

PRESS RELEASE:

Symposium in London backed by parliamentarians as part of UN's International Day of Yoga presents avenues to implement Yoga in NHS

London, 28 June 2017

A one-day symposium in London sponsored by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Indian Traditional Sciences gathered together scientists, administrators, practitioners, and health professionals, to present the scientifically established therapeutic value of different forms of Yoga, particularly with a view to making such approaches available through the National Health Service.

Introducing the speakers, the APPG's Secretariat Amarjeet Bhamra explained that the Group, initiated in 2008 by the late Lord King, Lord Patel and himself, had managed to gather many different disciplines of natural medicine and different factions within each, around one table. The Group now comprises 30 MPs and Lords working to support the introduction of Ayurveda, Yoga, and other Traditional Indian Sciences in health care, education, and other areas of national life in the UK. With the NHS in crisis, overwhelmed by the huge increase in the number of people – currently about 15 million – suffering from long-term chronic conditions, the proven potential of Yoga and its sister therapy Ayurveda to prevent and treat disease should be harnessed and implemented for the health of the population, Amarjeet said. The planned event on 21 June at the Houses of Parliament had to be postponed until 10 July 2017, following the rescheduling of the Queen's Speech to 21 June.



Dr. M Athique Principal Ayurveda College UK, Minister Srinivas Gotru, Director of the Nehru Centre of the Indian High Commission which hosted the Yoga Symposium on 23 June, Hon Jaya Row, Chief guest speaker Prof Tony Nader, leader of Maharishi's worldwide Transcendental Meditation organisation, Amarjeet S. Bhamra, Secretariat of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Indian Traditional Sciences.

Photograph by Elizabeth Young

Minister Srinivas Gotru, Director of the Nehru Centre officially welcomed the speakers and delegates at the Nehru Centre, which had held a number of events in London during this week of International Yoga Day 21 June, following the example set two years ago by India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, who had been the principal motivator for the establishment of the UN International Yoga Day in 2015. He praised the excellent work of the APPG Indian Traditional Sciences and congratulated the strong established relationship between the High Commission of India and the APPG who have jointly arranged this Symposium.

The opening presentation was given by Hon. Jaya Row, educator and coaching professional in Vedic knowledge, who explained that Yoga is about expansion of mind, through inspiration. 'You cannot achieve greatness with a small mind,' she said. 'If our minds are shrunken, everything becomes threatening to us: even family and friends are seen as enemies. The purpose of Yoga is to bring back harmony in the minds and hearts of everyone, leading to reduced conflict and war.'

Principal guest speaker was Prof Tony Nader, MD, PhD, head of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's worldwide Transcendental Meditation organisation. Prof Nader has researched and charted the precise correlation between the structure of the human physiology and the structure of the Vedic literature. He presented a chart showing the correspondence not only between the four books of Yoga and the four lobes of the brain, but also the one-to-one correspondence between the 195 Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the 195 sets of association fibres, with each individual Sutra correlated with one of the cortical gyri (folds) of the brain.

Prof Nader also presented empirical research on the Transcendental Meditation technique, which gives direct experience of restful alertness, pure wakefulness or *Samadhi* – the most fundamental of the eight aspects of Yoga described in Patanjali's exposition. 500–600 scientific research studies chart the benefits of Transcendental Meditation in almost every area of mental and physical health, leading to spontaneous profound positive results in all of these eight aspects. In addition, the studies show that with the advanced programmes of TM, society increasingly reflects these same desirable characteristics. Many of the research studies show benefits in cardiovascular health – one of the critical areas of health where the NHS is currently overstretched – including reduced hypertension and reduced incidence of heart attack and stroke.

Three sessions of distinguished speakers were moderated by Dr. Anjali Joshi - Ayurvedic Medical Association UK, Brittany Spence - British Complementary Medical Association and Dr. Mahesh Mathpati - London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Suzanne Newcombe, lecturer at the Open University and research fellow at the LSE-based charity Inform, spoke of the long tradition of applying Yoga to the prevention and treatment of health problems. For a number of years, she said, Iyengar Yoga practitioners were certified and deployed in the adult education programmes of the ILEA, with special focus on the needs of an ageing population.

Yoga therapist Carolina Naess, formerly a dancer with the Swedish Royal Ballet who retired early due to a severe back injury, found immediate relief and eventual cure through the breathing exercises of Sudarshan Kriya Yoga and has since been teaching breathwork to children and adults, including autistic children. NHS doctors in Kent are referring patients with depression to breathwork programmes, with very good results.

The symposium also heard from movement and soft-tissue specialist Joanne Avison who explained that a new understanding of anatomy which emphasises the importance of fascia and the fascial matrix can provide a clue to the mechanism by which the subtle approaches of Yoga are so beneficial. Yoga teacher Louise Palmer-Masterton spoke about the remarkable therapeutic effects of Yoga, as did Brittany Spence, bodywork therapist and chairperson of the British Complementary Medical Association.

Suki Kalirai, chairman of Skills Active, the government-licensed sector skills council for wellbeing and physical activity, spoke briefly to emphasise the need for Yoga to *speak with a common voice*, if it is to make the transition from a niche phenomenon used by 5% of the population, to almost universal use by 70%. Scientific research adds credibility, he said, but there is no room for pursuing individual agendas.

Research was presented by Sunita Poddar of the Patanjali Yog Peeth (UK) Trust, measuring the beneficial effect of Yogic breathing techniques on heart-rate variability, an important factor in maintaining autonomic balance.

Consultant rheumatologist and researcher, Dr. C Bernard Colaço summarised a pilot study he is supervising with 10 arthritis patients attending weekly sessions in the hospital with a trained Yoga teacher, as an adjunct to the medication and other treatment they receive. Initial feedback from the patients is that they enjoy the sessions, and several have experienced clear benefit.

Ayurveda Professor Venkata Joshi explained the beneficial influence of the primordial sounds of the Vedas, on human health, and called for more research on this.

The concluding presentation was given by Madan Thangavelu PhD, a genome biologist at Cambridge University, highlighted the remarkable congruence between the findings of modern genetics and epigenetics on the one hand and the cognitions of the ancient Vedic and Buddhist sages on the other. His message was: since both disciplines are leading to the same conclusions, we would do well to just follow the advice of the ancient sages regarding diet, lifestyle, and development of consciousness.

Messages of support from His Excellency Deputy High Commissioner of India Dinesh Patnaik, Dr. H R Nagendra Chancellor S-Vyasa Yoga University, and Dr. Michael Dixon LVO OBE MA FRCGP Chairman College of Medicine were read by Brittany Spence.

An Early Day Motion (<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/27>) which has been tabled by Virendra Sharma MP for Ealing Southall on Int'l Yoga Day was read by Diana Leighton of the Maharishi Foundation UK and requested all delegates to encourage their local MPs to sign this EDM.

Amarjeet S. Bhamra
Secretariat | APPG Indian Traditional Sciences