



## Yoga and its benefits

*Ambassador of India to Bhutan, Ruchira Kamboj talked to Bhutan Times Reporter Sonam Penjor on International Day of Yoga and is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition*

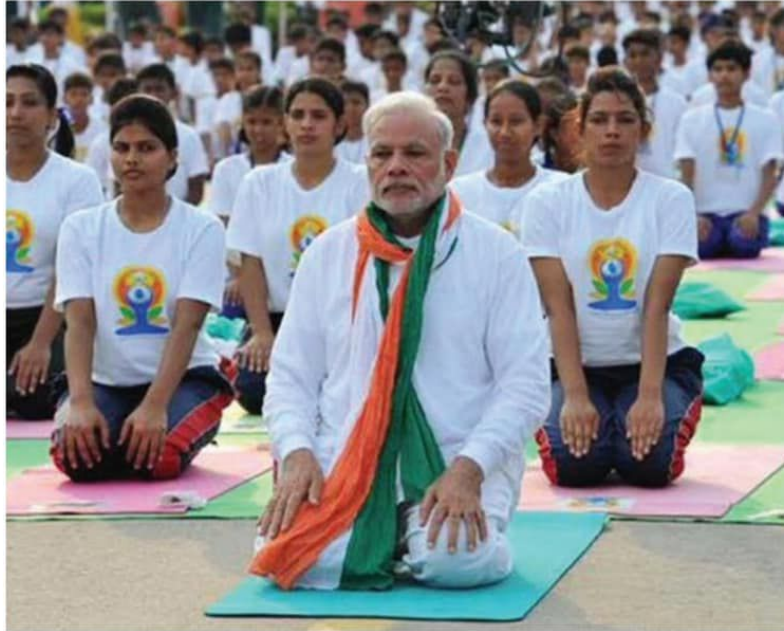
### Who started the IDY celebrations? Why is the International Day of Yoga celebrated?

The idea of an International Day of Yoga was first proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2014. In his speech, he had said: "Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. 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 in well-being. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day."

Recognizing the universal appeal of Prime Minister Modi's message, the United Nations proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by Resolution 69/31 on December 11, 2014 during the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The draft resolution was endorsed by a record 175 member states, the highest number of co-sponsors for any United Nations resolution. June 21 also coincides with the summer solstice, a day with the longest period of daylight when the Sun reaches its highest position in the sky. Ever since, there has been an unparalleled spirit within the world to embrace Yoga with greater depth and passion.

### When did the celebrations of International Yoga Day initially begin and what is the objective of the programme?

As I have mentioned in some detail above, the first International Day



of Yoga was observed across the globe on 21 June 2015. At the time of proposing the concept, Prime Minister Modi had emphasized that "we need to change our lifestyles." In this vein, the IDY promotes and popularizes the spirit and practice of Yoga, with an objective that more and more people should reap its accompanying benefits.

### What is the theme of the International Yoga Day 2021?

Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the theme of the International Day of Yoga this year is 'Be With Yoga – Be At Home', emphasizing upon the importance of maintaining COVID-19 protocol and social distancing even while celebrating the Day.

### What are benefits of practicing Yoga in time of the pandemic?

Yoga is much more than a physical exercise – it enables us to access a new dimension of the self, even while providing a holistic approach to preventive health-care and well-being. And through

its unifying power, we seek completeness and at the same time, a oneness with the world. The emotional and health benefits of yoga are well documented: Yoga leads to more energy, a brighter mood, and increased strength, balance and flexibility. Yoga reduces stress, benefits heart health, protects your spine, increases your blood flow, boosts immunity, improves focus and concentration and releases tension in your limbs. According to the great Indian sage Patanjali: "When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their bonds. Your mind transcends limitations; your consciousness expands in every direction; and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person than you ever dreamed yourself to be."

The year 2021 marks the 7th International Day of Yoga. The pandemic has brought the focus

back on practices that promote physical health and mental well-being. Suffice to say that Yoga is perhaps the ultimate practice that offers benefits for people of all ages, and in all situations.

### How can an individual begin to practice Yoga at home?

Anyone can begin the practice of Yoga at any time, with a little inspiration and self-motivation.

One option available for all Bhutanese are the online weekly Yoga classes conducted by the Yoga Guru of the Cultural Centre of the Embassy of India which are live-streamed on the Facebook page (@IndiaInBhutan) of the Embassy every morning at 9:30 am. There are also a variety of Bhutanese Yoga teachers who offer physical and online classes at their Yoga studios. In fact, two of these instructors, Phuntsho Dema and Chainga Dorji, were prize winners of a global video-blogging competition hosted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the Ministry of AYUSH in 2020.

The Embassy has also coordinated fully-sponsored ITEC training programmes customized for Bhutanese nationals at the Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana University, Karnataka in 2019-2020. After the COVID-19 situation normalizes, we will offer similar ITEC training courses on Yoga for budding Yoga enthusiasts from Bhutan.

The Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India offers a number of training courses on Yoga through digital channels from time to time. For instance, a Volunteer Training Programme on the Common Yoga Protocol was recently conducted in two batches by the Ministry of AYUSH, candidates had to register on the link <https://yogacertificationboard.nic.in/IDY2021/> and certificates were issued to all who had successfully completed the entire CYP course.

### Additional comments:

I wish to take this opportunity to profusely thank all our Bhutanese friends who are practising Yoga across their serene, spiritual and beautiful country. This year, we were delighted that faculty members and students of the Draktsho Vocational Institute, the Royal Thimphu College, monks of the Dratshang Lhentshog and several prominent individuals joined us in the celebrations of the International Day of Yoga 2021. Thanks also to Kelly Dorji, Chenchho Gyeltsen and Sangay Tsheltrim!. There cannot be better role models for Bhutanese youth to emulate.

As a last word, I will conclude with some wisdom from the world-famous Yoga Guru Shri B K S Iyengar who had said: "Yoga is like music: the rhythm of the body, the melody of the mind, and the harmony of the soul, create the symphony of life."