

CORPORATE IMPACT

Corporate News, Views and Impact

Vol.2 | Issue 3 | June 2023 | Rs. 150/-



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Cover Story

by Gurbeer Singh Chawla



You are a globally recognized yoga scientist please share your professional journey and experience with us and how you became a yoga scientist from a yoga lover.

Namaskar! I am just a student of yoga I am always learning the depth and dimensions of yoga which are from the micro to macro. In my opinion that journey started in the mother womb where my mother used to live that spiritual life and always remember the holy people spiritual people in the childhood she narrated many such wonderful stories from Mahabharat, Ramayana, and Spiritual masters, so might be that is the seed I saw in my childhood. Later on, I might have preferred to pursue masters in physics which is my most loved subject. Meanwhile I undergone one year diploma course in yoga at Karnataka University Dharwad. I am very fortunate to have a very good kind teacher who motivated me to continue in the field of yoga. When I given the responsibility to the head of the department in 1989. I have been very young and just come out from the physics master. Then I start visiting the various schools like Kaivalyadham, Sivananda ashram, Bihar school of Yoga, SVYASA, Yoga institute shantakruj and then I came in the contact with BKS Iyengerji, M.B. Bholeji M.M Gharoteji, and many leading yoga masters Nagarathna Didi in yoga therapy, Nagendrandra Ji in the conscious studies, professor swami from SVYASA so about the life and history of Bharat the ancient Bharat so like this I have been studied the tradition.

Then I got a very good teacher in philosophy I did masters in philosophy where professor Mahadev was my guide for the Ph.D. thesis on foundations of schools of yoga. That's a wonderful journey where I turn my life and studied yoga sutras of patanjali, Vedanta philosophy, Tantra, Buddhism Sufism and Jainism and it lead to me that holistic approach unbiased view about yoga. I always be with the public with the students and they are my God and teachers because I don't get a teacher continuously teaching but I sit with the masters and study their teachings followed them and experience them and then made those teachings as my teaching my learnings are my teachings and with that learning experiencing and teaching enlighten me. I saw



the brightness and kindness in the eyes of many people after my teaching which always gives something soothing where no one can give that by money the prizes that has motivated me to continue in the field of yoga and now slowly it is 36 years of journey have completed in the field of yoga.

What are your topmost priorities as the director of Morarji Desai National Institute of yoga?

The yoga academics are my priorities in the institute so we have a well designed courses of three months to three years, certificate course, diploma courses, degree courses, master courses and research in yoga. So we designed program followed by the research studies that's why in the institute high quality and high standard of yoga teaching, research and applications are my priorities, like yoga therapy, yoga for fitness, yoga for Wellness, yoga for management of stress yoga for management of the family and yoga for performance improvement like this various dimensions are there we designed. Last one is using the technology like yoga apps and minimum 20-25 yoga models or protocols which we prepared in consultation

with the eminent masters, so ultimately if you produce a good teacher in yoga that is important. If you have a facilities, you have a big institution but there is no quality teacher and institution that are going to be failed that's why yoga academics and producing the quality teacher is my first priorities in the institute.

What were the challenges for you to achieve the post of the director of Morarji Desai National Institute of the yoga?

I don't think the challenges, I take the life as it comes, in the childhood whenever I see the conductor is dominant in the bus I want to become a conductor, doctors are dominating in the village I want to become a doctor so like this the childhood dreams are different. I want to become a very good teacher for so but ultimately destiny brought me from physics to the philosophy, from philosophy to the meta spirituality or yoga but during this journey whenever I get any assignment I do dedicated work to complete that on time. But working challenge, improvement of professional challenge and going along with the colleagues



What is the vision and mission of Morarji Desai National Institute of yoga?

The vision and mission is health, happiness and harmony in the society. Health is more important but health needs to have happiness but these two will not come without harmony. Harmony at every walks of life, harmony in the personality physical mental emotional spiritual levels, harmony in the family, harmony in the society, harmony at the workplace, harmony in the universe so this is the way how we really bring happiness and peace in the world. So that our institute is not only teaching some courses but these are the three reasons we have to act as a center of excellence in yoga so center of excellence in yoga means inter concept academic courses in terms of research in terms of services we provide the therapy training and other dimensions so I think MDNIY is the brand now, its teachers are accepted worldwide so I am so happy that the quality education training, therapy and research in all these dimensions we talk to the class in mass population that is our show.

We would like to know about your achievements and contributions at national and international levels as a yoga scientist.

I am serving as a director of the renowned MorarjiDesai National Institute of Yoga, Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, since June 2005. I am also the Head of the Center WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine (Yoga) for more than a decade. Additionally, I am the Head of the Institution of Yoga Certification board of the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India since 2018. From 2019 to 2020, I assumed the role of Advisor (Yoga & Naturopathy) for the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. During

this period, I also took on the additional responsibility of serving as the Director of the Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy, New Delhi, from 2010 to 2012 and from 2019 to 2020.

Under my leadership numerous initiatives have been implemented to promote and advance the practice of Yoga both within India and internationally. I am one of the leading Yoga Masters of India in bringing the Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) for the International Day of Yoga, its booklets, and videos. I have contributed as a master of ceremony in all events of International Day of Yoga (IDY) since 2015 and all countdown events of IDY. I have organized, coordinated and delivered most of the Yoga programmes conducted under the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. I managed all the Yoga activities especially where the Hon'ble Prime Minister was the Chief Guest.

My recent contributions to the health and wellness sector include the development of the WHO mYoga application and the Yoga Break application, both of which have had a significant impact on promoting health and wellness. I have had the honor of presenting lectures in numerous countries, including South Africa, Russia, China, Italy, Europe and many more. I served as the Founder and Secretary General of the Indian Yoga Association, a self-regulatory body representing leading Yoga institutions, for over a decade. During his tenure, he played a vital role in providing Yoga education, training, and therapy to a diverse range of individuals from various sections of society, impacting the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Additionally, he has contributed to the field of Yoga through the publication of numerous research papers, articles, and authored books. I am known for

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developing disease-specific Yoga protocols and Yoga protocols for various target groups. I have provided Yoga education, training and therapy to lakhs of Yoga teachers and millions of Yoga enthusiasts.

In the present scenario all age groups of people are suffering from various mental issues how yoga can benefit those dealing with mental and emotional issues?

I prefer 40 minutes of yoga practice every day with some stretching postures for your spinal cord and extremities, aligning the body, the breath regulation which helps to take your senses inward and meditate and following yamas and niyamas, food habits, detoxification procedures so these are the practices I would recommend for dealing with mental and emotional issues.

Which healthcare programs from ministry of AYUSH are highly appreciated by the people what are your expectations from the ministry for more awareness in the country?

The ministry has come up with many things in yoga one of them is the International Day of yoga with MDNIY. We brought out a common yoga protocol for all and now it is one of the world's biggest public health initiative more than 270 million people are practicing worldwide or more as per available data. Through various seminars and conferences we are promoting yoga and it has been introducing in schools, colleges and in all the teacher training programs of govt. of India.

AYUSH and specially yoga is the strong pillar of Fit India movement. Yoga is the part of every primary healthcare system. Yoga has been introduced in 1.5 lakh health Wellness centers under the Ayushmann Bharat so many such initiatives has been taken and we have established yoga certification board where I am the head of the board where we are certifying the professionals in different categories like wellness protocol teacher, evaluator, assistant therapist, yoga therapist and also accrediting various centers like Wellness centers, schools center, university center, leading yoga centers and like this various categories we are certifying and bringing the standards in both teaching and learning and we are setting a benchmark for that with the very quality research. These are the initiatives we have taken from the ministry of AYUSH where Morarji Deasi National Institute of Yoga is playing a pivotal role in that.

Tell us about your published research paper on yoga which are highly appreciated at international platform

Recently I did a one work on pranayama and meditation for the COVID warriors who are working with the patients that come up with the 30 minutes program and I have my work on yoga for depression and yoga for mental health, Yoga and musculoskeletal disorders and especially yogic protocol for hypertension and most importantly only accepted is our common protocol where it has been appreciated widely by the public so list of publications I have more than 28 booklets 32 papers ten major projects I published. Furthermore, I have played a key role in evaluating numerous research projects as a member and chairman of various research project evaluation committees. I have taken proactive initiatives to integrate



Yoga therapy into healthcare delivery systems and has provided disease-specific Yoga protocols for several research projects to facilitate their scientific validation.

we would like to know about the special features you have designed for the forthcoming international yoga day coming the 21st June 2023?

There are many programs the Government of India has started for the IDY 2023. We have a 50,000 amritsarovar where we are going to practice yoga from the Antarctica to arctic and Sagar mala, one ayushbhrama in every statelike this many initiatives we are introduced and the main event will be happening in the jabalpur Madhya Pradesh yes and honourable Prime Minister will be there in the New York in the UN to celebrate the International Day of yoga with the world community. Yoga at all health and Wellness centers 1,00,000 AYUSH brahmas etcetera, ocean ring yoga from Arctic to Antarctica OK and Bharat mala yoga events. In my opinion these are some initiative.

Could you please share your thoughts about the relationship between yoga and spirituality?

Yoga is spiritual, yoga is essentially spiritual. Spirituality is not going to the temple and doing meditation. Spirituality is something which you have to know yourself what you are what is your true nature so if you see the micro, micro means which cannot be visible and you can see the macro which is infinite. The journey from the micro to the macro it is infinite both the way so that journey we are having what is that, so you are following all the laws of nature you are moving with the laws of nature for the entire humanity so you are saying that you are talking about spirituality but you are not moving with the laws of nature you are not scriptural. Spiritual means to going along with the natural law. How much you are living perfectly with the



laws of nature that is your spirituality, yoga is linked with that one but for that one what you need is to understand the mind. Mind is the core for the entire understanding of this spiritual dimensions, where we deviate out from the mind to the worldly or the pleasures and it will also take to the inner world of spiritual well-being so therefore mind management is the core of yoga. So yoga and spirituality means yoga practice help us to manage the mind and take it from the outer world to the inner world of spiritual well-being that's all.

what advice do you have for someone who is new to yoga and unsure where to start from?

you start with some 20 minutes of yoga to begin with just stretch your body in the standing bend forward backward twisting and breathing for 5 minutes, relaxation for 5 minutes and meditate for 2-3 minutes chant Aum,humm, him ending with the makara that will create you the happy hormones so you start with that very very simple thing. Don't force your body but discipline your body, align your body, do whatever you do, but do it correctly but it doesn't mean that you have to do everything you have to start with simple tadasana, padhastasana, bhujangasana, shashankasana, anulomaviloma pranayama, bhramari pranayama, and meditation. Our common yoga protocol is the best example, you start with that slowly increase to the half an hour of 45 minutes every day that is more than enough to live well. It will help you to understand what is true what is not true and if you choose the right path in

every walks of life that is the successful journey of life that is yoga you start from a 20 minutes it goes to the 24 hours of your life.

could you please share about an ongoing research or studies being conducted at the morarji Desai National Institute of yoga.

yes we are conducting on various dimension first of all on how yoga help us to increase our humanity and we're doing it with the aims New Delhi and we did the work on yoga for COVID patient and COVID warriors and we're also doing on the various courses the performance improvement of the paramilitary forces in four months course and in cardiac rehabilitation, cancer rehabilitation and also on the diabetes and hypertension we are doing some work on these things.

what is your message for the citizens of India on the occasion of international yoga day.

This time the theme is yoga for Vasudeva kutumbakam the whole world is one family the humanity is one and if you understand the very essence of our being a yoga is making us to know ourselves be within and that is more important you be well, you be healthy that is your contribution, then you think about the others so that is the message we want to give that yoga gives us to make me healthy and well first that is my contribution to the world.