

# International Day of Yoga

## Holistic approach to health, well-being

Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa  
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA

I am very pleased to contribute to this special supplement being brought out to commemorate the International Day of Yoga. The U.N. General Assembly on Dec. 11, 2014 unanimously declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga with a record 177 cosponsoring countries, including Japan, affirming the call made by the



Prime Minister of India, H.E. Narendra Modi, in his address to the U.N. on Sept. 27, 2014.

An estimated 300 million people practice yoga globally. It is very satisfying to see yoga being widely practiced in Japan as well. Yoga is not a belief system or religion, rather it is a technique. It is understood and practiced by many in different ways. For some, it is the physical benefits from stretching exercises that attracts them. For some, it is the meditative aspect that attracts them. However, the significance of yoga is much deeper.

As our prime minister articulated to the U.N. General Assembly in last September:

"Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature and a holistic approach to health and well-being. Yoga is not about exercise, but to discover the sense of oneness with ourselves, the world and nature."

While declaring June 21 as the International Day of Yoga, the U.N. recognized that, "yoga provides a holistic approach to health and well-being," and called for "wider dissemination of information about the benefits of practicing yoga for the health of the world population." In recent years, medical research, cor-

roborating the experiences of yoga practitioners, has validated many benefits, including improved physical fitness and cardiovascular health, as well as relief from stress, lifestyle-related disorders and anxiety.

You may like to access the portal; [www.idayofyoga.org](http://www.idayofyoga.org), launched by Modi at UNESCO, to learn more comprehensively about yoga. Next year, UNESCO will also consider the proposal of adding yoga to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is a matter of immense pride that yoga, termed as a "gift of India to the world," is finding its rightful place.

I am happy to announce that the Vivekananda Cultural Centre at the Indian Embassy offers yoga classes, which are attended by more than 260 students. I encourage friends in Japan to learn yoga at the center and other yoga organizations.

To celebrate the International Day of Yoga, the Embassy of India is organizing a yoga demonstration and experience session at Taimei Elementary School in Ginza from 9:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on June 21. Additionally, there are more than thirty events taking place all over Japan to mark the day. I wish to also acknowledge the contributions

of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Art of Living and the Indian Commerce and Industry Association, Japan, among others, that have partnered with us in our outreach efforts on the International Day of Yoga.

On this occasion, let me wish good health, peace, prosperity and happiness for everyone in Japan. I do hope practicing yoga will allow people to follow more healthy lifestyles, as well as help connect people and strengthening bonds of humanity. I would also like to thank all of the organizations that are commemorating the International Day of Yoga.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA LOGO



Yoga for Harmony & Peace

The folding of both hands in the logo symbolises yoga, the union, which reflects the joining 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 leaves symbolise the Earth element, the green leaves symbolise nature, the blue symbolises the water element, the brightness symbolises the fire element and the sun symbolises the source of energy and inspiration. The logo reflects harmony and peace for the humanity, which is the essence of yoga.

## Yoga for longevity, anti-aging

Ryuko Hira  
DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION

Centenarian Saichiro Misumi, who is still living in Ogikubo, Suginami Ward, Tokyo, was asked the secret of his good health, longevity and lack of dementia symptoms. He replied, "Every day, I do the simple yoga breathing exercises and read one paragraph of Indian Gita scripture, which is my mind and body tonic."

Yoga has been the secret of effulgence, youthful appearance, anti-aging and longevity since ancient times. Western medicine and surgical science is young; dating back less than 200 years. The commercialization and industrialization of medicine is a healthcare budget nightmare for all governments.

The cost for Japan's 4.5 million dementia sufferers was ¥14.5 trillion in 2014, which is projected to balloon to ¥24.3 trillion and 7.3 million people.

The government is encouraging a shift from institutional care to home care for elderly dementia patients as a way to curb demand for government-run nursing care insurance, which has grown to ¥10 trillion per year. The challenge is how to improve the quality of life for patients and family members with limited financial resources.

Yoga has a scientific and therapeutic basis as evidenced from a multitude of global research. Yoga is much older than Western medicine. Yoga was neglected both in the East and West until the Beatles began a new yoga trend that made a U-turn to the east. Since 2003 yoga became popular with young Japanese in fitness clubs. The yoga population of Japan has grown from 330,000 in 2006 to 1 million in 2010, which is far behind the 6 million in America and 2.5 million in England.

Unlike in the U.K. and the U.S., Japan is in the embryonic state where yoga treatment is not covered by health insurance, which substantially deters patients from seeking yogic treatment. Yoga cures many diseases, especially those of the respiratory and orthopedic

systems. The health ministry has adopted Ayurveda, meditation, nature cures, yoga and others as "integrative medicine" for reducing health care costs and increasing longevity. The education ministry has also adopted breathing exercises, meditation and music therapy to reduce stress for school students. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry has begun to study yoga as a next-generation health care service.

The Institute of Sathya Sai Education, in co-operation with regional departments of education, undertakes value-based education programs for students that incorporates yogic and Vedic lessons that substantially increases their powers of concentration.

Although intellectuals, thinkers and celebrities around the world have practiced and preached yoga, the phenomenal growth of the world's population has compounded health and medical issues at alarming levels. The world has united to adopt International Day of Yoga as an alternate source of higher lifestyles for longevity and anti-aging. Yoga is a constructive and comprehensive science originating from the Indian Vedas scriptures. The Vedas have been included on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list.

Yoga is union, harmony and oneness. Yogic sciences deliver theories and the importance of balance. Balance between ones desires (greed) and capability; balance between politics and principles; balance between commerce and morality; and balance between science and spirituality. The practice of yoga calms all agitation and harmonizes the five elements present in the human body. Yogic effulgence and excellence is the key to peace, prosperity and longevity.



Narendra Modi, prime minister of India, addresses the 69th session of the U.N. General Assembly. UN PHOTO/CIA PAK

## Beneficial for world population

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 27, 2014 called for establishing an international yoga day. The United Nations adopted a resolution on Dec. 11, 2014, proclaiming June 21 every year as the International Day of Yoga. It recognized that yoga "provides a holistic approach to health and well-being" and that wider dissemination of information about the benefits of practis-

ing yoga would be beneficial for the health of the world population.

"I had called on the United Nations General Assembly last September to declare June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. Yoga awakens a sense of oneness and harmony with self, society and nature."

"... Last December, the U.N. adopted it with record co-sponsorship in record time. It was not just an act of friend-

ship for India. It reflected our collective ability to go beyond our familiar boundaries in search for solutions to common challenges."

*Excerpts from the prime minister's address at UNESCO, on its 70th anniversary, on April 10, 2015, where he also launched the website for the international day of yoga - [www.idayofyoga.org](http://www.idayofyoga.org)*

## More people should enjoy yoga's benefits

Yoshiro Mori  
CHAIRMAN, THE JAPAN-INDIA ASSOCIATION

On occasion of the U.N.'s first International Day of Yoga, I extend my heartfelt congratulations toward all peoples of the world, including yogis and yoginis.



It is said that on June 21, the day of summer solstice, the very first yoga was performed.

Modi has spoken about yoga, saying: "Yoga is a precious gift for mankind from ancient traditions and realizes the unification of spirit and body. It is not only a body exercise but a spiritual one to find oneself in harmony with nature."

Everyone in this world hopes that one's life terminates in good health and happiness. I am firmly convinced that everybody will be able to pursue one's happy life by performing yoga, particularly in Japan where the population is rapidly aging.

On the occasion of the first International Yoga Day of UNESCO, I hope that an increasing number of Japanese people understand the significance of yoga and enjoy yoga in their daily lives.



Narendra Modi (right) meets Sathya Sai Baba (left), a well-known yoga educator and then the chancellor of Sathya Sai University.

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