The art and science of Yoga is pan-universal in nature and not limited by any artificial ‘human made’ divisions such as nationality, language, colour, caste, religion or socioeconomic status. Yoga and the Indian cultural performing arts have become accessible to all sections of the society in recent years and this is mainly due to the tireless efforts of our visionary founders, Swamiji, Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and Ammaji, Kalaimamani Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani. Their selfless Yoga Seva over the past five decades can enabled thousands to benefit from these life changing teachings without any barriers.

As we celebrate the 19th Annual Day of Yognat and 44th year of Ananda Ashram’s Karma Seva in Pondicherry, it is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to our beloved Bharatam and its unique, soulful and elevating Bharatiya Samskrithi. We thank and congratulate each and every parent at Yognat for giving their children this "Gift of our Great Culture". It is only the love and blessings of our well-wishers and patrons all over the world that enables our beloved, enthusiastic and talented children to make great strides of progress in Yoga and the fine arts. They have also excelled in their academic studies and many of them are now shining in higher studies and their professional lives.

HISTORY OF YOGNAT: Yognat is the local cultural wing of Yoga Jivana Satsangha (International), an International Organization founded in 1968 with nearly 150 Centres in 30 countries and with headquarters at the International Centre for Yoga Education and Research (www.icyer.com). Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, one of the greatest Yoga masters of the past century established Yognat on 27, March 1993. With the blessings of Pujya Swamiji who was hailed by many as the Father of Scientific Yoga, Yognat has brought national and international fame to Puducherry. The immense interest locally in Yoga, Bharata Natyam and the Carnatic Music is largely due to the efforts of Swamiji and Ammaji over the last five decades. Yognat is the continuation of the Sri Kambaliswamy Yoga and Fine Arts Programme for Youth started by Swamiji and Ammaji in 1975. More than 20,000 youth of Puducherry have received free training in Yoga and the Fine Arts.

Ammaji as the Director, Yognat brings her nearly five decades years of personal Sadhana and teaching experience into all our activities and is the guiding force behind every success. The brainchild of Ammaji, Yognat was founded to give Pondicherrians a chance to imbibe the wonderful Indian cultural arts of Yoga, Bharata Natyam and Carnatic Music in a modern Gurukula setting. Through many learning situations such as regular classes, summer intensives, camps, competitions, group activities, performances, conferences, seminars, lecture-demonstrations and excursions the students imbibe the greatness of these arts. Children are not forced into premature stage performances under the guise of Arangetrams and are allowed to blossom at their own pace. Emphasis is on personality development and blossoming into a good human being rather than on results, prizes and performances. Health, positive attitudes, peace of mind, skilled, strong bodies, quest for excellence and perfection are qualities Yognat strives to inculcate. At Yognat, children find a place where they have the chance to express their inner creative urges and at the same time, learn a unique discipline of
body, emotions and mind. Yognat also has an active Adult Yoga Education programme for gents, college students, housewives and working women with more than a hundred adults registered at any time. Special Corporate Yoga Programmes are also being conducted regularly.

Yognat follows the Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition as propagated by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and the Kalakshetra Tradition of Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale as taught by Padma Shri Adyar K. Lakshman in the Bharata Natyam training. Carnatic vocal music is taught in the tradition of Kalaimamani Srirengam Thiru R. Ranganathan. Yognat has developed a world famous troupe that appears regularly in prestigious festivals all over India and also stages spectacular Bharata Natyam and Yoga performances yearly in Puducherry. Yognat is the only institute in Puducherry that has presented 50 FULL LENGTH (usually 2-3 hour’s duration) and MINI DANCE DRAMAS (usually more than 30-45 minutes).

It is noteworthy that four of the NATIONAL BEST CHILD Awardees from Puducherry are students of Yognat. Many of our students have bagged the BEST CREATIVE CHILD AWARD from the Govt. of Puducherry. Students of the institute have won various prizes at National and International level Yoga Sport competitions including M Niraimathi and AS Anirudh who won Champion of Champions Award at the International Yoga Festival in 2000 and 2011 respectively. Yognat has instituted various awards such as the Sangeetha Samrat Vijaya Bhaskar Awards for Excellence in Carnatic Music, Michel Danckwerts Yoga and Cultural Excellence Award to honour students of the institute for their dedication to Yoga and the fine arts. More than 350 students have received silver medals for completing five years at Yognat till date.

Yognat conducts Summer Intensive Yoga and Bharata Natyam Courses every year in May that also features a 3-day Residential Camp at ICYER for selected students. This gives the children an opportunity to practice Yoga in a natural setting on the beach at sunrise and sunset as well as to enjoy the pleasure of a bonfire on the beach under the moonlight. Classes, games and group discussions help the children to learn about Yoga as a way of Life. Yoga Based Therapy is offered by prior appointment with our Chairman and Consultant Yoga Therapist, Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani who is Honorary Advisor of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, USA and Patron and Cultural Ambassador of various International Organizations all over the world.

CONFERENCES, EVENTS AND TOURS: Dr Ananda was busy this last year as an invited speaker at many events worldwide. He was invited to present an interactive talk and lec-dem in the CME on Obesity organized by Woman Doctors Association of TN at Sri Lakshminarayanan Institute of Medical Studies, Pondicherry in August 2011. He was also a Resource Person for the workshop on “Tourism-Linking Cultures” organized by Department of Tourism Studies, Pondicherry University for World Tourism Day in September 2011. He presented an Invited Talk on Yoga & Education during 19th International Conference at SVYASA Yoga University, Bengaluru in December 2011 and was an Invited Keynote Speaker at National Yoga Week 2012 conducted by the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, New Delhi from 12th to 18th February 2012. He was guest of honor for Holistic Health and Humour Association at Jothi Eye Care Centre and Sports and Fine Arts Day of Kanchi Mamunivar PG Centre in April 2012. He was guest at numerous Tamil literary events including the release of “Ettam Arivu” a motivational book in Tamil by Dr EM Rajan followed by a TV book review of the same on Dordarshan. He was also busy with his international tours in August 2011 and April 2012. He and Smt Devasena Bhavanani were
invited to present talks, concerts, dance lessons, seminars and classes at the Gitananda Ashram in Savona, Italy in August 2011 and then he was again invited to present intensive retreats, workshops, seminars, book presentations and musical performances in Italy (Merano, Cuneo and Savona) and Germany (Berlin) in April 2012. He was Special Invited Guest at the Merano Yoga Festival in April 2012.

Every year since 2007, the entire week from 12 to 18 of February resonates with vibrations of the National Yoga Week, a mass awareness programme for health, happiness and harmony through Yoga organised by the MDNIY, New Delhi. The event offers a common platform at the national level for various Yoga experts from all the eminent traditions of Yoga to share their knowledge and experiences. The collective knowledge and innovative ideas emerging from deliberations of National Yoga Week have been stimulating new thinking in the field of Yoga education, training, therapy and also in the promotion and propagation of Yoga with reference to holistic personality development. Every year a special theme is adopted and developed with 3-days National Conference, a day National Seminar and 3-days Workshop by eminent experts of leading Yoga Institutes and leading scientists. The theme chosen for this year’s event was “Yoga for Holistic Personality Development”. ICYER and Yognat were represented by Dr Ananda who delivered a keynote address on “The Yoga of Interpersonal Relationships” and moderated another keynote session. Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani and Yogachemmal Meena Ramanathan conducted the three day workshop on “Yoga for a Wholistic Personality” and guided more than 100 participants from India and abroad through theoretical concepts and practical techniques of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga in the Gitananda Tradition. All participants expressed their admiration for both the teachings as well as the manner in which the workshop was conducted by Smt Devasena and Smt Meena with demonstrations by Selvi L Vithiyalakshmi. During the Yoga Week, six booklets detailing concepts and practices for developing a Holistic Personality through Yoga published by MDNIY were released. These had been compiled by five eminent traditional institutes and a team of applied psychologists. Dr Ananda had compiled the booklet on behalf of ICYER at Ananda Ashram with special emphasis on practices uniting breath and body movements, as well as pranayamas and relaxation techniques unique to this tradition. The souvenir released on the occasion carried scholarly articles by Ammaji and Dr Ananda. Ammaji’s thoughts on “Impersonality Development” and Dr Ananda’s detailed explanations of the five evolutionary quirks were specially appreciated by all delegates, resource persons and participants.

Regular Guru Pujas and Vyasa Guru Purnima were celebrated with pomp and ceremony at the Sri Kambaliswamy Madam (Samadhi Sthalam) in memory of the illustrious Gurus of this living tradition. Maha Shivaratri was also celebrated with special Pujas for the Shiva Lingam located under the Shiva Shakti Tandava Moorthy followed by 1008 Panchakshara Japa and the Bhajan laden Pada Yatra to ICYER where the specially worshipped mud Lingam was immersed in the Bay of Bengal. The Jayanthi of Yogamaharishi Swami Kanakanananda Brighu was observed with a special Homa ceremony and all night AUM chanting at ICYER.

VISITS BY INTERNATIONAL YOGA GROUPS

Gitananda Yoga Sadhakas from Australia and New Zealand made a trip to India in August 2011 and had an intensive 10 days of Sadhana under the guidance of Ammaji and Dr Ananda. Yogacharya Muralidharan and Yogacharini Margo Hutchison led the group with grace. Smt Devasena, Shalini, Vibha and Shwetha assisted in teaching the classes while the energetic youngsters from Yognat gave a graceful cultural performance at the valedictory function where Yogacharini Shalini received her well deserved Advanced Yoga Diploma. Yogacharya
Murali and Yogacharini Margo were honored on behalf of the Australian group members while Cathryn Doornekamp and Ann-Marie Bukholt were honored on behalf of the New Zealand members.

A lovely group of 55 Brazilian Yoga enthusiasts led by Shri Marcos Rojo visited ICYER in January 2012. The group was on a Yoga tour of India and had expressed a desire to witness the Ashram activities first hand. They were treated to an excellent demonstration of Indian culture and Yoga with Bhajans by the international teachers and students of ICYER, a classical Bharatanatyam performance by Lakshmi, Dhivya Priya and Lucile and a stupendous Yogasana demonstration by AS Anirudh. Ammaji and Dr Ananda interacted with the group with translation by Giriraj and then the evening climaxed with an invigorating folk dance presentation by students and teachers of ICYER. All the guests enjoyed a tour of the ashram and brought a lovely presence to their visit with their respect and love for Yoga and the Indian Culture. Another team of 18 researchers from Poland led by Professor Dr Kulmatycki, Department of Psychology, University of Physical Education, Wroclaw and guided by Krzysztof Stec also visited ICYER in January 2012 and interacted with Dr Ananda as well as the students and teachers at ICYER.

It is rare to celebrate two of the 16 important sacraments of Indian culture (Shodasa Samskaras) on the same day and in the same place, yet we did have the privilege to do so on January 29th 2012 when Dr Alan Davis and Cathy Davis from the UK celebrated Sashtiaapdapoorthi while young Shankar Das from Brazil had his first hair shaving ceremony known as Mundana or Chudakarana. Both celebrations took place in the hallowed sanctity of the Sri Kambaliswamy Madam with the blessings of the Guru Parampara manifesting through our beloved Ammaji. Dr Alan and Cathy Davis had studied with Swamiji at Kambaliswamy madam in 1980 and this was the first time Alan was coming back to Ananda Ashram after thirty years through Cathy has been regularly coming back ever since the Millennium Meet in 2000. Young Shankar Das is the son of Giriraj and Shivashankari of Brazil and it was their deep desire that he have this important ceremony at the Sri Kambalinswamy Madam for that is the same place they got married in the traditional Hindu way two years ago. We also had another special Chudakarana ceremony for Govind who is the son of Yogacharini Aishwariya and Yoga Sadhaka Radu of Canada. Govind stayed with us from October 2011 to April 2012 as his father was his 6 month teacher training and mother was completing her advanced diploma studies at ICYER. In fact at the valedictory function of the 6 months training Ammaji bestowed a special certificate to Balayogi Govind for his participating in 7 months of Ashram living!

**YOGNAT OUTREACH PROGRAMMES:** Various awareness programmes and lecture demonstrations were conducted by Yogachemmal Smt. Meena Ramanathan, Co-ordinator Yognat Outreach Programmes and other faculty members during the past year. Smt. Meena represented Yognat and ICYER at the 2nd International Yoga Seminar on Yoga for Health, Illness and Disease conducted in September 2011 by the Ujjain Yoga Life Society in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. Her workshops and presentations were well appreciated by hundreds of participants who enjoyed learning various concepts and techniques of the Gitananda Tradition. The annual event was ably organized by the dynamic Radheshyam Mishra in an excellent manner. Faculty members of Yognat are also conducting regular Yoga and dance classes in many local schools and colleges.

Thanks to the worldwide growing interest in symbiotic integration of Yoga and Modern Medicine, the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth has started a Yoga Centre in its Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute at Pondicherry. Dr. Ananda is Honorary Advisor of
the centre that is being ably coordinated by Smt Meena Ramanathan with assistance of Dr R Balaji and Miss Pushpa, the Yoga Instructors. Nearly 2000 patients attended consultations and Yoga therapy sessions in the past year. Those who have attended the classes regularly have attained lot of benefits physically and psychologically, adding up to their health and well being on the whole. Many patients have been able to reduce the dosage of their medications while a few have been able to stop taking medications completely. Students of Kasturba Gandhi Nursing College are receiving regular Yoga training and a few research studies have been completed while many others are in progress. The CYTER team participated in ‘Krish-Rejuve’, an annual orientation programme for more than 300 faculty members of the Krishnasamy Group of Schools and Smt Meena gave an invited talk on “Activation and Deactivation through Yoga” with excellent demonstration by Miss Pushpa and support from Dr R Balaji.

As part of the Study India Programme of Puducherry University our faculty members imparted training in Classical Yoga and Bharatanatyam for international students of Puducherry University. Students from different universities in the USA had chosen to take a semester in India and study at Puducherry University. The programme being conducted for the 12th semester in succession had bi-weekly classes in Classical Dance and Yoga at ICYER by Yogacharini Devasena and Yogacharini Aishwariya with the assistance of Yogacharini Vaishnavi. Ammaji and Dr. Ananda supervised planning and implementation of this unique programme and feedback received from students and the University has been very positive.

Yognat is now expanding its adult Yoga training activities and has started focusing on Corporate Yoga programmes. The first of such programmes is being conducted for the Harmoney Corporate group on a regular basis at by Yogachemmal C Shanmugam and Yogachemmal Lalitha Shanmugam. Ammaji and Dr Ananda conducted a special Yoga Day for executives of Harmoney Corporate group in January 2012 and more than 50 executives and invitees attended the event at Hotel Atithi. Other corporates interested in such programme can contact us at yognat@gmail.com.

26TH PONDICHERY YOGA SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP: PYA organised the 26th Annual Pondicherry State Yoga Sport Championship on December 10th and 11th at Sri Subulakshmi Mahal in Muthialpet, Pondicherry. The much awaited event showcased the flowering of pioneering Yoga Seva of Pujya Swamiji manifesting through yeoman service of our most beloved and respected Ammaji. All credit for such a grand success lies at the lotus feet of our beloved Ammaji who continues to stimulate all of us to do our best for Yoga. The competitions were conducted on three different stages and the audience comprising of the parents, participating students and teachers as well as Yoga enthusiasts kept moving around and enjoying the grand spectacle. More than 900 participants from 30 Yoga and educational institutions ranging from the age of 3 to 18 years took part and were divided into various educational and gender-based categories so that the competition was amongst equals. Each group had six separate prizes and honour certificates for male and female competitors who could participate in the general competition where they did three compulsory and two own choice Asanas or in the special category where they performed five Asanas of their choice from a list of 50 Asanas belonging to the front bending, back bending, twisting, hand balancing and non-hand balancing varieties. There was also a demonstration event held for nearly 100 children under the age of 5 years to stimulate them to adopt the Yoga life. Enthusiasm and cheer shown by jubilant participants and their parents gladdened our hearts for it meant these children would continue their Yoga journey for at least another year if not
more due to this stimulation. Motivation is such an important aspect of growth for children and these events surely do that at multiple levels.

Apart from all these groups another special group consisted of 40 mentally-challenged special children, from the SADAY School for Children with Special Needs run by the dedicated Dr. Sugatham and his wife Smt Asha. More than 20 dyslexic children with various learning disabilities also participated from the Bridges School run by Dr Bhuvana Vasudevan. This is a very special and significant event, a trendsetter to encourage the enthusiasm of such mentally and physically challenged children of Pondicherry who stand to gain so much through Yoga.

All the competitive events got over the same evening with the cooperation and support of jury members and dedicated volunteers who worked in tandem to have everything fit in place as smoothly as possible. The theory exam was conducted in the evening and the children had to write a paper on Yoga philosophy, theory and psychology as well as technical aspects based on the Primer of Yoga Theory compiled by Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani. Students had to be proficient in both the physical as well as theoretical aspects of Yoga in order to succeed. At the end of a gruelling and hard fought event, Master SM Thanikaivel and Miss N Poonguzhali emerged as the well deserving “Champion of Champions” in male and female categories respectively. They both received glittering trophies in the valedictory and prize distribution ceremony held on the second day. Sri BR Babu, Secretary Tourism was Chief Guest of the event, also graced by NSS State liaison officer Dr EM Rajan, the eminent ophthalmologist Dr Vanaja Vaithyanathan, the MD of Harmony Wealth Advisory Services Sri M Ramesh Kumar, the eminent social activist Dr N Ardhana and Mutthamizmamani Pulavar Pattabhiraman. International invitees included Yogacharini Janita, Yogacharini Aishwariya, Yogacharini Shwetha and Yogacharya Michael.

Yogacharini Janita Stenhouse of France, Yogacharya Michael Deslippe of Canada and Smt Megalai Senthilkumar and Dr R Balaji of Pondicherry were honoured with the Yoga Chemmal Award on the occasion in appreciation of their dedication towards Yoga and their Worldwide Yoga Seva. This award is given by the PYA to eminent Yoga teachers and Yoga Sadhakas every year in recognition of their Yoga Seva. PYA’s newly reconstituted Jury Board for 2011-14 was announced and all 22 members were honoured with shawls, mementoes, honour certificates and ID cards. More than 250 winners in each of the 40 categories were really pleased to lay their eager hands on these glittering awards that were a fitting reward for all their hard work. All jury members and volunteers who had contributed towards the grand success of the event were honoured with shawls and special mementos. The whole event truly represents the manifestation of Swamiji’s dreams of taking the message of Yoga to all sections of our society in an inspiring and enlightening manner and Sri Krishna Rao, a long time ardent Yoga practitioner and enthusiast commented, “Pondicherry is blessed by the intense efforts of Yognat and Dr Ananda, Ammaji and Guruji”.

Pondicherry Yogasana Association also organised the SWAMI GITANANDA YOUTH & CHILD AWARDS 2011 competitions during December 2011 and January 2012 at the Yoganjali Natyalayam premises in Pondicherry. More than 150 children and youth participated in this event. This was the 11th year that this competition is being conducted and the Best Youth Awardee was bagged by N Poonguzhali and Best Child Awardee by Aradhana Mukherjee.
PERFORMANCES: Yognat presented many dozens of cultural performances for different events locally including the Fete de Pondicherry, music festival and Children’s dance festival organised by Deptt of Art and Culture, Govt of Pondicherry at Gandhi Tidal, TANMED-75 held at Ocean Spray and the Platinum Jubilee festival of Brahmakumaris at Kamban Kalai Arangam. Special Kalyana Natyanjali performances were organized for a dozen weddings including that of Niraj and Ranjani, the son and daughter-in-law of Smt Meena Ramanthan. As usual Yognat participated with many performances during the Navarathri music and dance festival at Sringeri Saradha Madam, and Ganesh Chaturthi festival at Saram and Vellanthangi Iyyanar Temple’s Tamil New Year celebrations.

BHARATA NATYAM ARANGETRAM: The Bharatanatyam Arangetram of Selvi Poonguzhali, premiered on 25th September 2011 was a spectacular success. Excellent dancing skills, great stamina, grace and beauty were exhibited by the youngster who is a great star of Yognat having won numerous awards for her Yoga and dance artistry. Her skill in action manifested in a true reflection of Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram in an admirable manner with rousing music in the presence of a huge and appreciative audience of friends and relatives. The celebration of the 50th wedding anniversary of her grandparents made the day all the more special and Poonguzhali made sure that she gave her grandparents the best-ever anniversary gift she could have given them. Following the Varnam the stage was taken over by her well wishers with eminent dignitaries including Speaker of the Pondicherry Legislature, Thiru Sabapathi and Chief Minister of Pondicherry Thiru N Rangasamy bestowing many honors and accolades on her. Her Gurus, namely Ammaji, Dr Ananda and Devasena were honoured along with the team of musicians, coordinators, makeup artists and dress makers. Pulavar Pattabhiraman, Kalaimamani Manikannan, Dr Ardhanari and Kalaimamani Rajamanikkam felicitated the young artist and then Ammaji and the honoured guests presented Poonguzhali with her well earned NINE YEAR DIPLOMA IN YOGA AND BHARATANATYAM from Yognat.

18th ANNUAL DAY OF YOGANJALI NATYALAYAM: Our beloved founder Guru, Pujya Swamiji Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj told us, “If you want to really know someone’s character, put them in a crisis and then you will know them inside out”. He also told us that responsibility is the ability to respond (respond-ability = responsibility) to any situation in the most apt manner. Thank you Swamiji, and thank you Ammaji. You have truly moulded the most wonderful and responsible Yogic character in all members of our YOGNAT TEAM.

If anyone would have told me that we would be having the ‘Most Successful Ever’ Annual Day of Yognat this year without Ammaji on stage, I would have split my sides laughing saying, “Are you joking?” Well, life is indeed amazing and Ammaji was admitted to the JIPMER hospital emergency services the night before the annual day, had a minor surgery on the morning of the annual day and we DID have the “Most Successful Ever Annual Day” in the history of Yognat!!

Through this experience I was able to realise even more clearly Ammaji’s greatness for she was able to direct us to perfection though her Siddhi of being physically in the hospital and yet psychically with us at the same time. I had doubts whether I would be able to sing the whole programme without breaking down for my singing is based on my emotionality. However I never felt her absence for even a single moment and was amazed that I didn’t have a single thought such as “I wish she were here”. So many of the people felt this way and it was truly something special that even our guests who were extolling her greatness, and the
magnificent work at Yognat never felt the need to say, “Oh, if only Ammaji was here”. She was truly with us every moment and later I came to know that she told Yogacharini Vibha and Dr Balaji who were taking excellent loving care of her in the hospital that she was hearing the entire programme! At one point she told Vibha, “I am hearing the Jathiswaram is going on now” and when Vibha phoned Shalini, the Jathiswaram was indeed going on!! Ammaji had prohibited anyone from coming to the hospital and told all of us “Go out there and get going, for we are going to have the best ever annual day and we need to be that glorious TEAM for that to happen”. Most people would have either cancelled or postponed the show and wallowed in self pity hoping all would converge on their bedside and here was this great soul, this Maha-Atma saying, “Do your Dharma, don’t worry about me”.

All the participants, teachers and guests showed up on time and we were able to as usual start right at 2.05pm on 26th June 2011 with the lighting of the traditional lamp by Srila Sri Velu Swamigal and Muthamizh Mamani Thiru Pattabhiraman in the presence of all members of the Yognat team. The continuous programme without a break from 2.05 pm to 10 pm of Spectacular Yoga Asana Demonstrations, Carnatic Vocal Music, Classical Bharata Natyam and Folk Dances involving more than 400 participants must indeed be a record! Then, there were all the supporting staff of make up artists, costume designers, tailors, musicians, light and sound, stage decoration, canteen management, teachers, memento makers, printers and so on! More than 1200 persons thronged the Subhalakshmi Marriage Hall creating a Festival ambience. As Kalaimamani Rajamanickam later said, “No other institute has been able to carry on organising annual days ever year coupled with dance dramas and Yoga sport events without a single breaks, hats off to Yognat and to Ammaji and Dr Ananda”.

Thiru Sriram Subramania, MD of Integra Software Services reminisced about their 17 year old relationship with Ammaji and Yoga Life and said, “We are one of the top-6 companies in the world today thanks to Ammaji teaching us the importance of punctuality and perfection right from our inception”. The Government whip and MLA of Orleanpet Mr Nehru appreciated the amazing abilities of the young students and promised all possible support for the good work of Yognat while Dr Muthu, the president of the Puduvai Tamil Sangam appreciated the cultural awareness being created by Yognat though Ammaji and Dr Ananda. “I haven’t seen such dedicated souls anywhere in my life and we are fortunate to have such superhuman being amongst us serving society with distinction” said he.

Most of the dance items were original to our Institute with original music composed by Dr. Ananda with the dance choreography a joint effort of Dr. Ananda, Smt Devasena, the teachers and Ammaji. Smt Devasena gave admirable support for the entire performance along with the talented musical team. Nearly twenty dance items were presented along with the chanting of the Maha Lakshmi Ashtakam and five levels of proficiency of Carnatic vocalists. Team Yoga Asana Tableaux were performed by kids as young as 4 years of age to senior boys who are now working professionals in their late twenties. It was a mind boggling variety of Carnatic Arts of all kinds, with acrobatic difficult Asanas performed as a team. The highlights included the “Kanden Kanden” composition depicting the stories of Kannapan and Karaikal Ammaiyar who were able to have the Darshan of Lord Shiva through their simplicity and love. The folk dances and the Dasavathara Thillana were special hits while the banner dance was the best it has been in many years with the young kids putting in great effort to make it a grand spectacle. The Senior Boys put on the most spectacular and mind boggling presentation they have ever done and then dedicated it to Ammaji who had motivated and stimulated them to such a peak this year. The special presentation on Bindus coordinated by Yogacharini Shalini took the audience into a meditative state as it showcased
the various yoga practices and concepts related to the major five axial Bindus, Tattvas, Mandalas and Chakras.

“The Yognat Team really came together in the crisis and did the impossible” said Smt Neela Sekar, a long time student of Yognat. Filled with emotion she continued, “How well Ammaji has trained you that you can do the job of a dozen persons in such a responsible manner despite such a catastrophic situation. God will always bless you for sure. Well, as far as I am concerned you and Ammaji are already God.”

SHAKUNTALA DANCE DRAMA : “The rain cloud laden with rain blesses the parched earth with its showers; similarly our beloved Ammaji is the dynamic rain cloud of dance dramas showering upon us such blessed, veritable feasts of Indian culture” said Pulavar I Pattabhiraman as he presented Ammaji with the title award of “Natya Nataka Karmugil”. Truer words have not been spoken as the dedicated service of Ammaji for the cause of our beloved Indian cultural arts is unparalleled in the history of Pondicherry.

Under Ammaji’s aesthetic, artistic and dynamic direction and co-ordination, Mahakavi Kalidasa’s SHAKUNTALA came truly and fully alive in front of more than a thousand strong and appreciative members of the audience who had assembled on 16th October in the New Auditorium of JIPMER. This was Yognat’s unique way of paying tribute to our visionary founder, Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj on the occasion of his 104th Jayanthi (birthday) celebrations.

Lyrics for the dance drama as in the past 17 years were written by Muthamizmamani Kalaimamani Pulavar I Pattabhiraman on the basis of research done by Ammaji and Dr Ananda while the music was composed by Kalaimamani Nada Yoga Shironmani SV Jagatheesan in association with Dr Ananda who composed musical interludes and rhythmic patterns to enhance the effects. Dr Ananda and Smt Devasena conducted the performance with stirring Nattuvangam and emotive singing and were responsible for choreographing the initial dance compositions that were then tweaked into perfection in Ammaji’s magical hands. Ammaji has that amazing magical touch that can make even the lifeless statues come to life and dance with grace and beauty. No wonder all the children and young adults performed their roles to perfection by merging themselves into their stage characters.

The main roles of Shakuntala and Dushyanta were portrayed by Yoga Sadhaki D Lakshmi and Selvi I Krishnaveni who were indeed the most charming and handsome couple with amazing chemistry on stage. It was a pleasure to have Lakshmi dance with us again after a short gap as she is undoubtedly one of the brightest stars to have come out of Yognat. In a true display of yogic character and skill in action, she managed to come for all the practice sessions despite her busy work schedule in Chennai making great effort for the success of the entire dance drama. Having played numerous major male roles in our dance dramas in the past, this year was refreshingly different with her playing to perfection the sweet and demur role of Shakuntala. It was very special to have a message from her later saying, “Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this year's dance drama as I feel that every moment that I dance, I live my life to the whole”.

Krishnaveni who has in the past few years matured into a lovely dancer deserves a special mention for her excellent help in organizing a lot of the initial choreography as well as in coordinating all the student participants into a dynamic team. She was often the only one who really knew what was happening during the initial practice sessions! Her noble grace under pressure and true Yogic character in testing times deserve great appreciation and we were tremendously pleased when Pulavar I Pattabhiraman chose to honor her with the title of
“Nalina Natiya Kalaip Poonthendral”. He also honoured Sri C Shamugam and Smt Lalitha Shamugam with the titles of “Yoga Semmamani” and “Yoga Nanmamani” in recognition of their Yoga Seva though Yognat under the dynamic guidance of Ammaji. Dr Ananda and Devasena who have formed a dynamic yoga and cultural team traveling all over the world in the past few years were honoured as “Inaiyil Iniya Inai”.

Right from the first scene where Dushyanta and Shakuntala are introduced right to the grand ending praising Bharata Nadu the audience was totally transfixed to the edge of their seats. Dr Padma Prashanththi, another lovely star of Yognat, was to say later, “Each character brought life which weaved the story beautifully. The characters filled the auditorium, and did not give way for any other thought. It is well known that “Yogaha Chitta Vriti Nirodaha” but this performance made me realise the possibility of “Natyaha Chitta Vriti Nirodaha”! “This was a most amazing performance. No loose ends at all - we were totally glued to the drama and its unique dynamism. No one but Ammaji can do this” said Srini, Director of Yatra Arts Foundation in Auroville who was also in charge of the excellent lighting for the drama.

Smt Reena Dayanidy, one of the stars of Yognat understood the difference in this dance drama in terms of excellent preparation. Being part of the back stage management committee she commented, “Usually Stage rehearsals and final performance will have totally different effects but to me this time, the stage rehearsal itself was so perfect that it made me feel that it was the best program i have ever seen. I was lost for some time and then inspired I called up some of friends that night and asked them not to miss it. This drama is very unique because it is very difficult for anyone to say this scene or that scene was the best for the entire dance drama as a whole looked the very best. Congrats to my dear Yognat team! A wonderful team effort”!

The musical support team was truly par excellence and many commented on their struggle in trying to decide whether to focus on the music or the dance! Selvi R Shalini touched a new level of proficiency and it was undoubtedly her best performance to date. Devasena’s excellent Nattuvangam and vocal support enabled me to concentrate on the emotive aspects of the singing and the Keyboard playing by Sri SV Jagatheesan and violin support from Sri V Thanikachalam was excellent. Sri M Prasanna lent excellent rhythmic support on the Mridungam along with Puduvai Kalaimamani Sri Al Ramasamy who created amazing special effects. The costumes were ably organized by Smt Lalitha Shanmugam and Yogacharini Vibha with their tidy make up her team of Smt Kanimozhi, Selvi G Sarulatha, Smt Amudha, Smt Gunaseeli, Smt Kokila, Smt Bijal, Selvi I Balasundari and so many other volunteers. The back stage management was taken care of efficiently by the team of Sri C Shanmugam, Sri C Kulandaivelu, Dr Balaji and Sri Saravanan without any major hiccups. Sri P Mutthamizvaanan and Smt Meena Ramanathan gave an excellent overview of each scene in Tamil and English respectively helping the audience to enjoy better every nuance of the drama. Reception arrangements were handled by Sri E Gajendiran, Selvi Sriprabha, Smt Jayalakshmi and Smt Tamilselvi.

The main roles were played by I Krishnaveni (Dushyanta), D Lakshmi (Shakuntala), Dhivya Priya Bhavanani (Bharata and fisherman), S Vidya Shankari (Priyamvadha and fisherman), S Samyukthaa (Anusuya and fisherman), S Devasena (Rishi Kanva, Guard and Asura Chief), R Varalakshmi (Durvasa Rishi and Indiran), S Samyukthaa (Rishi Vishwamitra), SS Lothikha (Menaka), S Sabarishree (Rishi Kashyapa), S Preethika (Arun hathi), N Poonguzhali (Mathali, Fisherwoman and Bee), S Sarveghnalakshmi (Charioteer), S Valli (Deer), Anandraj Bhavanani (Lion Cub). Others who played numerous roles included S Anurupa, A Thamizhimalar, R Yamuna, S Sahana Shankari, S Susana, M Maheswari, LD Darshini, A Sivaranjani, G Swarnamalya, S Leela Flavia, S Prashanthi, M Pirainila, K Dharshini,

Our Chief Guest Sri P. Mathew Samuel the Special Secretary, Art and Culture, Government of Pondicherry was such an inspiring Guest of Honor. He charmed us all by bringing his 90 year old mother to the event along with other close family members and was a receptive and attentive member of the audience, a sincere and appreciative speaker and was so warm and generous in his blessings for all the youngsters. “Respected Ammaji, my dear friend Ananda and their institution are assets to Pondicherry” said he as he expressed his admiration for the work done over the past 40 years by Swamiji and Ammaji in taking Yoga and the cultural arts to all sections of the Pondicherry society irrespective of any man-made barriers.

The special guest of the evening Sri B Santhana Krishnan, Director of Art and Culture, Government of Pondicherry was effusive in his appreciation of the wonderful performance by all team members. “I haven’t seen such a perfect performance anywhere. This is such a special evening for me to see the results of the yeoman cultural service work being done by Yoganjali Natyalayam under the guidance of Ammaji and Dr Ananda”. He also singled out Lakshmi for special praise for her amazing dancing and acting skills. He was also very taken by the musical team who created a magical environment and said “Many a time I didn’t know whether to watch the dancers or watch Dr Ananda sing as he was so amazing”. Other appreciative and honorable special guests included Sri C.M. Sukumar (Chief Manager, Indian Overseas Bank), Kalaimamani Pulavar I Pattabhiraman (Director Valluvar Villaisai Kuzhu) and Sri B Girish Kumar (Correspondent, New Modern Vidya Mandir). Eminent Pondicherrians who graced the evening included Thavathiru Velu Swamigal (Managing Trustee of Sri Rengaih Madam in Karaikal), Dr Madanmohan (HOD Physiology and Programme Director ACYTER, JIPMER), Dr N Ardhahani (Eminent social activist and educationist), Kalaimamani Sri V Manikannan (Senior vocalist and music master of Ananda Ashram for many decades), Kalaimamani Sri SV Jagatheesan (General Secretary Pondicherry Music and Dance Artistes Association) and Sri Muthou (Former Joint Director Education).

International representatives of the Gitananda Yoga Family worldwide honoured on the occasion included Yogacharini Shobana of the Czech Republic, Yogacharya Michael Deslippe of Canada, Yogacharini Shwetha of the Czech Republic and Yogacharini Aishwariya of Canada.

Yoga Sadhaki Vibha (Sana Aejaiz) of Chennai was honoured with the Yogacharini title and received her Advanced Yoga Teacher Training Diploma on the occasion. Her parents were also honoured on the occasion and Ammaji expressed the desire that Vibha take Yoga into the Islamic community creating health and harmony in society through such a union of thought. Dr Ananda expressed his admiration and gratitude towards Vibha for her Yoga Seva towards Ammaji during Ammaji’s hospitalization and said that Vibha had proved herself to be Ammaji’s Yoga daughter through her dedicated service and Yogic attitude.

ANNUAL SUMMER INTENSIVE COURSE : The 17th Annual Summer Intensive Yoga and Bharatanatyam Course was held in May 2012 with more than 110 students participating in Yoga, Bharatanatyam and Shlokam recitation classes that went on for more than four hours on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Tremendous changes were witnessed in the children as the intensive gave them an opportunity to work closely with Ammaji thus manifesting their inherent potential. Smt Meena Ramanathan taught students the Nama Ramayana that describes the whole of the Ramayana in 108 verses. The spellbinding Yoga
theory classes were given by Ammaji on the concept of Swadhyaya, the major Niyama of Patanjali’s Ashtanga Yoga. Ammaji stimulated the youngsters to go deep into themselves by understanding the links between name, form, ignorance and knowledge through Swadhyaya. The content of these classes lodged deep within everyone's consciousness as Ammaji hit the nail right on the head in a soft but steady manner. The students then learnt various Yoga techniques as part of a Yognat Suryanamaskar group of practices codified by Ammaji and taught in different groups under guidance of Yogacharini Devasena, Yogacharini Vaishnavi and Yoga Chemmal E Gajendiran. The beginners were taught various basic practices by Yoga Chemmal Lalitha Shanmugam and Yoga Chemmal C Shanmugam. This was followed by intensive Bharatanatyam training for different groups led by Dr Ananda, Smt Devasena, Smt Lalitha, Selvi Sarulatha, Selvi Bhuvaneshwari and Smt Amudha.

35 students and staff members participated in the 17th annual summer 3-day residential Yoga Youth Camp at ICYER. This was conducted from 25-27 May with numerous activities such as individual and team games based on Yoga concepts, Karma Yoga, beach classes, a bonfire and many other holistic activities to broaden the young minds. The camp is always much waited for as the children have so much Yogic fun and get many chances to enjoy themselves fully on the beach. They learn about community life and how to interact with each other in a healthy and productive manner. This year the team events of the Swami Gitananda Best Youth and Child Award competition were conducted during the camp and the children had great fun while learning so much. Yogasadhaki D Lakshmi, Yogacharya Dr Christoph, Selvi Varalakshmi and Yogacharini Vibha were guest faculty for the camp while Yogacharini Vaishnavi, Yogachemmal Dr R Balaji were major contributors to the camp activities. The dynamic Yoga family of Yoga Chemmal Dayanidy and Reena Dayanidy helped out a lot during the camp and also brought their baby Deganand Dayarine along for his first camp at only 3 months!

Ammaji is forever trying to find new and newer ways to enable the ‘seeding’ of the spiritual and cultural ethos of Bharatiya Samskrithi in the minds and hearts of our youngsters. As in the past few years we had a special 'Bindu based' Kolam competition. This event was held at Yognat on 30th May as part of the summer intensive classes. There was an enthusiastic response from not only the students but also from the teachers and we ended up giving many more prizes than planned. A team of judges from the Yognat housewives class declared the First Prize winners in different categories as Smt Tamilselvi, S Samyuktha and Dhivya Priya Bhavanani.

The valedictory function for the summer intensive classes was conducted on 31st May with students showcasing the Yognat Surya Namaskar under direction of Ammaji and then performing the special dance items taught during the month. The prize distribution for the 13th Annual Swami Gitananda Best Child and Youth Awards 2012 was also held the same evening. Selvi Sarveghnalakshmi bagged Swami Gitananda Best Youth Award while Selvi S Surega bagged the Swami Gitananda Best Child Awardee. Selvi Yuvarani and Anandraj Bhavanani won runner-up awards in youth and child categories respectively.

Eminent guests for the gala evening included Dr N Ardhanari, Dr EM Rajan and Dr Vanaja Vaithiyanathan. Yogacharya Christoph of Austria and Yogacharini Vaishnavi of Czech Republic were felicitated on the occasion. Muththamizh Mamani, Kalaimamani Pulavar I Pattabhiraman, the Tamil mentor for Dr Ananda as well as Dhivya and Anandraj was felicitated on his 80th birthday on the occasion and all members of the Yognat family wished him and received his blessings. Yognat is blessed to have his benevolent support at all times as he is a true patron of the fine arts. A special event had been conducted a few months earlier by Professor Srinivasan, his Reunion based elder brother in a gala event that saw the coming
together of more than two hundred well wishers, students and fellow Tamil scholars who were unanimous in their praise of his great skill and large heartedness.

NEW PUBLICATIONS: Ammaji continues to motivate and guide so many students around the world through her writings in ‘Yoga Life’ the International Monthly Journal of Ananda Ashram as well as in numerous other forums. There has been excellent appreciative reposes worldwide to Ammaji’s “The History of Yoga from Ancient to Modern Times” that is her magnum opus and has in her own words been “two decades in writing and research plus forty five years of Yogic Sadhana”. The scope of the book is vast – from Vedic times, through the Upanishads, Itihasas, Puranas, Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutra, Tantric literature, Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Avatars of all religions and cultures, mystic science and Yoga philosophers in the West. The second volume will be released soon and will trace the modern Yoga movement from 1700 to the 21st century. These are books that will be appreciated by all serious Yoga Sadhaks as Ammaji has made a powerful intellectual contribution to the Yoga movement with this amazing approach.

In the past year Dr Ananda authored / coauthored 23 research papers, abstracts and articles as well as a book on “Yoga for Wholistic Personality” that is a guide to concepts and practices of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga as taught in the Gitananda Yoga tradition. He also assisted in the compilation of the proceedings of the National Workshop on “Role of Yoga in Diabetes Mellitus”.

Dr Ananda has presented 18 DVDs over the past many years and this year has released another new title “YOGA IN YOUR OFFICE”. This is a joint effort from Dr Ananda and Yogacharini VIBHA who is running Kaya Swadhyaya, a Yoga centre in Chennai after completing her training at ICYER. This is part of the series of DVDS by Ananda Ashram to put out various videos related to applications of Gitananda Yoga in association with the well-known music company SUPER AUDIO, Chennai (www.musicandchants.com) who is a partner of UNESCO’S Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity. Yoga is the ancient art and science of holistic living that is as applicable today as it was thousands of years ago. Countless office goers wish to take up the practice of Yoga, yet do not find the time or space for it. This presentation will enable you to bring Yoga right into your office space thus improving your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health as well as your productivity. These practices can be done from even in your office chair or sofa and also when you take short breaks to go to the rest room or have a glass of water. Simple loosening movements, psychosomatic harmonizing techniques and stress busting breathing practices are presented in a simple and easy to follow manner. Techniques to achieve deep and profound relaxation as well as contemplative practices to achieve meditative awareness are elucidated. This novel approach brings Yoga into every moment of your busy corporate life making you a better person and your life a better one too. Direction and coordination is by Srinidhi Yatra Multimedia, Auroville while the soulful music and recording is by Rajkumar Rajamanickam, Kalai Aruvi Studio, Pondicherry, India

YOGNAT SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS:

Yoganjali Natyalayam has great reverence for the great cultural traditions of India and profoundly respects those eminent personalities who strive to keep such a cultural ethos alive through their selfless service for our Indian society. Each year Yognat and its parent organisation Yoga Jivana Satsangha honour selected eminent personalities as a mark of respect and a heartfelt tribute to these great citizens of our beloved country. Over the past 18 years Yognat has been privileged to honour many such great role models who have excelled in their chosen field of endeavour motivating other to strive and reach the very high standards they have set through their own living examples of “Yogah karmasu kaushalam-
This year Yognat honoured Prof Dr KSVK SUBBA RAO, Former Director JIPMER with the Karma Yoga Shironmani Award in recognition of his excellent service for the cause of public health as an eminent cardiothoracic surgeon and as Director of JIPMER for the past many years.

Yoganjali Natyalayam each year selects from its hundreds of students, one boy and one girl who have shown outstanding Yogic qualities as well as a student who has shown Yogic valour in trying circumstances. The BEST MALE AND FEMALE STUDENT AWARDS for the year were bagged by AS ANIRUDH and J SANGAVI respectively. Both Anirudh and Sangavi have blossomed into stars of Yognat in the past few years and are role models for the younger students. Yognat respects the sacrifices made by the families to have their children receive the cultural education at Yognat and in appreciation awards a family with the BEST FAMILY AWARD every year. This year the award was given to the Shri ILANTHIRAYAN PONGODI Family whose daughters I Krishnaveni and I Balasundari have become stars of Yognat in their own right. DEBOLINA PAL received the YOGA VEERYA AWARD for displaying the Yogic character of courage and heroism in testing circumstances this year.

The Michael Danckwerts Yoga and Cultural Excellence Awards were bagged by JC JEEBIDHA and M. HARIVARTHI. This award was instituted in June 2003 by Chris and Annette Danckwerts of Australia in memory of their son who was a lover of Yoga and Indian culture. Candidates are evaluated on the basis of curriculum vitae, character, academics, extra-curricular, personality and poise in an interview by a panel of eminent judges. The award consists of a year's full scholarship at Yognat along with a special memento and certificate.

The Sangeetha Samrat Shri Vijaya Bhaskar Music Awards were bagged by S VITHIYASHANKARI (Seniors) and K KOTHAI 9Juniors) while Smt SIVASATIYA was selected to receive the Music scholarship for the year. This award in memory of the great music composer Shri Vijaya Bhaskar was instituted in 2003 by the family of Smt Mangala Gowri and Sri CK Manoharun for students of Yognat showing exceptional talent in Classical Music. Every year prizes are given in senior and junior categories and one student receives the Shri Vijaya Bhaskar Music Scholarship.

Ananda Ashram has completed 44 years of community service through Yoga and Cultural Arts in Puducherry, India and the world in 2012. Yognat was founded in 1993 by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj as a continuation of the Sri Kambaliswaamy Youth Yoga and Cultural Arts Programme founded in 1975 by Pujya Swamiji and our beloved Ammaji at Ananda Ashram, Thattanchavady. Hundreds of students who were freely trained in that program have now become professional Yoga Teachers, Bharatanatyam masters and Carnatic vocalists. Many of these students are now on the teaching staff at Yognat. It is our keen observation that unlike most schools where the ordinary are slowly edged out, in Yognat it is seen over the years that many "ordinary students'' have been transformed into "dynamic, skilful and talented" youngsters who can hold their own against the best. This has resulted in our adopting the motto

"MAKING THE ORDINARY – EXTRA-ORDINARY!
AND THE EXTRA-ORDINARY - GREAT!"

It is our heartfelt prayer that Pujya Swamiji continues to bless us to achieve this objective with each and every student who enters our institution and that our beloved Ammaji will always guide us at all times towards this noble goal.