DEVASENA’S IMPRESSIONS FROM HER FIRST TRIP ABROAD

It was very nice to tour Italy and Switzerland with Dr Ananda and meet all his fans from all over Europe. When I made my first journey by air two years ago it had been an extremely tense experience but with my beloved husband by my side it seemed so much easier and all my six flights went off comfortably. To be in new places, with new people and to have new experiences was something special for me as there was so much to experience and learn. Of course Hariharan and Patti as well as the Gitananda Ashram family were already known to me but we met and interacted with so many others who were totally new to me. I must say that the food at the Gitananda Ashram was so tasty that I could eat there forever!

This trip helped me to see Dr Ananda’s “Dhyana Sthanam” his abode of meditation, the Gitananda Ashram that is such a wonderful place. The Devi temple is so wonderful with all the statues of the various Devis making me feel a sense of the great Indian culture and Hinduism come alive. Great respect and love is found there with all the Asramamites performing their duties as Karma Yoga with the Seva attitude. They all love and respect Dr Ananda so much and it is a manifestation of their great love for Swamiji that has been inculcated in all of them by Svami Yogananda Giri. To have the love and affection and respect from the Ashramamites reminded me of the blessings I have to be in this wonderful Yoga family of Swamiji and Amma.

For so many in India and abroad Dr Ananda is a manifestation of Guru and the Divine and for me it was so nice to see him as a Jnani when he gave his Satsangha. Many understand him as a learned person and wonder how he can know so much but there I witnessed people who could understand and see the inner vision of his greatness too. I was really touched by the respect and love we received from all the Tamil people who had come for the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations. I feel that we are not giving him due respect as he is always with us and has such a humble disposition. Though his world tours he really has made a mark that he is someone very special indeed to anyone in the world who has the privilege to meet and interact with him. I feel that he becomes one with his music especially in the Ashram where he seems so much at home.

It is nice to see the care people have taken of their culture and buildings in Europe and our visit to Rome and Genova showed me that aspect of the Italian people that is very good. We saw so many nice sights in Italy and Switzerland enjoying the mountains with Hariharan and family, saw the lovely aquarium in Genova with so many cute marine creatures, but I still feel that the wonderful nature of the people is something even more special. Everyone enjoyed a good joke at my expense when I kept saying that everything in Rome seemed like Genova! The first impressions are always the deepest and so Genova became my reference point.

Hariharan and Patti made sure that we had a good holiday in Switzerland and we had so much fun with them and the kids. Felt just like we were back at home to have Jeya and Nila running around! The trip to mount Robiei was a lot of fun and to have real snow in my hands was a great feeling. It was also nice to see Sankara, Nalini, Latha, Prema, Janita and the Vishwakarma family at the Ashram and interact with them all for the three days retreat.
Of course the Gitananda Ashram is a very different place. It is a miraculous place with such an Indian feel to it. It is amazing that Svami Yogananda has been able to do it! Swamiji and Amma's teachings are in the very air there and we had a great experience for the entire time. I thank Amma and Swamiji for giving me such a wonderful opportunity for real Satsangha with such spiritual souls. The experience made me realize how lucky I am to have so many opportunities in my life.

I was so happy to be able to dance on stage again and thank Dr Ananda for putting up with all my nonsense and making me do what I should for I then realize the great happiness through the dance, music and Yoga. Atmananda is such a loving and sincere and I feel a very special bond with her. She has really stimulated me to start dancing on stage again and it was wonderful to perform with her. I also really enjoyed the Samskrit classes with the group as they managed to go so fast in just two classes! Hamasanananda, Ma Uma Shakti and all of the Ashramites made our stay so comfortable and were ever ready to help at any time. They are doing such wonderful Seva for Bharatiya Samskriti, traditional Indian Culture. To me it always feels like they are all completely Indians, the only difference is that they speak Italian!

I was so happy that they have translated Swamiji’s and Dr Ananda’s books into Italian with such love and complete dedication to the cause of our Gitananda Yoga tradition. The inauguration of Swamiji’s statue brought tears of happiness to my eyes for it is so lifelike! Priyananda had also put on a collection of Swamiji’s Bhajans and it seemed like Swamiji was singing with all of us. Thanks for such a wonderful and touching moment.

I have to thank Shobana for helping Amma with Anandraj and Dhivya for if not we couldn’t have made this trip at all. She takes such good care of the kids that I was not worried about them at all knowing she was there back at the Ashram with them. I also thank all the Yognat teachers and ICYER staff for managing in our absence. Especially for doing such a wonderful job at the Dance Competition and Ganesh Chaturthi programme.

My father had great respect for the work of Swamiji and Amma and as Dr Ananda said, he would have been so happy to have witnessed my happiness on this trip. He used to always appreciate Amma’s dedication and expertise in bringing alive our great Indian culture through the dance dramas every year. He would have surely loved the Gitananda Ashram a lot.

Being with Priyananda and Atmananda was a real treat. Both are such amazing and talented human beings. Priyananda is such a Karma Yogi and sensitive person. Of course they are also my brother-in-law and sister-in-law as Dr Ananda considers them lovingly as his brother and sister at all times. Am lucky to have such a team who are real examples of real Yogic upbringing. I hope that in the future we can travel to the Ashram with the kids and they can see these wonderful Yogic people. Both Dr Ananda and I feel they are good role models for Anandraj and Dhivya who I am sure will grow up to support their father in his wonderful work.

Thank you Amma and Swamiji for this wonderful opportunity, for I have learned a lot and through the experience of this trip hope to take forward your great message to many more.