As we celebrate the 23rd Annual Day of Yoganjali Natyalayam (YOGNAT) and 48th year of ANANDA ASHRAM’S Yoga Seva in Puducherry, 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'.

We, in Puducherry are indeed blessed that a renaissance of Yoga and the Indian Cultural Performing Arts has manifested during the past few decades. This is primarily due to the untiring efforts of Pujya Swamiji Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and our beloved Ammaji, Kalaimamani Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani. They have been beckon lights enabling thousands of youth to see the light and walk the path towards regaining their invaluable cultural heritage. Yoga is our cultural heritage and the great Rishis are our ancestors in more ways than one. Spirituality is in our very genes and this physical and spiritual genetic potential enables us to experience transcendental concepts of Yoga in their fullness. However we are hindered by the widely prevalent ignorance of the treasures we have inherited. We have forgotten that we are the safe keepers of these treasures. It is only the love and blessings of our well-wishers and patrons worldwide 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. They are constantly proving that 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 socio-economic status.

HISTORY OF YOGNAT: Yoganjali Natyalayam 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 hailed by many as the Father of Scientific Yoga, YOGNAT has brought national and international fame to Puducherry. The immense interest locally in Yoga, Bharatanatyam and Carnatic Music is largely due to the efforts of Swamiji and Ammaji over the last five decades. YOGNAT is a continuation of the Sri Kambaliswamy Yoga and Fine Arts Programme for Youth started by them in 1975. Nearly 50,000 youth have received training in Yoga and the Fine Arts through their efforts continued now by Dr. Ananda and his team.

YOGNAT follows the RISHICULTURE ASHTANGA YOGA tradition (www.rishiculture.org) as propagated by Swamiji and the KALAKSHETRA Tradition of Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale as taught by Natya Kalanidhi Padmashri Adyar K Lakshman in Bharatanatyam. Carnatic vocal music is taught in the tradition of Kalaimamani Srirengam R Ranganathan. YOGNAT has developed a world famous troupe that appears regularly in prestigious festivals and stages spectacular Bharatanatyam and Yoga performances yearly in Puducherry. YOGNAT is the only institute in Puducherry that has presented more than 50 full-length and mini Bharatanatyam Dance Dramas. 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 institution have won various prizes at National and International level Yoga Sport competitions including Dr. Niraimathi and Master 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 motivate students while 650 students have received silver medals for completing a minimum of five years at YOGNAT till date. Many of our students have been toppers in the academic circle too with them bagging top ranks in state exams as well as in professional courses.

CONFERENCES, EVENTS AND HONOURS: Dr Ananda continues to serve on the AYUSH Ministry Committee of Yoga Experts for International Day of Yoga celebrations and Scientific Advisory Committee of Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN) in Ministry of AYUSH, Govt of India. He attended many meetings in Delhi throughout the year for this purpose. He was honored to be a Resource Person for International Conference on "Yoga for the Body and Beyond" organized at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi from 22-23 June 2016 by Ministry of AYUSH, Govt of India. The grand event was inaugurated by Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri M Hamid Ansari with participation from more than 34 countries and all states of India. Dr Ananda presented an invited talk in the first technical session on "Power of Pranayama" and participated in the concluding Panel Discussion that fielded pertinent questions from the enthusiastic global audience. He also participated in the executive committee meetings of the Indian Yoga Association of which he is Director of Publications.

He was invited to chair sessions during 22nd International Yoga festival of Tourism Department, Govt of Puducherry in January 2016 and also conducted workshops on Yoga Therapy. He was a resource person for CME on “Memory: Mind to Molecules” organized on 5 March 2016 by Department of Physiology, Danalakshmi Srinivasan Medical College & Hospital, Perambalur as well as the Integrated CME & Workshop on “Introduction of Yoga in Medical Curriculum” organized on 9 March 2016 by Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Biochemistry, Sri Satya Sai Medical College & Research Institute, Kancheepuram Dist, Tamil Nadu. He served as resource person for National Conference on Chronobiology and Health organized on 18-19 March 2016 by Department of Physiology, MGGMCRI. It was a special honour that he was invited to be Chief Guest for ARENA 16, the Annual Sports Meet of Indira Gandhi Institute of Dental Sciences on 14 March 2016 and soon after was Chief Guest for Annual Day celebrations and Sports Day Tagore Arts College, Pondicherry on 31 March. Dr Ananda presented a well appreciated 2-day invited workshop on anatomy, physiology, pathology and Yoga therapy with reference to cardio-respiratory systems at Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute, Lonavla on 10-11 September 2015. It is notable that Dr Ananda has been appointed as an Adjunct Professor of Kaivalyadhama’s GS College and is Chairman of Board of Studies in Anatomy and Physiology of Yoga practices.

Dr Ananda received Best Paper Award on the theme “Experiential Paradigm of Yoga in Education” during 8th International Conference on Yoga & Education at Kaivalyadhama from 27th - 30th December 2015. The award was given during the valedictory function by Swami Maheshananda, the Chairman of Kaivalyadhama in presence of Padmabushan Dr BM Hegde, Sri DR Karthikeyan and Shri OP Tiwari. Dr Ananda also participated in the panel discussion on Yoga research chaired by Prof Ramesh Bijlani of New Delhi. He attended the Board Meeting of the Council for Yoga Accreditation International of which he is a member of the Board of Directors.
He undertook his 15th tour aboard in April and May 2016 and visited Canada and the USA. He was invited to present a 3-day Intensive Retreat on Yoga by the Gitananda Yoga Association of Canada at Montreal, Quebec from April 22 - 24 2016. He also gave invited talks for 120 students of the Vanier College and 30 Yoga teachers and enthusiasts at the YogaNat Studio in Montreal. It was a matter of great pride that he was an invited Consultant and Principal Faculty for the Integrative Yoga Therapy (IYT) training program, "Yoga Therapy Applied in Medical Settings", held at Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, USA from April 24 – May 1, 2016.

Dr Ananda was an invited panellist for a panel discussion on topic of “Men for Women” during the International Women’s Day celebration organised by Confederation of Indian Industry- Indian Women Network on 12 March 2016 at Hotel Athiti. Dr Ananda was invited to speak about Ammaji and Smt Devasena. Ammaji was also awarded a special citation and memento appreciating her untiring efforts for uplifting the community through Yoga and the cultural performing arts. Dr Ananda was invited give a guest lecture on “Yoga for Stress Management” for NSS of students of St. Joseph of Cluny HSS on 1 March 2016. Smt Devasena accompanied Dr Ananda and together they gave a well appreciated session. Dr. Ananda as Hon President Pondicherry Yoga Teacher’s Development Association (PYTDA) presided over a Mass Yoga Programme organised by the association at Gandhi Tidal on the Pondicherry beach front on 21 August 2015. SSP Shri Chandran was chief guest and event organised under direction of Yogachemmal E Gajendiran, President PYTDA and its team. More than a thousand students participated. YOGNAT presented a special performance for Senkazhuneer Amman temple that lies next to ICYER. We are always heartened by the receptive and attentive audience at this annual event and since the past two decades have performed there with utmost satisfaction. This year the performance on August 28 was a grand success as Ammaji’s presence makes every event a special one and the students of YOGNAT were at their best throughout.

Dr Ananda was honoured with Bharat Excellence Award and certificate of honor and felicitation from Friendship Forum, New Delhi for his contribution towards promoting greater friendship and India-International cooperation. He also received the Best Indian Personalities Award 2016 from Friendship Forum, New Delhi for his excellent contribution towards welfare of people. He was also honored with the Sigaram (Peak of Excellence) award by the Pondicherry Drama Association during its annual event on June 28th 2015. This prestigious honor was bestowed upon him in recognition of his service and achievements in the field of music, dance and Yoga. He was included in Asia Pacific Who’s Who (XIV Ed) and the Asian Admirable Achievers (Vol. VIII) published by Rifacimento International, New Delhi, India and recived "Mahatma Gandhi Award for Excellence to Outstanding Men and Women of India" and Shining Achievers of India Award from Friendship Forum, New Delhi in November 2015.

Jayanthi of our Paramguru, Yogamaharishi Swami Kanakananda Brighu was observed with a special Homa ceremony and all night AUM chanting at ICYER while regular Guru Pujas and Vyasa Guru Purnima were celebrated with pomp and ceremony at 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 Pada Yatra to ICYER where the specially worshipped Pritvi Lingam was immersed in the Bay of Bengal. Dr. Ananda as Madathipathi of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam has been conducting all activities under Ammaji’s guidance.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA CELEBRATIONS 2016: It is a great pride for every Indian that efforts of our honorable Prime Minster Shri Narendra Modi bore fruit and the
United Nations declared June 21 as International Day of Yoga. We celebrated the event last year and this year again with multifaceted activities. Last year the Pondicherry community was honored in that our beloved Ammaji was invited to be a resource person for the International Conference on Yoga for Holistic Health held at Vigyan Bhawan at New Delhi and this year it was Dr Ananda’s turn to be there.

Dr Ananda was organizing secretary for the IDY2016 celebrations organized from 19 to 21 June 2016 by CYTER of the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth University, Pondicherry. The multifaceted activities from 19-21 June included a workshop on “Silver Yoga” for senior citizens and hospice inmates, mass performance of the Common Yoga Protocol on the Pondicherry beach promenade led by Dr Kiran Bedi, Yogasana competitions and demonstrations and a National Seminar and CME on “Introducing Yoga in Health Professions Education”. Yogachemmal Dr Meena Ramanathan and Yogachemmal G Dayanidy gave him admirable support for all the events. The Yogasana competitions were conducted with support of Pondicherry Yogasana Association and esteemed members of jury included Yogachemmal Shanmugam, Yogachemmal Lalitha Shanmugam, Yogachemmal Gajendiran, Yogachemmal Senthilkumar, Yogachemmal Govindarajan and Smt Latha. On June 21, from 6 to 8 am YOGNAT team of staff and students participated in the Mass Performance of the AYUSH Common Yoga Protocol at the Pondicherry Beach Promenade. Dr Ananda coordinated the event with Department of Tourism, Govt of Pondicherry. Ammaji was Chief Guest for the National Seminar and CME held at MGMCRI on “Introducing Yoga in Health Professions Education”. This was organized by CYTER in collaboration with Department of Physiology, MGMCRI and Department of Tourism, Govt of Puducherry. The CME was inaugurated by Ammaji in presence of Prof RL Bijlani and Mr. Mounissamy, Director of Tourism, Govt. of Puducherry. The function was presided over by Prof N Ananthakrishnan, Dean Research and Allied Health Sciences of SBV and felicitated by Prof Ravishankar, Dean of MGMCRI and Prof AR Srinivasan, Registrar SBV. Prof Madanmohan as organizing chairman welcomed everyone and honored the guests. (The e-souvenir of the SBV IDY2016 event is available for free download from http://www.slideshare.net/anandabhavanani/souvenir-of-international-day-of-yoga-2016-celebrations-at-sri-balaji-vidyapeeth-pondicherry)

Yogachemmal Shanmugam, Yogachemmal Gajendiran, Yogachemmal Senthilkumar and Yogachemmal G Dayanidy participated in a panel discussion moderated by Yogachemmal Dr Meena Ramanathan on “Importance of Yoga in Daily Life” at the IDY 2016 celebrations organized by Department of Tourism and Nehru Yuva Kendra in same evening at Gandhi Tidal. Many hundreds of people participated in the event and applauded as they were all honored by Nehru Yuva Kendra for their service for the cause of yoga amongst youth of Pondicherry. Yoganjali Natyalayam was given a special honour award on the occasion.

**BHARATANATYAM ARANGETRAM OF SELVI I KRISHNAVENI:** An amazing and magnificent performance by Selvi I Krishnaveni enabled everyone present on the occasion of her Bharatanatyam Arangetram at Kamban Kalai Arangam to be elevated to a state of higher consciousness. The 26 of June 2016 will forever be etched in the hearts and minds of those present as the audience witnessed Divine consciousness permeating through the performance that surpassed all expectations. Krishnaveni has been an exceptional student of YOGNAT for more than a dozen years and a star performer in all dance Dramas and annual day extravaganzas for the past decade. She has also become an extremely competent organiser of the student team and is a leader in the truest sense of the word.

The Arangetram was inaugurated with traditional lighting of the lamp and a special Salangai Puja was done at the altar set up with beautiful portraits of our illustrious Gurus Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri, Natya Kalanidhi Padmeshri Adyar K Lakshman and Sangeeta Bhushanam Kalaimamani Srirengam Sri Ranganathan. With blessings of her
Guru Ammaji and eminent guests of the evening Krishnaveni enthralled the audience with a performance that far surpassed everyone’s expectations from a Bharatanatyam Arangetram. All aspects of the greatness of Bharata Natyam were on display with an amazing level of perfection manifesting in both her Nritta and Nritya. Bhava, Raga and Tala blended seamlessly creating and amazing experience of divine presence in the auditorium for the entire five-and-a-half hours. Guests of Honour included Muthamilamani Kalaimamani Pulavar I Pattabiraman, Professor N Ananthakrishnan and Prof Shanthi Ananthakrishnan, Sri and Smt A Muralidharan from Chennai, Kalaimamani Rajamanikkam and Kalaimamani SV Jagatheesan. Pulavar Pattabiraman, as Director Valluvar Vilkisai Kuzhu bestowed the title of “KALAINIRAI MAAMATHI” on Krishnaveni representing the fullness the fine arts manifest through her love for the art of Natya. Kalaimamani Shri K Rajamanikkam, President, Puducherry Music and Dance Artists Association and Director, Sangeetha Salangai Natyalayala, was effulgent in his praise for the star student as well as her illustrious Gurus. He especially appreciated her stamina and enthusiasm that manifested in the taxing items composed and choreographed by Dr. Ananda and Smt Devasena under the loving guidance of Ammaji. Sri Muralidharan, the noted auditor expressed his thoughts that Krishnaveni had brought the Goddess herself alive on stage and enjoyed tremendously Mahadeva Kauthvam based on traditional Rudram chanting as also the beautiful composition on Lord Krishna.

Krishnaveni was awarded her Nine Year Part Time Diploma in Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga and Bharata Natyam from Yoganjali Natyalayam on the occasion. She thus joined the legion of a select group of YOGNAT stars who have received this valuable certification of (seven or nine years) in the past decade and half. The list includes V Renukadevi (2001), Padma M Prashanthini (2002), D Lakshmi (2005), Shreya Agrawal (2008), R Sruti (2008), Shilpa Balaji (2009), T Tamilarasan (2009), G Kanimozhi (2009), U Kokila (2009), G Sarulatha (2009), N Ponghuzhali (2011), and J Sangavi (2014).

All items of the Arangetram were “YOGNAT ORIGINALS” having been written, composed and choreographed by Dr. Ananda and Devasena with inputs from Ammaji. This made the whole event even more soul satisfying and was a true tribute to Lakshman Sir who had motivated Ananda to take up Natuvangam and choreography at his Mridangam Arangetram in 1987 itself. Dr. Ananda conducted the orchestra with his Natuvangam and Vocal with support from Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani. The Mridangam accompaniment came from the ever energetic Nada Yoga Shironmani Shri Thirumudi S Arun. The melody was enhanced by Nada Yoga Shironmani Shri V Thanigachalam and Innisai Ilankuyil Shri Rajkumar Rajamanickam who gave life to the items with their violin and flute. Nada Yoga Shironmani Kalaimamani Shri Al Ramasamy invigorated each and every moment with his special effects and to enable the audience to understand the nuances of the compositions English and Tamil compereing was done by Dr Meena Ramanathan and Smt. Devasena Bhavanani respectively. The stage management was by Yogachemmal C Shanmugam and Smt. Lalitha Shanmugam who were assisted by the YOGNAT student team who also managed the lights in an admirable manner. A special mention must be made of excellent makeup by Yogachemmal Smt Kanimozhi and enthralling costumes by Shri Manian Tailors.

**30th ANNUAL PUDUCHERRY STATE YOGA SPORT CHAMPIONSHIP:** Pondicherry Yogasana Association (PYA) founded by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri has been in the forefront of the Yoga Sport movement and Swamiji is hailed as one of its founding fathers. Since 1975 PYA has held Annual Pondicherry State Yoga Sport Championships including the ‘Silver Jubilee’ Championship in 2010. The 30th Annual Pondicherry State Yoga Sport Championship was organised on 30-31 October 2015 with more than 1200 participants.
participants from 30 institutions ranging from age of 3 to 50 years divided into various educational and gender based categories. There was also a demonstration event held for more than 120 children under 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. Students had to be proficient in both the physical as well as theoretical aspects of Yoga in order to succeed and at the end of a gruelling and hard fought event, G SURENDIRAN and S SUREGA emerged as the well deserving “CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS” in male and female categories respectively. More than 300 winners in each of the 48 categories were really pleased to lay their eager hands on these glittering awards that were a fitting reward for all their hard work. 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 it was very heartening to hear the honourable Minister for Tourism Shri P Rajavelu say, “Pondicherry is blessed by the intense efforts of Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj who brought Yoga to all sections of the society. His work and that of Ammaji and Dr Ananda is highly commendable”. Other eminent Pondicherrians who graced the occasion included Government Whip Thiru G Nehru MLA, dynamic Senior Superintendent of Police Dr V J Chandran, social activist Sri Akilan, Pulavar Pattabiraman, the well-known socially conscious ophthalmologic surgeon Dr Vanaja Vaithiyananth, Vice President of PYA Shri CK Manoharun and the International Gitananda community represented by Yogacharini Anandhi of Cyprus. The PYA Yogachemmal awards were given to Shri S Govindarajan, Smt Varalakshmi Kamalanathan, Smt Reena D Joseph and Shri S Sundar in recognition of their efforts in Yoga. This year a special lucky dip was held to motivate participants and this event sponsored by Yogacharya Gangadharan saw hilarious moments as the audience joined in chorus of selecting winners for cycle, fan and other prizes.

22nd INTERNATIONAL YOGA FESTIVAL 2016: A truly “Festival Atmosphere” pervaded the beach front promenade in Pondicherry from January 4 to 7th, 2016 as the Department of Tourism conducted the Annual International Yoga Festival for the 22nd consecutive year from January 4th to 7th, 2016. Lectures, demonstrations, workshops, cultural programmes and the International Yoga Asana Competition were the highlights. More than 1000 persons from all over India and several foreign countries joined to create a jovial atmosphere. YOGNAT presented the dance dram “Navarasas” and members of Team-47 at ICYER and YOGNAT participated whole-heartedly and presented excellent lectures on various topics. The International Yoga Festival has been held for 22 years and is the only Yoga Festival sponsored by a State Government anywhere in the world! It has gained in popularity and is listed in The Lonely Planet as an event worth “checking out!” The festival began in 1993 under patronage and initiative of Swamiji and continues with support from Ammaji and Dr. Ananda.

22nd ANNUAL DAY OF YOGANJALI NATYALAYAM 2015: 19 July 2015 witnessed a massive cultural extravaganza with more than eight hours of non-stop music, dance, chanting and Yogasanas by more than 300 participants, a team of dedicated musicians and a dozen support staffers, that created a joyful and colourful experience of the cultural vibrancy of Pondicherry. Ammaji with her benevolent, loving and eagle eyed direction enabled the whole event to be on track throughout while Dr Ananda and his team kept the hectic pace going from start to finish. The faculty members, student-teachers, staff members and students all worked as a team along with the unstinting cooperation of our parents who expressed their dedication to Bharatiya Sanskriti (Indian culture) through thought, word and deed. The event started sharp at 2pm with the lighting of the Kuththuvilakku by Ammaji, Thavaththiru Velu Swamigal of Melavanjore, eminent guests and faculty members with Aarthi performed by Yogacharini Smt. Devasena accompanied by the resonating
chants by Dr Ananda. Carnatic vocal selections from numerous composers in different languages were then presented by music students. The chanting of Guru Stotram was led by Smt. Meena with the children astounding the audience with their clear diction and flawless rendition of this classic.

The Banner Dance of YOGNAT is always a special attraction as it gives the audience a chance to witness amazing Yogasana skills of the children with magnificent teamwork in play. Ammaji had organized the banner dance into three teams and each team vied with the others to do better than their best. It is always heartening to see such amazing abilities of these young children and this type of healthy group activity enables them to grow in so many ways. The excellent psychosocial developments of our children over the past many years may be attributed to such golden opportunities that enable them to learn and understand strengths and weaknesses of each member while building up to their team’s best ever performance.

The dance performances were an amalgam of items drawn from the traditional Bharatanatyam repertoire such as Pushpanjali, Jathiswaram, Shabdam, Keethanam and Thillana etc as well as many bhakti filled compositions and energetic folk dances. The small ones made us all proud with their flawless and cute movements while the seniors took the cake with their spellbinding performances. All dance teachers had made efforts to present their classes well while Ammaji deputed senior students to each class for hands-on training in managing the young ones, thus adding value to the overall presentations. The highlight of the dance section was the Dasavatharam, a mini dance drama presented by the seniors and this 45 minute composition literally took everyone’s’ breath away in its spectacular melodic, rhythmic and emotionally charged presentation of the multi-splendored stories of the great Lord. Krishnaveni as the student-teacher in charge of the dance performances did an amazing job of coordinating all the groups and their practices and her efforts bore fruit in the excellent teamwork and formations presented by all the dancers. Smt. Devasena’s lovely singing complemented the efforts of Dr Ananda, while the musical team made sure that no stone was left unturned in making the event a grand musical success. Excellent coordination and human resource management by Yogachemmal Shanmugam and Smt Lalitha Shanmugam enabled all the bits and pieces to come together in a smooth and seamless manner while stage arrangements by Sri Sharavanan and Sri Ramalingam with Dandapani Electricals made everyone feel a sacred atmosphere.

The Chief Guest of the event, the Minister for Art and Culture, Thiru T THIAGARAJAN was greatly appreciative of the efforts of all students and complimented Ammaji and Dr Ananda on an excellent show. “It is important that Pondicherry has such unique organizations like YOGNAT, for we need to cultivate artistic expression as well as human values in our youth” said he while giving away the prizes to the meritorious students. The MLAs Thiru G Nehru and Thiru M Visweswaran as well as Smt Ragini, Director Art and Culture were very appreciative of the children’s performance. Professor Madanmohan, Pulavar Pattabiramanar and Dr Ardhanari felicitated the occasion.

S Sarvegna Lakshmi and C Praghathi were selected for Best Student Award in recognition of their exemplary character, artistic talent and Yogic growth while Yoga Veerya Award went to Anandraj Bhavanani. Dhivya Shivani and S Harini were selected for Michael Danckwerts Yoga and Cultural Excellence Scholarship Award and Sangeetha Samrat Shri Vijaya Bhaskar Music Awards were bestowed upon S Shailaja and N Neiya. The Best Family Award was given to the family of Thiru M Jayachandran, Smt. Ravathy and J Sangavi for their dedication to the cultural heritage of our beloved country.
17th SWAMI GITANANDA YOUTH & CHILD AWARDS 2016: Puducherry Yogasana Association organized the 17th Swami Gitananda Youth & Child Awards 2016 competitions during May 2016 at YOGNAT. Best Youth Award was bagged by S SUREGA and Best Child Award by I PAVYAA. Swarnamalya and Meeraa Devi bagged runner-up prizes in youth and child categories respectively. In order to create interest in the art and science of Yoga, the PYA has organised these competitions every year since 2000. In this competition the competitors are tested not only in their Asana skill but also in their Yogic thinking and exposition in addition to other aspects of the art and science of Yoga. The individual events for this year’s competition were Yoga Art, Yoga Fancy Dress, Yoga Story Telling and Yoga Elocution events while the team events were Yoga Quiz, Yoga Dumb Charades and Team Yogasanas. The awards were given away in a glittering function held on 31st May at YOGNAT by Chief Guest, Thiru R Siva (MLA Orleanpet) in the esteemed presence of Ammaji, Muththamizh Mamani Pullavar Pattabiramanar, and other senior members of the PYA including Yogachemmal Gajendiran and Yogachemmal Shanmugam. The competitions were organized by the husband-wife Yoga team of Yogachemmal G Dayanidy and Smt. Reena, winners of the Youth Awards themselves and who have dedicated themselves to helping others grow in spirit. Pulavar Pattabiramanar was also felicitated warmly on his 85th birthday.

21st ANNUAL SUMMER INTENSIVE 2016: Every year, the young ones of Puducherry look forward to the advent of summer when they get their academic holidays and more importantly an opportunity to further their yoga and dance abilities through the May Intensive classes at YOGNAT. This has been the pattern for the past 21 years and this year was no exception. More than 150 youngsters took part in Shlokam chanting, Yoga theory and practical sessions as well as Bharatanatyam classes conducted under the direction of Ammaji. Using the effective tools of Bharathiya Samskrithi - Indian Culture - Yoga, Bharat Natyam and Carnatic Music, the students were shown how to respect, understand and live in tune with the Pancha Maha Bhutas, the five great elements of the manifest world.

The much awaited 3-day residential camp was held at ICYER the end of May and was attended by 40 students and teachers. The regular Ananda Ashram schedule was observed with all rising at 5am and having a full day of classes on the beach and in the Ashram. Many team events of the Swami Gitananda Youth and Child Award competitions were conducted including Yoga quiz, Yoga dumb charades and team Yogasanas. Many fun filled moments were had by children who enjoyed the waves, the sun and the sands to their heart’s content. The bonfire on the beach was another gala evening with fun and frolic and much singing as all enjoyed their popcorn too. The cooking by Shanti and team always captivates the taste buds of our young ones and each and every child enjoyed the tasty and healthy ashram food.

NAVARASA, THE NINE EMOTIONS - A DANCE DRAMA BY YOGNAT: Is it possible to go to heaven without dying! Hundreds of Rasikas who witnessed YOGNAT’s Annual Dance Drama “Nava Rasa” would chant a resounding “Yes! Indeed” after experiencing “Bliss Incarnate” on and off the stage on 29 December 2015, as more than 52 dancers ranging in ages from six to twenty-six and ten musicians created “heaven on earth” with melody – Raga – Thalam movement and colourful costumes in Kamban Kalai Arangam. The overflowing auditorium audience settled down to participate in three hours of heaven and bliss. Thiru Rajamanikkam, summarized the experience: “It was perfect in every note, movement, gesture and emotion. This was “Nine Dance Dramas” all rolled into one”, referring to the elaborate delineations of the Nava Rasa – Nine Basic Emotions of Bharat Natyam by enacting well known stories. All the dramatic enactments were enhanced and woven into creative Kovais – rhythmic movements in patterns – displaying the Nritta skill of the dancer.
Dr. Ananda was the master architect composing songs, music and Kovai (movement pattern) supported by Devasena; Amma polished up the production with an artistic eye. Krishnaveni did the hard work of daily dance drills, making dancers practice over and over and also aiding in choreography as well as resurrecting old dance items to be refined. She also did most of the research. She herself danced several roles with aplomb of a professional. She was aided by Soumya, Vidya, Balasundari and Sangavi.

Each year Yoga Jivana Satsangha (International) honours several eminent personalities with special titles. This year the Acharya Ratna Shironmani title was bestowed upon Professor K.R. Sethuraman, Vice Chancellor, Sri Balaji Vidyapeth, Pondicherry for his yeoman services over decades as mentor for thousands of medical students of prestigious medical institutions. The title Karma Yoga Shironmani was bestowed upon Puduvai Shakti Dr. Vanaja Vaithinathan, Regional Medical Director, Vasan Eye Care (Jyothi Eye Care Centre) eminent eye surgeon and social activist in various medical projects and charities. The world Yoga family salutes these two great souls for their contribution to the welfare of all humanity!

141st GURU PUJA AT SRI KAMBALISWAMY MADAM: The 22nd Guru Puja Aradhana for Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and the 142nd Guru Puja Aradhana for Akanda Paripurna Srla Shri Kamlignana Desiga Swamigal burst into the consciousness of thousands of Guru Bhaktas on January 9, 2016 at Sri Kambaliswamy Madam. Ammaji and Dr. Ananda were privileged to hoist the orange flag of the Guru at dawn on Saturday, January 9, 2016 for the 41st year! Since 1874 the Samadhi site has been ruled continuously only by the eight Gurus of the Paramparai: Ambalavana Swamigal, Manika Swamigal, Shanmuga Swamigal, Velu Swamigal, Subramanya Swamigal, Shankaragiri Swamigal, Gitananda Giri Swamigal and the current Madathiapathi Dr. Ananda Balayogi Giri. Though there have been many challenges to the Guru’s authority over the decades, the Annual Guru Puja Aradhana for Sri Kambliswamigal has never been missed. This year’s celebration was the most grand one with several thousand persons thronging the holy Samadhi site from 5 am until midnight. The Madam’s premises had been beautifully painted and repaired, and coloured lights and magnificent floral displays exhibited. Exquisite traditional vocal and instrumental music charged the atmosphere and the traditional Nadeswaram and Tavil marked auspicious moments in the elaborate ritual. An elaborate 18 course “sit down” Prasadam feast was offered to thousands. Srla Shri Kambliswamigal, a Digambari Siddha, was praised as “The King of Ashtanga Yoga Throughout The World”. He obtained Samadhi 142 years ago, in the Tamil year Sri Mugh on the Amavasai Day of Margazhi month. Every year without fail, grand Guru Pujas have been performed on this day for 141 years by successors to this illustrious Siddha Yoga Paramparai.

ANNUAL YANTRA COURSE: Having been well trained in this art by his Guru-father and having received excellent instruction from Dr. Jonn Mumford of Australia for the past 15 years, Dr. Ananda gave an intense, systematic and in depth instruction in “YANTRA: The Science of Number, Name and Form” in February 2016. Two dozen dedicated Sadhaks of the Rishiculture Ashtanga (Gitananda) Yoga tradition gathered at the Mother Ashram from 3rd to 23rd of February to participate in this illuminating course that explores the interconnectivity between all aspects of the microcosm and macrocosm. The course was as per annual tradition inaugurated on the evening of 3rd February after the celebrations marking the Jayanthi of Yogamaharishi Swami Kanakananada Brighu, the Paramguru of this Rishiculture Paramparai. Yogacharya Muralidharan assisted Dr. Ananda in the course while senior members including Yogacharini Cathy Davis of Cornwall and Yogacharini Latha of Berlin enabled the participants from all over the world to imbibe the teachings in a smooth
manner. Senior graduates of the ICYER including Yogacharini Sridevi of Switzerland, Yogacharya Jnanadev of Wales and Dhivyadarshini of Hawaii participated with keen enthusiasm along with members of TEAM 47 and other students who had come specially for the Yantra course.

FORTY-SEVENTH SADHANA TEAM: The Forty-Seventh Sadhana Team to “pass through” the Six Month International Yoga Teachers Training at ICYER (Ananda Ashram) at Kottakuppam, Tamil Nadu, (Near Pondicherry) were honoured on March 20, 2016 at Sri Kambaliswaamy Madam. They received traditional Hindu honours, new title “Yoga Sadhaka” and their Six Month International Yoga Teachers Training certificate which gave them the privilege of teaching and living the Gitananda Yoga life style and teaching its philosophies and technology. The beautiful, radiant faces, dressed in traditional Hindu attire, projected the grace and beauty, which radiate when living the Yogic life style!

YOGNAT SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS: We have great reverence for the great cultural traditions of India and profoundly respect those eminent personalities who strive to keep this cultural ethos alive through their selfless service for our society. Each year, YOGNAT selects students who have shown outstanding Yogic qualities and growth in recent times and this year, Selvi DHIVYA PRIYA BHAVANANI and Selvi G SWARNAMALYA have been selected for the BEST STUDENT AWARD in recognition of their exemplary character, artistic talent and Yogic growth. Similarly Selvi G PRIYAVATHANA and Selvi S NARCHELVI have been selected for the MICHAEL DANCKWERTS YOGA AND CULTURAL EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD instituted in 2003 by Chris and Annette Danckwerts of Australia in memory of their son who was a lover of Yoga and Indian culture. The Sangeetha Samrat SHRI VIJAYA BHASKAR MUSIC AWARDS were instituted in 2003 by the family of Smt Mangala Gowri and Sri CK Manoharun in memory of the great music composer Shri Vijaya Bhaskar. This year Master D NIRMAL and Selvi I M EVA AGNES PRISCILLA have been selected to receive the Shri Vijaya Bhaskar Music Scholarship Awards. The BEST FAMILY AWARD is being bestowed upon the family of the late Thiru M SATHYARAJ and Smt ALPHONSA for their more than three decades of dedication to the cultural heritage of our beloved country as manifested through the life giving art and science of Yoga and performing fine arts.

Swamiji and Ammaji have planted the seeds of Yoga and our beloved Indian Culture very deeply in Pondicherry and their pioneering efforts have started to bear fruit, manifesting a conscious and beautiful goodness (Satyam Shivam Sundaram) that didn’t exist before. The youth and children of Pondicherry are blessed to be born in this Punya Bhumi and to be a part of Yoganjali Natyalayam is considered their greatest blessing by so many of them. To understand the potential of each child and enable them to actualize it in a loving and supportive environment is the prime objective of YOGNAT that aims to make “The Ordinary Child, Extraordinary and the Extraordinary Child, Great!”

When you can do your work with love, passion and motivation producing happiness not only for yourself but for others too - then you are truly blessed in your life! We at YOGNAT are tremendously blessed by our Gurus, for, we are ever busy doing stuff that we love and enjoy. This also gives us the chance to constantly evolve ourselves on the path to liberation, the goal of human existence. “Work is worship” said our illustrious Guru Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and he makes sure we are busy worshiping the Divine a lot for he keeps us ever busy with newer plans every day. We at YOGNAT are truly blessed to be Sishyas of such a visionary founder and are constantly motivated towards excellence by our dynamic director and Guru, Puduvai Shakti, Ammaji, Kalaimamani Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani.