

International Symposium on YOGism for Healthy & Happy Living and Aging

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AROGYADHAM, JBTDRC

Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram

Presidential Address

Shri. Dhiru S. Mehta

President

Kasturba Health Society, Sevagram

Dear Yoga experts, yoga lovers and friends,

As most of you know I am not a man of medicine and whenever I come to preside over meeting over such subject it is more out of my duty as president of Kasturba Health Society. Today I can say that I know a little better about yoga. I am regular practitioner of yoga. Three days a week I perform yoga for 45 minutes and I can say with experience that yoga has proved very beneficial for me. Practice of yoga leads to better health and fitness and flexibility and muscle tone. In a survey taken sometime back in Australia it has come to the light that yoga is primarily seen and practiced as a physical discipline and equally yoga helps to reduce stress and anxiety. Quite a few people have been resorting to yoga for mental health issues, stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. Yoga can also help to change one's outlook on life and that is why there is increase in alertness about yoga world over. The classical yoga of our country is practiced as high pedestal of divinity so far now seem as to mundane streets of Newyork and London. People in western countries are looking for independence, freedom, liberation and moksha from stress and in fact yoga is becoming our commerce.

We are delighted to welcome and have you in this International Symposium on YOGism at Sevagram, the Karma Bhumi of Mahatma Gandhi who lived and propagated 'Simple Living and High thinking' which of course is now replaced by high living and little thinking. It is time to come out of our nests and help the cause of Yoga for creating a peaceful World.

YOGA & YOGism

The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word *Yuj* meaning union. It is the union of individual with divine or individual consciousness with universal consciousness. Yoga is the single universal principle which balances the entire universe. It is recorded in the Vedas that Yoga is older than the universe. Yoga is not a religion, not a cult, nor any theory or set of dogmas. It is fundament of Sanatana Dharma – the eternal universal principle. The principles of Yoga are

universal, noble and divine. The Hindu Rishis, Sages and Yogis have adapted it as a way of life. Each faith has its doctrine firmly established in the principles of Yoga – belief in God, Prayer to God, love and compassion to all, live in harmony with nature and strive for God – Realisation or Oneness with the Supreme.

Yoga provides us a very natural and practical approach to a healthy and successful life in harmony with nature and the environment. It offers techniques for harmonizing the body and mind, purifying our consciousness and achieve Self – Realization. That is, to become one with God (www.yogaindailylife.org).

The great Sage Maharishi Patanjali (500 BC) described the philosophy of Yoga into four main paths according to the nature and range of qualities existent in humans. **Jnana Yoga** is path of knowledge and wisdom through philosophy and discrimination between Reality and unreality. **Bhakti Yoga** is the path of love and devotion to the Divine through worship and prayer. **Karma Yoga** is the path of selfless action and service. **Raja Yoga** is the path of self – discipline and self – mastery through practice and meditation.

Practicing Yoga requires a great deal of self discipline and confidence. Yoga makes one independent and free.

Raja Yoga is the eight – fold path of discipline and practice. Self discipline is the key to success (www.yogaindailylife.org). To guide the spiritual seeker how to live life, certain moral and ethical principles are set down, known as the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*.

Yama – is self control through the following:

Ahimsa, truthfulness, non stealing, celibacy and non – accumulation of possessions.

Niyama – is discipline through the following:

Purity, contentment, endurance and self control, study of holy scriptures and surrender to God.

The other limbs of Raja Yoga include:

Asana - comfortable and steady posture, exercise;

Pranayama – regulation of the breath;

Pratyahara – withdrawal of the senses

Dharana – concentration

Dhyana – meditation

Samadhi – realization of the self, oneness with God.

The whole environment is poisoned due to human greed. Our rivers, lakes, oceans and seas are polluted Our fields, mountains and skies are polluted. Indeed the most dangerous pollution is mental pollution.

Since Yoga is the balancing principle that sustains all of life, it is Yoga that will restore harmony to our world. Leading to Yogic life will remove dualism from an individual's mind and restore his inner peace. The result will automatically be demonstrated to the outer world. There will be peace between individuals, communities and Nations and humans live in harmony with nature. Through Yoga way of living we cultivate compassion for all living beings.

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A Yogi is very focused on inward development through asceticism, meditation, contemplation and manipulation of physical energy. Yogi often dresses and lives simply as part of their ascetic values, and they spend a great deal of time in deprivation and meditation to ponder the divine. A Yogi is generally treated with veneration and respect in Indian Society (www.wisegeek.com).

Finally consumerism associated with fast – paced life, junk foods, greediness to accumulate have taken their toll in increasing life style problems in western nations related to stress, obesity, heart disease etc. finally opening their eyes to the wisdom of Yoga way of simple living. Research in life style / Mind – Body Medicine in Divisions of Integrative Medicine has shown benefits of different components of Raja Yoga, namely **Yogasanas**, **Pranayama** and **Meditation** (mindfulness) in management of Obesity, Asthma, Hypertension, Stress, Addiction and other life style health problems and is being integrated with conventional medicine abroad.

Modern Yoga gained momentum in the West in the late 1800s after Swami Vivekananda and great Gurus like Osho, Mahesh Yogi and others travelled to west and introduced the Science and Practice of Yoga. It has become a multibillion dollar industry in the USA, with about 30 million American practitioners. America has tasted and embraced Yoga for its good things. None will be able able to stop its growth in this modern era. In recent years, Swami Ramdev revolutionized popularization of Yoga to the masses with claims of over 85 million people regularly following his Yoga camps via TV channels and videos in India and abroad.

I wish the visiting experts from India and abroad and the delegates a pleasant stay and good get together at Sevagram, the land of Gandhi and also wish the Symposium all the success. Let us simply understand that YOGism is just simple living in harmony with Nature and hence a matter of concern for whole Universe.