

# Ashram charms First Citizen

**SUDHIR KUMAR MISHRA**

**Ranchi:** President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday afternoon made a distinction between knowledge and wisdom and advocated extensive practice of yoga *kriya* to attain the latter during his nearly 90-minute visit to the serene Yogoda Satsanga ashram near Ranchi station.

Releasing the Hindi version of Paramahansa Yoganand's globally acclaimed book *God Talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, titled *Ishwar Arjun Samvad*, President Kovind also said the Gita had answers to every tricky question or challenge in all walks of life.

In his maiden visit to Jharkhand on becoming President, Kovind showed he was well aware of the life of Paramahansa Yoganand (1893-1952), calling him India's spiritual ambassador to the west after Swami Vivekananda.

Paramahansa Yoganand, who started his life's work in the Ranchi ashram in 1917 is widely revered in the west for yoga and especially its meditative aspects.

"He made the world realise the importance of yoga in everyday life," Kovind said.

Kovind also reminded the audience — governor Droupadi Murmu, chief minister Raghubar Das, Yogoda Satsanga Society president Swami Chidananda and others — that Mahatma Gandhi had visited



this ashram in 1925.

"When Swami Vivekananda was preaching Indian spiritualism in Chicago in 1893, the same year Mukunda Lal Ghosh was born in Gorakhpur, who went on to become Paramahansa Yoganand. I am proud that Paramahansa Yoganand had his roots in my native state Uttar Pradesh," the President of India underlined amid cheers.

Appreciating the scenic of beauty of the 20-acre Yogoda Satsanga Ashram and the warm hospitality of the hosts, he said, "The upkeep of its premises and the conduct and behaviour of individuals associated with it are living examples of *karmyogis* (people for whom work is worship). The tree under whose shade Paramahansa Yoganand sat for his meditations is more than 100 years old," he said.

He said he had been informed that Yogoda Satsanga Society of India was celebrating its centenary. "I wish it all the best in its future endeavours," he said.

Kovind said he would be participating in the concluding ceremony of the Antar-rashtriya (International) Gita Gyan Mahotsav in Kuruk-



**YOGA LOVERS:** Yogoda society president Swami Chidananda presents a memento to President Ram Nath Kovind in Ranchi on Wednesday and (above) governor Droupadi Murmu greets foreigners at the ashram. (Manob Chowdhary)

shetra on November 25.

"It is commonly perceived that Kurukshetra is the place where the Mahabharata battle was fought. But, it is also true that Lord Krishna had given wisdom (*Gita gyan*) to Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra," the President underlined the spiritual importance of the city in modern-day Haryana.