



INTERNATIONAL YOGA FESTIVAL 2014

The World Came Together for Peace



A News Magazine of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh

INTERNATIONAL YOGA FESTIVAL 2014

*People from Over 50 Nations: Learning Together.
Growing Together. Building Bridges of Peace. Together.*



Dear Divine Souls

The International Yoga Festival was not only a festival where people learned yoga; rather, the festival itself **was** yoga -- a divine union of the east and west, the north and south. On the banks of Mother Ganga, in the lap of the Himalayas, people of every country, every culture, every color and every creed came together as one family, connecting to the Divine within themselves and to the Divine within others. During the week, the participants were taught by excellent yogacharyas and presenters; they were touched by the depth of the wisdom and philosophy; and they were transformed by the divine, sacred energy. The International Yoga Festival is a time in which not only does one's body become strong and flexible, but also one's very self becomes strong and flexible. It is a time of uniting not only one's hands to one's legs, but a time of uniting oneself to the Divine. May God bless you all with continued awareness of the Divine within you and continued connection to the Divine Source.

With love and blessings always,
In the Service of God & humanity,

Swami Chidanand Saraswati

Swami Chidanand Saraswati

Jai Gange!

The International Yoga Festival was a beautiful time of seeing the world come together in the name of yoga, or union, on the holy banks of Mother Ganga. More than 600 people from 51 countries came to learn asana, pranayama, kriyas and meditation from over fifty presenters from sixteen different countries! They had the wonderful blessing of the darshan, satsang and inspiring, uplifting discourses of revered saints who filled the atmosphere with bhakti yoga (devotion) and gyan yoga (wisdom). Then they joined hands together in karma yoga (service) and cleaned the banks and waters of Mother Ganga, pledging to work to protect and preserve the water bodies in their own cities and countries across the world. It is always such an honor, a blessing and a joy to be part of an event that is so transformative for so many people.

With love and peace from the holy banks of Mother Ganga,

Sadhvi Bhagawati

Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati





Pujya Swamiji and Sadhvi Bhagawatiji enjoy a walk through Parmarth Niketan with revered spiritual teacher, Shri Mooji and Trudy Goodman, founder of InsightLA Meditation center



Hon'ble Home Minister, Shri Sushil Kumar Shindeji, Respected Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Shri Harish Rawat and Pujya Swamiji unveil IYF's and GIWA's new booklets



H.E. Honorable Governor of Uttarakhand Dr. Aziz Qureshi, is welcomed to the International Yoga Festival by Pujya Swamiji



PARMARTH NIKETAN

Welcome home to the land of the birth of yoga, the Yoga Capital of the World, on the beautiful banks of Mother Ganga





REVERED SAINTS, YOGACHARYAS & TEACHERS



H.H. Shankaracharya
Swami Divyanand
Teerth



H.H. Swami
Chidanand Saraswati



H.H. Swami
Madhavpriyadas



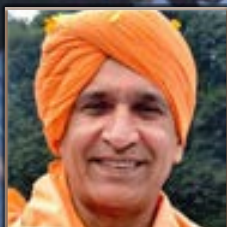
H.H. Radhanath
Swami



H.H. Shri Mooji



Ven. Bhikku
Sanghasena



Padmashri Bharat
Bhushan



Gurmukh Kaur
Khalsa



Swami Yogananda



Shantimayi



Jack Kornfield



Trudy Goodman



Sadhvi Abha
Saraswati



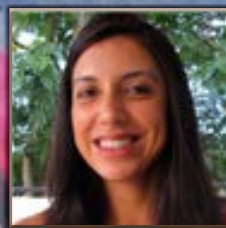
Sadhvi Bhagawati
Saraswati



Jeffrey Armstrong



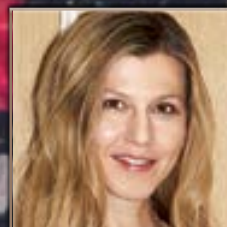
HS Arun



Deepika Mehta



Laura Plumb



Gabriela Bozic



Kia Miller



Matthew Sweeney



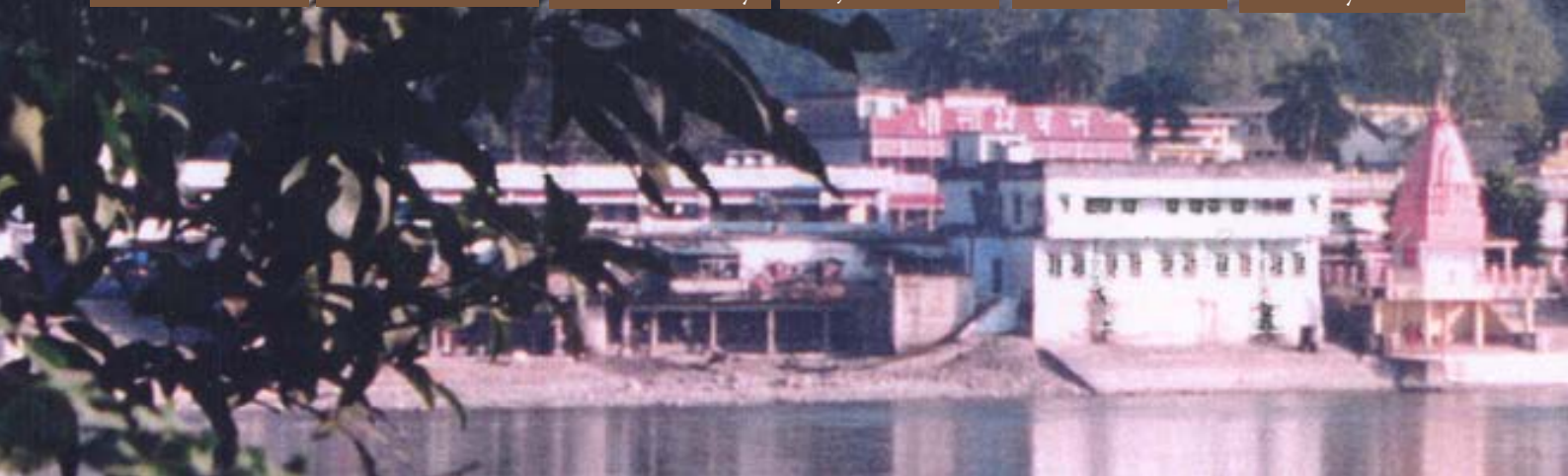
Rujuta Diwekar



Hikaru Hashimoto



Tommy Rosen





Swami Paramadvaiti



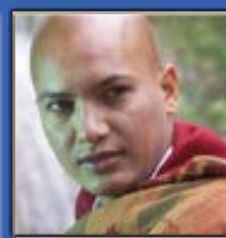
Yogi Cameron



Sherri Baptiste



Gurushabad Singh
Khalsa



Mohan Bhandari



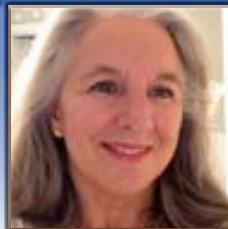
Yuva Dayalan



Maa Gyan Suveera



Erica Kaufmann



Siddhi



Brian Ingle



Bharat Shetty



Roberto Milletti



Yogiraj



Chandresh Bhardwaj



TA Krishnan



Chandanni Miglino



TS Rukmani



Dr. RS Bhogal



Gayatri



Akria Watamoto



Bhavini Kalan

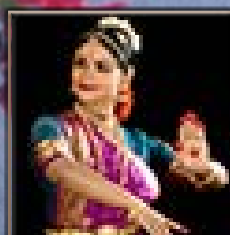


David Wei

SPECIAL CULTURAL PERFORMANCES BY



Sivamani



Padmaja Suresh



Sharmila Bhartari



Arushi Pokhriyal



Anandra George



Vaiyasaki Das and Kishori

DAY ONE:

1

The International Yoga Festival Begins With Programmes and Classes that Promote Togetherness

The first day of the 2014 International Yoga Festival began with classes including Kriya yoga by **Sadhvi Abha Saraswati**, Lila Yoga Sun Salutations with **Erica Kaufmann** and Power Pranayama by **Yogiraj**.

After breakfast, intense asana classes started with Kundalini Yoga by **Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa** from Hollywood, USA and Hanuman Namaskar series with **Laura Plumb** of California, USA.

While teaching Hanuman Namaskar, **Laura Plumb** explained: "As the Son of Vayu, Hanuman represents the power of prana, and the power of a mind turned inward to the light of the heart. Focus your mind on that light within, and breathe into that power. Feel your divine self alive and true."

The lecture series began with **Yogi Cameron**, a world-famous supermodel turned ayurvedic expert and yogi. Born in Iran, he is a best-selling author and has been featured in numerous international publications. Yogi Cameron spoke about the importance of integrating Ayurveda into one's daily sadhana for full health of body, mind and spirit. He explained: "Without a strong and healthy body our spiritual practice will be disturbed and ungrounded. An Ayurvedic based diet and lifestyle is the essential backbone to our practice so our mind can be focused while our body has the endurance and health necessary to sustain our Sadhana."

Following his talk there was ecstatic bhakti yoga and kirtan led by **Vaiyasaki Das** of USA and **Kishori** of Mexico.

Highlights of the afternoon included Sacred Mudras for Health and Wholeness with **Siddhi** from Germany, The Sacred Space of Santosha: A life beyond craving (Movement Vinyasa & Kundalini Yoga) with Tommy Rosen from USA, a discourse on yoga by **Shri R.S. Bhogal** of Kaivalyadham and a beautiful discourse and kirtan with **Shantimayi** on the topic of "A New World Emerging - Inspiration for the Visionary."

Tommy Rosen explained in his class on the "Sacred Space of Santosha" that "We have to actually practice being content. It does not just come to us. Like body builders, we yogis can flex the muscle of contentment and become better at it. You do not need a drug or a person or sex or shopping or drama or anything. It

is all within you and once you learn to control your inner environment you will gain dominion over the outer world."

Shantimayi, in her beautiful discourse, explained that: "Love is The Only Resolution. Spiritual wisdom is the absolute treasure of this life. An open heart and open mind is spiritual wisdom."

In the evening there was a special "Welcoming/Inauguration Ceremony" for all the delegates. **Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati of Parmarth Niketan** gave the official welcome and there were beautiful remarks by **Deepika Mehta** of Mumbai, **Gabriela Bozic** of Germany, **Yogi Cameron** and **Laura Plumb**, all of whom shared what a great gift and blessing it is to come "home" to Parmarth Niketan and take part in this special one-of-a-kind festival. The inauguration ceremony also had an impressive, breath-stopping yoga demonstration by the rishikums of the Parmarth Gurukul and special blessings by **Pujya Sri Shankaracharyaji Swami Divyanand Teerthji**, **Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji**, **Shri Mooji** and **Shantimayi**.

Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji explained to the crowd of nearly 1000 participants, "Yoga is union. It is not just union of our heads to our knees or our hands to the floor. It is union of the self to the Divine. Here during this week, don't focus only on making your bodies strong and flexible, but focus on making your inner self strong and flexible." He further emphasized that, "Uttarakhand is the birth place of yoga and you are all the chosen ones to be back here to imbibe the divine science."

Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswatiji, in her welcome address, told all the participants: "You have all been called here to India, to Uttarakhand, to the holy banks of Mother Ganga for a special reason. This is not like a yoga conference in London or Paris or New York or Sydney. In this sacred land of Rishikesh, you not only receive teachings but you also receive the divine touch and divine transformation. The sage Patanjali described eight limbs of yoga, beginning with the yamas and niyamas and ending with samadhi or divine ecstasy. Here at this unique festival, we aim to provide classes and programs that give you teachings and experiences of the first seven limbs. The eighth, samadhi, happens by the grace of Mother Ganga."



15th International Yoga Festival begins at Parmarth Ashram

550 participants from 46 countries attend Shiv Abhishek, Ganga Aarti



By OUR STAFF REPORTER

RISHIKESH, 28 Feb:

The participants for the 15th annual International Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan ashram arrived in time to participate in a special Mahashivratri programme. Since 1999, Parmarth Niketan has been hosting this event which has grown to international acclaim and increases in size every year. Yogacharyas, teachers, students and seekers come from every corner of the globe to participate in this programme. This year, there are more than 550 participants from 46 countries.

This evening, the participants joined together at special Shiv Abhishek Puja just prior to the Ganga Aarti. Sadhu Bhagwati Saraswati explained that Shiva is represented, most commonly, either in the form of Nataraja – the Cosmic Dancer, or in the form of meditating, or in the formlessness aspect of the Shiv Linga.

"It means," she said, "that even while we are dancing or doing yoga, we are also meditating, and even while we're meditating, we are dancing. And whether we are dancing or meditating or doing yoga or doing anything else, we should always stay deeply connected to the Supreme, Infinite Reality which is beyond names and beyond forms. When we offer our abhishek to Shiva it is a symbol of offering ourselves, our devotion and our surrender."

After the abhishek puja, there was a special prayer for all of those who lost their lives, their families, their homes and their livelihoods in the tragic Uttarakhand floods last year.

Following the puja and prayer, they gathered for the divine Ganga Aarti ceremony. As Swami Chidanand Saraswati, the President of Parmarth Niketan explained, "The Aarti is divine Happy Hour. All over the Western world as the sun sets

people gather in the pubs and clubs for Happy Hour. But we gather here on the banks of Mother Ganga for our Happy Hour, which is a Happy Hour with no hangover and where the happiness lasts much longer than 60 minutes!"

All of the participants could be seen swaying and clapping with closed eyes, clearly enthralled by the beautiful, soul-stirring experience. The Swami emphasised, "At the Aarti we give thanks to the Divine, by any name, any form, any religion. All day long the Divine bestows upon us the light of life, the light of grace and the light of His blessings. At the Aarti we offer back the light of our thanks, our love and our devotion."

Following the Aarti, the participants were treated to a special cultural song and dance performance by Sharmila Bharti, who was joined by girls from several of the local schools. The dance was dedicated to Shiva. The

international participants were thrilled to see the great creative flow and expression of the Indian dance.

Said David Rogers from USA: "Even though we may not understand the words in Hindi or Sanskrit, the meaning is so deep and so profound that we can feel it and understand it in our hearts and souls."

After dinner there was a special Mahashivratri Puja with abhishek and kirtan until late in the night. "What an amazing way to start our yoga festival!" the participants could all be heard exclaiming after the puja. Said Chandanni Miglino of UK, "Yes it is late and we have been travelling for so many hours, but we are so rejuvenated, so energized from this divine energy and experience already."

Starting tomorrow morning, 1 March, there will be classes from 4 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. with more than 50 yogacharyas, presenters and experts from more than 15 countries

around the world. Kundalini Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Bharat Yoga, Deep Yoga, Shintoh Yoga and Somatics Yoga are just a few of the more than 60 different offerings throughout the week. There are also classes in meditation, mudras, reiki, Indian spices and much more. Further, spiritual discourses will be held by revered spiritual leaders from India and abroad. There will also be cultural dance/music performances highlighting the culture of this Himalayan Garhwal region as well as Odissi and South Indian style.

The International Yoga Festival is a truly, globally-unique event bringing together masters and students from dozens of different lineages, cultures and countries in one sacred, beautiful location.

The Festival is open to students from raw beginner to advanced practitioner.



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सामूहिक रूप से शिव आराधना की



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International Yoga Festival kicks off in Rishikesh

TNN | Mar 1, 2014, 10:54 PM IST

READ MORE International Yoga Festival in Rishikesh | International Yoga Festival

RISHIKESH: The 15th International Yoga Festival kicked off at Parmarth Niketan ashram in Rishikesh today. The week-long festival on the banks of the Ganga will see nearly 600 participants from 46 countries attend classes and demonstrations of various yoga disciplines like Kundalini Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Bharat Yoga, Deep Yoga, Shintoh Yoga and Somatics Yoga.

More than 50 yogacharyas, presenters and experts will take classes in meditation, mudras, reiki etc. Inaugurating the event, Parmarth Niketan president Swami Chidanand Saraswati defined what the term 'yoga' really meant. "Yoga is union. It is not just union of our heads to our knees or our hands to the floor. It is union of the self to the divine," he said.

The festival will also have talks and discourses by a number of saints. Present during the inauguration ceremony were spiritual gurus like Shaakarsacharya Swami Divyanand Teerth, Shri Moog and Shantimay.

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DAY TWO:

2

India's Respected Home Minister, Uttarakhand's Chief Minister, Saints, Yogacharyas and Dignitaries Come Together

On day two, respected **Shri Sushil Kumar Shinde, the Honourable Home Minister of India and Respected Shri Harish Rawat the Honourable Chief Minister of Uttarakhand**, came to Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh to welcome and address some 600 participants from over 50 countries who have come to take part in the 15th annual, world famous International Yoga Festival.

Hon'ble Shri Shinde was impressed to see all the people who came from every corner of the Earth to imbibe the divine nectar of yoga in its birthplace in the lap of the Himalayas.

Pujya Swamiji said: "The International Yoga Festival is not only a festival OF yoga, but the festival itself IS 'yoga,' a union of North and South, East and West, a union of countries, cultures, creeds and colors, coming together to imbibe the divine nectar of yoga on the banks of Mother Ganga, in the sacred Himalayas."

Said Shri Sushilkumar Shinde: "I have come to have the darshan of all the international delegates who have come to learn yoga, to teach yoga and learn the Indian culture. You have all seen this pious place and you are learning yoga. Pujya Swamiji was saying that today there are 600 people here and tomorrow there will be 1,000, then 5,000. I think that the people who have come here will definitely go back and teach others and give the *diksha* of yoga to others."

Said Hon'ble Shri Harish Rawat: "I am grateful to Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji for giving me this opportunity to listen to the views of the various people who are attending the International Yoga Festival about Mother Ganga, our Himalayas and about Uttarakhand."

Short talks were given by yogacharyas, including **Laura Plumb** of San Diego, USA, **Gabriela Bozic** of Germany, **Deepika Mehta** of Mumbai and **Tommy Rosen** of Los Angeles, USA. Each of them expressed their great joy to be here. As **Tommy said**, "We are so honored to be here at Parmarth Niketan in the beautiful, divine area. This place, this area has a special gift which not only helps us learn yoga but also

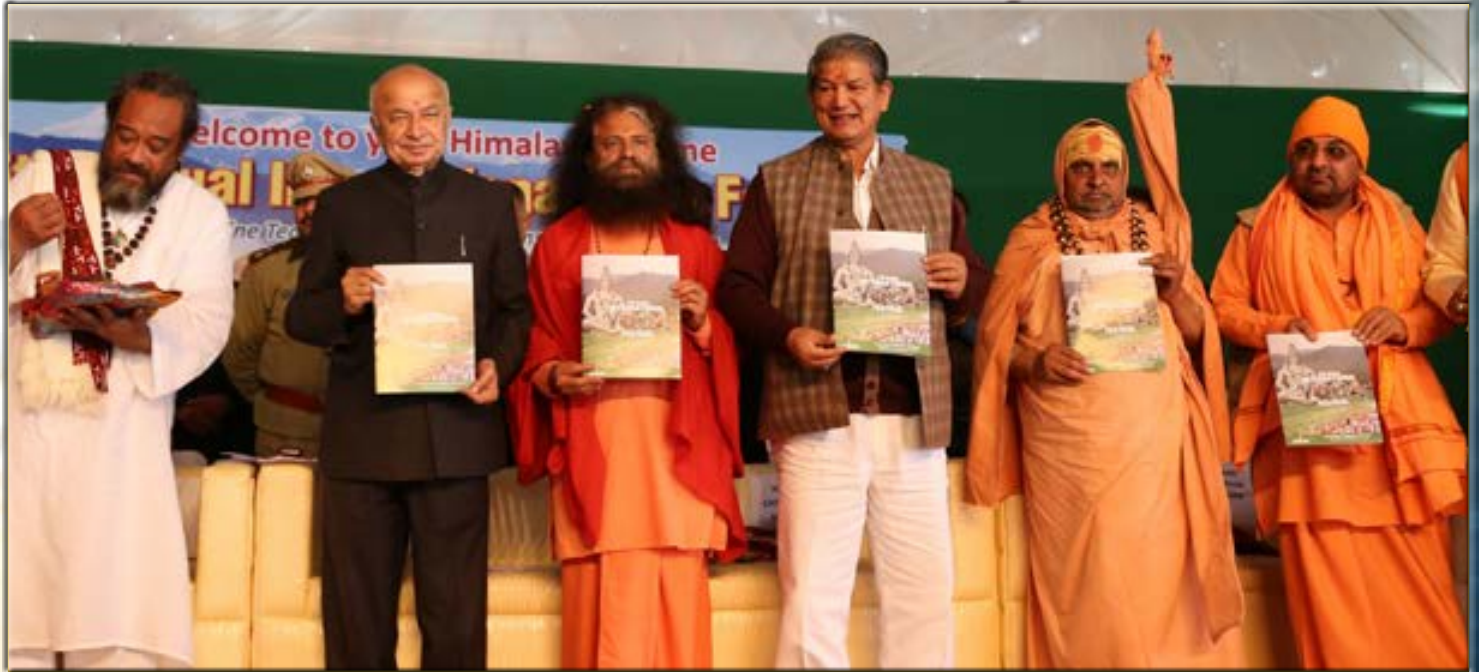
heals. This land is a healing land." Deepika Mehta, yoga teacher to the Bollywood stars explained that: "Coming back to Parmarth is coming home for me. I teach all over the world, but my heart is here."

Pujya Swamiji said: "Here, in these sacred Himalayas, in the land of Mother Ganga, is the birthplace of yoga, and now you are all needed to come forward for Ganga. You are all now Yogis For Ganga!" He led a pledge in which all the participants and yogacharyas raised their hands and stood up and pledged to give their time, talent, technology and tenacity to help keep Ganga, and all the water bodies of the world, clean, green and safe. Beautiful yogis from several countries dressed up as Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Narmada and other rivers to showcase the glory of India's holy rivers and assist in presenting sacred rudraksha saplings to the honourable dignitaries.

Hon'ble Shri Shinde said: "Pujya Swamiji, for the last so many years has worked to maintain the piousness of the Ganga and to keep Ganga clean. It is unparalleled in the history of humanity that Pujya Swamiji is doing this work....I have been seeing Pujya Swamiji since the days when I was CM of Maharashtra. He believes in action. Whenever He came, He talked less, but believed in action. I am here for You."

Hon'ble Shri Harish Rawatji said: "Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji is the roaming Ambassador of Mother Ganga. All over the world, through the message of Mother Ganga, He is giving the message to humanity that we should preserve water for not only today, for the future also. For the future of mankind, as well as the survival of the entire humanity and the entire globe. This is wonderful."

Prior to the event, Hon'ble Shri Shinde, Hon'ble Shri Harish Rawat and the revered saints performed a Water Blessing Ceremony led by Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji in which sacred water was poured onto a globe as a prayer that all people, from all countries, all cultures and all walks of life should have access to clean and safe water, sanitation and hygiene.





उत्तराखंड केसरी

MONDAY, MAR 3, 2014

UTTRAKHAND KESARI

गंगा जीवन की शुद्धता का प्रतीक : शिंदे

दकनपुर-औरंगाबाई सड़क निर्माण पर गुरु मंथने ने दो सहमति



आचार्यजी और शिंदेजी का दकनपुर-औरंगाबाई सड़क निर्माण पर गुरु मंथने में भाग लेना।

दकनपुर, 2 मार्च (संवाद)। दकनपुर-औरंगाबाई सड़क निर्माण पर गुरु मंथने में भाग लेने वाले आचार्यजी और शिंदेजी का दकनपुर-औरंगाबाई सड़क निर्माण पर गुरु मंथने में भाग लेना।

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DAY THREE:

A Day of Enchanting Talks, Energizing Classes, Fun and Friendship

3

As the sweet smell of night-blooming jasmine faded into the early-morning air, people from around the world gathered for power pranayama, led by **Yogiraj Vishwapal Jayant**, Indea Foundation yoga led by **Bharath Shetty**, a special class on twist postures for health by **Tommy Rosen** and yoga therapy with **Prahlad Bhardwaj**.

Tommy Rosen explained that we hold onto our emotions and our pain in our tissues and if we don't "twist" them out and release them, they lead to illness and injury. He explained: "Feelings left unprocessed are buried alive. They will act as an energetic blockage to the happiness and health of an individual. Later, if left unprocessed, these energetic blockages can cause a variety of emotional and physical symptoms, which will get more and more serious unless the person shifts onto a path of healing."

Intense asana classes were next on the agenda, with **Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa** of California, USA teaching Kundalini yoga, famed celebrity yoga teacher, **Deepika Mehta** of Mumbai teaching the ashtanga fundamental series, Sri **H.S. Arun** of Bangalore teaching Iyengar Yoga with a focus on the twisting postures and **Padmashri Bharat Bhushan** teaching a special sun meditation.

These intense classes were followed by a thought-provoking and divine satsang with **Shri Mooji**, originally of Jamaica and now a resident of Portugal. Mooji addressed the depths of the Advaita Vedanta school of philosophy by coaxing the audience to go deeply within themselves and question, "who is the one asking this question? Who is the one with the problem? Whose problem is it?" He explained, "I am not so interested in the question as in the questioner.....Something very deep has brought you to this holy land of Rishikesh to this International Yoga Festival and it is that depth of experience that we want to make sure you receive, not only things you could read in books."

Highlights of the afternoon included Reiki with **Maa Gyaan Suveera**, a special program on the

use and benefit of Indian spices with **Smt. Anjana Bhagat**, a meditation on demystifying enlightenment by **Chandresh Bhardwaj**, Shinto Yoga with **Hikaru Hashimoto** of Japan, Ganga Yoga with **Laura Plumb** of California, USA, Jivamukti Yoga with **Gabriela Bozic**, and the yogic dance of fire and bliss, including asana, pranayama and kriya with **Kia Miller** of USA.

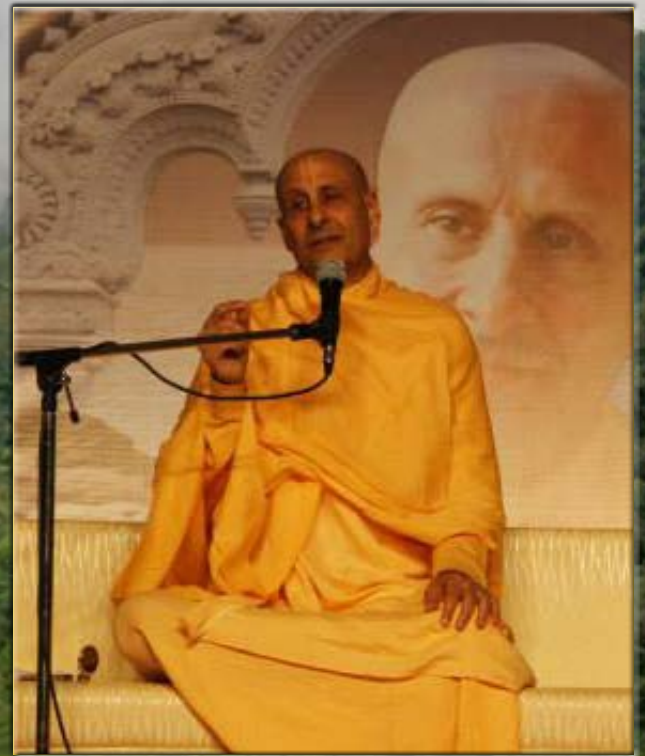
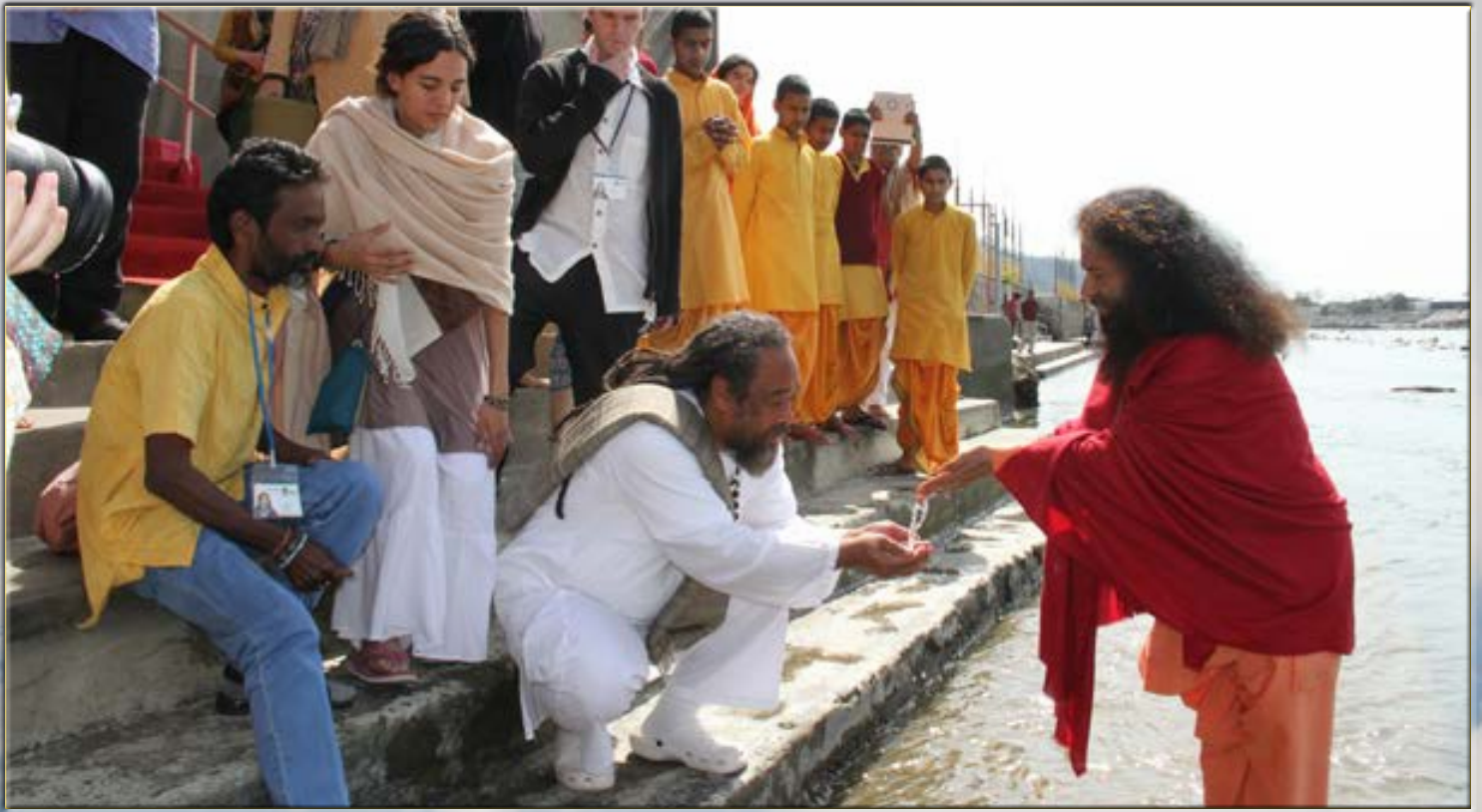
Regarding Ganga Yoga, founded and taught by Laura Plumb under Puja Swamiji's inspiration and blessing, **Laura said:** "Open your heart and recognize its natural generosity. Let yourself be a river of love. Be the compassion we all seek in the world. Give and Forgive. Puja Swamiji always says, 'Ganga gives and She forgives.' Ask yourself, by Ganga's example, what are you ready to forgive? How can forgiveness open the rivers of compassion in your own life? Ganga teaches us generosity of heart. She purifies our past, refreshes our soul, and carries us to the ocean of the heart. Through Ganga, we learn to be a river of love for the world."

In his talk on Demystifying Enlightenment, **Chandresh Bhardwaj**, the founder of the self-discovery center, Break the Norms, said: "Spirituality is knowing that all your attachments are merely an illusion. Enlightenment is releasing those attachments. Truth cannot be avoided. Love cannot be escaped. Beauty cannot be ignored. Divinity cannot be denied. Every time you move ahead in your spiritual journey, you will be bitten by a mosquito called Ego. It's invisible and yet holds the power to suck out all that you have earned. The ego doesn't travel alone. It also brings along all that is necessary to kill your divinity."

In the evening, all participants took part in the sacred and divine world famous Ganga Aarti ceremony at Parmarth Niketan followed by a beautiful discourse on the "Yoga of Love" by **Radhanath Swamiji** of Mumbai and kirtan with **Anandra George** of USA, **Vaiyasaki Das** of USA and **Kishori** of Mexico.







DAY FOUR:

The International Yoga Festival Becomes a Symphony of Togetherness and Peace

4

Day four began with Ashtanga Series of yoga taught by yoga-teacher to the celebrities **Deepika Mehta** from Mumbai, Movement, Flow & Transformation with **Roberto Milletti** of Italy, Ci plus meditation with **Maa Gyan Suveera**, Lila Sun Salutations by **Erica Kaufman**, and Sukshma Yoga taught by **Swami Yogananda**.

Deepika guided the students to: “keep the heart lifted and radiant, yet at the same time drop the tailbone to balance the flow of prana and aparna. The essence of ashtanga vinyasa is to find the sushamna nadi (central axis) in every asana of the practice through the alignment, keeping our dhristi (gaze), ujjayi breath and vinyasa (movement & breath connection) with awareness in the bandhas (body locks).”

The morning intensives included Devi Sadhana with **Laura Plumb** from USA, which included a practice of asanas, pranayama and meditation dedicated to the Mother Goddess in all Her forms, Power of Yoga with **Sherri Baptiste** of USA, Kundalini Yoga with **Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa** and Iyengar Yoga with **H.S. Arun** of Bangalore.

The spiritual lecture series included discourses by **Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswatiji** on “a Divine Balance -- from Stress Management to Self Management” and “Rewire your Consciousness with Mantra & meditation: A Talk & Guided Mantra Meditation” by **Chandresh Bhardwaj**, founder of the Break the Norms center and movement.

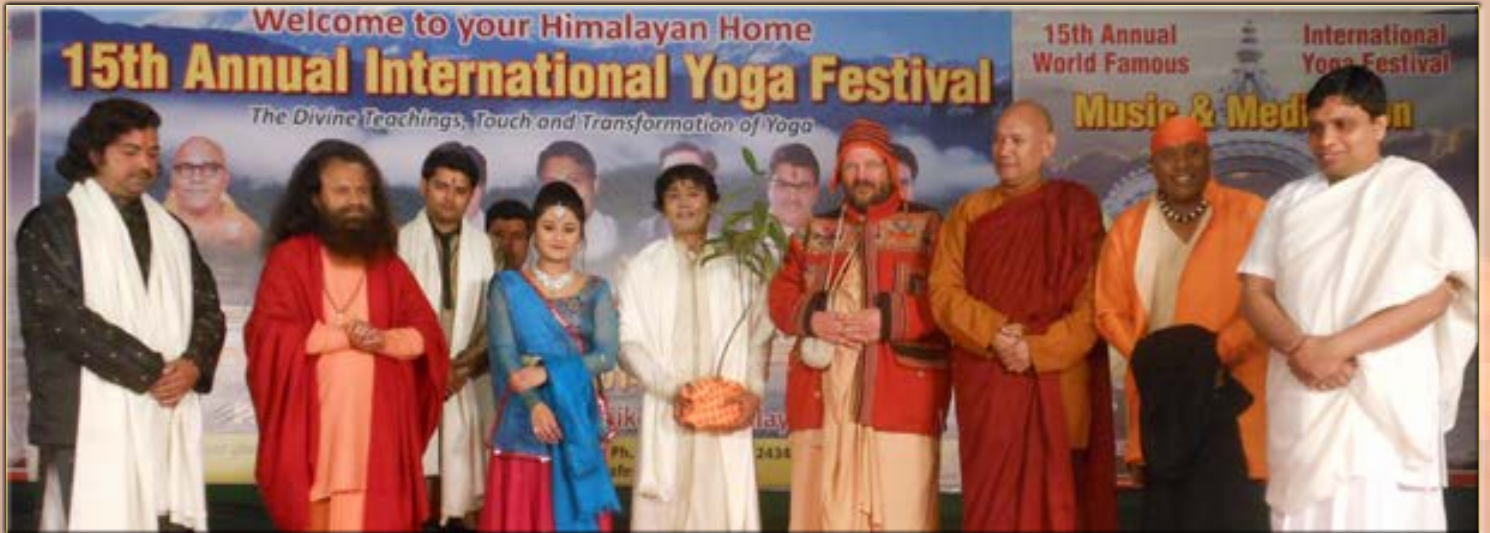
Sadhvi explained that “The problems in our lives are caused by the artificial borders we erect between different aspects of our lives -- this is my spiritual time, this is my work time, this is my family time. Then we try to ‘balance’ those aspects and it leads us into stress management classes or onto anti-anxiety medicine. When we realize, instead, that

everything is our spiritual life -- whatever we do, wherever we go, whomever we’re with -- it’s all part of the sadhana of seeing the Divine in everything, it’s all a sadhana in love, peace, presence and true, divine union, then the stress disappears, the depression disappears and the Self appears.”

After lunch, among the afternoon’s many events, **Chandanni Miglino** taught Submerged Yoga, **Hikaru Hashimoto** taught Shinto Yoga, **Anandra George** led a beautiful chanting of the Sanskrit alphabet, **Yuva Dayalan & TS Krishnan** led Yuva Yoga, **Gabriela Bozic** led a Bhakti-filled Jivamukti class, **Akira Watamoto & Roberto Milletti** led a joint hatha class on posture and movement, and **Radhanath Swamiji** shared a discourse on his personal experience with Himalayan yogis, much to the delight of all the participants.

Akira Watamoto, a renowned yogi from Japan who frequently appears on TV and in print, shared: “sometimes we get stuck in our asana due to the stubbornness of the mind and old patterns. Let’s experience, through the liquid movement and fluidity of asana, a pure expression of the body’s intelligence. Just observe one’s breathing and harmonize the movement with the breath. We will then be able to experience the working of sacred Nature inside our own skin.”

After the evening’s sacred Ganga Aarti, participants enjoyed a special dance performance on the Ganga River by **Arushi Nishank**. She was followed by the special experience of dancing to the matchless percussionist, **Sivamani**, who played the drums with such joy and prowess that it had all participants dancing. Sivamani, truly IS music, not only a musician and he brought the gift and experience of music to the heart, mind and every cell of the participants.







16 Garhwal Post www.garhwalpost.in

Dehradun, 5 Mar, 2014

Dehradun

Arushi, Sivamani perform at Yoga Festival

By OUR STAFF REPORTER RISHIKESH, 4 Mar: On the 4th day of the International Yoga Festival at Parnarth Nishtar here, today, the morning began with Aashanga Series of yoga taught by yoga-teachers to the students, including celebrities. Deepika Mehta from Mumbai; Movement, Flow & Transformation with Roberto Miletto of Italy, Qi plus meditation with Maa Gyan Suktara; Lia Sun Salutations by Erica Kaufman, and Sukshma Yoga was taught by Swami Yogananda.

Deepika guided the students to "Keep the heart lifted and radiant, yet at the same time drop the tailbone to balance the flow of prana and apana. The essence of aashanga vinyasa is to find the sushumna nadi (central axis) in every asana of the practice through the alignment, keeping our chrishti (gaze), ujjayi breath and vinyasa (movement & breath connection)



with awareness in the bandhas." The morning intensives included Devi Sadhana with Laura Plumb from USA which included a practice of asanas, pranayama and meditation dedicated to the Mother Goddess in all Her forms, Power of Yoga with Shree Baptiste of USA, Kundalini Yoga with Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa and Iyengar Yoga with HS Arun of Bangalore.

The spiritual lecture series included discourses by Sadhvi Bhagwati Saraswati on 'A Divine Balance - from Stress Management to Self Management' and 'Re vive your Consciousness with Mantra & meditation: A Talk & Guided Mantra Meditation' by Chandresh Bhattacharya, founder of the Break the Norms movement. The Sadhvi explained, "The problems in our lives are caused by the artificial borders we erect

between different aspects of our lives - this is my spiritual time, this is my work time, this is my family time. Then we try to balance those aspects and it leads us into stress management classes or onto anti-anxiety medicine. When we realise, instead, that everything is our spiritual life - whatever we do, wherever we go, whenever we're with -- it's all part of the sadhana of seeing the Divine in everything, then the stress disappears, the depression disappears and the Self appears."

After lunch, highlights of the afternoon were: Chandanji Miglino taught Submerged Yoga, Hilaria Hashimoto taught Shinto Yoga, Anandara George led a beautiful chanting of the Sanskrit alphabet, Yogi Dayalan & TS

Krishnan led Vira Yoga, Gabriela Boice led a Bhakti filled Jivamukti class, Akiro Watanoto and Roberto Miletto led a joint hatha class on posture and movement, and Bachhanth Swami shared a discourse on his personal experience with Himalayan yoga, much to the delight of all the participants.

Anandara, a well-known kirtanist from Hawaii, explained, "So many of us chant the Sanskrit prayers and mantras without knowing exactly how to properly pronounce the sounds. I remember once a student asked me 'Which is the n in Ganesh?' I had no idea and it was from that moment that I decided to immerse myself in the study of the Sanskrit alphabet."

Akiro Watanoto, a renowned yogi from Japan who frequently appears on TV shows and in print media, shared, "Sometimes we get stuck in our asana due to the stubbornness of the mind and old patterns. Let's experience, through the liquid movement and fluidity of asana, a pure experience of the body's intelligence. Just observe one's breathing and harmonise the movement with the breath. We will then be able to experience the working of sacred Nature inside our own skin."

After the evening's Ganga Aarti, the participants witnessed a special dance performance given by Anushi Nishank, on the Ganga,

followed by the special experience of dancing to the matches percussionist Sivamani who played the drums with such joy and prowess that it had all participants on their feet.

On the occasion, Sach Franchina, age 40 from Bergamo said, "I came to Parnarth Nishtar's International Yoga Festival every year to recharge my batteries and to find my centre again."

Chisako Kurthara, age 31, from Tokyo added, "I decided I wanted to be a yoga instructor so I quit my job and came to the International Yoga Festival to dive in at the deep end and learn the best ways."

Amilee Mysen, 23, from Sydney asserted, "I came to the International Yoga Festival to meet the yogis of the world and to validate my life choice to be a yogi by being around others who have made the same decision. My favourite part so far is the encounters with nameless yogis! Serendipity and anonymity combine at IYF for incredibly authentic experiences."

Anand Sharma calls for easing gold import curbs

NEW DELHI, 4 March (IANS): Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma Tuesday said he has requested the finance ministry to ease curbs on gold imports as it hurt the gems and jewellery industry and exports.

Addressing a media conference here, Sharma said he had taken up the issue with Finance Minister P Chidambaram and asked for easing the curbs.

"We have to have a balance. Over-regulation, too much of tariffs, lead to another problem. It leads to smuggling," he said.

Sharma said gems and jewellery industry, a major contributor to India's exports, has been hit by the gold import curbs. "We have to ensure adequate availability of gold for the gems and jewellery industry, which is a very important sector for our exports," he said.

Last year, the government had import duty on gold to a record high of 10 percent and put a number of other curbs, in a bid to discourage imports of the precious metal.

High gold imports had pushed the country's current account deficit to a record high of over \$88 billion in the financial year 2012-13.

Chidambaram last month said the current account deficit is likely to come down to \$45 billion in the current financial year ending March 31, largely due to lower gold imports.



DAY FIVE:

A Day of Learning, Growing and Sharing for All

5

On day 5, the morning began with a kundalini kriya class on developing navel intelligence by using the uddiyana bhandana by **Kia Miller**, who is a devoted scholar, practitioner and teacher of Kundalini yoga from Los Angeles, a special class on Zen Meditation led by **Akira Watamoto**, renowned yoga teacher from Japan as well as Yuva Yoga by **TA Krishnan**, who was awarded the Yoga Ratna by the President of India, as well as his disciple, **Yuva Dayalan**, who teaches all over Asia and runs his own Yuva school of Yoga in Hong Kong.

Kia Miller explained that: “Our work with the breath through pranayama helps us to dissolve the veil that covers our True self. Therefore, in the end, you will see that we are only uncovering that which is already there. That is the true state of Yoga.”

Next, during the intensive classes, **Gabriela Bozic** taught Jivamukti Yoga, Deepika Mehta of Mumbai, famed yoga teacher to the celebrities, taught the ashtanga class with focus on alignments, **Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa** of California, USA taught Kundalini yoga, and **Bharat Shetty** led an INDEA Vinayasa flow class. Famous drummer, **Sivamani**, was a special guest in **Gurmukh's** Kundalini class, thrilling students with the wonderful blessing of doing their yoga to Sivamani's rhythmic sounds.

During **Gabriela's** class on backbends she said: “through consistent yoga practice, we learn to perceive things more accurately, to be in the present moment, and thus choose the right action which will help reduce or avoid future suffering.”

These intense classes were followed by an inspiring satsang with **Shri Radhanath Swamiji**, originally from the USA and now heading the ISKCON Temple in Mumbai. Radnath Swamiji is also the renowned author of “The Journey Home” and a well-known humanitarian.

During his satsang, he shared stories of the lives of saints, devotees and rishis, electrifying the audience with awe and devotion.

Afterwards, participants were treated to a discourse by **Pujya Swami Madhavpriyadasji**, head of the Swaminarayan Gurukul Parivar Ahmedabad. Pujya

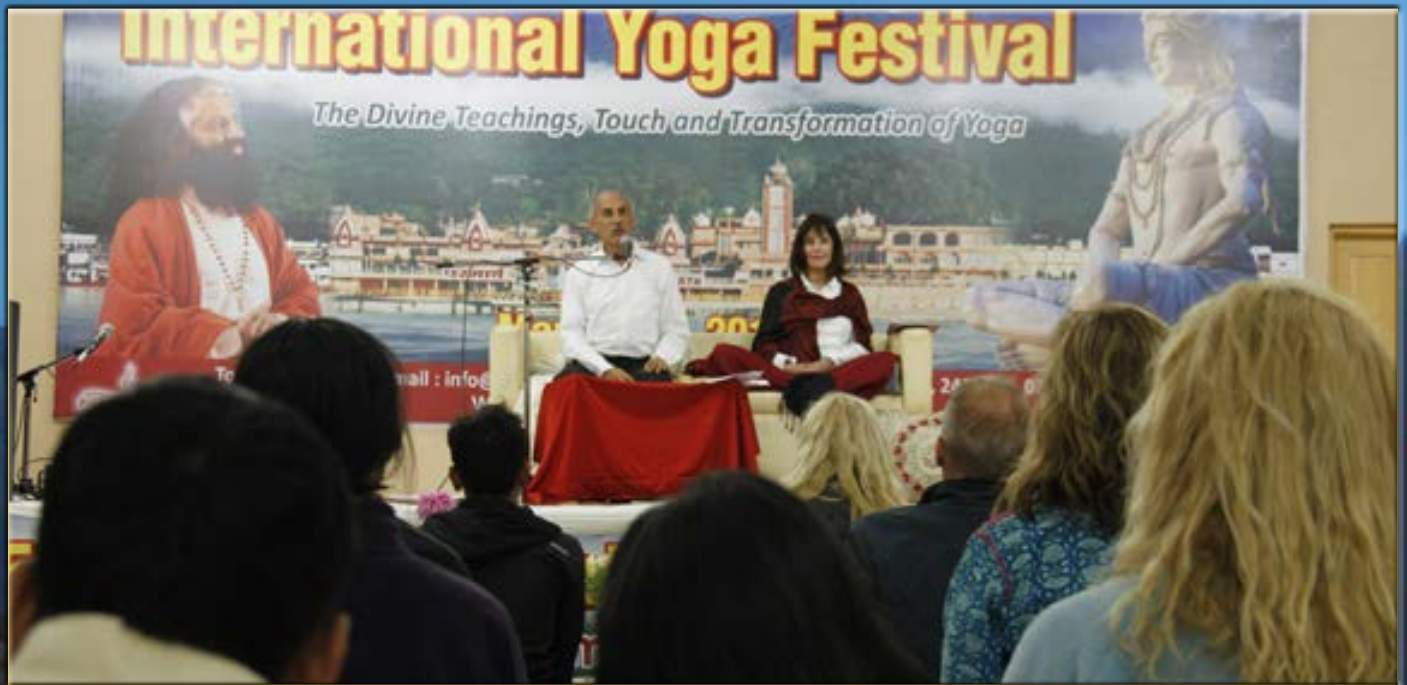
Swami Madhavpriyadasji explained that “Yoga means union. So that which unites us is yoga. There is no greater unifier than love. So love is the greatest yoga. The greatest obstacle on our spiritual path is the ego, and the answer to that is also love. Where there is love, there can be no ego. Just as nothing can stay stuck in the ever-flowing waters of Mother Ganga, so no trace of ego, jealousy, anger or greed can stay stuck in the ever-flowing river of true universal love in our hearts.”

After enjoying their lunches at tables in the sunshine or within dining tents, participants enjoyed an afternoon which included Somatics Flow with **Brian Siddharth and Gayatri**, a special workshop on Vedic and Devotional Chanting with **Anandra George**, a hands-on workshop on the benefits of Indian spices with **Dr. Anjana Bhagat**, and a lecture by **Dr. Himanshu Aeron**, Director of Seema Dental College, titled “the mouth is the mirror of our body.”

The afternoon also featured a special lecture on “Svadhyaya: The psychology of Yoga,” led by **Jeffrey Armstrong** (Kavindra Rishi), a renowned scholar of the Vedas and Jyotish from Vancouver, Canada. He said, yYoga says, every one of you is eligible to have the most intimate relationship possible with the Source of Everything. Yoga explains that the longing in our hearts that has driven us crazy – behind that is this hunger for love and intimacy that we know is possible. We can direct that love toward the source of our existence.”

In the evening, all participants took part in Parmarth Niketan's divine Ganga Aarti ceremony, followed by a beautiful discourse and meditation class on the “Yoga of the Awakened Heart: Meditation and Mindfulness” by **Jack Kornfield**. Having lived many years as a Buddhist monk in Thailand, India and Burma, he is the founder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California, and a renowned author whose books on Buddhism, meditation and psychology have sold over 1 million copies. **Trudy Goodman**, founder and guiding teacher of InsightLA, a non-profit organization for vipassana meditation training in Los Angeles, USA, also helped lead the class.







DAY SIX:

The International Yoga Festival's Closing Ceremonies Feature Uttarakhand's Governor, Yogacharyas, Saints and Dignitaries

Yogis and presenters from over 50 nations, including Kenya, Ukraine, the United States, Mexico, Peru, Japan and Thailand colourfully celebrated the concluding ceremonies of the International Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh on this day. They were joined by dignitaries including **H.E. Dr. Aziz Qureshi, Governor of Uttarakhand** and **HH Puja Swami Chidanand Saraswati**, President of Parmarth Niketan, Founder of Ganga Action Parivar and Co-Founder of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance.

The concluding ceremonies took place while the sun set serenely over the azure blue flow of the River Ganga. As participants enjoyed presentations and songs of togetherness, messages were brought forth that that a more peaceful world can be forged through mutual-understanding.

Said HH Puja Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji: "India should never be seen as a mere piece of land. It is a land of peace. Today, as we celebrated together, the illusory differences of nations, language and race were erased, and all were able to enjoy true harmony. Such togetherness is a natural outcome of yoga, which reminds us that we are all members of one family, united by the ties of Divinity."

Said HE Governor Dr. Aziz Qureshi, "Puja Swamiji is truly a divine symbol of peace, prosperity, progress and humanity. It brings me great happiness to see the International Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan blossoming under His vision and blessings... It is also a great honour to welcome the seekers and participants from over 50 countries to this sacred land of Uttarakhand. Their coming together, in itself, is a message of the power of Yoga to break through all borders and boundaries of caste, cultures and creeds."

Sadhvi Bhagawatiji of Parmarth Niketan, explained "This yoga festival brings together people of every country, every culture, every creed and every colour. It is a true union, a "yoga" of peace and love. Together, we have enjoyed a beautiful week of being taught, touched and transformed. We have learned together, grown together and come together. Through this International Yoga Festival, at Parmarth Niketan's divine, peaceful abode, on the banks of Mother Ganga, yoga has united the world."

Said HE Governor Dr. Aziz Qureshi: "Through yoga, all the barriers between men are demolished. I wish you all, when you come again next year, that you return with the message that the narrow divides that tear apart humanity have disappeared."

Prior to the Concluding Ceremonies, the sixth day of International Yoga Festival celebrated a wide spectrum of practices. As the sun rose over the Himalayas, hundreds of participants gathered for Kundalini Yoga, taught by Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa and Gurushabd Singh Khalsa of California, USA, on Parmarth Niketan's Ganga Ghats.

Throughout the day, participants had a wide range of classes and programs to choose from, including the graceful Dance of Prana by India's renowned yogacharya, Deepika Mehta, Yuuva Yoga led by award-winning Yogi T.A. Krishnan and Yuva Dayalan, and Somatics Flow Yoga by Siddharth Ingle of Ireland and Gayatri of Sweden.

Later in the morning, an inspiring spiritual discourse series was held in which award-winning author, **Jeffrey Armstrong (Kavindra Rishi)** of Vancouver, Canada discussed "Ishvara Pranidan: The Lost Secrets of the Devas." His talk was followed by a discussion on the "Psychological Perspectives of Yoga" by the renowned yoga expert and author, **R.S. Bhogal** of Kaivalya Dham, Pune, India.

After enjoying their lunches sitting at tables in the lap of the Himalayan Foothills, participants benefitted from unique classes, including a special class on the Moon Sequence by renowned Ashtanga Yoga Teacher and martial arts expert from USA, **Matthew Sweeney**. China's **David Wei** gave a beautiful class on "Using the Principles of Taoist Yin Yang, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Buddhist Yoga, and Chinese Massage for Inner Meditation." **Padmashri Bharat Bhushan** presented a class on Bharat Yoga and Maa Gyan Suveera led the Reiki sequence.

As a special, inspiring program, **Shri Mooji**, a beloved spiritual leader in the Advaita Vedanta tradition from Jamaica, led an enlightening question and answer session, which captivated an audience of over 500 people, who deeply enjoyed his wisdom under the IYF's beautiful tent as the Ganga River flowed serenely beside them.





International Yoga Festival

"Yoga uncovers that which is already there"

By OUR STAFF REPORTER

RISHIKESH, 5 Mar On the 5th day of the annual International Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan, today, the evening begins with developing 'yoga' intelligence by using the 'yogic' intelligence, a beautiful yoga class by Kim Miller, who is a devoted scholar, practitioner and teacher of Kundalini Yoga from Los Angeles, a special class on Zen Meditation led by Adam Winterstein, renowned yoga teacher from Japan as well as Vinyasa Yoga by TA Krishnan, who has been awarded the Yoga Rishi by the President of India, and his disciple Vani Deshpande, who teaches all over Asia and runs his own Yoga school of Yoga in Hong Kong.

Kim Miller explained: "Creating intelligence in the body leads to an intelligent approach to life. This class will take you on an exploration into your own innate power to create. One work with the breath through pranayama helps us to discover the self that exists in us. True self. Therefore, in the end, you will see that we are only uncovering that which is already there. That is the true state of Yoga."

Then the morning intense asana classes took place with Gabriela Botic teaching Jivamukti Yoga, Deepika Mehta of Mumbai, famed yoga teacher to the celebrities, teaching the ashtanga class with focus on alignment, Gurnukul Kaur Khosla of California, USA, teaching Kundalini yoga, and Bharat Shrivastava leading an INDEA Vinyasa flow class. These were the special presence of famous drummer Shivamoni in Gurnukul's Kundalini class so the students had the wonderful blessing of doing their yoga to the rhythmic sound of Shivamoni's drumming.

In Gabriela's class on backbends, she explained: "On a



psychokinetic level, backbending moves us into the future. We are applying yogic principles to backbending which allow us to safely, leadenly and confidently move into the future with a sense of adventure. Backbends help us address the fear of going into the unknown territories, of doing something new and how to move past that fear in order to live the truest expression of ourselves. Through consistent yoga practice we learn to perceive things more accurately, to be in the present moment, and thus choose the right action which will help reduce or avoid future suffering."

These intense classes were followed by an inspiring session with Radharani Sweet, originally from America and now heading the TRICON Temple in Mumbai, and the

renowned author of 'The Journey Home.' He started yoga focused on the theme of 'Through Giving We Receive.' He shared stories of the lives of the saints, the devotees and the sages, which filled the audience with awe and devotion.

Followed a discourse by Swami Madhavanandaji, head of the Swaminarayan Gurukul Parvati, Ahmedabad. He explained that "Yoga means union. So that which unites us is yoga. There is no greater union than love (premi). So love is the greatest yoga. The greatest obstacle on our spiritual path is the ego, and the answer to that is also love. Where there is love, there can be no ego. Just as nothing can stick in the overflowing waters of Mother Ganga, so no trace of ego,

jealousy, anger or greed can stick in the overflowing river of true universal love in our hearts."

After enjoying their lunch sitting on tables in the sunshine and during tea, some highlights of the afternoon included Somania Flow with Brian Siddharth and Gagan, a special workshop on Vedic Devotional Chanting with Anandha George and the benefits of Indian spices with Dr. Anjana Bhagat, and a lecture by Dr. Himanshu Arora, Director of Swami Devdutt College, on 'The mind is the mirror of our body'.

There was also a special lecture on 'Svadhyaya: The psychology of Yoga,' led by Jeffrey Armstrong also known as Kavindra Bhatti, a renowned scholar of the Vedas and Ayurveda.

from Vancouver, Canada. He explained, "Yoga invites us to deeply feel our hunger and choose the action that we want to experience with the Source of Everything, and to hold onto it no matter what is going on outside of us in the rest of the world. Yoga says, every one of you is eligible to have the most intimate relationship possible with the Source of Everything. Yoga explains that the longing in our hearts that has driven us crazy - behind that is this hunger for love and intimacy that we know is possible, and that we can direct that love toward the source of our existence. Otherwise, we will chase after it in the temporary, material world, or leap into the emptiness, and detach from this possibility of a direct relationship with the Source of Everything. We can offer it right back to the Source, and the Source will offer it right back to us!"

In the evening, all participants took part in the sacred and divine world famous Ganga Aarti ceremony at Parmarth Niketan followed by a beautiful discourse on the 'Yoga of the Awakened Heart Meditation and Mindfulness' by Jack Kornfield, who had spent many years as a Buddhist monk in Thailand, India and Burma, is the founder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California, and is a renowned author whose books on Buddhism, meditation, and psychology have sold over 1 million copies, and Trudy Goodman, founder and guiding teacher of Insight LA, a nonprofit organization for vipassana meditation training in Los Angeles, USA.

The Tamasara, 30, Helsinki, Finland, said, "The teachings are so deep, the atmosphere is beautifully light and the people are so open. The International

Yoga Festival is more than I can ask for from any yoga event."

Elizabeth Andropoulos, 29, Ann Arbor, Georgia, added, "The interesting blend of Indian and Western approaches to yoga is so refreshing. The International Yoga Festival is both serene and fun simultaneously."

Shubamit Salim, 48, Tel Aviv, Israel, asserted, "I know the yoga would be great, but the great things are such a nice bonus."

Alice Bick, 40, Hamburg, Germany: "I have come here 6 times and it's different every year. What I really appreciate is that I can drop into the Indian crowd or the German crowd or any crowd I like."



DAY SEVEN:

7

International Yoga Festival Delegates from Around the World Come Together for the Ganga River

On day seven, Yogis from around the world joined hands for a cleaner, greener Ganga and all the waters bodies of the world.

As the day began, hundreds gathered on Parmarth Niketan's ghats alongside the banks of the River Ganga to perform the newly-developed art of Ganga Yoga. Ganga Yoga was developed by American yogacharya, **Laura Plumb**, with the inspiration, blessings and teachings of **Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji**.

Laura explained: "The Ganga River teaches us generosity. She purifies our past, refreshes our soul, and carries us to the ocean of the heart. Through Ganga, we learn to be a river of love for the world."

After the class, attendees held brightly-coloured flags representing their many countries, including Brazil, South Africa, the United States, France, Iran, Australia, Turkey, Japan and Russia and joined hands in a pledge to protect Mother Ganga, and all the water bodies of the world.

Hearts filled with joy and people took to their feet to dance as beautiful songs were played in praise of the Ganga. They then joined in early celebrations of the Indian festival of Holi, in which they tossed at one another flower petals and powder in the colours of the sun.

To commemorate their deep feelings for the beautiful and holy Ganga River and in remembrance of the nearly 800 million people worldwide who lack access to safe drinking water, as well as the over two billion people who have no access to sanitation, the music quieted as all took part in a water ceremony with prayers for water, sanitation and hygiene for all.

Said **HH Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji**, "Yogis from around the world have come together today to declare that the River Ganga is a global treasure which should be kept in a clean, green, free-flowing state for all. Far too many travellers are seeing Mother Ganga's waters tainted with sewage, trash and toxic chemicals. They are witnessing dry rocks where She once serenely flowed. Now is the time to plant trees, to stop polluting, to be

the change. It's something each one of us can so easily do, and if we all do this together, enormous transformations can be achieved. Today you are all now Yogis for Ganga!"

To show their commitment against the millions of tons of solid waste which enter the Ganga and its tributaries every day, the international participants waded into the river to collect trash from the waters and from the banks. They then reassembled on the ghats of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh, to take a holy dip in the river they call, "Mother," to the melodious sound of Vedic chanting by Parmarth Niketan's young Rishikumars (students).

Explained **Sadhvi Bhagawatiji** of Parmarth Niketan, "As we clean the banks of Mother Ganga, we are actually cleaning our own hearts, minds and souls. We are purifying ourselves through this action of service. First, we give a bath to Mother Ganga, then we take our own holy baths."

During the event, a historic "Yogi's for Ganga Declaration" to Protect the Ganga River was endorsed by hundreds of participants. The Declaration was written by Western-born yogis who came together and said they wanted to impress upon the world the crucial role the Ganga River plays culturally and environmentally. (See the Declaration on Page 30)

Said **Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji**, "All rivers connect to the seas, which connect to all continents. Just as yoga is for everyone, so is the Ganga. Water means life. It is what builds societies and holds us all together. Without water, there can be no life. That is why all rivers in all nations must also be revered and protected."

Said **Laura Plumb**, "Mother Ganga gives and gives like the most perfect of mothers, never expecting anything back in return. Yet, She is in great trouble, as are so many water sources world-wide, due to the poor choices of mankind. I have personally pledged to help not only Mother Ganga, but to try to ensure the rivers in my home area are also improved. This for me has become part of my spiritual practice, as important as my morning asanas, japa and meditation."





The Yogis for the River Ganga Declaration to Protect and Preserve the Lifeline of Millions

*We, the people of the world, do hereby unite
to take a stand for the majestic and holy Ganga River.*

*It is from the banks of the Ganga that the art and practice of yoga was born.
Her waters have supported the growth of civilizations, have inspired poets, saints and sages.
She is the lifeline for some 500 million people, as well as for countless species
of plants and animals, some of which can be found no place else on this Earth.*

*We, as travellers to and within India, expect Her waters to be clean and serene.
We expect them to nourish us and to inspire us.*

*Yet, we see rubbish mar Her banks and lyrical flow. We learn of billions of litres of sewage and
toxic chemicals that are permitted to foul Her waters every day. In some places, we are
startled to see that there is no Ganga at all, because Her waters have been diverted or
extracted to the point in which there is nothing left but dry rocks and parched dreams.*

*The Ganga is a global symbol, which ties us all together.
She is a reason for our travels, the muse of countless songs.*

We feel Her pain as our own.

*The pollution and depletion of the flow of Mother Ganga is not just violating Her rights,
but violating the rights all people and beings who depend on Her and travel to see Her.*

*We have gathered to commit ourselves towards protecting the Ganga and Her tributaries
and to recognize Her rights to flow free and clean in order to nourish us,
as well as to provide healthy lives and sustainable livelihoods for all who depend on Her.*

*Today and hereafter, we raise our voices in the spirit of peaceful fellowship,
so that the glorious Ganga River might be protected and preserved for this and
all future generations through the coming together of all people.*

*We hereby declare, Ganga's Rights are Our Rights, and we urge Parliament to pass
the National Ganga River Rights Act, so that all may have access to plentiful, clean water.*

*We also affirm that all water is our water and will do all we can to protect and
preserve the rivers and water sources of our home areas, and to protect the environment
through sustainable practices such as the planting of trees wherever in the world we may live.*

BE A YOGI FOR THE RIVER GANGA
SIGN THE PETITION FOR GANGA'S RIGHTS
CLICK WWW.GANGAACTION.ORG

CELEBRATING TOGETHER



*International Yoga Festival Delegates Celebrate
International Women's Day Before Returning Home*

The week-long annual International Yoga Festival at Parmarth Niketan came to a close on day eight. Before departing, as a symbol of their love, they celebrated the special occasion of International Women's Day by honouring Mother Ganga for the inspiration and rejuvenation She had provided them with during the course of their stay.

The morning began as the sun rose over the sacred Himalayas, as participants practiced Ganga Sadhana, led by yogacharya, **Laura Plumb**. As **Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji** explains, "Mother Ganga gives and gives with no hesitation, no discrimination, no vacation and no expectation. We must not only bathe in Her waters, but we must also take Her messages of love into our hearts and emulate these in our own lives."

Afterwards, participants enjoyed a day of yoga, prayer, meditation and learning. Many were treated to the compelling stories of Mother Ganga's arrival onto Earth to bring water to an arid valley, liberation to the sons of King Sagar and inspiration to all of our hearts, minds and souls.

Sadhvi Abhaji, the head of Parmarth Niketan's Yoga and Meditation Centre, shared the significance of Ganga's descent onto Earth: "The Mother Goddess came here, descended upon the Earth, by Her grace, to bring life and liberation. She is not merely a river, but truly the Goddess in the form of a life-giving river."

The participants of the International Yoga Festival were inspired by the sacred traditions and teachings. Upon hearing about the recent tragic floods in Uttarakhand, which took thousands of lives, they joined hands to plant memorial trees and pledged to continue to serve the vital cause of protecting

and preserving Mother Nature and Mother Earth wherever they go. The yogacharyas of the International Yoga Festival also offered the tree saplings they had received as their farewell present to be planted back in the flood-affected schools of Uttarakhand as part of Parmarth Niketan's and Ganga Action Parivar's collective mission, alongside many other NGOs, institutions and stakeholders, to work together to bring green rehabilitation to the Himalayan land and people. To learn more about these crucial efforts, click www.projecthope-india.org.

In the spirit of giving back to nature, the participants also offered green grass and jaggery (raw sugar) to Parmarth Niketan's cows, which had been supplying all with fresh organic milk, and honoured them as for the part they play in organic farming, the very foundation of traditional, healthy Himalayan life-styles.

Said **Sadhvi Bhagawatiji**, the President of the Divine Shakti Foundation, "Indian spiritual tradition teaches us to worship the Divine Feminine-Shakti in all Her forms, whether the form of the Mother Goddess Parvati or Durga or the form of the Mother River Ganga, or the form of Mother Earth and Mother Nature. Thus, on the occasion of International Women's Day, we cannot think of a better way to honour the divine feminine but by pledging to serve and preserve Mother Ganga, Mother Nature, Mother Earth and even Mother Cow."

With the river of love, devotion, peace and union flowing in their hearts, and commitments to bringing their yoga "off the mat," the participants of this year's International Yoga Festival departed to their respective home nations knowing that they will also always have a home at Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh.







PUJYA SWAMIJI'S MESSAGE ON THE FESTIVAL OF HOLI

Holi – The Holi-day to Let It All Go



Today is the sacred and beautiful day of Holi, a day celebrated across India with great joy, gaiety and festivity. There are many meanings and much significance attached to this day. For some, it is the festival of Springtime, the heralding of warm weather and bidding farewell to the winter. It is also seen as a festival of love, the return of fertility. The Puranas describe Holi as a celebration of virtue over vice. It is a time when we rejoice in the victory of pure, divine Prahlaad over his aunt Holika.

This year, I want to talk about another meaning, one relevant to all of us at this time. If we look at the actual semantic derivation of the word, we see it is made up of Ho and Li. There are two different meanings to this:

First, "Holi" means that which has happened, "Jo hoga ya, holi," that which has passed. So Holi is a time to acknowledge what has happened, what has passed and then to move on. It is the "moving on" holiday. On this day of Holi, we introspect and look back on the past year or many years, to see "kya ho-li" what has passed, what has happened. We see it, witness it, acknowledge it, take the lessons from it and then let it go. The most famous story of Holi is the one associated with the divine devotee Prahlaad and his aunt Holika who tried to burn him in the fire. However, rather than burning divine Prahlaad, evil Holika was burned in his place. Hence an important symbol of this holiday is to let the badness, the evilness (ours or others) be burned in the symbolic fire so that we can move on. Too frequently in life we hold onto grudges, anger, pain, jealousies for year after year. We are bound by our own guilt over acts of commission or acts of omission – that which we did and should not have, or that which we should have done and yet failed to do. We become stuck, chained, imprisoned by the deeds of years past – what others have done to us, what we have done to others. Holi is the time to say "Ho-li." It happened. Yes, it happened. However, today is a new day, a new time, a new year. We let the pains, grudges, angers, habits of the past be burned in the fire of our prayer so that we too may emerge from this day, colored not only with paint and powder, but colored with prayer. We must use this divine holiday as a way to just let it all go. That which has happened, is over. Ho-li. It has happened. And now,



today is a new day. We must not carry the chains of the past into the present.

Another meaning of the word Ho-li, is to look at it as two roots, Ho and Li. Ho means, as I mentioned above, that which has happened, already occurred. Li is a form of the verb "lena" ("liya") or "to take." What do we take on Holi? We take pledges, sankalps for the future. So, the past has happened (ho) and now we take (li) a pledge for the present and future. A new pledge for a new you. We cannot control the past. We can only control the present and future. That which we plant today will grow into the tree whose fruit we will eat tomorrow. If we are unhappy with the fruit of today, we look back upon the past, accept and acknowledge that we planted the seed of the harvest we are reaping today – sweet or sour – and pledge that we will plant seeds today of love, peace, forgiveness, compassion and unity. So, today on this day, we look at the past, with deep, deep honesty, we let it go with forgiveness, acceptance, and understanding and then we take a pledge for the present and future that we will move forth with newness, new light, new love, new vision of unity and peace.

As we burn the effigy of evil Holika, let us also burn all the grudges, pain and chains of the past. As pure, divine Prahlad emerged unscathed from the ashes, let our true selves – pure, holy, compassionate, loving, peaceful, generous, devoted – also emerge from the celebration.

If, amidst our joyous revelry, we can truly take this deep meaning of Holi into our heart, then purity, divinity, truth and goodness will again – as in the time of Prahlad and Holika – vanquish arrogance, greed, deception, ego and grudges, and we will all be able to move forward into a bright future.

With love and blessings always,
In the Service of God and Humanity

Swami Chidanand

Swami Chidanand Saraswati



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With the Land of the Birth of Yoga, Where Yoga is Celebrated Daily.



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