



International Yoga Day: Sense of Equanimity

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Abstract:

International Yoga Day, June 21, was declared as the International Day of Yoga by the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 2014. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his UN Address suggested the date to be June 21 as the International Day of Yoga as it is the longest day of the year (Summer Solstice) in the Northern Hemisphere and has special significance in many parts of the world.

Keyword: *International day, UN, Yoga*

1. Origin

Prior to the UN declaration of June 21 as International Day of Yoga, formal and informal groups of yoga teachers and enthusiasts have celebrated World Yoga Day on various other dates. It was in a conference organized at The Art of Living International Centre that a proposal for observing 21 June as the World Yoga Day was made.

The conference, titled 'Yoga: A Science for World Peace' was held between 4 and 5 December 2011. It was organized by The Art of Living Foundation and Deemed University, Bengaluru jointly with Portuguese Confederation of Lisbon, Portugal. On that day, under the leadership of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar a proclamation was signed for having UN and UNESCO declare June 21 as World Yoga Day.

2. UN Declaration

On 11 December, India's Permanent Representative Asoke Mukherji introduced the draft resolution in UNGA. The draft text received broad support from 177 Member States who adopted the text without a vote. This initiative found support from many global leaders. A total of 175 nations co-sponsored the resolution and had the highest number of co-sponsors ever for any UNGA Resolution of such nature. Following the adoption of the UN Resolution, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar lauded the efforts of Narendra Modi, stating that "It is very difficult for any philosophy, religion or culture to survive without state patronage. Yoga has existed so far almost like an orphan. Now, official recognition by the UN would further spread the benefit of yoga to the entire world. Emphasizing the importance of yoga, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, "Yoga makes you like a child again. When there is yoga and vedanta, there is no lack, impurity, ignorance and injustice. We need to take yoga to the doorstep of everyone and free the world of misery."

3. Importance of the Day June, 21

From the perspective of yoga, the Summer Solstice marks the transition to Dakshinayana. The first full moon after Summer Solstice is known as Guru Poornima. Lord Shiva, the first yoga practitioner (Adi Yogi) is said to have begun imparting the knowledge of yoga to the rest of mankind on this day and became the first guru (Adi Guru). Dakshinayana is also considered a time when there is natural support for those pursuing spiritual practices.

4. About the Idy (International Day of Yoga) Logo



Logo

Folding of both hands in the logo symbolise Yoga, the union, which reflects the union of individual consciousness with that of universal consciousness, a perfect harmony between mind & body, man & nature; the holistic approach to health & well being. The brown leaf symbolise the Earth element, the green leaf symbolise the nature, blue symbolise the water element, brightness symbolise the fire element and the Sun symbolise the source of energy and inspiration. The logo reflects harmony and peace for the humanity, which is the essence of Yoga.

5. Sushma Swaraj Launched International Day of Yoga Logo

Minister of External Affairs of India, Sushma Swaraj launched International Day of Yoga Logo on 29th of April 2015. Sushma Swaraj said while launch of logo “We will observe the day going beyond the 177 countries who have helped pass the resolution by bringing in the rest as well. Internal events will be organised at the Embassy premises in those countries where local regulations do not permit holding of yoga,”

Truly the different colors of the logo symbolises the eternal power of Yoga and connectivity of all traditions towards the Yoga. Till now 177 countries has become the co sponsors for the International Yoga Day and many are welcoming the support to encourage the education about Yoga.

6. Why International Yoga Day Matters

Without a minimal understanding of yoga, it is difficult to appreciate the significance of the resolution to celebrate an International Yoga Day. The ancient sages of India had developed an integral system called yoga to keep the physical and mental faculties fit and healthy and to slow down the inevitable decay of the body organs. Yogic practices are complete in its revamping of the entire system – the physical body, the mental body and the energy body. Like every scientific theory; yoga also offers a very practical and systematically designed technique. The system of yoga maintains that every matter in this cosmos, from the most prevalent to the most subtle, is vibrant with life. Modern science agrees with it in that even inside the tiniest particle of atom, there is incredible movement. If there is movement, it is being caused by some energy and that energy, yoga stresses, is the basis of all life. According to yoga, each and every matter is throbbing with life energy – that energy is consciousness itself and that consciousness is just a part of the Super Consciousness or God Reality.

The same energy radiates forth from the lowest life form to the highest; it only varies in appearance. Man is considered to be the highest in the ladder of evolution because he is the only being whose awareness can be enhanced to the maximum level to reach the state of enlightenment, the stage where he identifies himself with the Super Consciousness. Yoga recommends that to reach that level, man has to attain the highest state of awareness or consciousness which can be accomplished by following a life structured on self discipline, based on the principles of a simple living and lofty thoughts, in which equal significance is given to the development of the physical, mental and energy bodies.

The physical body is meant to remain active. The lifestyle should be such that the muscles and joints obtain enough exercise, a kind of exercise that is not tiresome and at the same time, beneficial to the three bodies. Hatha yoga, in which the body is stretched to the maximum through slow movements and the specific time period with which each posture is maintained, is meant to increase one's body flexibility. As long as the body is supple, it remains young. Yoga mainly focuses on the spine, the axis of the physical body, the main “telegraphic” pole from where the entire nervous system emerges. If the

spine remains agile and strong, there will be no disruption over the blood circulation and an adequate supply of nutrients and oxygen will be delivered to the nerves to keep them receptive and healthy. As age begins to catch up, the shoulders get hunched over due to lack of exercise and one has painful tension in the upper part of the back and neck due to the various nerves that have gone out of shape. Hatha yoga corrects one's posture, aiding him naturally to be alert and confident.

Prana is the vital force in the body. Pranayama is both a science and an art of purifying the channels along which the life stream of 'prana' flows. Pranayama, breathing practices, the process by which conscious control is achieved through synchronized breathing, are vital for increasing the capacity of the lungs. Through regulated breathing, by altering the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation, it is possible to control the prana. This kind of yogic breathing teaches a person how to use the lungs to their maximum capacity and how to control the breath. Deep, slow and rhythmical breathing increases vitality and mental clarity. Most people breathe shallowly, barely expanding the rib cage. Purifying the prana is a preventive as well as a curative measure against a variety of physical and mental ailments. It increases one's overall immunity and resistance to diseases.

The body, mind and energies of an individual have to be in absolute harmony with the existence. Your creativity or your ability to perform depends upon the manner in which your energy functions. If you can gain some mastery over your energies, something like getting your batteries charged, there will be incomparable improvement in your performance without much extra effort from your side. Once you begin to activate your inner energies, your thought process, the swiftness with which your brain reacts and the implementations of your ideas happen in a different sphere altogether. There is a whole technology as to how to use this energy for higher possibilities and that is Kriya yoga.

7. Messages

"By proclaiming 21 June as the International Day of Yoga, the General Assembly has recognized the holistic benefits of this timeless practice and its inherent compatibility with the principles and values of the United Nations."



BAN KI-MOON
United Nations
Secretary-General

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. This tradition is 5000 years old. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day."

8. Conclusion



Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India
UN General Assembly

Press Information Bureau director general Frank Noronha tweeted "The (union) cabinet was briefed that out of 193 countries (that are members of the UN), 192 countries (except Yemen) celebrated Yoga Day, including 44 Islamic countries," It is estimated that close to 200 million people around the world practice yoga (of some form or the other), a majority of them in India, and over 20 million of them in the United States alone. With this resolution for an International Yoga Day, more people will become aware of the tenets of yoga and will be encouraged to follow a yogic life style, a life that is healthy, humble and devout. Let this be a great opening for the world community to realise the worth of oneness and then, there is no feud, no disagreement and no disparity. Man of every creed and colour will live as one – the world will become one.

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