



Yasodhara Ashram
YOGA RETREAT & STUDY CENTRE

2018

Annual Review
A Year of Invitation





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President's Message



2018 was the “Year of Invitation” for Yasodhara Ashram.

From the loss of the Temple in 2014 to re-imagining, construction and now the completion of the new Temple of Light—it’s been a journey. So we invited everyone to the

Grand Opening in June, and you came! 700 people entered the lotus-like dome and were dazzled by its beauty. Combined with our Strawberry Social, ribbon cutting, tributes from local dignitaries and dances by young dancers, the official public opening felt equally cosmic and local.

For the past four years, much of our energy has been directed toward the Temple project. It took tremendous generosity, community spirit and divine grace to raise this building. Special thanks to our donors! That this sacred space is here again speaks to the resilience of the Ashram and its future—dedicated to diversity while embracing our unity in the Light—and is evidence that Swami Radha’s vision lives on.

This year was a bright one for Yasodhara Ashram with people of all ages and backgrounds learning from each other in courses and retreats, with children and families, teens and elders sharing the space. We invited karma yogis to attend free of charge and delighted in their desire to give and learn.

Visiting groups came from far and wide, and our surrounding communities enjoyed dynamic music events—from choral to experimental to classical—in the Temple. We continued to support our local school, offering classes and inviting students for special programs. We held a climate action vigil and a gathering for reconciliation. Our teachers travelled across North America and Europe offering teachings. Personally I was touched by the conference I attended in Toronto that brought together speakers on climate action, social justice, Indigenous wisdom and women’s dignity—all issues close to my heart.

It was also a year that the Ashram extended through inviting in media. Four writers stayed on site, participated in retreats and wrote stories for print and online magazines. We are inviting collaboration, engaging a broader audience and expanding our arc of love. My prayer is that each of us connects with the light of understanding, compassion and wisdom—our inner Temple—so we can shine brightly in the world around us.

In 2019 we invite you to “Return to Centre”—return to heart centre, the centre of love. Join us. Many blessings!

Swami Lalitananda

SWAMI LALITANANDA

About Us

Yasodhara Ashram is a yoga retreat and study centre founded in 1963 in Kootenay Bay, British Columbia. As a Canadian charity and active learning centre, our purpose is to stimulate open intellectual and spiritual enquiry, supporting the potential of transformation in each person. We offer a wide range of programs year round, helping people to evolve and lead fulfilling lives. We are also a residential community where we practice living what we teach.

Locally the Ashram has been an integral part of the East Shore community of Kootenay Lake for more than 50 years. We volunteer on community boards, the fire department, first responders and at the local school, and we make donations toward services such as the ambulance and school lunch program. We offer meeting space and invite our neighbours to educational and cultural events. We hire locally and support local farmers.

Globally we reach out through travel and offering workshops internationally. We invite schools and like-minded organizations to join us for sustainability tours and work-study programs. We participate in conferences and share what we learn with other groups.

Find out more at: Yasodhara.org



Education & Outreach



The Ashram offers a range of courses and retreats

varying in length from day visits to the three-month Yoga Development Course (YDC), from Yoga Teacher Certification to the Service & Study and Learning Residency Programs.

COURSES & RETREATS

Our courses and retreats emphasize self-discovery through reflection and practice in everyday life. Our teachings help people build a strong foundation of character—the inner work necessary to face life’s challenges and adapt to change.

2018 Highlights

This year our program framework included the Yoga Development Course from January to April; 10 Days of Yoga courses in May, July, August and October; Equinox and Solstice Retreats at those cosmic times of year; and a range of retreats (which offer more independent time) and courses (more time in class) through the spring, summer and fall. Teacher Certifications were held in the spring and summer.

Our focus in 2018 was highlighting the brilliance of the Kundalini system, the power of relaxation and the many tools we have for understanding the mind.

In this “Year of Invitation” we experienced more first-time participants in courses and retreats than ever before—almost 400 of the registered students were new. Overall registrations in all programs reached a high of 783, continuing a steady six-year climb. Our introductory program, “Taste of the Ashram” with day and overnight options, continued to be popular.

Our guest profile is predominantly female, with the highest percentage of participants coming from within a one-day’s drive in BC and Alberta. People most typically learn about the Ashram through word of mouth (45%) and website/Google searches (20-25%).

TEACHER SERVICE PROGRAM

We value our Yasodhara Yoga teachers and encourage them to return to the Ashram for renewal. The Teacher Service Program offers an opportunity to self-design a program—usually ranging from two weeks to several months, with financial contributions that fit each person’s needs and circumstances. Whether teachers stay for a week or six months, they are a very integrated and welcome part of our community.

2018 Highlights

This year 28 Yasodhara Yoga teachers returned to renew themselves and to offer Karma Yoga. Knowing the Ashram from their own experience, our teachers are especially helpful at contributing wherever help is needed.

SERVICE & STUDY

The One-Month Service & Study Program welcomes participants of all ages interested in experiencing life in a spiritual community. The focus is on Karma Yoga, the yoga of action. Participants learn about creating a positive attitude toward work and transforming work into spiritual practice through an attitude of devotion, an understanding of symbolism and an ideal of selfless service. This program integrates the Young Adult Program for 18-30 year olds, helping them gain confidence so they can create the life they want to live. Many learn how to work, how to work together and how to understand themselves in relation to others.

2018 Highlights

This year we welcomed 58 participants, 25 of them Young Adults (18-30). Fourteen “One-Month-ers” extended their stay with the average extension being two months. After the first month, several from this program entered into Learning Residencies while others stayed longer as karma yogis. From May to December we followed our “Year of Invitation” theme by inviting people to the One-Month program free of charge. This was met with an enthusiastic response.

This year we also introduced “Pathways,” a more intentional step-by-step process of extending Karma Yoga stays at the Ashram. After completing the One-Month program, participants can apply to enter this more focused and held program.



LEARNING RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Learning Residencies (LRs) at Yasodhara Ashram are spiritual and career/life development opportunities. Learning Residents often have a background in their area and use the residency to further develop skills as well as to contribute to and be supported by a mentor and by the Ashram community. LRs receive room and board and participate in workshops and classes. They work in areas essential to Ashram functioning.

2018 Highlights

2018 was the sixth year of our Learning Residency Program. This year we shortened the program to three months from the former six-month requirement; the shorter program seemed to better meet the needs and time constraints of most people. Five participants in all came for an LR stay in 2018, working in the areas of Kitchen, Garden, Preserving Kitchen, Digital Media and Infrastructure.

BUILDING COMMUNITY - REACHING OUT

Building and maintaining community connections is a heartfelt priority for the Ashram and our residents. We engage with the local and regional Kootenay Lake community in which we are located while also reaching out to like-minded groups and individuals around the world.

2018 Highlights

Our “Teachers on Tour” outreach program saw long-term efforts to expand our European offerings bear fruit for the 2018 season, with opportunities to teach in England, Germany, Portugal and Hungary. Almost 300 people participated in European workshops this year, including more than 100 new to our teachings. In North America our connection with a student from San Antonio, Texas led to a first-time workshop there. In Canada we offered a weekend retreat near Ottawa at a popular yoga venue as part of a full Eastern tour including Halifax, Ottawa and Montreal. Workshops were also well received in the Okanagan and on Vancouver Island. Overall more than 600 people attended workshops with more than 200 being introduced to our teachings.

Outreach brings three main benefits: supporting our Yasodhara Yoga teachers throughout the world, introducing our teachings to a wider audience and generating needed income.

BUILDING COMMUNITY - INVITING IN

The Temple of Light, the Ashram lands and our teachings offer the potential of life-changing experiences for those who come. We welcome a diversity of people and foster relationships with individuals and groups that have similar aims of promoting peace, environmental action and understanding among traditions.

2018 Highlights

For the second year we hosted Ashram friends, Pahan Pte San Win and Wanbdi Wakita, spiritual leaders from Manitoba, for a fundraising weekend focused on Indigenous wisdom, reconciliation and advice on how to be an ally. Funds supported the second annual Sundance of Women honouring the spirits of missing and murdered Indigenous women.



GROUPS



2018 HIGHLIGHTS

A highlight of our enthusiasm to build relationships with groups in 2018 was the six-day visit of the University of Western Ontario's "Community Through Choral Arts group." Together with Nelson's Corazon Youth Choir, they collaborated to present "The Ripple Effect," a series of concerts with evocative sounds and songs that soared through the Ashram's landscape—from beach to orchard to forest to Temple. Another special event was the Nakatani Gong Orchestra using local volunteers to create an orchestra of gongs played with bows.

ARTIST & PROFESSIONAL RETREATS - NURTURING CREATIVE POTENTIAL

The Artist and Professional retreats offer a beautiful, focused and spacious environment to relax and be nourished while nurturing creative potential. These retreats continue to bring a range of guests to the Ashram throughout the year. The flexible structure gives space for focusing on a project, taking personal time and engaging in the Ashram community through optional Hatha Yoga classes, Karma Yoga and satsang. Every retreat guest so far has mentioned that being part of the Ashram's daily flow enhanced the richness of their experience.

2018 Highlights

2018 brought a range of Artist and Professional retreat guests, including a professional chef experimenting with an Italian bread recipe (with Ashram residents enjoying the tasty results). Other guests included consultants, writers, musicians, a filmmaker, a retired university professor and an environmental anthropologist.

Sustainability & Resilience



FOOD FLOW

Our Food Flow system includes the kitchen, garden, orchard and preserving kitchen. The activities of Food Flow grow, procure, process, harvest and prepare all of the food that we eat.

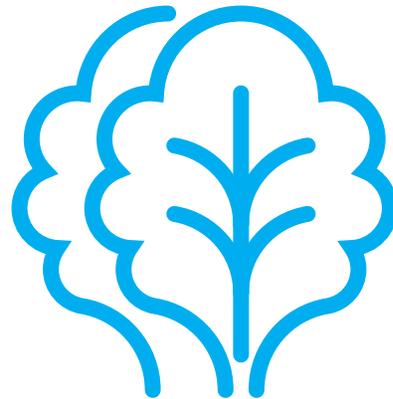
The Ashram kitchen created over 55,000 meals in 2018. Menus are based on what is available locally and seasonally from our garden and from the surrounding area. We truly have a farm-to-table philosophy and seek to promote self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Procurement from local farms, gardens and businesses remains an important way for the Ashram to promote a wider sustainability in the community while allowing us to eat the freshest, most nutritious food possible. In 2018 fully 20% of the food served was sourced within 100 km of the Ashram.

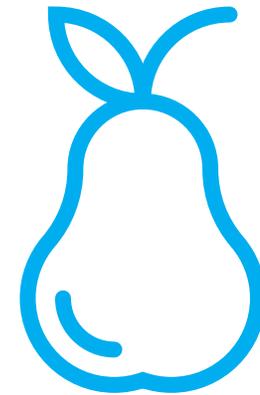
In 2018 the garden continued to be a place of growth and learning. The Ashram became self-sustainable in garlic production and in season met all of our needs for salad greens, summer squash and leafy greens such as kale. Together our garden and orchard harvested the market equivalent of over \$35,000 of fresh food, representing 18% of our total annual food budget.



396 lbs Salad
=
\$3,960



383 lbs Chard
=
\$2,298



700 lbs Pears
=
\$1,400

For example we harvested 396 lbs of salad greens for a market value of \$3,960; 383 lbs of chard at a market value of \$2,298; and 700 lbs of organic Bartlett pears with a market value of \$1,400.

The mobile hoop house had its cover replaced in 2018 ensuring an extension of our growing season into the fall and an early start in the spring. This vital piece of infrastructure helps to lessen our dependency on increasingly unpredictable California crops through the winter season.

The preserving kitchen adds value to the Food Flow system, allowing us to take advantage of the harvest from the garden, orchard and local farms. This year, for example, we canned 230 liters of Ashram organic pears with a market value of \$1,035. We also transformed simple ingredients into healthy products through fermentation—efforts that are appreciated by our diners.

INFRASTRUCTURE

After construction of the Temple was complete, the Infrastructure team turned their attention to Ashram upgrades and repairs. We had a busy time in the last three months of 2018, renewing areas that had been waiting for attention since 2015.

Projects included replacing the roof on Many Mansions, renovating two bathrooms in the Guest Lodge, creating two functional rooms out of one large inefficient room in Radha House, replacing old windows and doors with new energy efficient ones in Radha House and purchasing new wall tents for summer accommodations. It was a busy fall!

In the Repair & Maintenance area, we continue to care for and upgrade our buildings, roads and utilities, with a focus on documenting history and procedures for a transparent transfer of knowledge as the community evolves.

With the increase in wildfires over the past few years, concerted efforts have been going into fire prevention. We are continually addressing ember traps and as well as treating the forest areas to reduce fuel loads. This year we made a number of FireSmart upgrades to buildings, including new roofs for the gas station and beach pump-house. We are working toward becoming a recognized FireSmart Community.

We also took a major step forward in our infrastructure planning by contracting with the Nelson-based engineering company, 9Dot. We will continue the planning process in 2019, reviewing with the company's engineers our water, waste water, electricity, buildings, and fire safety in order to work out a phased-in holistic plan for the future and to determine best ways to use and maintain what we have.



We continue to move forward with commitments to renewable energy and to greater energy efficiency for the Ashram overall. With the Temple now a year old we assessed the net benefits of the small photovoltaic (PV) pilot project installation there. We also have enough data to do a first assessment of the Temple's geothermal system. In both cases, the net savings appear to be less than we had originally hoped. So in 2019 we are establishing changes that will help us achieve our original goals and, more broadly, determine how these renewable-based technologies can work best for us across all 23 buildings at the Ashram.

With the help of outside experts, we will be tailoring new energy upgrades more closely to the specific profiles of each building, beginning with Saraswati Lodge and Radha House. We believe a significant part of the costs will qualify under new funding being made available by our utility company and the provincial or federal governments. 2019 is looking to be a year of consolidating what we have learned from our pilot projects over the past several years and further refining our building-by-building strategies.

Temple of Light



The new Temple of Light was open in 2018 to visitors and to our own community. This meant that we could once again gather each evening for our devotional service (satsang) in the Temple. We welcomed the 2018 Yoga Development Course to this stunning new space, and throughout the year used the Temple for special workshops, ceremonies and events. Visitors streamed in to experience it in record numbers.

The Grand Opening in June was held in coordination with our annual Strawberry Social. After the ribbon was cut to officially open the Temple, our Member of Parliament, Kootenay Lake Regional Director and Chamber of Commerce President offered touching tributes about the Ashram's contribution toward bringing people together in harmony. A group of talented young Nelson-based dancers reflected the graceful lightness of the space. The day was lively, full and congratulatory, attended by large enthusiastic crowds of friends, neighbours and visitors.

In August we held a Temple Dedication weekend, calling people home with an inward, contemplative focus. We filled the space with our devotion and gratitude and each of us reflected on what we want to dedicate our lives to. The weekend brought together many committed students and Yasodhara teachers, including a substantial contingent from Europe.



At different times in the year we hosted events in the Temple including a Climate Action Gathering, a Bharata Natyam dance performance by the talented Anusha Fernando of Shakti Dance of Vancouver and three very different musical events: choral groups presenting the Ripple Effect, with the two choirs culminating their performance around the periphery of the Temple and singing to the audience in the centre; the Nakatani Gong Orchestra, experimental percussion using local volunteers to create an orchestra of gongs played with bows; and a classical concert of violin and piano.

Part of constructing a building is then seeing how it performs during the first year and correcting any deficiencies. We made improvements to the auxiliary building floor, the drainage scuppers and the roof cladding. Landscaping was also launched with basic structures created through berms, a stone walkway and the planting of trees. An irrigation system was installed, soil amendment was started and plans were sketched for further design and planting in 2019.

At the close of 2018 Patkau Architects were beginning to receive accolades for their innovative work on the Temple of Light. The project has been submitted for a number of architectural awards.



Donor Generosity



Once again this year our donors gave generously to the Ashram, contributing to two specific fundraising requests—developing the landscaping at the new Temple and supporting bursaries for young adults participating in our Karma Yoga program. In addition 145 monthly donors and one-time gifts throughout the year helped support our daily operations and special projects.

The Ashram also received one generous bequest and several gifts in memory of loved ones who passed. We gratefully received \$13,120 in grants from The Columbia Basin Trust, Nelson and District Credit Union, Canada Summer Jobs and the Columbia Power Corporation. These funds allowed the Ashram to purchase new computer equipment and to support three events: the official Temple Opening, the annual community Strawberry Social and the Reconciliation weekend with Indigenous Elders. In addition, we were able to hire students to help support our busy summer guest season.

Thank you to all!



Spiritual Direction & Governance



Founded by Swami Sivananda Radha, a Western woman who studied in India in the mid-1950s, Yasodhara Ashram was the first ashram established in Canada. Swami Radha was asked by her teacher to live on faith without working when she returned to Canada. Out of her dedication and courage, the Ashram grew into the flourishing centre it is today.

Swami Radha is a role model for other women and established a lineage of women leaders. Swami Radhananda was president of Yasodhara Ashram Society from 1993 through 2014, building on Swami Radha's work and creating her own legacy of outstanding leadership and innovative teaching. Swami Lalitananda became president of the Society in 2014 and has overseen the Temple project through all its phases.

Yasodhara Ashram Society has been a Canadian charity since 1963.

2018 Highlights

Spiritual Director

Over the year Swami Radhananda gave initiations into deeper spiritual commitments to five dedicated, long-term students of the work.

Yasodhara Ashram Society Board of Directors

Our quarterly Board meetings provide dynamic interaction between the three on-site swami directors and the three directors living outside the Ashram. Together we monitor the overall functioning and health of the Society and look ahead to future initiatives as well as succession, financial and human resources sustainability. The combination of skilled professionals living and working outside the Ashram together with the deep dedication of the swami group has provided a balanced perspective to our Board in 2018.



Financial Overview



Over its 55-year history, Yasodhara Ashram has operated on the principle of renunciation and generosity—buying what we need when we need it, without overconsumption. We make our programs financially accessible—offering payment plans, course discounts, bursaries, scholarships and stipends. Donations help support youth, elders and people on limited incomes to access the Ashram teachings and community.

2018 Highlights

In 2018 we earned revenues from the combination of courses, fundraising, residency fees, Karma Yoga programs, bequests and investments. Our financial focus in this year was on finishing touches to the Temple, Temple landscaping and building upgrades and repairs.

2018 Financial Statements with Notes are available [here](#).



Future Directions



After the intense focus on building the new Temple, we determined that 2019 would be a year to take stock and assess, breathe deeply and observe:

What is the Temple bringing? Already observations show that publicity around the Temple is one way of “putting the Ashram on the map,” as Swami Radha used to say. We are seeing an increase in awareness of the Ashram’s presence, especially in the region, with many more day visitors and people new to our teachings taking courses. As the Ashram becomes more known and open, we are also intent on maintaining the essence and heart of it—our teachings of Light, Divine Mother and kundalini and our lineage through the feminine, intuition and initiations.

What projects need attention now? We are starting multi-year planning in infrastructure and renewables, using consultants to set holistic action plans. The phases will become clearer over the next year, depending on needs and costs.

In 2018 we began gathering data to review trends from the past five years. In 2019 we will launch more fully into a strategic planning process, bringing together perspectives from residents, Board members and teachers. Part of the process will be extending to like-minded organizations to help us understand and learn from their successes and challenges. We are hoping to formulate a longer-term outlook and to respond to some of our questions about the best possible future.

One of the questions we are asking is how we can maintain the Ashram as a centre for Karma Yoga when our need for skilled help is increasing. How do we maintain financial sustainability? These questions are not new and need ongoing thought and experimentation. One promising source of income is increasing our facilities rentals to aligned groups during the shoulder seasons. With the strategic planning process, we will explore other options for additional income streams that integrate with our mission.

Another question that we continue to hold: Who are the dedicated ones that will carry forward the work of the Ashram as the elders step back? We are prompted by our teachers, Swami Radha and Swami Radhananda, to lead through surrender to the Divine, listening to the subtle voice of intuition, sharpening our observations and always questioning, What is the Ashram asking? What is being reflected back? Who is poised to step in?

What about the big questions that affect us all such as climate change and political instability? How can we be most effective? What are our best actions in our own organization? What can we offer to next generations? We will be developing more ways of inviting youth leadership to the Ashram to think together and to renew themselves. Strategies for renewables and reducing our own influence on the environment need continuous updating.

Regionally we are part of organizations such as Friends of Kootenay Lake and the Interfaith Climate Action Collaborative that strengthen our collective voice. At the Ashram we also operate on the subtle level, sending out healing vibrations from the Temple and offering retreats that help people access their own inner strength and resilience. We feel that working on ourselves can be a foundation for change in the world.

As we move ahead our work is multi-layered: practical planning to prioritize the Ashram's long term needs; reaching out and collaborating to develop stronger interdependency; and listening with intuitive understanding, prepared to act on our values where we are guided.

Our aim is to be a compassionate, safe, welcoming community that honours each person; to pass along teachings that help people access their inner Light and wisdom; and to work together with others in harmony. Although the challenges are substantial, we are optimistic that the Ashram will continue to deepen understanding and bring people together for positive change.



Yasodhara Ashram

YOGA RETREAT & STUDY CENTRE

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SINCE 1963

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