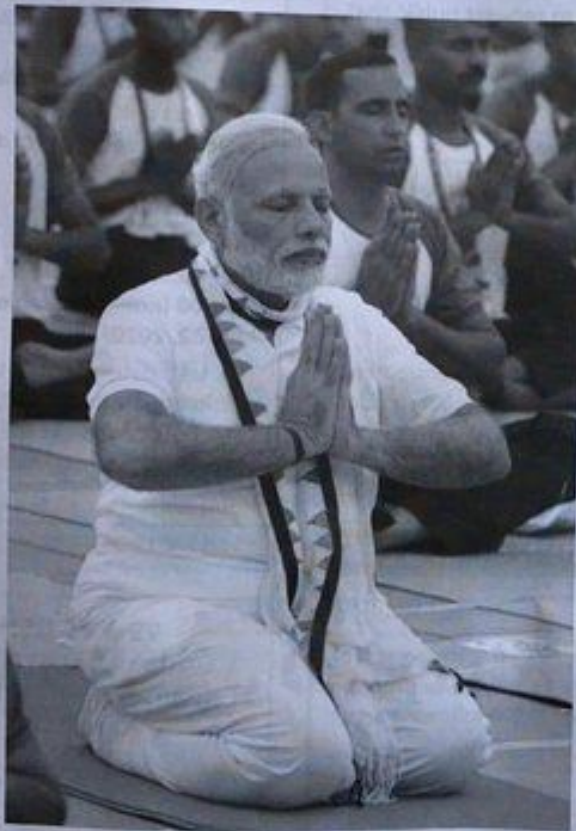


Yoga : The Infinitely gentle thing

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
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