

HONORING THE DIVINE FEMININE POWER

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Bharatiya Samskriti, the traditionality of Indian culture, places great emphasis on honoring the **Universal Divine Feminine** and hence states, "Matru devo bhava...", reiterating the prime importance of acknowledging the Divine Maternal Principle.

The manifest universe, **Prakriti** is considered feminine, whereas the **Purusha**, the Pure Consciousness that lies behind everything, is considered masculine. The timeless culture of Sanathana Dharma also reminds us that even the almighty great Lord Shiva becomes a mere "Shava", or corpse, when devoid of his Shakti.

The Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga Parampara of the Gitananda tradition has always honored the feminine Shakti. When our Paramguru **Srila Sri Kambaliswamigal** attained Mahasamadhi, the consecration his Samadhi Sthalam was done through the efforts of the great **Saint Subbhammal**, who assisted the lineage holder and second Madathipathi Srila Sri Aambalavana Swamigal in establishing the foundations of what is today, manifesting as the Sri Kambaliswamy Madam in Pondicherry.

Ammaji, the Living Siddha of Pondicherry, has played a great and noble role in establishing and continuing this illustrious tradition, and her influence on the Modern Yoga world is to be acclaimed tremendously. As the grand Matriarch of this tradition, she has lovingly steered us all forwards and upwards on our evolutionary journey through her phenomenal Yoga Shakti.

We are always looking at ways to honor the great women of our World Yoga Family and over the years have honored **Yogacharini Cathy Davis** of the UK, **Yogacharini Lalitha Devi** of the USA, and **Yogacharini Tasha** of Russia/Germany with **Lifetime Achievement Awards**. A few years ago 25 eminent women of Pondicherry were also honored with the **YOGNAT SHAKTI** awards during the Annual Dance Drama organised by Yoganjali Natyalayam, the cultural wing of the Ananda Ashram..

With all of this in mind, we felt it would be fitting to honor five of our own dynamic women of Yoga with the title award of **YOGA SHAKTI 2021** on the occasion of the Internal Women's Day 2021. As the weekly online lessons of the **Yoga: Step-by-Step** of Team 52 occur every Sunday, the session on 7th March was used as an opportunity to bestow the honors on these most amazing women of substance. All of them are highly experienced on the path of Yoga and I am privileged to lovingly consider them my Yoga Aunts.

Yogacharini Margo has been a part of my life right from my early childhood and I always affectionately refer to her as Mathaji Margo. Her work in Australia for the cause of Yoga is phenomenal and she is a guiding light of the Gitananda Yoga Association Down under. Her dedication to the teachings of Swamiji is exemplary. Well into her eighties, she still surpasses all the young ones of our team by her tremendous energy, zest for living and dedication to the transmission of these unique teachings without dilution.

Yogacharini Zenna is my Canadian Yoga Aunt and has been part of my life since a very small age when she trained with Swamiji. She has been a beckon of Spiritual Light for so many and continues to guide a great number of seekers through her love, grace and wisdom. I am blessed by her love and get great insights by listening to her wisdom, that is truly from the highest source. So many members of Team 52 have been blessed in receiving her loving guidance through the Zoom Womb and our online e-Gurukula.

Yogacharini Latha is my German/Finnish Yoga Aunt and is the driving force behind the vibrant Gitananda Yoga Society in Berlin. She radiates the Shakti of Yoga through her life and is guiding so many seekers on the path. Every year she has returned to the Ashram to assist Ammaji in guiding the new batch of eaglets and continues to surprise everyone with her amazing abilities that surpass even the young ones here. She has indeed been one of Ammaji's best and most loved students for sure.

I consider **Yogacharini Jnanasundari** as my French Yoga Aunt and she has been the most inquisitive student of Swamiji's teachings ever since she took up studies with him so many decades ago. Her ability to 'spin a tale' about Yogic concepts and relate them to life situations makes her one of the most amazing teachers adopting the teaching methodology of the Yoga Vashista itself. Her creative art work brings to life the intrinsic connectivity between Asanas and their energies as she helps students perceive the stages of asanas from pose to poise through posture.

Yogacharini Mugs has opened up an entire new Yoga family for me through the SOYA (South Okanagan Yoga Academy) family that has the most amazing teachers and students possible. She is indeed a personification of the Divine and her loving dedication to traditional Yoga shines through her every thought, word and deed. Her book "**Letters from the Yoga Masters**", is one of the most amazing compilations of wise communications between illustrious Yoga Gurus of India and her own master, **Sri Harry (Hari) Dickman**, was referred to by Swami Sivananda as "**the Yogi of the West.**"

In honoring all of these five most amazing Women of Yoga, I felt deeply honoured as they all shine such a bright light of Yoga into our lives. They all show us in flesh, blood and bones that it is indeed possible to live a **Life of Yoga** and age gracefully with love and wisdom shining forth, bright and clear.

May they all be blessed, and may we all be blessed through them.