

HISTORY OF SRI KAMBALISWAMY MADAM (SAMADHI STHALAM)

More than 150 years ago, a highly developed Yogi, who was known by the superlative title Akanda Paraipurna Satchidananda Sri la Sri Kambali Gnana Desika Swaigal or in short Sri Kambaliswamy lived in the area today known as Thattanchavady. He was already long in Mauna or silence. He was a great Yogi and praised by his devotees as the “King of Ashtanga Yoga on the whole earth”. Sri Kambaliswamigal was a Digambari Sanyassin who took Jala Samadhi in a water body near the Madam on the Amavasa day in the Tamil month of Marghazi of 1873. Sri



Kambaliswamigal was a great Siddha and many miracles are attributed to him including the ability to tele-transport himself and convert straw to gold as well as stay submerged under water for hours on end. He was praised in many old beautiful Tamil hymns as The King of Ashtanga Yoga over the whole Earth. He was also hailed as a Kalpa Vriksha Who would grant all boons of his devotees. Other hymns declared he was worthy of worship by the whole world. People used to wait for his Darshan with great reverence as his very presence brought them solace and prosperity. He attained Maha Samadhi on the new moon day of the Tamil month Marghazi in 1873 and was interred in a Samadhi structure with Shiva Lingam on top as per Shaivite custom by his successor Sri Ambalavana Swamigal who cared for him in his last days along with another devotee known as Subbammal. In fact Sri Ambalavana Swamigal, the first Madathipathi and Smt Subbammal may be rightfully called the founders of the Sri Kambaliswamy Madam, a holy Samadhi site of the great gurus, a Samadhi Sthalam of Siddhas. The Annual Guru Puja for Sri

Kambaliswamigal has been conducted every year by the Madathipathis of this illustrious living tradition ever since, without fail on the new moon in the Tamil month of Marghazi that usually falls between 15th of December and 14th of January.

Sri Ambalavana Swamigal was mainly responsible for taking care of the Samadhi site and performing the daily Pujas and other celebrations to honor Sri Kambaliswamigal. The saintly Subbammal, on her death bed bequeathed all her properties to Ambalavana Swamigal and the Madam. He interred her mortal remains in Samadhi close to that of her guru's and today there exists a beautiful shrine to Anandavalli, a form of Kamala Lakshmi established there by Swami Gitananda Giri. Ambalavana Swamigal fed and cared for wandering Swamins and saints who were traveling on Padayatra from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari and the Samadhi site became a holy pilgrimage site for those who were interested in the depths of the South Indian Siddha Siddhantha tradition. Just before his death, Ambalavana Swamigal willed all the properties vested in him by Subbammal to his chosen successor Sri Manicka Swamigal who placed his Guru in Samadhi as per his last wish, directly in front of Sri Kambaliswamigal's Samadhi facing his Guru for eternity.

The customs and usage of this Samadhi site were set by the second Madathipathi Sri Manicka Swamigal who conducted all the activities efficiently. The daily activities included Guru Poojas, Annathanam, Neivaithiyam and lighting of lamp round the clock and observing Annual Guru Poojas on the Maha Samadhi dates and feeding the poor as per the written tenets and customs of the Madam. Manicka Swamigal was unmarried and had no children. So this property also became part of the property of the Samadhi site, monastery or Madam. Property of the Samadhi site was enlarged during his time and before his death he voluntarily handed over his duties to his successor Sri Shanmugha Swamigal with the property by means of a registered will, Deed Notaire. After the Maha Samadhi of Manicka Swamigal, his body was interred in Samadhi in the adjoining garden area that is to the North of the Samadhi of Sri Kambaliswamigal. Thus in the same manner Sri Shanmugha

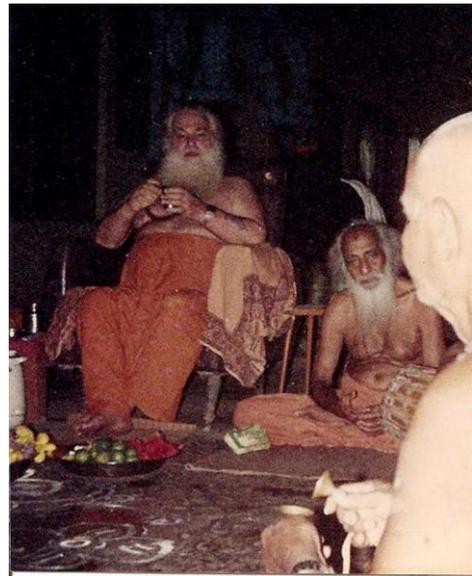
Swamigal passed his authority to Sri Velu Swamigal, who in turn passed it to Subramaniya Swamigal who then passed it to Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal.

Sri Sankaragiri Swamigal choose Dr. Swami Gitananda as his disciple and successor after observing him for many years while he was teaching Yoga in his Ananda Ashram at Lawspet and Thattanchavadi and after being fully satisfied of his competence to fully administer the Madam, to do Poojas and carry on the customs and tenets of the Madam hitherto practiced and followed by him and his predecessors. Sri Sankaragiri Swamigal particularly appreciated Dr. Swami Gitananda for his reputation in being one out of the four leading authorities on Ashtanga Yoga in the whole world. As Sri Kambaliswamy was known as a master of Ashtanga Yogi as well as a Siddha, Sri Sankaragiri Swamigal felt it good and right to expand the teachings of the Paramaguru of the Madam by anointing Dr. Swami Gitananda as his successor. During the Annual Guru Puja in December 1973, Srila Shri Shankara Giri, fell ill and requested Swami Gitananda to perform the Pujas.

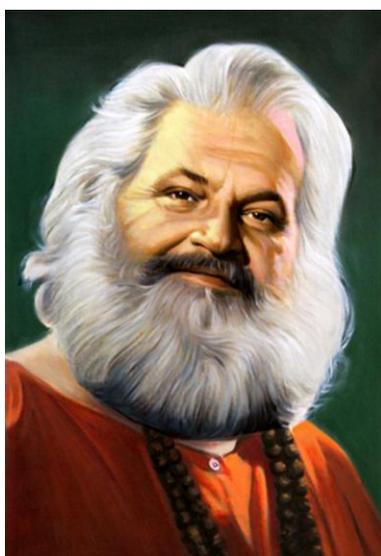


On the 21st day of January 1975, Srila Shri Shankara Giri nominated Swami Gitananda as his legal heir and successor to the position of Hereditary Trustee and Madathipathi of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam as per the Madam tradition. Then the great restoration and rebuilding of Sri Kambaliswamy Tradition was undertaken by Swami Gitananda. The Madam became famous throughout India and the world as an ideal Guru Kula and the Shanti Niketan of the South. Classes in Ashtanga Yoga, Bharata Natyam and Carnatic Vocal were started from 1975 onwards and attracted thousands.

Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri was one of the most potent and effective forces in the field of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga worldwide. Trained in modern allopathic medicine, he combined the ancient traditional spiritual sciences with a modern scientific temperament. His hundreds of thousands of students around the world were attracted to his clear, rational, scientific expositions of ancient philosophical and spiritual concepts. A practical man to the core, the technology of yoga which he transmitted to his students has proven an effective method of attaining perfect health, well being, personality and intellectual development.



He was the purveyor of a vast, scientific, rational and systematic body of yoga knowledge and embodied in himself the Bengali Tantric tradition of his life-long Guru Sri Kankananda Swamigal with the Shiva Yoga and ritualistic expertise of the line of gurus of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam, as imparted to him by his predecessor Sri Sankaragiri Swamigal. The vast living and vibrant knowledge which he imparted so freely to hundreds of thousands of students included a complete and rational system of Hatha Yoga practices which provided a base for the higher techniques. For those who prepared themselves properly, he offered a complete system of jnana



yoga techniques to purify, steady and cultivate the mind, and free it of hang-ups and false concepts and conditions.

Swami Gitananda looked every inch a Rishi, with long flowing white hair and beard and a majestic stance. His magnetic personality dominated the stage wherever he went. He was a marvelous orator, capable of holding crowds of thousands in thrall with his large-hearted humor and resonant voice.

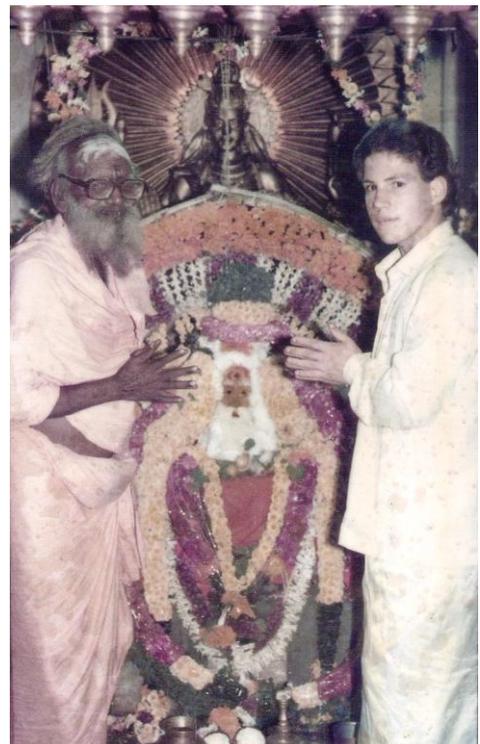


One of his major projects was the upliftment of village children through yoga and the Carnatic cultural arts. To this end he founded the Sri Kambaliswamy Yoga and Cultural Arts Program, in which more than 10,000

children studied Yoga, Bharata Natyam (traditional dance) and Carnatic vocal music free of charge.

Following the Maha Samadhi of Swami Gitananda Giri on 29th December 1993, Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani was anointed as Madathipathi of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam on 13.01.1994 by Sri Sankaragiri Swamigal.

Sri La Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal was a Siddha Guru, who lived the life of a traditional Sannyasi. Born in a village near Trichy, into a family of gold smiths, he renounced the world at the age of 51, and spent nearly a decade wandering in the Himalayas. He came to Kambaliswamy Madam in the early 1960s and became the chief disciple of Subramaniya Swamigal, then head of the Madam. He became well known as an adept in Siddha Medicine and many Siddha Medicinal herbs were grown in the Madam. Sri Shankara Giri wore his hair coiled on top of his head, and when he opened it, it was many meters in length. He was born on December 25, 1900. He lived a very austere, simple life, and



walked wherever he went, sometimes as much as 20-30 kilometers a day. He was a staunch upholder of Dharma, and his favorite saying was Dharma protects those who protect Dharma. He had a great influence on Ananda Balayogi, son of Sri Swami Gitananda, Sri Shankara Giri confirmed Ananda Balayogi as the successor and head of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam in January 1994. Sri la Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal attained Maha Samadhi on June 11, 1995 at the age of 95 and his Samadhi is placed in the northern side of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam and daily Pujas are performed there.

Since the time of the Maha Samadhi of Sri Sankaragiri Swamigal in 1995, Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani has been carrying on the legacy with the guidance of his mother and Guru, Yogacharini Kalaimamani Smt Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani popularly known worldwide as Ammaji.

