

## Yoga Researches in New Millennium

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Yoga is a Sanskrit word derived from the word 'yoke', which means to unite. In its very philosophy, yoga serves to unite body and mind for holistic benefit of mankind. Worldwide, yoga attracts a lot of practitioners, healers, teachers and believers. Popularity seems to be on the rise. Though, India gave yoga to the world and for all its wonderful benefits; it is revered around the world, but the position of yoga, as a science and art in India could still be improved.

Scattered group of people in India practice for its benefits and many more are getting attracted to it. Still, yoga has a huge untapped potential that could be utilized to provide a low cost preventive care to people who do not have access to conventional medicine both in India and elsewhere. This is not to take away anything from the spectacular advances that modern medicine has seen in recent times. We continue to emphasize on the fact that yoga is not a substitute for modern medicine; it can compliment if used judiciously and under supervision.

William Broad, a New York based senior science writer in New York times has given an extensive review of yoga as a science in his latest book, The Science of Yoga. This comprehensively written book gives an overview of yoga from a balanced viewpoint. It also takes a critical view at yoga researches and potential claims made by practitioners and 'researchers' alike. I have had the opportunity to communicate with

William and tried to know his mind as a communicator to general public and found that he has a clear understanding of potential benefits that yoga offers and limited harms that could come if practice is done unsupervised.

Out of vast majority of people who practice or preach yoga, only a tiny fraction is engaged in doing meaningful researches on yoga. As a believer of yoga, I, as a person would be glad if more people take up challenge of objectively knowing the potential of yoga as a preventive or therapeutic modality. I have respect for people who think yoga is an exercise, but have little patience with those, who just consider it as an exercise. It seems more than what people think about it. Studies are demonstrating the same day by day. Around a decade back, when only a dozen of papers could be retrieved from PubMed, around 2000 can be seen at present. Yoga research is still in its infancy and we need much more. Diseased people at large, and to some extent scientific and physician community too like yoga. A friend of mine wrote a small letter to British Medical Journal, a decade ago. It was about incorporating cheap and cost effective methods such as yoga to look after health of poor people into mainstream medicine. The letter has been cited more than 80 times. It perhaps shows that such suggestions have an appeal in scientific community as well.

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