

India Documents 900 Yoga Poses to Block Patents

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11 June 2010

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Photo: AP

A Hindu devotee performs yoga on the banks of the Ganges River, in Varanasi, India (File)

India has catalogued hundreds of yoga poses in an effort to block entrepreneurs and companies in other countries from getting yoga-related patents. Yoga is a centuries-old technique of exercising, breathing and meditating that has gained in popularity in recent years and grown into a huge industry.

The yoga postures or "asanas" have been documented by New Delhi's [Traditional Knowledge Digital Library](#) following a three-year effort by a team of yoga gurus, scholars and other experts.

After scrutinizing ancient Sanskrit texts they have made video recordings of nearly 900 poses, which are widely used by those teaching and practicing yoga. It aims to record at least 1,500 poses.

Yoga is regarded as a Hindu exercise that involves both philosophy and fitness. India says yoga has been practiced in the country for over 6000 years, and cannot be patented by others.

Their worry stems from hundreds of yoga-related patents and trademarks issued in recent years by Western countries where yoga is becoming increasingly popular.

[V.K. Gupta](#), who heads the [Traditional Knowledge Digital Library](#), says the ancient knowledge of yoga is "collective knowledge" and is

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available for use by everybody.

"It would be very inappropriate if some individuals or some companies try to appropriate this knowledge and prevent others from practice and use. We believe we will be able to do the authentic conversion of the ancient yoga texts and make it accessible to the international system so that all the piracy and other issues get prevented," **Gupta**.

The information compiled on yoga is being translated into English, French, Spanish, German and Japanese, and being sent to patent, copyright and trademark offices around the world.

Gupta says this will prevent yoga-related patents from being granted on the basis that they are original. Patents are given to those who invent or discover something new. Yoga has grown into an estimated \$250 billion industry.

Yoga is not the only ancient knowledge India is seeking to protect. The **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library** is also compiling a massive database of traditional medicines and ancient remedies that it wants to protect from being patented in other countries.

India says other countries are cooperating in the initiative. New Delhi has signed agreements with patent offices in the United States and Europe to help protect its traditional knowledge.

The government says in the past year more than one dozen patent applications with the European Patent Office, which concern Indian systems of medicine, have been withdrawn or set aside. This includes one for a skin cream based on melon extract and another for a medicine based on pistachios.

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