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## **Yoga and the Tsunami**

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Those individuals who are familiar with Yoga or have some experience practicing or teaching it were not surprised to hear that within a week after the “Asian Tsunami”, as it is now being referred to, struck in parts of Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, classes were set up to teach Yoga to those who had survived.

This effort was not a widespread one, taking place in only a few places in India, but it was wide enough to get some minor coverage by the international press.

In one radio report, the reporter naively asked the teacher whether the chanting that the learners were doing was in not same way religious or would lead them into some sort of cult like situation.

Perhaps the reporter was just showing her own ignorance and attachment to her own secular background and suspicion of any religious or spiritual discipline that people may learn, follow or practice.

Certainly, the practice of Yoga is not one that should or would lead an individual into anything that requires their submission or blind following of another human being or set of teachings and values.

In saying that, it does not mean that Yoga has not been used by some people in such a way in the past, or perhaps now and in the future it will be used in such a way.

Yoga does not ask that we blindly submit but that we accept along with other things and in that experience create wisdom and compassion so that we are free to love and understand ourselves and others better.

Yoga should be something that is making us more focused and energized and freeing us from mental and physical limitations and constraints so we are better able to reach our own potential as both human and spiritual beings.

Certainly, those who have experienced and lived through the trauma of the Tsunami hitting their country and community and have had to live through and deal with the dreadful aftermath of it in addition to their own personal situation need a way to let go, see things more clearly and get on with things.

How Yoga is being taught to and used by these survivors is not much different then how it is used by most of the people who have to come to it in their lifetime without having had this horrible experience of the tsunami but perhaps having experienced their private and personal traumas.

They may be under a severe stress and anxiety that has been allowed to build up over the years and is sustained and made stronger by its own unwholesome momentum.

Such a tendency may be made worse by their habits and the current state of the body and mind.

In observing the follow up stories, experiences and perceptions of the earthquake and tsunami victims and survivors, we now hear reports of people from all countries who now view the sea in a different way.

They now know its savagery and are afraid of it.

This writer has always loved the beach and sea, but a few years had a scary experience where he almost drowned within 5 meters of the shore because of the power of the sea, waves and currents.

Since then, there has been much less interest on his part to go into the water while at the beach, but knowing the closeness of man to the many elements of nature at the beach is something that can rarely be experienced elsewhere and continues to draw him to the beach from time to time.

Perhaps Yoga will not alleviate the fear of those who experienced the tsunami when it hit, but its practice will assist them in dealing with that fear and other elements of life and their own being that create states of consciousness that are uncomfortable to experience.

That is what Yoga does.

It makes us more mindful, concentrated and energetic, so the resources of our being, the mental, the emotional, the physical, the behavioral and the spiritual are all at a higher level and used more mindfully.

It can assist someone who has survived an earthquake and tsunami in Asia or someone suffering from stress and anxiety, or some kind of emotional or physically debilitating state in the west.

Its application and the results of that application are the same regardless of who learns and practices it and what is the state or situation that has led them to it.

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