

## **AMMAJI'S 70<sup>TH</sup> JAYANTHI- A GALA SATSANGA OF THE GITANANDA FAMILY**

**A report by Yogacharya Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani**

The gathering of my dear Gitananda Yoga family on the occasion of Ammaji's 70<sup>th</sup> Jayanthi at ICYER from 6<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013 was truly the confluence of a rainbow of Yogis and Yoginis. An amazing array of humane beings of different nationalities, colours, religions, gender, experience, languages and ages, all came together in Yogic harmony to celebrate with exuberance the birthday of the 'Living Siddha of Pondicherry', our beloved, most respected and admired Ammaji, the 'Yogic lioness of Tamil Nadu' in the words of Yogacharya Eric Doornekamp of New Zealand.

"Where else can we find so many young Yoga teachers with such a depth of spiritual awareness?" exclaimed Yogacharini Hanna Machia as she came down from one of the morning Yoga sessions. As I listened, she continued with joy, "It is such a pleasure to see how the teachings of our dear Swamiji have continued under the watchful guidance of our beloved Ammaji through the years and to see all these young ones with such depth of knowledge heartens me greatly." Truer words were never spoken for the young brigade of the Gitananda Yoga family is surely and steadily blossoming in wisdom and joy worldwide. It gives me great joy that such a growth is under the watchful eyes, and with the loving blessings of senior members of the Yoga family who are guiding and supporting the young ones beautifully.

Right from the introductory satsanga with Ammaji on the 6<sup>th</sup> evening, and the "Yoga for Jetlag" morning class on the 7<sup>th</sup> with Yogacharini Shobana, everyone was in the mood for a good Sadhana coupled with the generous sharing of wisdom and experience. Different teachers guided the various sessions of Hatha Yoga, Pranayama, relaxation, Mantra and spiritual art as well as Mantra, Bhajans and Carnatic music that were on the rigorous daily ashram schedule from 5 am to 9 pm. Everyone participated in each and every session with gusto and no one missed any session due to illness, idleness or lethargy!

The seniors including Margo, Cathy, Hanna, Murali and Heather led by example and kept all the young ones on their toes. Special sessions on Vibrational Breath Therapy by Bernadette, on Yoga for children with special needs by Meena, on Mandala pranayama by Hanna, and on Spiritual Art by Jennifer were complemented by interactive sessions on polarity and relaxation. Devasena led a lovely Mantra and Bhajan session while Aishwariya, Radu, Gargi, Lakshmi, Vibha and Cathryn made sure that all the morning Hatha Yoga sessions got the entire group off to great starts every day.



### **THE JAYANTHI TEAM**

Cathy Davis, Shobana Devi, Vibha, Margo Hutchison, Devasena Bhavanani, Muralidharan, Hanna Machia Cathryn Doornekamp, Bernadette Hearn, Selwyn Williams, Max & Gargi Farr, Kathy O'Sullivan Anita Rangaswami, Heather Box, Shahereen Bhargava, Radu, Aishwariya (& Govind) Falcon, Meena Ramanathan, Jennifer Dany Aubé, Lakshmi Dhanraj, Lalitha Shanmugam, Shanmugam, Reena, Dayanidy, Krishnaveni, Saravanan, Shanthi, Kavitha, Krishnan, Murali, Arumugam and Natesan.



### Gems from Ammaji's Satsangas

*Life should be lived in a meditative state of being – 60 x 60, 24 x 7, 365 x lifetime*

*Not many are awake out there, so watch out!!*

*Ahimsa involves protecting oneness against unconsciousness, the one and only enemy.*

*The sprouting of yogic consciousness, a neo-consciousness is such a stage of evolution that there is no going back to being "asleep" again!*

A special celebration was also held at the Mango Hill Resort in Auroville with a pre-birthday swim party! All of us (and especially Dhivya, Anandraj and Govind) enjoyed our day out swimming in the lovely pool (that has a cashew tree in the centre) followed by a nice sit down lunch with Ammaji.

Cultural events by the teachers and students of Yoganjali Natyalayam were an opportunity for all to enjoy the marvelous musical, dance and yoga talents of the young ones who outdid themselves in their performances for Ammaji. A special skit was organized by Reena Dayanidy and Krishnaveni that depicted the life of Pujya Swamiji Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj in a touching manner. Students of Yognat brought to life different episodes of Swamiji's life with dramatic scenes coupled with video presentation. AS Anirudh gave a spectacular demonstration of his Yogasana skills and then teamed up with the senior boys of Yognat to put on display a wonderful team demo too.

Many guests visited the ashram during the celebrations to receive Ammajis blessings including Sri Navin Daswani and his team from Super Audio, Chennai, Smt. Anitha Rangaswamy from USA and her aunts, Dr Madanmohan, Dr Prakash Rao, Dr Vanaja Vaidyanathan, Yogacharya O Gangadharan, Sri CK Manoharan, Sri Selvaraj, Sri Subramaniam (Subbu) and many senior members of the Yognat family including Smt. Gowri Muthuraman, Dr. Nalini Srinivasan and others. A great number of e-mails and letters flooded ICYER as so many of her friends, students and family from all over the world sent in their best wishes and gratitude celebrating her glorious her life of Yoga.

Kalaimamani SV Jagadeesan, Kalaimamani AL Ramasamy, Prof Dr AR Srinivasan, Thiru V Thanigachalam and Thirumudi S Arun teamed up with Dr Ananda and Devasena to present a series of music performances that added to the dance presentations by Krishnaveni, Sowmiya, Sanghavi, Vithiyashankari, Balasundari, Dhivyapriya and their exuberant team. Sri Natesan of GC Dandapani & Sons made sure that the sound and lights enhanced every performance in a successful manner.

Weddings seemed to be happening galore during the celebrations as Gargi and Max tied the knot Yogic-Hindu style with all requisite ceremonies at Sri Kambaliswamy Madam on the first Sunday followed by the exchange of garlands by Varalakshmi and Kamalanathan the next Sunday. This was then rounded off by Dr. Vijay and Priyadharshini who renewed their vows with garland exchange a week later. Of course all the events had a huge gathering of well wishers and tasty food. Sri C Shanmugam, Sri E Gajendiran and Sri S Selvaraj made sure that all the puja events went off smoothly at the madam.

Speaking of food, the ashram cook Shanthi and her team in the kitchen outdid themselves in making sure that no one went hungry and that none was unsatisfied with the food, indeed glorious food. The cultural evenings also had extra catering by the Hotel Surguru team led by Sri Dhamodaran who has become part of the ashram family over the years.

The highlight of the celebrations was the Ayush Homam celebrated on Ammajis birthday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of September and was led by Pundit Raja Shastri and his team from the Veda Patashala in Pondicherry. Dr N Ardhanari and Mrs. Pattu Ardhanari presided over the homam and along with Lalitha and Shanmugam made sure that all arrangements were perfect for the celebration. Along with the Ayush Homam, Ganesha Homam, Nava Graha Homam, Maha Mrithunjaya Homam etc were conducted in Vedic style and this was followed by the ceremonial bath for Ammaji with the holy, sanctified water from the pujas. Muththamizh Mamani Pulavar Pattabiraman, Sri Ganesha Oduvar and other seniors blessed Ammaji with a long life while many devotees and students received her blessings on the occasion.

Dr Ananda's new books, "Yoga Chikitsa: Application of Yoga as a therapy" and "Saraswati's Pearls: Dialogues on the Yoga of sound" were released by Ammaji and also a booklet on the history and traditions of the Sri Kambaliswamy Madam Guru Parampara distributed to all present on the occasion. Sri Selvakumar of Surguru Printographs was honored on the occasion and he presented Ammaji with a beautiful giant memento that now adorns the satsanga hall.

All in all, a very wonderful time that enabled us to celebrate with joy, love and gratitude the birth of one of the greatest women of our times (as so beautifully put by Zena Ursuliak from Canada). We all owe Ammaji and Swamiji so much, and, this is but a small way in which we can express our heartfelt gratitude and maybe strengthen further their inner resolve to help more and more seekers, on the path of conscious evolution, towards the highest spiritual goal of human existence, Moksha.

Happy 70<sup>th</sup> birthday dearest Ammaji! May the divine bless you with the very best 70 times over! I prostrate at your lotus feet and seek your potent blessings forever. May we always be worthy of your benevolent and divine grace!