

Yoga does not discriminate, brings satisfaction: UN chief

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United Nations: Emphasising that yoga does not discriminate, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said he discovered the "simple sense of satisfaction" it brings when he tried his first "asana" during his visit to India.

In his message for the first International Day of Yoga to be observed on June 21, Ban recalled that it took him a while to gain his balance when he tried yoga for the first time in New Delhi during his visit in January but soon realised it can be done by anyone.

"And yoga does not discriminate; to varying degrees, all people can practise, regardless of their relative strength, age or ability. I discovered this for myself on trying to do my first asana, a tree pose suited to beginners. It took a moment for me to gain my balance, but once I did, I appreciated the simple sense of satisfaction that yoga can bring," the UN chief said in the message.

He said during his visit to India, he had the opportunity to practise yoga with one of his senior advisers. Ban's adviser on Myanmar, veteran Indian diplomat Vijay Nambiar had given the UN chief his first yoga lesson as a preparation for the International Day of Yoga.

The UN spokesperson had also tweeted a photo of Ban trying to imitate Nambiar while doing his first yoga asana.

The picture shows a smiling Ban, who had taken off his shoes, standing on one leg, his hands raised above his head and the other leg bent at the knee. Nambiar is also seen striking a similar pose.

"Although he happened to be a son of the country, I might equally have done the same with many other colleagues from different parts of the world. Yoga is an ancient discipline from a traditional setting that has grown in popularity to be enjoyed by practitioners in every region," Ban said.

He said Yoga offers a "simple, accessible and inclusive" means to promote physical and spiritual health and well-being.

In proclaiming June 21 as the International Day of Yoga, the UN General Assembly has recognised the "holistic benefits of this timeless practice and its inherent compatibility with the principles and values of the United Nations," Ban said.

"Yoga offers a simple, accessible and inclusive means to promote physical and spiritual health and well-being. It promotes respect for one's fellow human beings and for the planet we share," he said.

As the world gears up to host the first International Day of Yoga, Ban called on the nations to "see the benefits of this practice in terms of individual well-being, as well as our collective efforts to improve public health, promote peaceful relations and usher in a life of dignity for all."

The International Day of Yoga was a brainchild of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had mooted the idea in his maiden address to the General Assembly in September last year.