

The Malaysian Yoga Society (MYS) is organising the third Malaysian International Yoga Competition (MIYC) on the 1st of May, 2013. Yoga practitioners from different parts of the world will be convening at Kandiah Hall, SJK(T) Vivekenanda, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, not for a competition based on envy or intention of winning, but for one based on inspiration, love, understanding, sharing and giving.

“With the competition, we hope to reach out unconditionally to children and adults alike with the powerful transforming energy of yoga and share our knowledge and love for yoga with everyone regardless of gender, age, race or religion. We see the competition as a platform to encourage people to take up yoga, learn it the correct way, encourage them to strive towards improvement of their personal best in yoga, celebrate their courage in attempting the postures, learn to share it with others and simply rejoice in doing so,” said Master Manisekaran, founder of Malaysian Yoga Society and Malaysian Association of Yoga Instructors.

“We also hope to raise funds for all our social welfare activities and projects for the underprivileged,” he added.

Yogacharya Navanesan, a full-time yoga instructor with MYS said that the students who took part in the competition were amazed to see so many varieties and different styles of yoga. They were impressed with the yoga community in Malaysia and amazed at the international participants and their unique standard of yoga.

Last year, MIYC was held at the same venue and MYS saw more than 500 participants in the children’s category and 100 over participants in the adult category. In the previous year, it was held for 2 days at the 1 Utama Shopping Centre in Petaling Jaya. Besides local school students and children from the homes, competitors came from as far as China, Iran, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore to rock the arena with their exemplary and extraordinary performance.

“This Yoga competition is not to compete with others. In truth, it’s an opportunity to show kindness, peacefulness, a healthy mind and a healthy body with dedicated practice, altruistic devotion towards the ancient art. It’s an opening for people from around the world to come together, encourage each other and share their wisdom and skills of Yoga to make a better individuals as well as society”, said Tilak Raj, a participant from India who was also the winner of the below 30-years-old age group.

In the previous years, the youngest participant was 4 years old and the oldest one was above 80 years of age. Age or body limitations are not barriers to yoga. Through the competition, children and teenagers learned to overcome stage fright and gained self-confidence and grit, while the older performers awed the world with their determination, strength and flexibility. Mr Kumaraswamy, who was 82 years old, proudly said that he doesn’t need to wear reading glasses anymore and has seen many ailments, including chronic knee problems, vanish into thin air in the past 20 years of doing yoga. Here was his chance of telling the world that such things are possible due to the therapeutic nature of yoga and old-age needn’t be associated with infirmities, senility or weakness of body and mind.

“Through this event, MYS hopes to encourage more people, especially the children, to take up yoga and gain all its benefits, which include better focus, increase in health and memory power, greater energy, relaxation, positive self-esteem and super confidence,” said Muralidaran, a senior yoga practitioner and instructor, who is part of the organising team.

He added that yoga is more than what people generally understand it to be. It's not a mere twisting and stretching of the body part. It's helps children be healthy bodily and is also a technique of tuning the mind for balance and centredness. MIYC, he said, is a well-known and prestigious competition that strives to uplift yoga to an international level on par with other international events.

With the yoga performances and talks, MYS hopes to create awareness about yoga and educate the public on the life-enriching properties of yoga. It has in recent times gained enormous popularity around the world and has been accepted as a mainstream form of exercise. But yoga in itself, cannot be confined to the narrow understanding of what an exercise means. The therapeutic values and healing effects of this ancient mind-body system is slowly being understood by the modern man. In fact, in some countries, yoga is being accepted as a complementary and alternative medicine practice. Other lesser known and not-so-popular techniques like shatkarma, or the cleansing techniques, and pranayama, or the breathing practices, have profound effect on the psychology a person and more and more modern day researches are being done on this.

“Though the competition is based on performance on stage, yoga does not refer to the postures or asanas alone. It is a series of practices that involves the systematic growth of a person in body, mind and emotions. A person, no matter how accomplished he is with the asanas, would not be a true practitioner unless and until he abides by the code of ethics, or yama and niyama.

“Furthermore, yoga is a miraculous healing practice that enables one to live a stress-free life of balance and fulfilment,” said Master Manisekaran.

The eight limbs of yoga as described by the sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras, begin with Yama and Niyama, which are the ethical codes or the disciplines one should abide by in order to accomplish his ultimate aim of doing yoga. These include truthfulness, sense moderation, self-study and self discipline. Only then one proceeds to doing the asanas in order to get the most benefit from it. The breathing practices complement the asanas in order to effect an individual's growth to higher stages in yoga like one-pointed concentration and the discovery of bliss within the self.

“Yoga helps one discover his self with an understanding that reaches farther into different dimensions within the self and helps practitioners understand and appreciate themselves more. With understanding comes appreciation and with appreciation comes love for this amazing art,” said Lee Yan, who is also part of the organising team.

MYIC is open to entries from a total of 8 different age categories comprising of:

- 1) Four categories for children aged 4 to 18 years old
- 2) Four categories for adults aged 19 years and above

Each participant is required to go on stage to perform individually, their 5 favourite yoga postures, to their best of ability, before a panel of qualified judges. Points will be awarded based on the execution of the 5 selected yoga postures, steadiness and alignment in the postures, flexibility and strength, degree of difficulty of the postures and facial expression — all within the 4-minute time allotted for each participant.

Last year, the majority of participation was from the 18 years and below category. This year, 500 hundred or more entries are anticipated from the 18 years and below category and around 200 from the adults' category. The participants will likely be familiar faces as well as new ones, including the underprivileged children from various parts of Malaysia. They were fully sponsored by MYS and had a wonderful time. They expressed their joy and appreciation to be a part of such a huge and inspiring gathering.

MIYC is sponsored by Mayi Yoga Academy and generous donations from the public.

Prizes include trophies, medals for 1st , 2nd and 3rd placements for each category and a certificate of participation for all those who go on stage. Mayi Yoga Academy is sponsoring the winner's prize for all categories in the form of Courses' Cash Vouchers worth more than RM19,000.00

Registration forms can be obtained online at: <http://www.malaysianyogasociety.org.my/> or at any of the Mayi Yoga Academy centres in Bangsar, Brickfields and Damansara Utama. Registration is RM 35 for adult and RM 15.00 for children's category below 18 years old and submission deadline for registration form are 25th of April 2013. For more information, call Persatuan Yoga Malaysia (MYS) at 03-22605322.

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