

EXERCISING— WITH YOGA



AN article in a recent issue of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel carried the title, "Yoga Bridges Religion." Throughout the article the reader was led to believe that Yoga intertwines quite comfortably with any religion—neither adding to it nor changing it in any way. For instance, the article mentioned that for Nina Johnson Yoga broadened rather than replaced her Baptist faith. Anne Kuhry said that Yoga was also in tune with her Roman Catholic faith. Could this be the truth? Can one practice Yoga and still hold true to one's Christianity? What the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel neglected to mention was that Yoga is far more than just a system of health consciousness and meditation—it's pure religion. From its earliest beginnings to its ultimate purpose, Yoga has had one object in mind: to convert people to a pagan religious system.

What lies behind the practice that kindergarten children are now being taught in many schools, YMCA's are placing on their list of programs and public TV offers on its daily schedule?

The term **YOGA** comes from the Sanskrit, **YUJ** meaning **YOKE**. The ultimate goal is to be yoked to the godhead. Yoga is a step into the Hindu religion. The aim of Yoga is to realize the "absolute Brahman", "supreme being" or "absolute god." Brahman is known to man through his spirit god, **Shiva**. Yoga teaches that man's goal is to unite with

this god and thus achieve the yoke or yoga. Swami Vishnudevananda, author of *"The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga"*, says, "The aim of Yoga is to achieve truth wherein the individual soul identifies itself with the supreme soul of God." Yoga claims one's spiritual energy or prana is held in bondage by the evil body. Through a series of special postures, breathing exercises and positions, one releases this energy and begins the uniting process. These postures prepare the mind for entering an altered state of consciousness. This is done by allowing the goddess, **Shakti**, a coiled serpent lying at the base of the spine, to travel up through the seven **chakras** or energy points to finally unite with Shiva who resides in the middle of the forehead. One is to arouse Shakti (also called **Kundalini**) that she might travel through the imaginary spinal tube to be yoked with Shiva and thus find true happiness and fulfillment. Brad Scott relates in his book, *"Embraced by the Darkness"*, "I often felt the warm thrill of the kundalini—the life force that brings enlightenment—rising up my spine, intensifying as it reached my stomach center and then my heart center, expanding my consciousness, empowering and delighting me. And then when I mentally pushed it upward toward the crown of my head, I felt a few times as though I had merged with an all-encompassing light." #5 p37

There are four forms of Yoga: **Karma Yoga** (spiritual union through right conduct), **Bhakti Yoga** (union with the absolute by devotion to a guru), **Jnana Yoga** (access to god through knowledge), and **Raja Yoga** (god-realization through mental control).

Raja Yoga includes **Hatha Yoga** which is perhaps the most popular because of its television exposure. Hatha Yoga is divided into eight stages: 1) body perfection or discipline, 2) self-purification, 3) bodily posture for energy release, 4) breath control, 5) stilling of the mind and control of the senses, 6) concentration, 7) meditation, and 8) union with the god, Shiva. A mantra syllable like "**om**"

is often used during this meditation. The exercise includes the lotus or crossed-leg position and the cobra or snake position.

All forms of Yoga take the student through the same basic steps. The first step helps the student gain control of the conscious body through simple

"The Hindu system of Yoga may seem at first a gentle form of physical exercise, but the positions practiced in Yoga, called asanas, are part of a complex discipline incorporating relaxation, breathing techniques, diet and meditation; the followers ultimate aim is liberation from reincarnation and union with the divine."

from *"Mysteries of the Unknown Powers of Healing"*
by Time-Life Books

meditation and exercise. This step seems to be rather innocent to the unsuspecting public. The second step teaches the student to gain control over the unconscious mind. Gifted students in this step are said to learn control over their blood circulation, breathing and even heartbeat. It has been documented that some go into trances for several weeks without food. The third step teaches the student to gain control over nature. This can take several years of study under a master teacher or lama. Here the student learns to produce energy in the form of heat. They are said to melt ice merely through the power of concentration. The fourth and final step of Yoga gives the student mastery over the secret arts.

Here one learns control over the dark secrets such as levitation.

Looking carefully at these four steps, one can begin to see the logical progression from the innocent exercising in front of the television into the occult art of black magic. What began as a harmless recreation ended at the doorstep of Satan. The Christian would be well advised not to be deceived as so many unsuspecting individuals already have. Exercise is both beneficial and necessary and there are countless types of exercise that can be very beneficial for us. But we must stay clear of any exercise that puts us in the position of exposing our soul to a false religion such as Yoga.

MAN SPEAKS

Respond to the following comment by Christian author Johanna Michaelson in her book *"Like Lambs to the Slaughter: Your Child and the Occult"*. #17

"As John Weldon and Clifford Wilson comment in their excellent research manual "Occult Shock and Psychic Resources" 'Yoga is really pure occultism, as any number of occult texts prove...The numerous dangers of occultism are evident from many studies.'"

Respond to this quotation from a lecture by Christian author Dr. Suresh Chander Varma, former Yoga teacher and son of a Hindu guru.

"The students in the Yoga Center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee ask whether I can still practice Yoga while I am a Christian. My answer is 'NO.'"

GOD SPEAKS

Read Galatians 5:1. How does this speak to the idea of 'yoking'? _____

Read Colossians 2:8. Can Yoga be viewed as just "an innocent set of exercises?" _____

Read Psalm 94:11 and 139:1-4. Can one ever eventually gain complete control over one's mind? _____

Read Psalm 48:9. Why do Christians meditate? _____

WE SPEAK

Is Yoga the only exercise program available to us? If not, what are some other suggestions? Have you ever heard a Hatha Yoga teacher refer to exercises as a religion? Why or why not? Is it acceptable for a Christian to practice Yoga if fully aware of its connection with a false religion? Why should the Christian be concerned about caring for the physical body? See 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.