

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF  
INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY CELEBRATIONS**

I am happy to be present here amidst you on the occasion of International Yoga Day. At the outset, I congratulate Ms. Nivedita Joshi and her entire team, who have dedicated their lives to the wellbeing of the society at large, by imparting the yogic knowledge they imbibed through the time tested and proven methods of Shri B.K.S. Iyengar.

2. Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar with his intellectual and spiritual practices, I am informed, masterminded the techniques which could be used by all practitioners of yoga. 'Research based experience' and 'experience based research' helped him in evolving this technique which came to be known as "**Iyengar Yoga**". He strove to make it possible for citizens to experience the wisdom of the yoga sutras. It is said that Iyengar yoga is meant for all and is a way of life. The use of props, designed by Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar such as wooden gadgets, belts and ropes helps the practitioner to achieve perfection in any asana. It

is also believed that regular practice of 'Iyengar Yoga' integrates the body, mind and emotions.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

3. Wisest of our ancestors were recognised as *Rishis* or 'Seers'. These were men who could visualise what others could not. These Sages shared their visions for the welfare of mankind and enriched our civilisation with their insights and foresight. These *Rishis* were also known as *Yogis* – men who devoted their lives to practice of Yoga and a sustained pursuit of holistic knowledge. These sages practiced and preached that humans have much more to experience than just comforts, pleasure or luxuries and that human beings can feel and achieve higher level of consciousness which gives them superior position as compared to animals or other living beings. Their legacy – **Yoga** – is an important part of our cultural heritage and also is the most wonderful gift from India to mankind.

4. Yoga is as old as the human civilization. Vedic texts refer to Yoga as a divine subject and being as old as

Vedas themselves. However Yoga is neither a faith nor a religious belief. Sages have always looked into Vedas for the origin of what we now call as YOGA TRADITION. The term yoga can be found in Rig-Veda but present day connotation of yoga has taken a long journey.

5. As spiritual discipline, the term yoga appeared probably for the first time in Upanishads which dates back to 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. The fact that Yoga was practised in India even during Indus Valley civilization (3300 – 1300 BCE) has been established by Archaeological findings too. Terracotta figurines in Yogic *asanas* have been found during excavations from Harappa & Mohenjo-daro. A lime stone statue of priest from Mohenjo-daro is a meditative pose or Dhyana Mudra. This shows that India has known and practised Yoga for several Millennium.

6. Renowned scholar's like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and yoga masters like Yogananda have spoken about the deep

philosophical contact with Vedic literature. From Rigveda to Ahirbudhnya Samhita Upanishad, the concept of yoga has evolved considerably. It defines Yoga as union of individual soul to the cosmic soul. It is Samayoga which is predominantly spiritual.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

7. Yoga is an art, science and philosophy. It helps to join the powers of body, mind and soul for achieving self-realisation. It is perhaps only Yoga that provides the complete answer to a person's physical, mental, moral and spiritual well-being. Modern medical science has validated that the practice of Yoga not only reduces stress but has multiple long-lasting beneficial effects. Yogic discipline not only helps control the wavering mind but also inspires the pursuit of excellence.

Dear Friends,

8. Indians should be known in the new millennium not just for its prowess in Information Technology but

also for its ancient technology or the sciences that aim at universal well being. Yoga holds the promise of better health and mental prowess for all who practice it and makes no miraculous claims. To quote the Father of Yoga- Sage Patanjali, “Yoga unites body and mind, man and nature”. Yoga enables us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured'.

9. The designation of 21st June as the International Day of Yoga, has not only demystified Yoga but has helped propagate it globally. It has been brought to the man on the street. He has learned how to make the practice of yoga a part of his daily routine. The global popularization of yoga will help to improve the lifestyle of those who adopt it and pro-actively safeguard their physical and mental well-being. I would like to encourage the younger generations to study, practice and benefit from Yoga as well as Ayurveda and other ancient Indian healing systems. I look forward to the increasing integration of this science into a holistic treatment of diseases.

10. I am happy to learn that the Indian Heritage Society has been making efforts to make the knowledge of Yoga accessible to persons from all walks of life by conducting regular Iyengar yoga classes at “Yogakshema” in Delhi and workshops all over the country, including for people with physical impairments. I would also like to add that the Braille manual is a commendable effort of Ms. Joshi, who made a remarkable recovery from a crippling ailment, through yoga. I applaud her willpower and her commitment towards Yoga. Towards the end, I would just like to add that I am positive that this Yoga Institution shall continue to spread the knowledge of Yoga enthusiastically both at home and abroad. I wish them all the very best in all their future endeavours.

THANK YOU

JAI HIND