



Yoga: As India's Gift To The World For Better Well Being

Dr. Rajani Rani Varshney
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology

What is Yoga?

Yoga is a centuries-old practice that originated somewhere around 5,000 years ago in India. This was looked up as a process and technique to interconnect the mind, body and soul together and take a step closer to enlightenment. Yoga originates from Indian culture. As this practice gained popularity in the West, this started to be termed an exercise and relaxation method. This was also associated with the claims to alleviate any existing physical injuries and chronic pains. Yoga is the ancient way to attain physical, mental, and spiritual practice. Primarily originating in India, the word 'yoga' is derived from Sanskrit, meaning to unite. This unity signifies the ultimate union of the body with consciousness and thus attaining definitive peace.

Yoga is divided into six branches, namely Hatha Yoga, Raja yoga, Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga, Tantra yoga. There are also seven chakras of yoga styles namely Sahasram chakra, Ajna chakra, Vishuddha chakra, Anahata chakra, Manipura chakra, Svadhishtana chakra, Muladhara chakra. There are total 13 types of Yoga: Kundalini Yoga, Vinyasa Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Yin Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Bikram Yoga, Power Yoga, Sivananda Yoga, Restorative Yoga, Prenatal Yoga, Aerial Yoga, Acro Yoga.

Benefits of Yoga

1. Yoga is the only process in which you can exercise without any equipment. Not only that but in Yoga, you can drive away your diseases without any medicine.
2. With Yoga, you can increase the flexibility of your body. If there is flexibility in one's body, then the pain is much less in that body. Doing Yoga can relieve your pain.
3. If a person does Yoga for 20 to 30 minutes daily, then his body does not get tired throughout the day.
4. Yoga is very beneficial for children. Yoga is also helpful in calming the mind, and it is also helpful in showing the right attitude. Doing Yoga produces positive thoughts, and it also takes the mind to do the right thing

5. Muscles get strong by doing Yoga. By going to the gym, doing weight exercises also strengthen muscles, but when you do Yoga, your muscles become strong, and at the same time, it becomes flexible also, so there is no arthritis and back pain.
6. Doing Yoga keeps the mind calm. By doing this, anxiety does not come. Diseases like mental stress and hypertension remain away from the body.
7. Doing Yoga improves human posture.
8. Yoga helps bones remain strong, and there is no joint pain. Blood flow remains good by doing Yoga. It also improves the heart rate of the body and also boosts immunity. Not only this, but Yoga also helps in controlling blood pressure and controls blood sugar levels.
9. Weight loss is also very quick and easy due to Yoga. Yoga makes the person happy all the time. It enhances peace of mind which leads to good sleep.



Significance of Yoga

Shiva, also known as Adiyogi, is considered the originator and creator of Yoga. This was further brought to the masses by the Saptarishis. As per the Indian mythological story, Shiva sat in a meditating position for years. Then, seven people were impressed by his level of determination, so they decided to learn from him, and they sat still for more than 84 years.

After this, Lord Shiva noticed these 7 beings on the summer solstice day and transmitted the science of meditation to the Saptarishis (7 rishis).

Role of India to promote Yoga

Every person in India knows about Yoga very much in advance, people know its benefits, and it has been done before it became popular in the world. In his speech given in the UN, the current Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, gave the idea of making International Yoga important.

He said in his speech, "Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but discovering the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature. Changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness can help in well-being. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day."

With this, the UN Assembly accepted this proposal and decided to celebrate International Yoga Day on June 21 every year. Also, there are several exercises being organized in the schools like writing International Yoga Day Essays for students in English and other vernacular languages.

History of International Yoga Day

Recognizing the universal appeal of Yoga, on December 11 2014, the United Nations proclaimed June 21 to be marked as the International Day of Yoga. It was first started by our present Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. He celebrated Yoga Day for the first time on June 21 in 2015, after which Yoga Day started being celebrated all over the world on June 15, and it turned into International Yoga Day. More than 36,000 people from all over India joined Prime Minister Modi to perform 21 yoga postures, also called asanas, for 35 minutes at Rajpath, New Delhi. Shri Narendra Modi was further joined by other high-profile political and famous leaders across the globe.

In today's times, this is practised in various forms across different parts of the world and is growing more and more popular. The main aim of celebrating International Day of Yoga is to raise awareness of the multitude of benefits of Yoga. However, Yoga is much more than just a mere physical activity.

International Yoga Day Objectives

The main objective to adopt International Yoga Day is as mentioned below.

- Promote enhanced mental and physical health advantages amongst the people.
- Aware the public of Yoga's holistic advantages.
- Promote awareness among people about Yoga's natural and amazing results.
- Assist people to connect with nature while practising Yoga daily.
- Reduction in the rate of fatal diseases across nations.
- Unification of communities while devoting quality time for health from monotonous work routines.
- Growth enhancement and development together to bring peace.
- Encouraging people to eliminate negativity and embrace yoga asanas.
- Triumph over bad mental and physical health.
- Promote healthy living habits amongst the masses.

The global journey of international yoga day

In today's fast-paced world, where stress and anxiety are pervasive, yoga offers a sanctuary- a space to reconnect with oneself, cultivate mindfulness, and foster resilience. Its teachings extend beyond the yoga mat, influencing how individuals navigate life's challenges with grace and equanimity. Therefore, incorporating yoga into people's lives has become increasingly important, providing a pathway to holistic well-being and personal transformation.

Global Acceptance: The acceptance of yoga as a global practice is evident in the widespread participation of countries worldwide. From bustling Metropolises to remote villages, yoga has found its way into the hearts and homes of millions. Countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany have witnessed a surge in yoga practitioners, with yoga studios, retreat centers, and wellness festivals becoming integral parts of their cultural landscapes.

In addition to established yoga communities, emerging economies like Brazil, China, South Africa, and Indonesia have embraced yoga, recognizing its potential to improve public health and well-being.

Governments in these countries have introduced yoga programs in schools, universities, and public health facilities, making yoga accessible to diverse populations. The global acceptance of yoga underscores its universal appeal and its capacity to transcend cultural boundaries, uniting people in a shared journey

towards health and wholeness.

United Nations Celebrations: Each year, the United Nations celebrates International Yoga Day with enthusiasm and fervour, underscoring the practice's role in promoting peace, harmony, and well-being on a global scale.

The UN headquarters in New York serves as a focal point for International Yoga Day celebrations, hosting a series of events and activities that showcase yoga's transformative power. These celebrations typically include yoga sessions led by renowned teachers, speeches by dignitaries, cultural performances, and panel discussions on various aspects of yoga. Participants from diverse backgrounds come together to practice yoga, exchange ideas, and celebrate the values of unity, compassion, and inclusivity that yoga embodies.

Beyond the UN headquarters, International Yoga Day is celebrated in UN offices around the world, with events organized in partnership with local communities, yoga organizations, and diplomatic missions. From bustling city squares to serene natural settings, people gather to practice yoga, reaffirming their commitment to personal and planetary well-being.

In recent years, the pandemic prompted a shift towards virtual celebrations, with online yoga sessions, webinars, and social media campaigns becoming integral components of International Yoga Day festivities. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the spirit of solidarity and resilience prevails, as people come together in spirit to honour the ancient practice of yoga and its enduring relevance in the modern world.

International Yoga Day (2015-2024):

2015: The Inaugural International Yoga Day themed “Yoga for Harmony and Peace” was celebrated with great fervour, marked by mass yoga demonstrations at iconic landmarks worldwide, including the United Nations headquarters in New York. Millions of people from diverse backgrounds participated in yoga sessions, underscoring the practice's universal appeal and its ability to unite people in a shared pursuit of health and well-being.

2016: The Second International Yoga Day continued the momentum, with celebrations highlighting yoga's role in promoting Yoga for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. This theme underscored the role of yoga in contributing to the pursuit of sustainable development, emphasizing its potential to address key global challenges. Events and activities held worldwide focused on highlighting how the practice of yoga can support the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as promoting health and well-being, reducing inequalities, and fostering environmental sustainability. Through yoga, individuals were encouraged to cultivate a deeper connection with themselves, their communities, and the planet, fostering a sense of responsibility towards creating a more equitable and sustainable world.

2017: The theme for International Yoga Day was "Yoga for Health," emphasizing the Physical and Mental benefits of yoga. Events focused on promoting yoga as a tool for improving overall health and well-being, with a particular emphasis on its role in preventing and managing chronic diseases.

2018: With the theme of "Yoga for Peace," International Yoga Day celebrations emphasized yoga's potential to promote tolerance, understanding, and non-violence. Events highlighted the role of yoga in fostering inner peace and harmony, both within individuals and in society at large.

2019: International Yoga Day embraced the theme of "Yoga for Heart," emphasizing the practice's profound impact on Cardiovascular health and overall well-being. This theme highlighted the therapeutic benefits of yoga in promoting heart health, including reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, and improving circulation. Events and activities organized worldwide focused on raising awareness about the importance of incorporating yoga into daily life to maintain a healthy heart. Participants were encouraged to engage in heart-opening yoga poses, breathing exercises, and meditation practices to nurture both physical and emotional aspects of heart health.

2020: International Yoga Day embraced the theme of "Yoga at Home and Yoga with Family," reflecting the global shift towards practicing yoga in the comfort of one's home amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This theme emphasized the importance of incorporating yoga into daily routines and sharing the practice with family members. With social distancing measures in place, people worldwide turned to virtual platforms to participate in yoga sessions together with their loved ones. The theme encouraged individuals to create a sacred space within their homes for yoga practice, fostering a sense of connection, unity, and well-being within the family unit.

2021: International Yoga Day embraced the theme of "Yoga for Well-being," spotlighting the practice's profound impact on overall health and happiness. This theme underscores the holistic nature of yoga, emphasizing its ability to nurture Physical, Mental, and Emotional well-being. Events and activities organized worldwide focused on promoting self-care practices, stress management techniques, and mindfulness exercises to enhance individuals' overall quality of life. Participants were encouraged to prioritize their well-being by incorporating yoga into their daily routines and cultivating a deeper connection with themselves.

2022: International Yoga Day adopted the theme of "Yoga for Humanity," emphasizing the practice's universal principles of compassion, unity, and service to others. This theme highlighted yoga's profound potential to foster a sense of interconnectedness and solidarity among all members of the human family. Events and activities worldwide centered around promoting acts of kindness, social responsibility, and humanitarian efforts inspired by the teachings of yoga.

2023: International Yoga Day embraced the theme of "Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," highlighting the ancient Indian concept that translates to "The world is one family." This theme underscored the universal values of unity, inclusivity, and interconnectedness promoted by the practice of yoga. Events and activities worldwide focused on fostering a sense of global solidarity and mutual respect among all individuals, regardless of nationality, religion, or background.

Participants were encouraged to embody the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam through acts of kindness, compassion, and service to others, reaffirming their commitment to building a more peaceful and harmonious world.

2024: International Yoga Day's theme, for this year is "Yoga for Women Empowerment," underscores the pivotal role of yoga in empowering women globally. Through yoga, women can cultivate Physical strength, Mental resilience, and Emotional balance, enhancing their overall well-being. This year's theme highlights how yoga serves as a transformative tool, enabling women to reclaim their agency, foster self-confidence, and embrace their inherent power to effect positive change in their lives and communities.

Role of India as a Pioneer: India plays a pioneering role in promoting yoga globally, given its rich historical and cultural connection to the practice. The Ancient Indian scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Upanishads, contain references to yoga as a spiritual discipline and a path to self-realization. The Indian government, along with various yoga organizations and institutions, actively promotes the teaching and practice of yoga both Domestically and Internationally. India hosts large-scale yoga events on International Yoga Day, including mass yoga demonstrations, workshops, and seminars.

India's Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) oversees the promotion and regulation of yoga and traditional Indian medicine systems. It collaborates with international partners to organize yoga events, conferences, and training programs around the world.

International Yoga Day thus stands as a testament to the transformative power of yoga to unite people across borders and cultures in pursuit of health, harmony, and well-being. From its humble beginnings as a proposal at the United Nations to its recognition as a global cultural heritage, International Yoga Day

continues to inspire millions to embrace yoga as a path to self-discovery, empowerment, and enlightenment. The global acceptance of International Yoga Day reflects the universal appeal of yoga and its ability to promote health, peace, and well-being on a global scale with a potential to create a more harmonious and compassionate world for generations to come.

The Importance of International Yoga Day

International Yoga Day is an important event for a number of reasons. Firstly, it helps to raise awareness about the benefits of yoga and promotes its practice all over the world. This is important because yoga has been shown to have numerous health benefits, including reducing stress, improving flexibility, and boosting overall energy levels.

Secondly, International Yoga Day is a celebration of the unity and diversity of the global yoga community. It brings together people from all walks of life, cultures, and backgrounds to practice yoga and celebrate the benefits of this ancient knowledge.

Finally, International Yoga Day is an important reminder of the role that yoga can play in promoting peace and harmony in the world. Yoga is a practice that emphasises compassion, mindfulness, and non-violence, and can be a powerful tool for building bridges between different cultures and communities.

Importance of Yoga for Better Living

Today the whole world is suffering from various kinds of problems. Our present day life is so chaotic and stressful that even thinking of ancient days soothes our heart and brain. The life style of human beings with the passage of time has gradually changed. Science and technology has dominated the present age and the modern man fully depends on it. Physical labour has reduced and ultimately the health of modern man has weakened due to lack of workout. In this age of competition, life is so hard and stressful that man is unable to cope up and hence suffering from various psychological and mental disorders. Yoga provides the best solution of these problems to which modern man is the sufferer. No other exercise, except Yoga, can deal with these problems all together. Yoga manages all problems simultaneously in a brilliant way. To compare with other games and exercises which provide only muscular and cardio-vascular fitness, Yoga gives an all-round development for living a healthy social life. The aim of yoga is achievement of physical, mental and spiritual harmony. Yoga is committed to the cause of moral and spiritual uplift of mankind to bring the peace and happiness in the modern world.

Yoga is a science of life, it offers us simple, easy remedies and techniques and methods of health and hygiene to assure physical and mental fitness with a minimum of time, effort and expense. Yoga is one of the most ancient metaphysical sciences, which investigates the nature of soul and through its discipline, awakens the super-conscious mind of the man which unites the moral being with the immortal supreme spirit. Yoga leads to balance and also provides both a philosophy and a religion. The real joy of life appears when we can unify nature and culture, wealth and poverty, movement and stillness, attachment and

detachment. Yoga can serve both the individual and society. Yoga is neither a sect nor an ideology but a practical training of mind and body. Broadly speaking, it has three main outcomes: First, it makes us more aware of our natural wisdom; Second, it strengthens the body's ability to recover from illness or injury; and Third, it teaches us how to co-operate with others. Yoga teaches us truth through mind and body rather than theory; it brings about deep change of attitude. The entire thrust of our life is to devote total attention to every action and at the same time, to trust in the power of sacred.

In fact, Yoga is a bridge between body, mind and spirit. Since its practices smoothly coordinate the functions of the bones, muscles, blood, brain etc., which help to improve health, and as they train human mind, which is immaterial and intangible, for modifying proper attitude, behavior and values may establish mental peace.

The Future of International Yoga Day

As the popularity of yoga continues to grow all over the world, the future of International Yoga Day looks bright. Each year, more and more people are participating in International Yoga Day events and celebrating the benefits of this ancient practice.

In the years to come, it is likely that International Yoga Day will continue to grow and evolve, with new events, initiatives, and partnerships being established all over the world. As the global yoga community continues to expand, International Yoga Day will remain an important event for promoting the benefits of yoga and bringing people together in a spirit of unity and harmony.

Yoga enables one to truly connect with oneself. It enables an expansion of physical and mental abilities and helps us become the best version of ourselves. After all, inner tranquility is the recipe for greatness. This is the reason Yoga has gained unprecedented popularity across the globe – with people in the United States of America, Canada, countries in Europe, Japan and South Korea adopting and practicing yoga in large numbers. The beginning and peak of the global pandemic were definite inflection points. Today, the popularity of Yoga has soared – from Los Angeles to Okinawa and from London and Paris to Sydney and Auckland.

Yoga is a drugless Indian system that emphasizes stress management, lifestyle, and diet correction to reduce the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, obesity and even cancer. The Ministry of Ayush has, since its inception, gone the extra mile in promoting Indian traditional medicine systems of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy and Sowa Rigpa. It has made these endeavors in a bid to establish India as the holistic health capital of the world.

Conclusion –

International Yoga Day is celebrated every June 21. It was introduced by our honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. It aims to provide mental health fitness, physical health fitness of mind, body and soul. Yoga has had a significant impact on Indian society and culture. It has been used for centuries to promote physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual growth.

Yoga can be adapted to suit people of all ages, abilities, and body types. It emphasises compassion, mindfulness, and non-violence, and can be a powerful tool for building bridges between different cultures and communities. Yoga is not just an exercise or a form of meditation, it is a way of life that can help us to achieve inner peace, harmony, and a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Yoga, one of the many ways India contributes to making the world a better place and better well being.

References

- AYUSH Ministry. *The IDY Handbook: Reference for organizers of promotional activities for International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2021*. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16]]. Available from: https://yoga.ayush.gov.in/public/assets/IDY_ebook.pdf.
- AYUSH Ministry[2022] 'Unflinching Aims of Transformational Reforms of YOGA DAY'. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16]]; <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2023/apr/doc2023424186001.pdf>. [Google Scholar]
- Yoga Certification Board (2023). Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16]]. Available from: <https://yogacertificationboard.nic.in/about-yoga-certification-board/>
- World Health Organization (2023). *WHO mYoga App*. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16th]]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/behealthy/who-myogaapp>.
- Ministry of AYUSH (2019). *Working group meeting for benchmarks in training in Yoga*. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16]]. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/moayush/posts/who-working-groupmeeting-for-benchmarks-in-training-in-yogathe-world-healthorg/2795531750672068/>
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (2019). *Global Yoga Accreditation Summit*. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16]]. Available from: <http://naac.gov.in/images/docs/PressRelease/GYAS-Media-Release-USA-03-May-19.pdf>.
- Ministry of Education (2022). 'List of Schools in India'. [[Last accessed on 2023, June 16]]. Available from: https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/udise_21_22.pdf, <https://pib.gov.in>.
- Lehto XY, Brown S, Chen Y, Morrison AM. *Yoga tourism is a niche within the wellness tourism market*. *Tour Recreation Res.* 2006;31:2535. [Google Scholar]
- Dillette AK, Douglas AC, Andrzejewski C. *Yoga tourism –A catalyst for transformation?* *Ann Leis Res.* 2019;22:2241. [Google Scholar]
- Ponder LM, Holladay PJ. *Transformational Tourism: Tourist Perspectives*. Wallingford UK: CABI; 2013. *The transformative power of yoga tourism*; p. 98107. [Google Scholar]
- White LS. *Reducing stress in school-age girls through mindful Yoga*. *J Pediatr Health Care.* 2012;26:45–56. doi: 10.1016/j.pedhc.2011.01.002. [DOI] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Nanthakumar C. *The benefits of Yoga in children*. *J Integr Med.* 2018;16:14–19. doi: 10.1016/j.joim.2017.12.008. [DOI] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Arbo GD, Brems C, Tasker TE. *Mitigating the Antecedents of Sports-related Injury through Yoga*. *Int J Yoga.* 2020;13:120–129. doi: 10.4103/ijoy.IJOY_93_19. [DOI] [PMC free article] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Jeitler M, Högl M, Peters A, Schumann D, Murthy V, Bringmann H, Seifert G, Michalsen A, Stöckigt B, Kessler CS. *A qualitative study of Yoga for Young Adults in school sports*. *Complement Ther Med.* 2020;55:102584. doi: 10.1016/j.ctim.2020.102584. [DOI] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]
- Biman S, Maharana S, Metri KG, Nagaratna R. *Effects of Yoga on stress, fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, and the quality of life among employees of the diamond industry: A new approach in employee wellness*. *Work.* 2021;70:521–529. doi: 10.3233/WOR-213589. [DOI] [PubMed] [Google Scholar]

- *National Library of Medicine (2023). Pubmed Search results for Yoga from 2015-2023. [[Last accessed on 2023, July 03]]. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=Yoga&filter=years.2015-2023> .*

