form of diagnosis.

Iridology looks at health patterns in the eyes. It is frequently used to examine a person's status of well-being. Abnormal markings in texture and colour of the iris may reveal the physical – mental state of the body. It is a useful tool in the preliminary diagnosis of an illness before there is a serious breakdown in health. A free ten-minute assessment is available by appointment.

Cost
Initial consultation $45.00 – 1 hour
Subsequent consultations $30.00 – ½ hour

To make an appointment with Eric please contact Cathryn or Eric Doornekamp.