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Farah says the song-and-dance sequence is Bollywood's forte.

Bollywood ▼



For mind and body

Meet Jawaher al Fardan, wellness entrepreneur, yoga teacher and founder of the first fully-dedicated yoga studio owned by a Qatari

NIYAYOGA





The dancer's pose in yoga strengthens the legs, stretches the shoulders and chest, and is very energising.

Strength & flexibility through breathing

'Yoga is a moving meditation which teaches you how to slow down and be more in the present - qualities which are so important when we all live such busy lives'

YOGA is a 5,000-year-old form of exercise that focuses on strength, flexibility and breathing. While most modern workout fads come and go, Yoga has endured because it is more than just exercise. It constitutes the science of health and the philosophy of life. It touches a person's life at every level, be it physical, mental or spiritual and provides a body-and-mind workout that combines strengthening and stretching poses with deep breathing and meditation.

Yoga is not a widely popular form of fitness in the region and the start of Niya Yoga by Qatari entrepreneur Jawaher al Fardan could fuel the fitness revolution in Qatar. Niya (Arabic for intention) Yoga is the second fully dedicated yoga studio in the country. It is set to open in Qanat Quartier at The Pearl-

Qatar on December 8 and will offer 35 classes a week.

The classes will range from yoga basics for beginners, Slow Flow, Vinyasa - a faster flowing form of yoga, and Power Vinyasa for a more advanced version. They also offer a variety of meditation classes including meditation through Tibetan Singing Bowls.

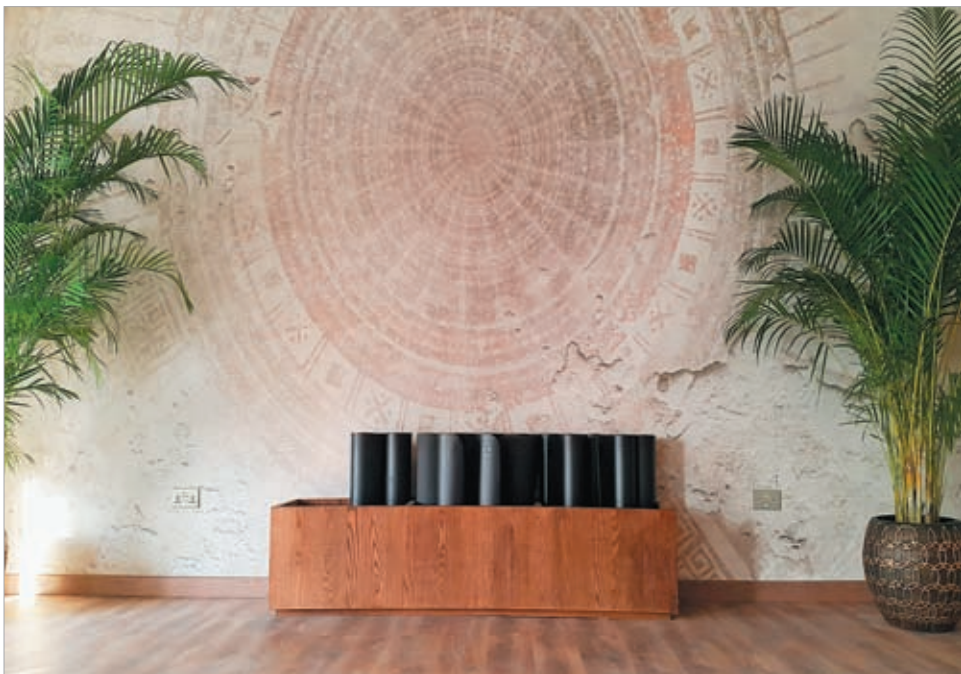
Qatar Tribune's Dipti Nair met up with wellness entrepreneur, yoga teacher and co-founder of Qatar's first fully vegan café - Evergreen Organics, **Jawaher al Fardan**, about how coming from one of the biggest business houses in the region, she found a passion for yoga. Excerpts:

Q. You hail from a business oriented family, how did you develop an interest in yoga?

A I've always been passionate about



Jawaher al Fardan



The interior of Niya Yoga has been designed to provide a peaceful, serene and green sanctuary where you can relax and feel at home.

physical activity be it running, weights, CrossFit or pilates. I got hooked on to yoga during my studies with Ashley Cummings, a renowned yoga teacher and founder of Agni Yoga LA. During this time, I began to experience what a deep and powerful system yoga was. I explored the various lineages in detail and saw how different styles work for different people at different times in their life. It was incredibly inspiring. At first I only felt the physical benefits - I became stronger, more agile and flexible. But as my practice grew more regular and increased, I began to notice the mental benefits as well. I became more open, more relaxed but also more focused. Yoga is a moving meditation which teaches you how to slow down and be more in the present - qualities which are so important when we all live such busy lives.

How has your family supported you in your yoga endeavours?

My family is incredibly encouraging and supportive, something I am always grateful for. I've always been taught the importance of giving back to society. Providing a meaningful service has been ingrained in me since a young age, and yoga is my service, my way of helping people connect with themselves and others.

Where did you train?

I'm fortunate to have trained with truly fantastic teachers in Los Angeles, India, and Bali. The courses I've done in these beautiful locations have had a huge impact on me and I've tried to capture some of this at Niya. We have reclaimed wood fittings, a hammock to relax in, trinkets from my travels and every room is plant-filled - the jungle vibes definitely go back to Bali. We are also excited to be hosting our own yoga teacher training courses from 2017.

Yoga essentially comes from the East. Can a person from the Middle East with its different culture understand the essence of yoga and practise yoga as part of life here?

Yoga can be what you want it to be. It's a physical practice centering around movement and breath, and it's also a philosophy system which teaches you to be a kinder, more giving version of yourself. Anyone can practise yoga in any manner that works for them, regardless of age, gender or nationality. There are no expectations, no judgments, no right or wrong way to integrate the practice into your life.

What can we expect from Niya Yoga?

You can expect a peaceful, plant-filled sanctuary, overlooking the ocean, where everyone is welcome to explore yoga. We offer over 35 classes per week, so whether you're

a beginner or advanced practitioner, you'll find a style that resonates with you. We have two bright, airy studio rooms for group classes, and a beautiful private room for one-to-ones and holistic therapies. From 2017, we'll host workshops, teacher-training courses, wellness weekends and retreats.

For a first timer, yoga can be intimidating, what realistic advice would you give to them?

Doing anything new can be intimidating, which is why we offer Yoga Basics classes at the studio for beginners. The poses, breathing and alignment are all broken down and the teacher will answer any questions you've been too embarrassed to ask in the past. Private sessions are a great way to start so you can feel comfortable with the postures before joining group classes. Most importantly, breathe, relax and have fun!

What do you love most about

teaching yoga?

When you teach yoga, you have to be totally present, no matter what's going on in your life. As a yoga teacher you're there to help people, and to do that you have to let go of whatever is going on in your life and totally focus on how you can best guide your students. For me, teaching is akin to meditation.

What is your favourite yoga pose?

Dancer's pose is probably my favourite. It's a deep backbend and heart opener that strengthens the legs, stretches the shoulders and chest, and gives you a real buzz. It's incredibly energising - like matcha tea for the soul.

How would you say that yoga has changed your life?

The positive experiences I've had doing yoga has set me on a path to share the practice and other holistic healing techniques with others. So yes, it has transformed my own personal journey and I hope it will do the same for others.

