Relevance of International Yoga Day for India

Why in News?

Recently, the 10th International Yoga Day was celebrated globally.

What is yoga?

- Yoga is fundamentally a *spiritual practice* founded on a highly delicate science that seeks to achieve harmony between mind and body.
- **Origin** – Yoga is an ancient and complex practice, *rooted in Indian philosophy*.
- The term yoga means ***"coming together" or "joining"***.
- Thus, yoga entails the unification of our body, breath, mind, and awareness.
- **Literary sources** – Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Buddhist teachings, Jainism, Panini, Epics, Puranas and so on.
- **Development** - ***Maharishi Patanjali*** wrote complete and authoritative writings on yoga, grammar, and ayurveda to assist humanity purify their thoughts, speech, and bodies, respectively.
- The *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* are a ground-breaking literature that conveys the full discipline of yoga in simple yet profound sutra form.
- **Forms** – Although classical yoga also includes other elements, yoga is mainly practiced and emphasizes
    - Physical postures (*asanas*)
    - Breathing techniques (pranayama)
    - Meditation (dyana)
- There are many different yoga styles, ranging from gentle practices to physically demanding ones.
- **Physical health** – If we can manage our bodies, we can also control our breathing.
- If we can regulate our breathing, we can control our thoughts.
- **Improves mental health** - Yoga can help to awaken and enhance these skills.
- Peace of mind has an impact on everything.
- Thus, yoga aims to promote such overall improvement.

> *Yoga and two practices of Chinese origin—tai chi and qigong—are sometimes called "meditative movement" practices. All three practices include both meditative elements and physical ones.*

How has India benefited from International Yoga Day?

- **International recognition** - On December 11, 2014, the ***United Nations*** General Assembly declared *June 21 to be the International Day of Yoga*, thanks to India's efforts.

- The 10th International Day of Yoga was celebrated in 2024 under the theme "Yoga for Self and Society."
- **Global reach** – It has reached many nations including developed nations like USA, Canada, UK, and so on.
- Globally around 300 million people practice yoga regularly.
- **Enhance Indo-US ties** – In 2023, Indian Prime Minister inaugurated the yoga in New York on June 21.
- There are about 48,000 yoga studios in the US.
- **Spur yoga market** – Currently yoga market is valued at 107 billion USD.
- It includes yoga mat, yoga studios and mainly yoga instructors.
- It is growing by 9.4% annually.
- **Amplifies cultural diplomacy** – It has popularised Indian philosophies like *tolerance, harmony, nonviolence and honesty*.
- It is a *window to Indianism*.

*The importance of **cultural diplomacy** was first realised by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru along with Abul Kalam Azad had set up the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, as early as, in 1950 to showcase India's rich civilisational history.*

- **Boost India's global standing** – It helps India say not only as a country but *also a civilisation*.
- The *scientific and complex poses* of yoga shows the greatness of Indian practices even thousand of years ago to the world.
- **Enhance soft power diplomacy** – It has helped India *capture the minds and hearts of the entire world*.
- Most of India's 191 embassies and consulates worldwide organised yoga sessions to commemorate the day

Countries	Soft Power Diplomacy
Finland	Sauna diplomacy
China	Panda
France	Food
Brazil	Football

What lies ahead?

- Yoga tourism can be promoted further to boost India's economy.
- India needs to develop global standard infrastructure facilities like yoga centres and connectivity projects.
- Rethink to empower soft power diplomacy globally.
- India is bidding for 2036 Olympics and pushing for inclusion of six disciplines including Yoga.

References

1. Hindustan Times| 10th International Yoga Day Celebration
2. The Indian Express| Yoga in Ancient India

