

# Akram Youth

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indian  
culture  
परिवार



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## Editorial

**T**he Indian culture is as old as the human civilization itself. The cherished Indian society has its vibrant culture as its beating heart. India is beyond the majestic temples and the breath-taking Himalayas, the politics, Bollywood or even cricket. The colourful traditional festivals, the folk dances, rituals, the dialects and deeply rooted values show the cultural diversity of this huge democracy. The morals and the spiritual knowledge which has been passed from generation to generation is an invaluable asset this country owns as its proud possession. One of such cultural heritage is the science of Yoga, which is not merely a physical exercise, it has a spiritual core too. This art has now been recognised on an international level; UNESCO has recognised it as an Indian Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Among so many other rich traditions that have been followed over the period of hundreds of years, 'Ashram' is one among them. 'Ashram' is another such unique concept, wherein, a group of people lived while following a certain lifestyle through the four stages of a human life, the primary goal of these Ashrams was the development of self. This issue highlights this interesting Indian culture.

Here is the second issue on the cultures of India, with again so many more interesting insights of the land of so many spiritual legends. With hopes that all of you will enjoy this issue, Jay Satchitanand!

- Dimple Mehta





# What is Culture ?

**T**he last issue briefed us about the vibrant and seemingly different cultures that spans across India. Culture can be considered a synonym for the values and wisdom that has been passed on for generations. But then a wonderment, out of simple logic, makes us question about the starting point of all these cultures and traditions.

## How did this all begin?

Dadashri used to say that Rushabhdev Bhagwan was the one who provided us with all the knowledge and wisdom that we possess today. Numerous arts, crafts and skills of various trades were taught by him to the people with the right aptitude. He taught farming to some and to others he taught the trade of agricultural produce. He invented the alphabets, the language and the tools for writing. For self-defense, he taught martial arts to individuals with strong physique thus enriching the human society in developing their innate tendencies. His contribution towards cultural values (sanskars) in the fields of survival, knowledge, administration and growth span over 10 million years in India.

Just as in the art of cooking, the addition of spices gives a completely new dimension to the experience of eating, similarly, the added 'sanskars' (cultural values) enriches a human, empowering them to experience the world in a whole different way and with a purpose in life.

A person's culture has a huge influence on one's thoughts, speech, behavior and way of life. If one questions "what are the important things that make a significant contribution to their daily life?", then one is sure to conclude that it is the people around them who sculpt their characters the most in comparison to other factors. This in-turn reinforces the fact that our companions are the ones who define our culture more than anything else.



A legend has it that two parrots, born to the same mother, were captured by a hunter who sold one to a murderer and other to a saint. A year passed by and the hunter decided to pay the parrots a visit. When he approached the murderer's parrot who was ill-treated, the parrot greeted him by saying, "Get out of the house or you'll be killed!"

Whereas, on the other side the saint's parrot greeted him warmly by saying, "Welcome mister, please have a seat. What would you like to have?"

These greetings made the hunter conclude that although both parrot siblings were born to the same mother, they hugely contrasted each other's personalities in accordance to the cultural surroundings they were bought up in.

Similarly, our decisions are largely based upon our own interpretation of the world around us, which in turn defines us, and we as group of individuals define our culture.

*We, as group of individuals  
define our culture.*



A

**Questioner:** In the olden times, people used to live in a joint family and nowadays we find less number of families who live jointly. People are living in nuclear families so, how does this affect the growth of a child?

they are given mobile phones or any other game which keeps them engaged for the entire day. As a result, the kids do not get enough sacraments (sanskars). The love, care and sacraments they get are not good enough compared to in a joint family, where the children were taken care of even if the parents were not free. The parents' brothers and sisters would take care of the children which lacks in a nuclear family. Here, the love they get is not enough as a result the child looks for love in the outside world and they end up with bad company. When there were joint families, the kids did not get enough facilities and now in the nuclear ones, these facilities have increased which do not give the required sanskars. So, in the olden days, the joint families were more beneficial for nurturing of children.

**Aptputra:** A child is nurtured with cultural values in a joint family rather than in a nuclear one. There are grandparents, uncles, aunties, elder brothers and sisters who lovingly take care of each other. The children see their parents taking care of their grandparents which makes them feel that even they must take care and serve their parents. One must know how to take adjustments with everyone. Since in today's time, the families are small, consisting parents and their children, the parents leave their kids alone while they are busy in their work the entire day. If the child disturbs them,

*Joint Family Culture*



# World's biggest joint family



“

The Family of **Ziona Chana**.

Total Family members: 181  
Place: Mizoram, India



July 2018

7



# GNANI with Youth

## Guru-Shishya Parampara

**Questioner:** The Indian tradition of ‘Guru- Shishya (Master and Disciple)’ is an important cultural aspect which has the concept that one cannot attain knowledge without the help of a Guru (Master) at its roots. However, in today’s day and time, people acquire all the required knowledge and learn all that is needed through Google, Internet and YouTube. Today’s generation relies more on Google and Internet and have more faith in it instead in a living Guru, so please explain the advantages and disadvantages of the Guru-Shishya culture.

**Pujyashree:** Do you need a Master for learning (to use) internet or not?

**Questioner:** Yes, that we need, but once we have learnt...

**Pujyashree:** This means that you did take the support (of a Guru) to learn the A, B, C, D. Hence, one does take support of the master, it is like this, if you want to see Switzerland do you keep looking at its photographs on Google or you actually go there?

**Questioner:** Yes, we go there.

**Pujyashree:** If you see brochures of Leh-Ladakh, and appreciate it by saying that it is very beautiful, there are so many places which are worth seeing, this time we will go there and all that... Then you do visit the place, don’t you? Thus, Google is only for giving information but you practically go there and experience it. The scenario



now-a-days is, that because of internet, there are benefits as well as disadvantages. The drawback is that the person is becoming weak in dealing with real (living) people. With the help of Google, he might be 10-15% understanding and learning, of the remaining 80-85%, he is fulfilling his desires; watching movies, TV, and such other stuff... with the increase in amount of entertainment, the mental strength weakens, the person becomes weak, as a result he doesn't like to deal with real people. He will choose to work alone instead of having to deal with people. He will stay aloof because if someone says something then he will have to answer him back, if he has to take adjustments in conflicts, he will get depressed and will eventually suffer. These internet addicted people cannot find solution to any of their problems. This in turn results in the decrease of their strengths and their bearing power. They will question Google about stuffs like how to raise a child, something happened to my kid, what should I do? It is okay to find recipes for making puran-poli (sweet dish), that you can do, learn from it and then make it.

**Questioner:** Yes, there are such software programs, a person learns from it and uses the knowledge.

**Pujyashree:** Yes, but in the end, one has to go to a school, doesn't he? To obtain college certificates, doctor certificates or such others, doesn't one need to go? So even if there is an ample of such virtual knowledge, but in reality, one does go somewhere to get information.

**Questioner:** Even the Guru must be sound, isn't it so? Sometimes it so happens that we get a teacher who doesn't have enough knowledge.

**Pujyashree:** What can be done in that situation? If we want to buy some clothes then shouldn't we be aware of what exactly we want, similar is the case for a teacher, it depends on what we want. If you want to get knowledge to attain salvation then find the teacher accordingly. If you want to find key to happiness in worldly life then search the teacher accordingly. This means

that you must have enough understanding of what you want, which is derived from the experiences of our innumerable past lives, Google can't provide this understanding. Our soul has strength of infinite Googles. Google doesn't know what we want, so we can say that the strength of Google is limited. Whereas our inner soul and our right understandings guide us to what we need and what we don't.

Accumulated experiences from the past lives lead us to what we are searching for eventually we acquire it.

and



# The Trend of Ashrams

Hinduism is considered as one of the most important and ancient religion of India, and according to the Hindu scriptures, the life of a person (considering 100 as an average life span) was divided in four equal age-based stages called Ashram; Brahmacharya Ashram (from birth to 24 years of age), Grihastha Ashram (24-49 years of age), Vaanaprastha Ashram (50-74 years of age) and Sanyasa Ashram (75 years of age to the day one dies). Let us understand these Ashrams in brief.

1

**Brahmacharya  
Ashram**  
(0-25 age group)

This stage focused on education and included the practice of celibacy. The students, while living at their Guru's house, learnt about science, spiritual knowledge, holy scriptures, law and logic, and self-discipline. While learning to live a responsible life of dharma, i.e. following righteousness, morals, punctuality and duties, they even worked to give dakshina (a form of fee) to their guru.

2

**Grihastha  
Ashram**  
(25-50 age group)

In this stage, a person, while completing his household responsibilities of sustenance of his family, education of his children, lived a righteous social life which was mainly family centered. Grihastha stage was considered as the most important of all stages in sociological context, as human beings in this stage not only pursued a virtuous life, they even produced food and wealth for themselves as well as for their children and for the future generation too.

3

**Vanprastha  
Ashram**  
(50-75 age group)

This was the retirement stage, where a person handed over the household responsibilities to the next generation, took an advisory role, and gradually withdrew from the world. Vaanaprastha stage was a transition phase from a householder's life which had its greater emphasis on Artha and Kama (wealth, security, pleasure and sexual pursuits) to one with greater emphasis on Moksha (spiritual liberation).

4

**Sanyasa  
Ashram**  
(75-100+ age group)

This stage was marked by renunciation of material desires and prejudices, which was represented by a state of disinterest and detachment from material life through understanding. This stage had a core idea of leaving behind all material properties, without any self-interest, while being focused on moksha, peace and simple spiritual life.

## Four Ashrams of life



**Questioner:** Which were those four Ashrams? Brahmacharya (celibate), family life, old age and finally sanyasa (renunciation) were there and each of these for 25 years?

**Dadashri:** This was when people used to live for hundred years. The composition is so perfect! How does the composition help? It has an effect on the mind, which makes the mind to think that way. If today, the government orders that all the people must compulsorily remain indoors after 9 pm, then the mind will obey it. Such is the nature of the mind that it follows what is guided.

**Questioner:** Can one practice brahmacharya (celibacy) in worldly life?

**Dadashri:** Yes, there are people who follow it very nicely. Rishimunis (sages) of the yester years used to practice it. Husband and wife both followed celibacy as a joint effort. For celibacy, I have performed vidhi and given vows to many couple.

**Questioner:** Yes, but it is possible only when both come together jointly showing their unanimity.

**Dadashri:** Yes.

**Questioner:** But what to do in a case if the man wants to practice celibacy but his wife doesn't want it?

**Dadashri:** Try and make her understand.

**Questioner:** But how?

**Dadashri:** Everything will gradually fall in line. It won't happen abruptly. Slowly and slowly understanding will prevail and both will mutually agree to it. The couple should discuss the consequences and losses that sexuality leads to.

**Questioner:** The husband has taken gnan but the wife has not. The husband knows the importance of celibacy!

**Dadashri:** That will not suffice. The wife should also take gnan. Why did he marry then?

**Questioner:** Despite husband's willingness, it is not possible to persuade her to take gnan!

**Dadashri:** Then he should understand that the circumstances are not favorable and the time is not ripe enough. For the time being, live according to the situation.



# Mata Pitani Seva ma



Mata Pitani Seva ma Chhe  
Sarva Tirtha Dham Re (2)

Aemni Aantardi Tharine  
Punaya Kamao Amap Re (2)

Mata Pitani....



Janam Aapi Uppkar Kariyo (2),  
Ae Run Anant Apar Re (2)

Thhes N Phahucho Ae Dil Ne  
Kadi , Aetli Rakhajo Bhaad Re (2)

Mata Pitani....



Bhanavi-Ganavi Mota Kariya(2) ,  
Shinchya Sat Sanskar Re (2)

Aemni Pase Nana Thayne Jajo,  
Padjo Paay Re (2)

Mata Pitani....



Duniyane Visare Paadi (2) ,  
Bhaadiyu Tujma Bhramand Re (2)

Modhu Na Feravjo, Aemnu  
Lutay Jase Bhramand Re (2)

Mata Pitani....

# Chhe Sarva Tirtha Dham

## Gyani Ni Chhayama Album-6

Aangadi Jali Chalya Jeni (2) ,  
Padva Na Didha Lagar Re (2)

Aapjo Teko Aemne Kayam,  
Khamjo Aemno Bhar Re (2)

Mata Pitani....



Potani Ichaa Ne Tyagi (2) ,  
Lutavyu Tuj Kaaj Re (2)

Puri Karjo Aemni Ichaa ,  
Aek Aek Kari Yaad Re (2)

Mata Pitani....



Maavtarni Sevathi Aeva (2) ,  
Raji Thay Bhagawan Re(2)

Lakho Karodo Kharcho ,  
Ke Bhagawan Bhajey Na Thaye Re (2)

Mata Pitani....



*Culture of  
Serving Elders*

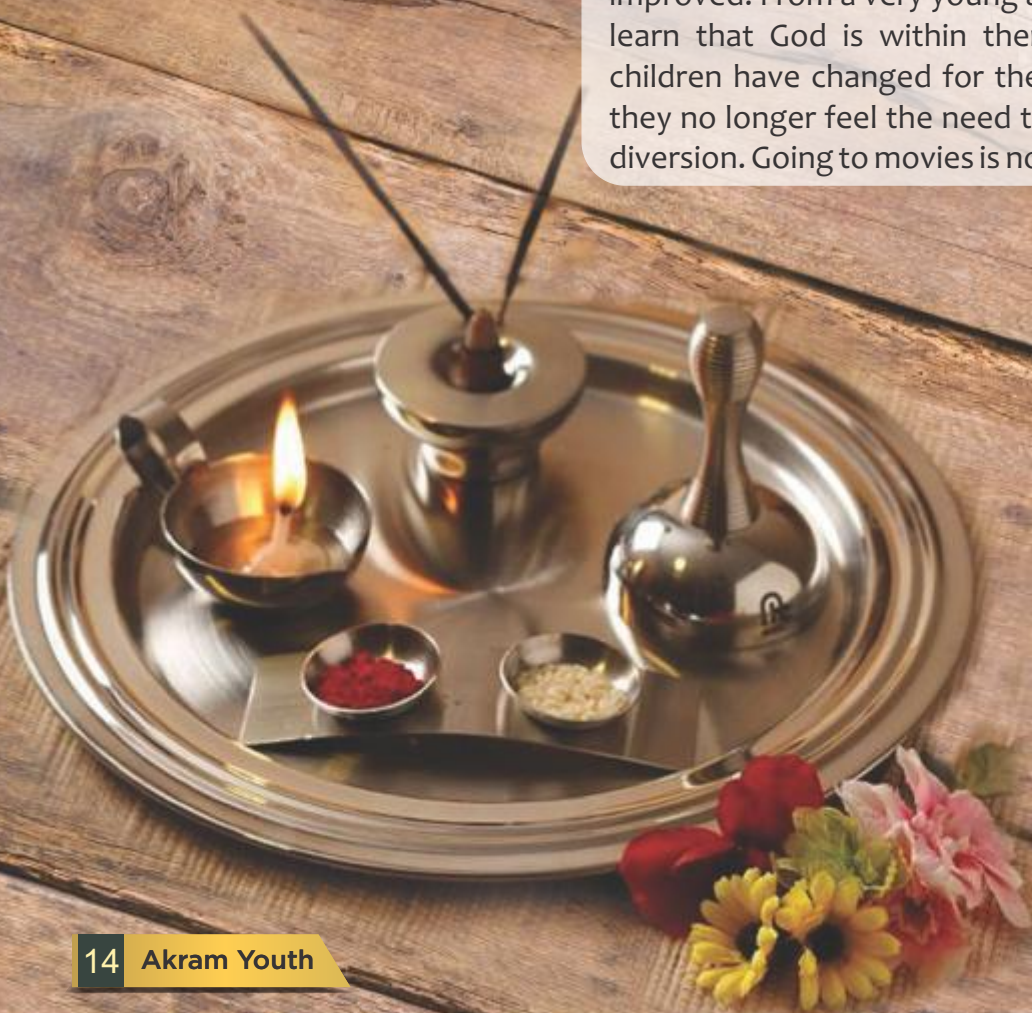
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visit...

<http://tiny.cc/seva-pad>



# Dada's Book Excerpt

Teach your children good habits. Every morning after they bathe, teach them to pray for world peace and salvation. If you can do this, it would mean that you have succeeded in instilling good values in them. Pray with them, so they will learn from you. This is your duty as a parent. Every day, you should also have them sing “Dada Bhagwan Na Aseem Jai Jai kar Ho” (Prayer to the Lord within). Many children have benefited from this and their concentration in their studies has improved. From a very young age, they will learn that God is within them. So many children have changed for the better that they no longer feel the need to seek other diversion. Going to movies is no longer their





prime source of enjoyment. At first they raise objections, but after a while they remember how good it feels to say the prayers and they respond positively.

**Questioner:** What is the importance of doing arati (devotional singing using tiny oil filled lamps which are waved in front of the idol being worshipped; offering to express highest devotion) at home?

**Dadashri:** The importance of doing arati is nothing else but you do get a fruit by doing arati. Fruit that you get in 'our' presence, such fruit you can never get anywhere else. You take adjustment of doing arati at home. But even then you get very lofty fruit by doing arati at home. Therefore everybody had scheduled doing arati at home so that the ambiance of home does not get spoiled. All the homes are full with sheer conflicts. Now if arati is sung then that can bring about change in children. And when children sing arati their mind remains peaceful. Because of this heat, anger and worldly kusang

(bad company), children will have thoughts about bad conduct. So this arati gives them coolness and dissipates those bad thoughts. This is a tool to save them. This is a very beautiful thing. Some people do arati twice, in the morning and in the evening so the children can sing. And elderly people will not have conflict. This environment is full with conflicts. Nowadays, you have money and all the worldly things and if you do not want to create conflict, even then conflict will enter. He will bang on a dining table, will he not? 'You did this way' and 'you did that way' and then it starts. Does not this happen? So many mahatmas had decided that everybody: husband, wife and children will speak 'vidhi-arati-aseem jai jaikar ho' together after dinner. So children will learn discipline and become wiser. And if you ask them to go out the next day they will say 'let us speak that, let us speak that.' They will no longer feel the need to go out to enjoy and they will learn good values.

Reference: Maa Baap Chokrav  
no Vyavhar (Granth) Page 25

*Regular Arti-prayers at  
home cultivate sanskars!*

*Pious atmosphere creates  
purity inside out!*





# *Fasting* (Upvaas) **The Hunger for God**

## What is Fasting ?

**T**he word 'Upvaas' is made up of two words viz "Up" & "Vaas". The word "Up" means "near" (to) & "Vaas" means "to reside". Hence, the word "Upvaas" means "Reside near to".

Now the question is "Residing near to whom or what?" The popular interpretation is, 'Residing near God'.

This means that if one's focus is on God then the person is considered to be in an "Upvaas". The meaning of such a fast is that one has "withdrawn" or "fasting" one's "senses" from the material world and is "feasting" on / focussing on God.

## Fasting - Why?

Fasting is found to increase the insulin sensitivity of the body. When you fast, your body gains more tolerance towards carbohydrates. Following periods of fasting, the insulin is able to effectively direct the cells to absorb more glucose from the blood.

Since upvaas or fasting gives rest to the digestive system of your body, your body is able to speed up the metabolism and burn down fat.

Studies across different cultures reveal that the lesser people eat, the longer they tend to live. Fasting gives a rare chance to feel the real hunger. Fasting releases the right hormones in the right proportions. When your hormones are working properly, you can feel the fullness rather quickly resulting in lesser consumption of food.

A number of studies have shown that fasting can significantly improve brain functions. The reason behind this is the enhanced production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) during fasting. The important function of BDNF is to convert brain cells into neurons besides triggering the production of several other chemicals that are good for the body.

Fasting can also enhance the immune system of the human body since it brings down free radical damage and regulates the inflammatory conditions in the body.

Thus, fasting has some wonderful health advantages for the human body. Thus, while rightly practiced, fasting can have spiritual as well as health advantages.





# The importance of fasting



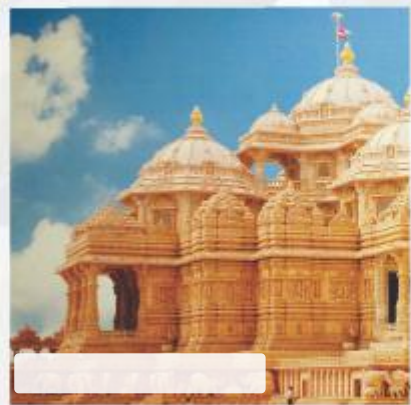
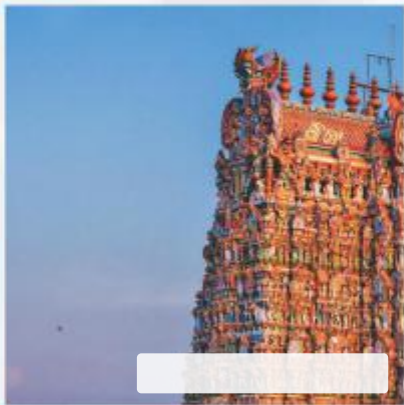
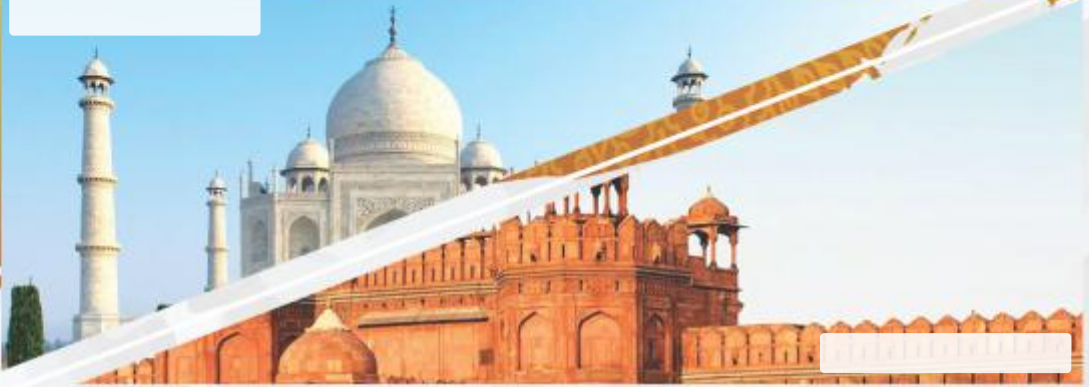
**Dadashri:** If you fast, then whatever food has not been digested will be burnt off and you can maintain jagruti (awareness). You can fast when there is a physical difficulty, or if vikar (sexual passions) arise, then it can burn some passions and by burning these vikar a person can remain steady. One becomes unsteady because of passion. But there should be a limit for the fasting. It will not work if one does as many fasts he wants. One has to see both his physical body and proportion. One has to see his physical health, how his body's constitution is, and how many fasts are worth doing. People do fasting without any reason and which is meaningless.

**Questioner:** The true meaning of a fast is to take less food or abstain from eating. But is it beneficial if the fasting is associated with intake of some satvik food which by its constituents promotes total well-being and harmony within?

**Dadashri:** There is nothing better than totally abstinence from eating. And instead of taking a little satvik food, it is better to eat once (necessary enough) and drink as much water you want to drink. Apart from this, you should not drink tea or put some other food in your mouth. You should eat only once. Whatever you want to eat but eat simple food. Food in itself is an intoxicant. Regardless of the kind of food it is, it is intoxicating; people take pleasure of its intoxication. Through fasting, the intoxication is reduced, however if fasting does not support one's awareness, then it is all done in vain. It helps keep the body healthy, it helps keep the mind healthy but that is all. But then later one will fall asleep, he cannot stay awake because sooner or later he has no choice but to eat. But with enlightenment, once a person has been completely awakened there is no problem if he eats and drinks. There is no impediment thereafter.

# HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW INDIA ?

Which Indian Cultural Monument is this?





Yoga is the Sanskrit term for Union. Many people believe that the term Yoga refers to the union between body and mind or between body, mind and spirit, but traditionally it has been accepted that it is the union between the Jivatma and Paramatma, that is between one's individual consciousness and the universal consciousness.

Yoga was propounded by the ancient Indian sage Patanjali. 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yog', which means 'union' (presumably union with the divine being or God). It is a secular and scientific methodology to experience the integration of the body-mind-soul.



Some of the most practiced Yoga are: Karma Yoga, Gnan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Tantric Yoga, Kundalini Yoga and Raja Yoga.

Amidst the stress of the regular activities, our mind craves for peace and healthiness. To uplift ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually, most of the time we walk at the seashore or gaze at the soothing sunrise to attain temporary peace, but it becomes more refreshing and reviving if we can take a break and opt for the soothing Yoga activities.



Since ancient times, India has been the land of saints and sages who meditated and practiced yoga. The spiritual city of Rishikesh happens to be the Yoga capital of India. Tourists flock to practice Yoga in the lap of the Himalayas in India. Rishikesh hosts the International Yoga Week every year in the month of February which attracts several experts and participants.



# Yoga includes:

## Mind control

The breathing techniques and meditation helps you gain complete control over your mind and improve your concentration and productivity, along with giving you mental peace.



## Body control

The yoga postures demands that you have control of your body. Each posture requires you to stay in a specific position for a certain amount of time. This way you enhance your body balance and control as well.



## Meditation

While humming “Om” under your breath and simultaneously concentrating and keeping a count of your breath helps you meditate better.



## Physical postures

Various physical postures are there for our every internal and external body parts that should be practiced according to the needs of a person.



## Breathing techniques

To regulate and control breathing is one of the primary techniques that should be practiced while doing yoga.



### **Mindfulness**

It enhances mindfulness and generates happy emotions and increased self-esteem.

### **Various health benefits:**

Our circulatory system gets a brilliant boost from yoga. It improves body strength and balance. It ensures better health in terms of lungs, heart, muscles as well as digestive organs. It also gives you better sleep.

### **Flexibility**

Your body becomes more flexible and less stiff.

### **Improves concentration:**

It improves control over mind. Your powers of concentration increase considerably.

### **Better Vision:**

By practicing yoga, one can get a better vision of the world.

### **Well-being:**

Yoga can fill us with joy. It improves physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

### **De-stressing:**

Nothing de-stresses us like a delightful session of yoga.

### **Easy**

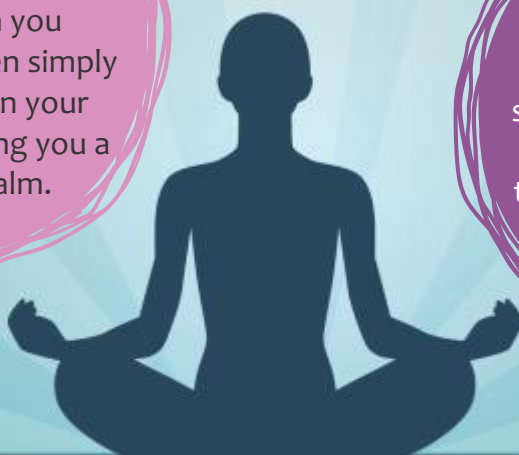
Yoga can be done by one and all. It is easy to practice and learn.

### **Inner Peace:**

A sense of inner peace and harmony pervades your life when you practice yoga. Even simply concentrating on your breathing will bring you a moment of calm.

### **Respect:**

Yoga teaches us to respect others. Yoga sessions often end with a salute to the divine light in others, and a recognition that we ourselves possess a divine light too.

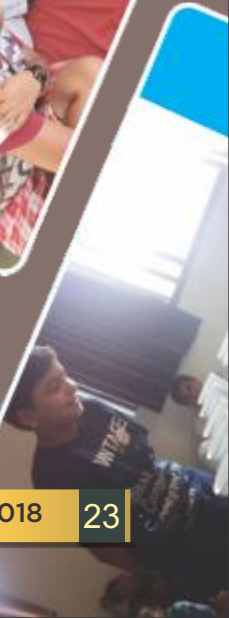


**Practicing yoga has benefits for your mind, body and soul.**



# Youth Boys Summer Camp 2018

Summer camp was organized for youth boys at 17 different centres, in which around 840 youths and 90-100 coordinators/helpers participated on the theme of 'Seva of Elders'. In this event, through different games and activities cum interactive sessions, they were taught the value of 'Teamwork in Seva'.





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## Indian Culture



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