

# Message from international yoga day

International Yoga Day was celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015. People throughout the globe actively participated in the yoga day celebration. Participation of 192 nations in this mega event heralds the beginning of a new era of mankind. This was a landslide victory for India at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) when the United Nations declared June 21<sup>st</sup> as International Yoga Day (or World Yoga Day). This came after Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had urged the world community to celebrate yoga at the international level, in his maiden speech at the UNGA on September, 2014. He had said, ‘Yoga is an invaluable gift of our ancient tradition. It is not about exercise; it’s a path through which an individual can discover his sense of oneness with nature. It embodies unity, unity of the mind and the body, thought and action, restraint and fulfillment. On the whole, it’s a holistic approach to health and well-being.’

There were some reservations from some quarters for yoga day celebration. They had an apprehension of yoga being made compulsory for all, and yoga could be discriminatory. Therefore, emphasizing yoga does not discriminate, United Nation Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his message for the first International Yoga Day stated that “...And yoga does not discriminate; to varying degrees, all people can practice, regardless of their relative strength, age or ability. I discovered this for myself on trying to do my first asana, a tree pose suited to beginners. It took a moment for me to gain my balance, but once I did, I appreciated the simple sense of satisfaction that yoga can bring.” There was overwhelming support from all parts of the world for International Yoga Day. Referring to the wholehearted support from the world over, India’s Permanent Representative, Mr. A.K. Mukerji told the UNGA, ‘This is a testimony to the enthusiastic cross-cultural and universal appeal that yoga enjoys among members of the United Nations’ and expressed hope that this resolution would give vent to India’s efforts in the area of global health. Through the resolution, adopted under the agenda of “Global Health and Foreign Policy,” it acknowledged that practicing yoga

would be beneficial for the health of the world population and was adopted with ovation, without even going through the usual procedure of passing a vote. It is for the first time in the history of the United Nation that such a proposal has been recommended and implemented by any country in <90 days. Besides proclaiming June 21<sup>st</sup> as the International Yoga Day, the resolution invited all international organizations and regional bodies to propagate the benefits of practicing yoga.

However, without having a basic concept of yoga, it will be difficult to appreciate the significance of yoga day. Yoga was developed by ancient sages of India to keep the physical and mental faculties fit and healthy, to remain free from suffering, and to slow down the process of degeneration. Yogic practices help in revamping all the systems: the physical, mental and the vital (energy) bodies. Yoga is a pure science and offers very practical and systematically designed techniques of practice. According to yoga, each and every matter is full of life energy, the energy of consciousness, which is part of the super-consciousness or God Reality. The man is the highest creation in the ladder of evolution as he is capable of enhancing his consciousness to the maximum level, to reach the state of super-consciousness. Yoga endorses that to reach the highest level of super-consciousness, man has to attain the highest level of realization, which can be accomplished by living a life self-disciplined and with the development of the physical, mental, and vital bodies.

In hatha yoga, the body is stretched to the maximum through slow movements with which each posture is maintained, which is meant to increase body flexibility. As long as the body is supple, it remains young. Pranayama, the controlled and conscious breathing exercise is a curative measure against a variety of physical and mental ailments and increases one’s immunity and resistance to diseases. However, yoga has higher aspects, beyond the practices of hatha yoga. By practicing yoga, the attitude toward life should change, and the practitioner should be able to free himself from all the entangling emotions and feelings that bind him to the world, and should acquire a sense of detachment, all of which empowers him to still his mind and body. Through yoga practice, one should realize the truth. Yoga is ultimately the union of the self with the divine.

It is estimated that daily about 200 million people around the world practice yoga of some kind or the other. With the celebration of International Yoga Day, more people will become aware of the doctrine of yoga and will be

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encouraged to follow a yogic life, a life which is healthy, humble, and spiritual. Let this be a great opening for the world community to realize the importance of yoga without feud, disagreement, and disparity. General public should understand that yoga offers a simple, accessible, and inclusive means to promote physical and integral health.

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