



# INDIA

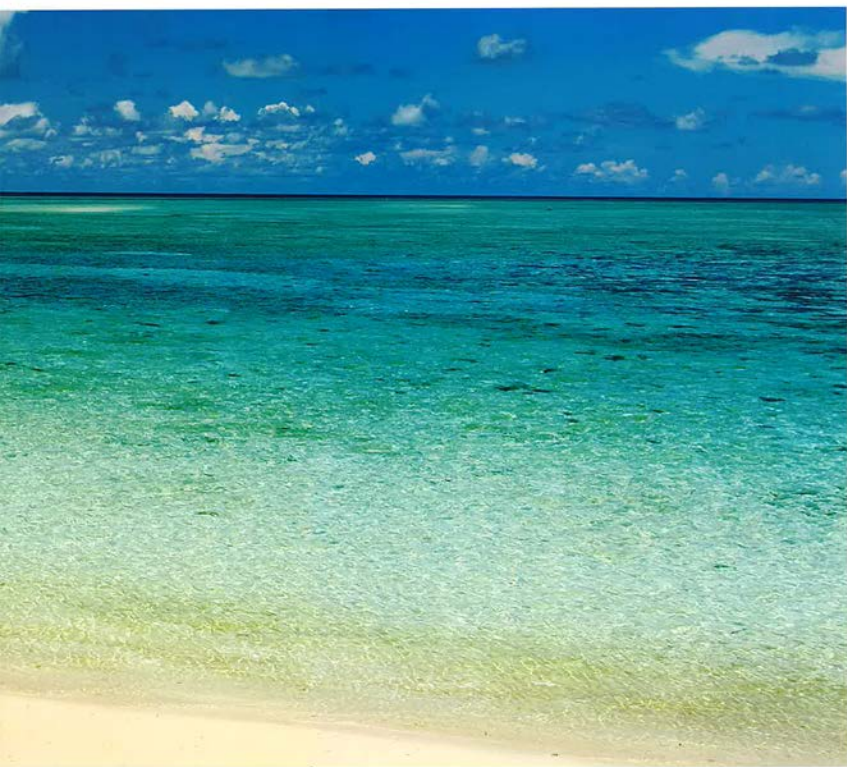
**TIMELESS SPLENDOUR**



**WELLNESS**



# **HARMONY OF MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT**



Yoga, meditation and ayurveda – streams of the great wellness river that flows through the country – are seeing a dramatic growth in popularity worldwide

## ■ PARVEEN CHOPRA

**T**he Indian tradition straddles both ends of the spectrum of human striving – spiritual perfection and material success. To achieve either, one needs a fit and healthy body, an agile mind and an equable temperament. Towards this end, Indian sages and gurus developed systems and codified them to pass down from generation to generation. Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation are the main streams of the mighty wellness river flowing in what is arguably the oldest living civilisation in the world.

The Vedas, fount of Indian civilisation and Hinduism, envision the well-being of the individual as well as of society as expressed in these oft-quoted lines:

*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah,*

*Sarve Santu Niramaya,*

*Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu,*

*Maa Kaschit Dukha Bhaag Bhavet*

(May all beings be happy,

May all be free of disease,

May people have the well-being of all in mind,

May nobody suffer in any way)

—*Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad 1.4.14*

Contemporary Indian gurus continue to underscore the importance of wellness. 'Health', according to yoga master B.K.S. Iyengar, "is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit. When one is free from physical disabilities and mental distractions, the gates of the soul open."

Over the past 50 years, the dramatic growth in the popularity of yoga and meditation worldwide has been focussed on the wellness aspect more than on the spiritual one. People, it seems, are ever willing to grasp at natural antidotes to the stress and strife of modern life. Ayurveda's revival and export to the West is part of the resurgence of traditional and complementary systems of medicine. Modern medicine or allopathy may have made enormous advances in diagnosis and treatment of diseases but still falls short of the World Health Organisation's definition of health not being a mere absence of disease. In contrast, ayurveda – literally, science of life and longevity – is concerned with curing ailments as well as preventing them. Furthermore, it strives to maintain and enhance health.

Ayurveda is part of the Atharva Veda, one of the four Vedas. Going back at least 5,000 years, ayurveda rivals Chinese medicine as the oldest surviving healthcare system. The current knowledge about ayurveda is

PREVIOUS PAGE: YOGA IN THE LAP OF NATURE  
RIGHT: SHIRODHARA, POPULARLY KNOWN AS THE  
THIRD-EYE TREATMENT, INVOLVES POURING OIL GENTLY  
OVER THE FOREHEAD TO RELAX THE NERVOUS SYSTEM









primarily drawn from three Sanskrit treatises about two millennia old: *Charaka Samhita*, *Susruta Samhita* and the lesser-known Vagbhata's *Ashanga Hridayam*, which is the bible of the Kerala school of ayurveda. Susruta is also famous for having performed some surgical procedures.

The starting point in ayurveda is the *tridosha* theory, conceptually similar to the four Hippocratic humours. The three *doshas* are: *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*, crudely translated as wind, bile and phlegm. An imbalance between the *doshas* manifests as disease. A contributing factor is *aam*, toxins caused by slackened digestive fire. Ayurvedic physicians, known as *vaidyas*, employ a two-pronged strategy to effect a cure: bolster digestion and remove toxins. Therapy is of two kinds: *shamana* (medicines that are mainly herb-based), and *shodhana* (cleansing and rejuvenation).

*Shodhana* is most popular in Kerala, a state on the southwest tip of the country. In the current revival of ayurveda, clinics and spa-like centres offering *panchakarma* (five detoxifying *kriyas* or procedures) and therapeutic massage (*abhyanga*) have mushroomed not only in Kerala but all over the country. The most renowned hospital of the Kerala school is the century old Arya Vaidya Sala in Kottakkal, 28 kilometres from Kozhikode airport. They have a hospital in Delhi, and many clinics and outlets elsewhere. A similar institution is Arya Vaidya Pharmacy in Coimbatore, in Tamil Nadu bordering Kerala. Monsoon is considered the best period for ayurvedic treatment in Kerala. A few ayurvedic hospitals, mainly government run, are also in operation, while some general hospitals – government and private – have added ayurveda wings. The government

has set up a separate department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Nature Cure, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) under the Ministry of Health.

Brihaspati Dev Triguna, 90, is the Grand Old Man of ayurveda. His clinic near Nizamuddin Railway Station in New Delhi treats a few hundred patients every day. He has no equal in pulse diagnosis, an almost forgotten science described poetically in an ayurveda verse thus: "Every *raga* finds resonance on the *veena*'s strings; and the nuances of every disease reverberate in the pulse." Triguna collaborated with TM (Transcendental Meditation) guru Maharshi Mahesh Yogi in promoting ayurveda abroad in the 1980s and 1990s. Like Triguna, the jet-setting Mumbai-based Dr Pankaj Naram also owes his success to pulse diagnosis.

Nature cure owes much of its popularity in India to Mahatma Gandhi, who used and promoted this no-medicine system that works only with the five elements found in nature – earth, water, air, fire and ether. The Mahatma had a naturopathic hospital named Nisargopachar Ashram set up in Uruli Kanchan village near Pune in Maharashtra.

Nature cure believes that there is only one disease – accumulation of morbid matter in the body. The treatment is also one – removing toxins through enema, hydrotherapy, sauna, fasting and so on. A sophisticated hospital dealing with this area is the Institute of Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences. Situated on the outskirts of Bangalore (now Bengaluru), it is also called Jindal's Farm after its founder, industrialist S.R. Jindal.

Wellness and healing have traditionally been part of life rather than things to be sought in a hospital, they are to be achieved through



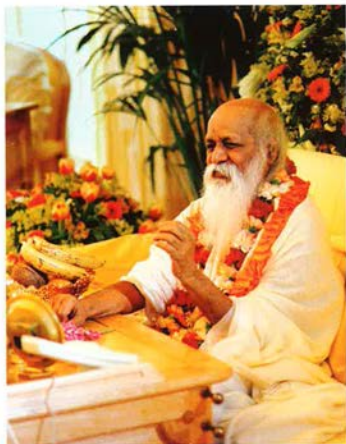
FAR LEFT: YOGA GURU BABA KAMDEV IS GAINING VISIBILITY THROUGH TELEVISION  
LEFT: SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR, FOUNDER OF THE ART OF LIVING, EMPHASISES A BREATHING-BASED TECHNIQUE, SUDARSHAN KRIYA  
BELOW: MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI INTRODUCED TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION. THE BEATLES WERE AMONG HIS DISCIPLES

*dinacharya* (daily regimen) and *ritucharya* (seasonal regimen). Herbal and home remedies are common — for instance, clove oil for toothache, ginger-honey paste for cough and cold — and some have now been found to have a scientific basis. Almost every Indian will tell you that food — the correct kind and in right quantity — can heal just as wrong food can cause disease.

Like holistic medicine, India has been a repository of meditation systems and techniques.

It is said that one particular treatise, *Vijyan Bhairav Tantra*, contains the alpha and omega of meditation. As transmitted by Lord Shiva to his consort, Devi or Parvati, the 112 techniques described in its *sutras* cover the subject exhaustively. Simply put, meditation is a way to quieten the chattering mind. One category of technique involves concentration on an outside object like the tip of a flame or inside oneself. The TM technique taught by Mahesh Yogi works with a monosyllabic sound called mantra. TM was practiced by hundreds of thousands of people around the world at the height of its popularity in the post-hippie period.

Extensive research on TM and other systems has established that deep rest during meditation dissolves deep-rooted stresses. Consequently, it provides relief in diseases such as insomnia, migraine and high blood pressure. Long-term benefits include more energy, enhanced creativity, improved work performance and harmonious relationships. Now it has been shown that serious conditions like coronary heart disease can be reversed with meditation, yoga, diet and lifestyle changes. From the hermitages of yore, meditation has now entered the hallowed portals of









FACING PAGE: ACTOR SHILPA SHETTY PROMOTES YOGA AS HER LIFESTYLE CHOICE. LEFT: WOMEN PRACTISE PADMASANA, THE ULTIMATE YOGA POSE

many reputed hospitals, for example, as part of treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Traditional Indian systems like meditation and yoga have lately found new followers among the youth thanks to gurus like Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. His Art of Living course has the breathing-based technique, *sudarshan kriya* at its core, and includes some meditation and yoga. Vipassana meditation, said to have been taught by Gautam Buddha himself, has spread through the efforts of S.N. Goenka, a householder based in Igatpuri, about 130 kilometre from Mumbai. Vipassana (meaning an insight into the nature of reality) is taught in 10-day residential courses, where students start with watching the breath for long hours before shifting to watching body sensations. Under Goenka's guidance, a 30-storey-high Global Vipassana Pagoda has been built on the outskirts of Mumbai. At the centre of this is an 8,000-capacity meditation hall.

More than meditation or *dhyana*, yoga has become a household word in the world. Students embrace this system because it delivers fitness and health through yogic postures or *asanas* and breathing exercises. Yoga (literally from the Sanskrit root, yoking or joining) is a much broader system as codified by sage Patanjali in a slim volume of aphorisms about two millennia ago. According to his Yoga Sutras, *yogash-chitta-vritti-nirodha* (yoga is the control of the modifications of the mind). And it is achieved through an eight-fold path: *yama* and *niyama* (dos and don'ts), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses), *dharana* (concentrating on an interior object), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (pure consciousness). Patanjali's eight-fold yoga is, in turn, one of the six systems of Indian orthodox philosophy.

Curiously, Patanjali's treatise has only one *sutra* on postures – *sthiram sukham asanam* (that which is stable and comfortable is an *asana*). So, where has the proliferation of *yogasanas* come from? Well, they are part of what is referred to as Hatha Yoga, which is of more recent vintage and was devised to prepare the body for the rigours of meditation.

Foremost among those responsible for popularising yoga is B.K.S. Iyengar. After learning *asana* practice from his guru T. Krishnamacharya in Mysore, Iyengar started teaching in 1937 from Pune. As his fame spread, he started travelling to Europe and America from the early 1950s. His *Light on Yoga* published in 1966 is considered the bible of yoga. Today hundreds of Iyengar Yoga centres dot the globe.

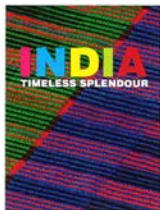
In the past few years, Baba Ramdev has stormed the world of yoga. Breaking the conventional mix he prescribes 80 percent *pranayama* and only 20 percent *asanas* as a cure-all. His yoga camps are attended by thousands of people. He first gained visibility through a programme telecast on a religious channel in India.

Today, a global brand, yoga, has in the past two decades especially, attracted millions of followers; this ancient concept of wellness has a tremendous international appeal and one that is rapidly gaining more and more momentum. The roots of yoga maybe Indian but its spread is universal. In America, it has been estimated that 98 percent of yoga teachers are of non-Indian origin and that over one million people practice yoga in the United Kingdom. The genesis of this globalisation can be traced back to the works of Plato and Aristotle which acknowledged yoga as a worthy Indian science. Bridges were further established with Alexander's arrival in India in 3 BCE (Before Common Era).

In a different era and at a completely different level, Indian film stars and assorted celebrities have also been successfully promoting yoga as a lifestyle choice. Through personal examples and commercially available DVDs and videos, stars like Rekha, Shilpa Shetty and Lara Dutta have been advocating a sort of home delivery of yoga encouraging people to be fit in mind, body and temple by harnessing diverse energies to attain physical and spiritual well being.

India, which attracted spiritual seekers earlier, is now welcoming visitors looking for wellness and putting their trust in the country's time-tested holistic therapies.

# CONTRIBUTORS



## FOREWORD



### Gopalkrishna Gandhi

After having spent over two decades in the Indian Administrative Service in Tamil Nadu and Delhi, Gopalkrishna Gandhi was asked to set up the Nehru Centre of the High Commission of India, London, becoming its first director. Later, he served as High Commissioner of India in South Africa, Lesotho and Sri Lanka, Secretary to the President of India, Ambassador to Norway and Iceland and Governor of West Bengal. He is the editor of five anthologies, and has written a novel, *Saranam (Refuge)* and most recently a play in verse, *Dara Shukoh*.

## LAND & PEOPLE



### Dilip Bobb

A well-known journalist, he has been in the profession for the last 35 years. He has written on a wide range of subjects for the India Today group and also edited a travel magazine, *India Today Travel Plus*. While with *India Today*, he has travelled to every part of the country as a senior reporter, covering events, people and places, coordinating innumerable special issues on India and its unique destinations. He was coordinating editor for a regular series of tourism specials brought out by the group. He was also the managing editor of the magazine till he left to take up a freelance career.

## RELIGION



### Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr.

Hyderabad-born Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr studied history at Loyola College and English Literature at the University of Madras in Chennai. He worked with *The Indian Express* in Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar and New Delhi. Author of *Mullah Omar and Robespierre - Essays in the Politics of Ideas*, he is interested in the history of ideas, especially the history of religions. He is of the view that religions in India reveal the cosmopolitan fabric of India's cultural life and traditions which have grown and changed over centuries.

## LITERATURE



### Namita Gokhale

A writer and publisher, her first novel, *Paro: Dreams of Passion* came out in 1984. Her other books include, *Gods, Graves and Grandmother, A Himalayan Love Story, Mountain Echoes, The Book of Shadows, The Book of Shiva, Shankuntala, The Play of Memory and The Mahabharata for Young Readers*. She has also edited the anthology *In Search of Sita* with Dr. Malashri Lal. She is a director at Yatra Books which publishes original and translated works in English, Hindi, Marathi and Urdu in collaboration with Penguin India. She is also founder and co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival.

## CINEMA



### Meghnad Desai

Emeritus Professor at the London School of Economics and a member of the House of Lords, he has written extensively on a wide range of subjects. A film buff, he has written Dilip Kumar's biography, *Nehru's Hero: Dilip Kumar in the Life of India*, which he describes as his 'greatest achievement'. Other books by him include *The Rediscovery of India, Rethinking Islamism: Ideology of the New Testor* and a novel *Dead On Time*. A former columnist for the British weekly *Tribune* and the Indian daily *Business Standard*, he currently writes for *The Indian Express* and *Financial Express*.

## CUISINE



### Rashmi Uday Singh

Gastronome extraordinaire, she has written 25 books on various aspects of food and eating out. A food columnist for *The Times of India*, her *Good Food Guide* is India's first city-restaurant guide. A contributing editor to the Asian edition of the *Miele Guide*, she has also been the chairperson of the Central Asia region of the London-based World's 50 Best Restaurant Academy. She has been on the jury for the World's Best Woman Chef contest in France and has consistently won the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in Paris, Frankfurt and Kuala Lumpur for her many publications.

## TEXTILES



### Rta Kapur Chishti

She is co-author and editor of the *Saris of India* volumes, based on the previously published *Saris of India* volumes on Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, as well as *Handcrafted Indian Textiles - Tradition and Beyond*. As a writer-translator she has written about craftsman and scripted for films and exhibitions. She has been actively involved with research and development of handspun handloom textiles and is the founder of the Sari School in Delhi which produces saris, organises workshops on the wonders of the sari, that fascinating unstitched garment.

## PHOTOS

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## FESTIVALS



### Jug Suraiya

Columnist and editorial consultant with *The Times of India*, he writes two long-running weekly columns, *Jugular Vein* and *Second Opinion*. As a travel writer he has contributed to several publications, both in India and abroad. In 1983, he became the first Asian to win the Pacific Asia Travel Association's Grand Award for travel writing. He is the author of several books including two collections of short stories, a collection of travel writing and a collection of essays. He is currently working on a book narrating his misadventures during his 44 years in journalism.

## WELLNESS



### Parveen Chopra

Founder-editor of *Life Positive*, India's first body-mind-spirit magazine published from New Delhi, he was later the Spirituality and Wellness Editor with *DNA*, a Mumbai daily. A pioneer of New Age journalism in India, he has interviewed many world famous spiritual masters and motivational gurus. In a journalistic career spanning 25 years, he has worked for magazines like *India Today* and contributed articles to specialised publications like *the Yoga Journal*. He is currently managing editor of *The South Asian Times*, a New York-based weekly paper catering to the Indian community.

## MUSIC



### S. Kalidas

Noted commentator on the Indian cultural scene, he has trained in classical music under eminent masters, including Amjad Ali Khan and Mallikarjun Mansur. He has been a senior editor with some leading newspapers and magazines including *India Today* and *The Times of India*. He has also lectured on Indian arts and aesthetics in India and abroad. He scripted and directed *Hai Akhtar*, a documentary film on the legendary diva Begum Akhtar in 1992. His publications include *Mallikarjun Mansur: Centenary Catalogue* and *Begum Akhtar: Love's Own Voice*.

## WILDLIFE



### Valmik Thapar

One of India's well-known wildlife conservationists, he has dedicated his life to the protection of India's diminishing tiger population. Author of 14 books and numerous articles on India's vast wildlife he has also produced and narrated documentaries on India's natural habitat for the BBC, Animal Planet, Discovery and National Geographic. His books include the well regarded *Land of the Tiger*, *Tiger Crisis*, *Danger in Tiger Paradise*, *Overpopulation* and most recently, *The Last Tiger*. He was appointed a member of the Tiger Task Force of 2005 by the Government of India.

## DANCE



### Leela Venkataraman

She has written on Indian classical dance for over three decades. A dance critic for *The Hindu (Delhi)* for about 25 years, her incisive weekly column has earned a wide readership. She is also a contributor to *Sruiti*, published from Chennai and a columnist for the Hyderabad dance journal *Nartanam*. Her book, *Tradition in Transition*, has run into several reprints. She is also the author of a monologue, *Step by Step Bharatanatyam* and has served as a member of the board of Kalakshetra, the world renowned Bharatanatyam school located in Adyar, Chennai.

## ARCHITECTURE



### Gautam Bhatia

A graduate in Fine Arts, he went on to get a Master's degree in architecture. A Delhi-based architect, he has received several awards for his drawings and buildings and has also written extensively on architecture. Besides a biography on Laurie Baker, he is the author of *Funjabi Baroque*, *Silent Spaces* and *Malaria Dreams*, a trilogy that focusses on the socio-cultural aspects of architecture. *Whitewash! An Unkind View of India & its Makers* was released in May 2008. He is currently working on *Below the Horizon - A City Underground*, a project of drawing and ideas.

## ART



### Gayatri Sinha

An art critic and curator based in New Delhi, her primary areas of enquiry are around structures of gender and iconography, media, economics and social history. She has edited *Voices of Change: 20 Indian Artists, Art and Visual Culture in India 1857-2007*, *Indian Art: An Overview, Expressions and Evocations: Contemporary Indian Women Artists of India*. She has curated in India and abroad including at the India Art Summit and the Korea International Art Fair, Newark Museum and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Fotografie Forum, Frankfurt and the National Museum, New Delhi.

## ECONOMY



### Nandan Nilekani

Chairperson of the Unique Identification Authority of India which aims to provide a unique identification number for all residents of India, he was recently co-chairman of the Board of Directors of Infosys Technologies Limited, a company he co-founded in 1981. In 2005, he received the Joseph Schumpeter Prize. *Time* magazine has listed him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. *Foreign Policy* magazine also listed him as one of the Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2010. He is author of *Imagining India*, a book which explores ideas on how India can forge ahead.