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Yoga founder develops mind-expanding program

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Known around the world for his humanity and yoga program, Sadhagura Jaggi Vasudev spoke at the Ohio Union Tuesday night.

Vasudev is the founder of the Isha Foundation and is in Columbus to speak about the seven-day Isha yoga program that will be offered. His program has been credited by the president of India and Mayor Michael Coleman for the impact it has had on the millions of lives in the rural villages of India.

The Isha Foundation is a non-profit organization with over 200,000 volunteers around the world. The organization promotes the seven-day program which is comprised of simple, seated postures along with focused breathing and meditation.

"It's an opportunity for a person to look at himself or herself like they have never looked at themselves before - it's a self exploration," Vasudev said.

The seven-day program works on four different levels: body, mind, emotion and energy.

"Unless all four levels are properly cultivated and are brought to a certain level of majority, being peaceful and joyful in your own nature does not happen," Vasudev said.

Vasudev said in many ways these four dimensions are misaligned in people and Isha yoga is a way of aligning them.

Vasudev has been practicing yoga since he was 12 and at one point he was overcome by a deep experience that changed everything about him and his perspective of life.

"It's just my humanity that is making me happy," Vasudev said.

Vasudev said when yoga first came to the United States a misunderstanding among people that yoga was a form of religion. Over time the benefits to the body made it a popular form of exercise. A physical aspect to the practice, but Isha yoga focuses on teaching more about the body, mind and energy of the practitioner.

"This is about you fundamentally taking control of your life, and how we do it is a scientific process," said Chocka Swamy, a volunteer for the Isha Foundation.

"Once you're operating from joy within you, then everything that you do you will do with your intelligence, said Swamy. "You're not acting out of desperation so your activities are not influenced by your needs to do something."

Yoga is beneficial because it is a way of self well-being. Yoga does not mean twisting your body into uncompromising positions but it is an inner sign to creating a comfortable climate within us Vasudev said.

"If you want to perform well as a good student, executive, a good family person or whatever, then the most important thing is that your inner climate is good. So being peaceful and joyful is very basic for every human being," said Vasudev. "For example, studying in a college, living in a family, working in the office is becoming stressful for people if the basic process of life - the simple process that everyone has to do one way or another, whatever little things they are doing is literally killing them simply because they are unable to maintain an inner climate. They are not able to be the way they want to be."

Vasudev said if students do not know how to be peaceful and happy by their own nature, their ability to grasp and function is not there because the body and the mind functions best when a person is peaceful and happy. When students are stressed or in some kind of distress, their bodies and minds do not function at their optimal levels.

Dianne Kadonaga, who also volunteers with the Isha Foundation, teaches yoga classes in Columbus and has been through the seven-day Isha yoga program.

"I teach a version of yoga and I take what I've learned from my Isha yoga experience and incorporate it into my classes," Kadonaga said.

The seven-day Isha yoga program will be July 28 through Aug. 3 at Veterans Memorial.

Additional info:

July 27:

*7 to 9 p.m.

*Veterans Memorial in the Wayne Brehm Room

*Free and open to all

*Includes presentation of Sadhguru explaining the science of inner engineering followed by a session in which participants' questions will be answered

July 28 - August 3:

*Veterans Memorial

*\$275 for the general public and \$225 for full-time students

*Contact the Isha Foundation at 614-783-7417 or 614-267-6937