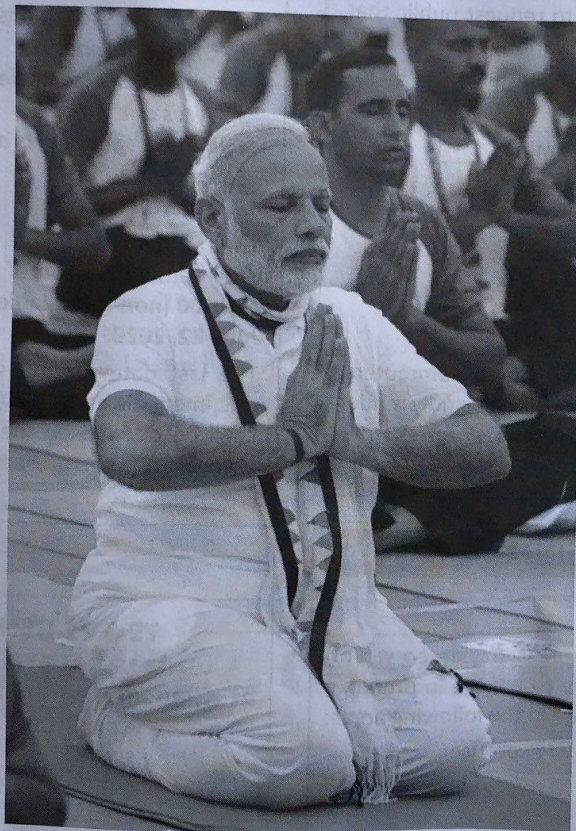


Yoga : The Infinitely gentle thing

For many years now, a question of great debate has tormented many philosophers: whether it is worth living life with the weight of reality or with the lightness of oblivion? We find ourselves asking, is suffering necessary for depth? This indeed, is a philosophical question to be explored over many dusks and dawns, yet I cannot help but think of Yoga when I am faced with this dilemma.

Yoga is liberation. It is an acknowledgment of the compelling pull of reality and the undeniable suffering, yet it seeks to release one from this weight. It is not the act of merely transcending to peace effortlessly, it is obtaining inner strength and daring to search for serenity. Yoga is the unbroken spirit to overcome - it is an indescribable, infinitely gentle thing.

However, let us step back for a brief moment to the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly. In September 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the world community to adopt an International Day of Yoga. And within 75 days of the proposal, the



United Nations General Assembly adopted a unanimous Resolution declaring June 21 as the International Day of Yoga.

Almost two years later,

UNESCO declared Yoga an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, forever inscribing this ancient art into the record of the timeless. And ever since, there has been an

unparalleled spirit within the world to embrace yoga with greater depth and passion. It is my delight that Bhutan is second to none in this regard and that there is an exceptional following of yoga within this pristinely beautiful and sacred country.

From a modest start of four students in 2010, the Cultural Centre of the Embassy in Bhutan now has almost 12,000 registered followers of Yoga. Previously, there used to only be one private studio with a single teacher in Thimphu. Today, Thimphu has four private yoga studios run by local Yoga teachers, three of whom have been the beneficiaries of ITEC Yoga. Other ITEC Yoga enthusiasts from Bhutan are freelance Yoga teachers. Needless to add, the Government of India offers maximum Yoga scholarships to Bhutan over any other country, given the privileged nature of our bilateral relationship.

As we adapt to a new lifestyle within these Covid-19 times, Yoga provides a unique liberation in efforts to increase immunity and sustain balance within one's self. As often said, only when one is at peace with oneself can one

build peaceful and healthy societies and a harmonious world.

Finally, and at a philosophical level, I will add that Yoga is the absolute control of the faculties of the mind and through a control of the mind, efficiency in action. This same viewpoint is expressed in the *Kumarsambhava* of *Kalidasa* where the state of meditation of Lord Shiva is compared to "an unflickering lamp kept in a windless place".

It is truly beautiful to see so many around the world gather in solidarity for yoga. It is not living with the burden of weight or the lightness of oblivion, it is a choice made with balance. An idiosyncratic beauty, timeless throughout the progress of humanity, Yoga has endured. It is truth beyond articulation, wisdom beyond time.

I hope all of you will cherish 21 June this year, and hold it close to your hearts, today and forever.

*Contributed by
Ruchira Kamboj
Ambassador of India
to Bhutan*

Sixth International Yoga Day

An award ceremony to mark the 6th International Yoga Day was held at the Embassy of India in Thimphu on Friday.

By Karma W Tamang

An award ceremony to mark the 6th International Yoga Day was held at the Embassy of India in Thimphu on Friday.

By Karma W Tamang
The Embassy of India had held various online Yoga competitions like Customized Yoga Quiz competition, Yoga Quiz competition, and Asana (Body Posture) of the Day competition where a total of around 250 participants took part in the competition.

Mr. Gerald Daly, Resident Coordinator (RC) of the United Nation (UN) in Bhutan, said yoga is one important way to build personal resilience and is considered one of India's greatest wisdom heritages with roots in Mohenjo-Daro and perhaps even to Pashupati Shiva.

"Yoga is a powerful tool to deal with the stress of uncertainty and isolation as well as to maintain physical. As the world struggles with the pandemic battle, I am deeply moved by how Bhutan comes together in solidarity. His Majesty, the king's leadership inspires and encourages all to come together in solidarity to combat COVID," Gerald Daly said.

The UN Resident Coordinator also took the opportunity to thank and commend frontline workers in the ministry of health and agriculture, and also all government officials who take the daily risk to ensure we

all live in safety.

The UN is responding to the immediate needs of most vulnerable by strengthening economic resilience. Working together to ensure no one is left behind is at the heart of our work in Bhutan and we are grateful for the partnerships with the Royal Government of Bhutan, CSOs and the international communities who enabled us to do this service," the RC said.

While congratulating the winners, Mr Gerald also congratulated the Indian officials on its election to the UN Security Council earlier this week and thanked the Indian embassy and the Government of India for their work and response to COVID.

"We are all together in this fight and we will all get through this together," he said.

The director of the Royal Academy, Pangbisa in Paro Arun Kapoor said that because of the assistance provided by His Majesty and the royal government, a lot of them living in Bhutan don't feel alienated or neglected during such trying times.

He said that the way Bhutan is handling the pandemic is something we need to acknowledge as the situa-



tions in other countries have gone from bad to worse. He also commended Bhutan's leadership under the monarchs which, according to him, has been exemplary.

On Yoga, Arun said that during the 5th International Yoga day there was a huge gathering whereby the prime minister and other important government officials attended the function. He added that despite the pandemic, the Indian Embassy has ensured that the importance of the day was not overlooked.

Awarding of Prizes

The prizes were awarded by the UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Gerald Daly, Mr. Arun Kapoor, Director of The Royal Academy, and the

Indian Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj.

Six children below nine years were awarded a certificate and cash prizes for their participation in various Yoga for Children programme while three students of Royal Academy were awarded a certificate and Samsung Galaxy smartphones for winning the customized Yoga competition quiz.

There were around 130 participants in the customized yoga quiz competition and Tenzin Choden Thinley, Karma Sonam, and Master Serthup Pelbar were the top three winners from the category.

Of the 30-odd participants in the Yoga Competition Quiz, Jamyang Choden,

Kinley Drukpa and Dorji Dema were declared the top three winners of the quiz.

As for the Asana of the Day competition, or the best body posture competition, there were around 90 participants from which Oma Maya Khadal, Tika Devi Adhikari and Lopen Tandin Dorji were declared the winners. They were also awarded certificates and Samsung smartphones.

Serthup Pelbar, one of the winners of the customized yoga quiz competition, said he got interested in yoga when he was in 7th grade and he had never looked back since then as yoga became part of his daily life and routine.

Yoga enthusiasts commemorate International Day of Yoga

Indian Embassy awarded prizes for various activities to celebrate the day

Thinley Namgay

With outdoor activities restricted because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indian Embassy has organised various online yoga activities unlike previous years to commemorate the sixth international day of yoga on June 21.

This year's international yoga theme is 'yoga for health-yoga at home.'

More than 250 yoga enthusiasts took part in activities like asana of the day competition, yoga quiz competitions, customised yoga quiz competitions for Royal Academy students, and the yoga for children

below nine years.

The prize distribution ceremony was held yesterday at the Indian Embassy in Thimphu. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bhutan, Gerald Daly graced the event.

Five children who took part in the 'yoga for children' category were awarded certificates and cash prizes. The top three winners of other categories were awarded certificates and a Samsung M-21 phone each.

Serthub Pelbar, a class nine student of the Royal Academy, said that he had been practising yoga for the last two years. "I engage in yoga daily. It makes my

body more flexible. Sometimes I learn steps from social media platforms."

Recently, online yoga videos of KVSSN Murthy, a yoga teacher from the Nehru Wangchuck Cultural Centre (NWCC), and videos of Bhutanese yoga enthusiasts, Mena and Tashi Yetsho were uploaded on social media to mark the day.

Some online activities are yet to be completed.

The 'Yoga Video Blogging Contest' launched by the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) on June 1 will end tomorrow. Common

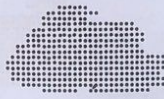
yoga protocol demonstration by KVSSN Murthy, and Phuntsho, a Bhutanese yoga practitioner and posting of online video messages by dignitaries will be held tomorrow.

Speaking at the ceremony, Gerald Daly said that yoga was one of the important ways to build personal resilience. "The yoga asanas of India are one of the great wisdom heritages of the world. We are fortunate to be able to draw on yoga to build our personal resilience at this time," he said. "Yoga is a powerful tool to deal with the stress of uncertainty and isolation as well as to physical wellbeing. Because it addresses

the needs of a whole being."

Yoga originated in India 5,000 years ago.

A press release from the Indian Embassy states that the values of yoga forms a significant part of the community's ethos based on unifying the mind with the body for greater mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing. So far, more than 4,000 Bhutanese have registered at the NWCC to practice yoga. More than 200 are regularly coming for the practice at the centre. The UN in Bhutan through online tools resilience under the initiative of "we care we share" also offers yoga resources to its staff and the people of Bhutan.



Yoga Day goes digital for the first time

The theme for this year's International Yoga Day is "Yoga for Health-Yoga at Home"



Five children who have taken part in the 'yoga for children' received certificates and cash prizes.

Lhakpa Tshering

With the digital platforms becoming an alternative means for learning, earning, and more, the online yoga program has enrolled many Bhutanese yoga enthusiasts owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, the Indian Embassy in Bhutan has commemorated the 6th edition of the International Yoga Day on digital media platforms. These home practice and online yoga activities are to maintain the social distancing measures recommended by the health ministry.

In the previous years, hundreds of Indian

residents and Bhutanese yoga enthusiasts took part in the yoga day event organized by the Indian Embassy in Bhutan. But the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted the life that has resulted in restrictions on large public gatherings.

Ahead of the International Yoga day, India Embassy has started a "My Life My Yoga" video blogging competition. This home practice and online activities have reached even those people who have never practiced yoga.

Five children who have taken part in the 'yoga for children' received certificates and cash prizes. They awarded other top three winners of each cat-

egory certificates and a smartphone with a data package of 1.2GB and talk time of Nu 100 each for six months.

Tenzin Choden Thinley, a class 11 student of the Royal Academy, who won a prize in a customized yoga quiz competition, said the online yoga activities have given her the opportunities to learn and explore more about yoga.

She said the online yoga quiz has helped her to learn more about the health benefits associated with yoga. "I used to engage in yoga but not daily basis," she said, adding it has encouraged her to practice yoga regularly.

Yoga has become popu-

lar in Bhutan in the past few years and is emerging as a major fitness discipline. It continues to become more popular and many Bhutanese get into yoga for physical fitness and stress relief.

Gracing the prize distribution ceremony, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bhutan, Gerald Daly, said yoga is a powerful tool to deal with the stress of uncertainty and isolation and to physical wellbeing.

He said that yoga is one of the important ways that can build personal resilience. "The yoga asanas of India are one of the great wisdom heritages of the world," he said. "We are fortunate to draw on yoga to build

our personal resilience in these times."

A press release from the Indian Embassy states while the social distancing measures adopted by countries to fight the COVID-19 pandemic have shut down studios and other communal spaces, yoga practitioners have turned to home practice and online yoga resources.

Yoga is a powerful tool to deal with the stress of uncertainty and isolation and to maintain physical wellbeing. With schools closed and summer break activities cancelled, parents may find it challenging to keep their children physically active. Yoga can help, according to the press release.