



YOGA - JOURNEY THROUGH THE SELF

Through his film, Yoga for Health & Global Harmony, filmmaker, art historian and photographer Benoy K Behl found that the ancient system has helped to restore a sense of balance and happiness in practitioners

One of the greatest challenges facing the medical world today, is mental health. The stress of modern life has been taking a great toll on the peace and inner happiness of the human beings. Modern life and the pressure of material acquisitions have taken away the sense of deep harmony and values which once pervaded the lives of men and women in society. As Sujata Chatterji and I travelled across the world to 10 countries for shooting our film Yoga for Health & Global Harmony, we saw how this ancient system has helped to restore a sense of balance and happiness in practitioners. Truly, in a world being torn by mental ill-health and an all-pervasive sense of dissatisfaction as well as disorientation, yoga appears today to be the one workable solution.

In an interview with Dr BN Gangadhar, director of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, Bengaluru, he says, "Yoga research at NIMHANS has shown very impressive results with respect to the biological changes in the brain and other organs of the body. It should be conducive for better emotional recovery as well as mental health promotion. Yoga can help repair the brain. There is an inbuilt system by which the brain could dynamically keep getting 'repaired' and one of the chemicals required for this is called the 'brain derived neurotropic factor'. We have demonstrated that the practice of yoga produced an increase in its level. So it means that the brain started developing some inherent strength to repair itself."

Esther Seegers, Teachers Training Course Student, Sivananda Yoga Farm, USA, explains, "I have seen the chaos among teenagers, especially the substance abuse in high schools. They need help. They have no idea about whom they should turn to and they are basically numbing their feelings and their true nature because they feel that they are not able to be who they are. And yes, there is not enough compassion or it's just that they need help at the end of the day. It is yoga that can give us that."

Yoga researcher and expert, Dr Sat Bir Khalsa from Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, USA, believes that yoga has a relevance. "It provides skills and outcomes that society currently doesn't have. These are essentially behavioural skills that allow us to manage our minds, bodies and emotions in very effective ways," shares he.

In another interview, Landon Gallant, sportsman and Teachers Training Course Student, Sivananda Yoga Farm, USA, says, "I played soccer for 28 years and the last half of that time was very aggressive. The physical nature of game called for a certain body type. So as I have slowly evolved away from that, I have completely surrendered to the practice of yoga. I was able to transform myself from an animal warrior to a spiritual warrior. This allows your ego to soften and become like water. Your life, your heart will open up and so will your mind."
