



## Science Interrupted, Yoga Revealed

*Yoga saved Nivedita Joshi and gave her a life*

**RIGHT FROM HER CHILDHOOD**, Nivedita had a probing mind. She had planned a career in science and wanted to be a microbiologist. But little did she know that destiny had charted a completely different course of life for her.

Nivedita got the first shock of her life at the age of 15. “It was *Janmashtami* and I was performing *puja* near my home. Suddenly I realised that I was unable to get up. My mom had to literally lift me up and the 2-minute way home took me half an hour,” she recounts. After

that was a 12-year-long saga of pain, painkillers and of course, immense tenacity. “Throughout those years I was torn between a yet-to-be-diagnosed aching ailment and a series of wrong treatments,” says Nivedita. On one hand, pain had left her in a wheelchair, and on the other,



steroids kept piling pounds on her. But Nivedita did not give up her studies.

Finally, after her MSc Part I in Microbiology, an MRI revealed that she had a slipped disc. This was accompanied by scoliosis (a medical condition where a person’s spine is curved from side to side), cervical spondylosis and two broken vertebrae. While doctors had almost written her

off, Nivedita battled on. “I would do 15 days of strenuous physiotherapy which would allow me to write for two and a half hours for my MSc Part II exams.”

But beyond a point, this strong-willed woman too resigned herself to fate. It was then that her father, BJP leader Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, suggested she take up yoga. She visited the BKS Iyengar institute in Pune and

learned yoga from the Yoga Guru (and *Prevention* advisor) himself. “Guruji came like God to me and gave me a new lease of life. He made me do postures (standing twisting, forward and back bending, full-arm balance) which I couldn’t believe I would ever be able to do.”

After a year of rigorous training, Nivedita not only returned to normal life, but also lost 20 kilos. Though initially she was not comfortable taking up yoga as her full-time occupation, she finally did so and started an Iyengar yoga institute in Delhi. “It was my *gurudakshina*,” she says. “If you can’t cure, you can endure, *guruji* would say. This is what yoga gave me. The power to endure,” says Nivedita. Yoga taught her never to lose hope. “From the very beginning I was determined not to give up. But yoga has made me a lot more positive.” ♦

—*Saswati Sarkar*

### NIVEDITA’S YOGA WISDOM

- Sleep early and wake up early. Eat home-made food.
- Complete your dinner between 8.00-8.30 at night.
- Try to maintain good health, as per the Indian definition of health—social, emotional and physical health.
- Do 35-40 minutes of *asanas* and *pranayams* every day. It will keep you fit.
- Learn to accept and fight back failures. Yoga gives you the mind-body balance required for it.
- Care and share. If you impart positive energy, you will get the same in return.
- Learn to forgive; not for the other person but for yourself. It will make you happy.
- Don’t lose faith in the power of the divine.

CREDIT