

CHRISTIAN YOGA: Rooted in Hindu Occultism (Part 1)

By Chris Lawson

Dear reader, the following article has been written in order to convey information about the unbiblical practice of Christian Yoga. Sadly, many professing Christians in the church are too undiscerning to know any better. Even Hindu's recognize that "Christian Yoga is still Hindu".

This article is also written with heartfelt grief and concern for those whom I have lovingly warned about the dangers of yoga, but who have rejected biblical counsel, pastoral exhortation, brotherly advice, testimony of destroyed lives, written warnings from yogi's of the dangers involved with yoga, etc. This past year I have received several emails from people whose lives have become dismantled due to yoga practice. Others, thinking they know better, have laughed at me and said that I don't know what I am talking about. Some have even gone so far as to ignorantly state that *hatha yoga* is just "exercise" and cannot harm anybody.

Although this article is in two parts, it is not meant to be a full length biblical critique on Christian yoga. Rather, it is meant to serve as a wake up call and warning to all who profess to be Christian—and yet find themselves "Stretching out in Worship" through yogic poses (*asanas*) and breath *control* techniques (*pranayama*). If any professing Christian can still justify doing yoga after reading this and the forthcoming articles, they might want to think twice about which Jesus they worship. The Jesus of the Bible does not and will never endorse any kind of yoga. Yoga, in any way, shape or form, has the ability to corrupt the mind and undo a Christian's faith. It has as its goal the conversion of individuals to an occult, pantheistic world view. As we shall see, Christian Yoga, like all yoga, is part of the occult based Hindu religion. Relabeling yoga for undiscerning westerners doesn't change the facts. Yoga is yoga!

FORGET THE FACTS, JUST DO IT

The number of people today, including Christians, that are involved with yoga is absolutely astonishing. Yoga, once considered by the western world to be a Hindu spiritual practice for attaining of occult enlightenment (*Self-Realization*), has now been thoroughly integrated into the western world—and into compromised churches. In fact, in many churches today, to proclaim about yoga what it really is - *an eastern occult practice rooted in paganism* - is tantamount to committing linguistic suicide. Calling yoga by its true colours and telling people what it is really designed for is simply not "politically correct" anymore. It seems that people no longer value how a common dictionary defines yoga. Furthermore, defining terms, by definition and in context, is even considered "unloving" because people get offended when they are told the truth. The western standard for right and wrong, even in many churches, has become, "if it looks good and feels spiritual, just do it." This mentality has gone so far off the scale in some camps that people are willing, when presented with irrefutable factual evidence of what yoga is, does, and can lead to, say "never mind the warnings from occult literature, never mind the destroyed lives, never mind the physical, mental, psychological and spiritual damage, we want our yoga."

CHRISTIAN YOGA MINISTRIES?

Even more daunting than the documented warnings and hazards of yoga is the fact that many Christians are teaching “Christian Yoga”. It seems that relabeling yoga as “Yoga for Christians” has given people the green light to bow down and “Do yoga for Yahweh”. One wonders though which Jesus these people have come to “worship.” A Jesus who allows Christians to integrate pagan occultism into Christian worship is not the Jesus of Scripture. “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Cor. 11:4). People all over the place are buying into yoga through “Christian Yoga ministries”. The following is a sample listing of some of these “ministries”. “Christian Yoga Exercise”, “Stretched Out In Worship”, “Yahweh Yoga”, “Holy Yoga”, “Body Prayer”, “Christ-Centered Yoga”, “Son Light Yoga”, “New Day Yoga”, “Yoga From a Christian Perspective”, “Bringing the Light of Christ to the Practice of Yoga”, “Trinity Yoga”, “Yoga for all of Humanity”, “Yoga Devotion”, “Prayer of the Breath and Body”, “Grounded in Yoga”, “Be Still Yoga”, etc. The following is from the Holy Yoga website:

Holy Yoga was created to introduce physical worship of the Lord through prayer, breath work and movement to all seekers and believers in Jesus Christ, regardless of denomination...The purpose of the ministry is to introduce people to yoga as a form of collective (mind, body and spirit) worship...as well as certifying teachers through the registered yoga school (RYS) of Holy Yoga...to facilitate Christ-centered classes in their individual churches, studios, and community spaces....Our sole purpose at Holy yoga is to introduce people to a unique and powerful yoga experience centered on our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To deepen the experience, Holy Yoga classes are practiced to contemporary motivational Christian music...Yoga is NOT a religion; it is a practice of mind and body control. When led by scripture, prayer and worship poses; it is a practice that encourages patience and cultivates an understanding of what God can manifest in our physical and emotional bodies. [1]

Along with this “Christian Yoga” ministry description is a long list of Scripture verses that are being conveniently misused to justify a “Christian Yoga Ministry”.

FILLED WITH EASTERN WAYS

Like the house of Jacob (Jacob’s descendents-Israel) in Isaiah’s day (Isaiah 2:6-9), the people rebelled against God and God had to discipline them. It is not that God no longer loved the people, but the people of Judah became like the pagan nations surrounding them. God’s people became as superstitious as the people in the East – they were following the practices of the Assyrian Empire. The people were also engaging in divination like the Philistines. Isaiah cried out to God,

“For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are filled with eastern ways; they are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of foreigners” (Isaiah 2:6).

So too today, compromising Christians have turned Eastward and are doing what [Hindu holy men do—yoga! Compromised Christians are putting into practice yogic philosophy through breath control techniques (*pranayama*) and ancient [and even trendy

new] yogic postures (asanas). Many are even doing the “*Sūrya namaskāra (Salute to the Sun)*”. According to Wikipedia,

...the Sun Salutation is a 20th century yogic invention of Bhawanrao Pantpritinidhi, the Rajah of Aundh... [2]

....Proponents who use *Sūrya namaskāra* as part of the modern yoga tradition prefer to perform it at sunrise, which the orthodox consider to be the most 'spiritually favourable' time of the day. [3]

Regarding the abomination of saluting the sun and giving reverence to the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18-25) , the prophet Ezekiel addressed this issue in his own day (Ezek. 8). The priests of Israel, instead of crying out to God for mercy on behalf of the idolatrous people, were themselves bowing down to the sun in the East. The priests had their own backs turned on God (in God’s temple) and they were bowing in submission and worship to the sun. This was and still is today an expression of contempt for God and is a direct violation of God’s command in Deuteronomy. 4:19. Ezekiel 8:15-18 has this to say:

Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.”

THEORY OF THE EAST MARRIED TO PRACTICE OF THE WEST

Trendy, fashionable and spiritual as it may seem, Christian Yoga is an unscriptural hybrid of Christianity mixed with Hinduism. Christian Yoga is the ultimate oxymoron? Even non-Christians, including a Hindu Yoga professor has boldly expressed that yoga cannot be integrated into Christianity, except through the deceptive practice of relabeling Hinduism. Mixing yoga with Christianity is nothing less than artful subterfuge—*“deception by artifice or stratagem in order to conceal, escape, or evade.”* [4] This is exactly what is going on in the church, in the name of Christ, and through professing Christians.

Most Christians seem clueless to the fact that over the last 100 or so years, many eastern gurus have been bringing “various philosophies” to the west. Many who have come to the west *“professing to achieve a knowledge of God by spiritual ecstasy, direct intuition, or special individual revelation.”* [5] Theosophy, which is the Mother of western occultism has done just this. Modern movements and cults following Hindu and Buddhist teachings have done this too. The clever handling of eastern philosophy has been put into western terminology and passed off to the masses. Eastern spirituality has come west and the west has bought into it hook, line and sinker. This has been planned out through nothing less than the genius of Satan, the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4).

Yogi Ramacharaka, a western convert to eastern occultism and a full-blown promoter of Hindu occult philosophy wrote about how this would be accomplished. In 1903, Yogi Ramacharaka wrote his Hindu Yogi occult primer, titled *The Hindu-Yogi Science of Breath*. Ramacharaka stated how “*The theory of the East, wedded to the practice of the West, will produce worthy offspring.*” [6] Ramacharaka’s words are in direct reference to the yogic philosophy breath control, also called “*The Science of Breath*”, being embraced by Westerners. Ramacharaka states:

Whole schools of Oriental [Eastern] Philosophy have been founded upon this science [Yogic breath control] , and this knowledge when grasped by the Western races, and by them put to the practical use which is their strong point, will work wonders among them. The theory of the East, wedded to the practice of the West, will produce worthy offspring...This work will take up the Yogi "Science of Breath" [pranayama – yogic breath control], which includes not only all that is known to the Western physiologist and hygienist, but the occult side of the subject as well. It not only points out the way to physical health along the lines of what Western scientists have termed "deep breathing," etc., but also goes into the less known phases of the subject, and shows how the Hindu Yogi controls his body, increasing his mental capacity, and develops the spiritual side of his nature by the "Science of Breath". [occultism] [7]

Sounds like Westerners embracing yoga are merely duped pawns in a cosmic chess game.

YOGA RENAMED IS STILL HINDU

The philosophy behind yoga and its postures are inseparable. On a Blog hosted by Lighthouse Trails Research Project, we found a link to an article written in a *Hinduism Today* publication. [8] Professor Subhas Tiwari, (a Hindu professor at the Hindu University of America) has a few things to say about “Christian Yoga”. In an article titled, *Yoga Renamed is Still Hindu*, Professor Subhas Tiwari stated:

The simple, immutable fact is that yoga originated from the Vedic or Hindu culture. Its techniques were not adopted by Hinduism, but originated from it...Efforts to separate yoga from its spiritual center reveal ignorance of the goal of yoga...If this attempt to co-opt yoga into their (Christians) own tradition continues, in several decades of incessantly spinning the untruth as truth through re-labelings such as "Christian yoga," who will know that yoga is--or was--part of Hindu culture? [9]

Seeing that many Christians and non-Christians have been involved with yoga with no prior research into what yoga is or where it originates from, we note the following definitions from a number of resources.

YOGA DEFINED by Miriam-Websters Online Dictionary

Yoga: Sanskrit, literally, yoking, from yunakti he yokes; akin to Latin jungere to join -- more at YOKE

1 capitalized: a Hindu theistic philosophy teaching the suppression of all activity of body, mind, and will in order that the self may realize its

distinction from them and attain liberation

2: a system of exercises for attaining bodily or mental control and well-being. yo·gic /-gik/ adjective, often capitalized. [10]

YOGA DEFINED by Wikipedia

The word "yoga" derives from the Sanskrit root *yuj* ("to yoke"); which is cognate to modern English "yoke", "*jugal*" and "*jugum*" in Latin. All derive from the Proto-Indo-European root **yeug* - meaning "to join" or "unite". It is generally translated as "union of the individual atma, loosely translated to mean soul, with *Paramatma*, the universal soul." [11]

YOGA DEFINED by Swami Nirmalananda Giri

In answering the question 'What is Yoga?', Swami Nirmalananda Giri states:

"Yoga" is a Sanskrit word that comes from the root-word *yuj* that means "to join." Yoga, then, is both union and the means to union. What do we join through yoga? Two eternal beings: God, the Infinite Being, and the individual spirit that is finite being. In essence they are one, and according to yogic philosophy all spirits originally dwelt in consciousness (sic) of that oneness. [12]

YOGA DEFINED by Experience Festival

So that there is no confusion about what yoga is, we have included here more definitions on yoga. At www.experiencefestival.com/, a monstrous archive of New Age, occult and mysticism oriented literature; yoga is defined this way:

Yoga: The ancient Yogis recognised long ago that in order to accomplish the highest stage of yoga, which is the realisation of the self, or God consciousness, a healthy physical body is essential. [This is part of the occult philosophy of yogic breathing] For when we are sick, our attention is seldom free enough to contemplate the larger reality, or to muster the energy for practice...The masters of yoga also teach us that personal growth is possible only when we fully accept our embodiment and when we truly understand that the body is not merely skin and bones but a finely balanced system of energies...The roots of Yoga can be traced back roughly 5,000 years to the Indus Valley civilization, where seals depicting people performing asanas (yoga postures) were used in trade along the river...The word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word "*Yuj*" meaning to yoke, join or unite. It is the union of all aspects of an individual: body, mind and soul. Hence, Yoga reunites all opposites - mind and body, stillness and movement, masculine and feminine, sun and moon - in order to bring reconciliation between them...Yoga is one of the six branches in Indian philosophy and is referred to throughout the Vedas, the ancient scriptures of India. There is a legend that says that the knowledge of Yoga was first offered by Lord Shiva to his wife Parvati and from there passed on to the world...According to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the ultimate aim of Yoga is to reach "Kaivalya" (freedom). This is the experience of one's innermost being or "soul" (the Purusa). When this level of awareness is achieved, one becomes free of the chains of cause and effect (Karma) which bound us to continual reincarnation. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is a 2200 year old

classical piece of Yoga Philosophy. [13]

The writers of this definition of yoga then go on to state the eight disciplines of yoga:

Hear, Patanjali describe 8 disciplines of yoga which must be practiced and refined in order to perceive the true self- the ultimate goal of Yoga: 1) *Yama* - Universal ethics: Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing. 2) *Niyama* - Principles of self conduct: purity, contentment, study of self, surrender. 3) *Asana* - practice of the postures. 4) *Pranayama* - Breath control. 5) *Pratyahara* - withdrawal and control of the senses. 6) *Dharana* - concentration. 7) *Dhyana* - meditation. 8) *Samadhi* - higher consciousness.” [13]

YOGA DEFINED by Yoga Journal Website

What is Yoga Journal’s Definition of Yoga? Cyndi Lee at the Yoga Journal website answers the question ‘What is Yoga?’:

“The word yoga, from the Sanskrit word *yuj* means to yoke or bind and is often interpreted as "union" or a method of discipline. A male who practices yoga is called a *yogi*, a female practitioner, a *yogini*....The Indian sage Patanjali is believed to have collated the practice of yoga into the Yoga Sutra an estimated 2,000 years ago. The Sutra is a collection of 195 statements that serves as a philosophical guidebook for most of the yoga that is practiced today. It also outlines eight limbs of yoga: the *yamas* (restraints), *niyamas* (observances), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breathing), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyani* (meditation), and *samadhi* (absorption). As we explore these eight limbs, we begin by refining our behavior in the outer world, and then we focus inwardly until we reach *samadhi* (liberation, enlightenment).” [14]

YOGA DEFINED by the Index of Cults and New Religions

Yoga: “Exercises (physical, mental or spiritual) based on Eastern metaphysical assumptions designed to aid in enlightenment or self-realization. Goals sometimes include altered states of consciousness or uniting the practitioner with the impersonal pantheistic God. Types of Yoga include: *Karma Yoga* (spiritual union through correct conduct), *Bhakti Yoga* (spiritual union through devotion to a Guru), *Juana Yoga* (spiritual union through hidden knowledge), *Raja Yoga* (spiritual union through mental control), *Hatha Yoga* (spiritual union through body control/meditation), *Kundalini Yoga* (spiritual union through focusing inner energy) and *Tantra Yoga* (spiritual union through sexual practices). Yoga philosophy is based on the concept of reincarnation and is drawn from the Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures.” [15]

YOGA DEFINED by Divine Life Society’s Sri Swami Sivananda

The following is the Publisher’s Note found on Sri Swami Sivananda booklet, *Yoga for the West*: [16]

Publishers' Note: The word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit root "*Yuj*" which means "to join." Yoga is the Science that teaches us the method of uniting the individual soul with the Supreme Soul, of merging the individual soul will in the Cosmic Will. Yoga is a perfect, practical system of self-culture. It

is the discipline of the mind, senses and the physical body. It helps the student to attain perfect concentration of the mind, ethical perfection, moral excellence and spiritual calmness. Real Yoga is the attainment of the highest divine knowledge through conscious communion with God. Yoga transmutes the unregenerate nature of the student and raises him to the highest state of Divine Glory and Splendour. It bestows on him increased energy, vitality, vigour, longevity and a high standard of health. It brings a message of hope to the forlorn, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak, and knowledge to the ignorant. It kills all sorts of pain, misery and tribulation. By the practice of Yoga one can turn out efficient work within a short space of time and attain full success in every walk of life. [16]

Simply put, why would any Christian want to be a part of this, unless they have been seriously misled? Jesus and His Word should be more than enough.

NATIONAL PASTORS CONVENTION: YOGA WORKSHOP AND MORE

It is very clear in the Old Testament that God explained to Moses how He, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is to be worshipped – *and how His people are not to worship Him!* Moses was very clearly commanded not to worship like the surrounding nations. The Israelites were to have no other gods before the LORD. They were not to worship the Eternal God in the way that the pagan nations worshipped their false gods. This same principle applies in the New Testament. Christians are not to integrate pagan method of worship into the worship of the true God – Jesus Christ.

Although old news by now, the 2004 National Pastors Conference of a yoga workshop. A yoga workshop at a National Christian Pastors Convention? At the current growth rate of apostasy, this trendy yoga fad and other eastern methods of spirituality will continue to influence the Church for the worse. Compromised evangelical leaders, Contemplative Spiritual Formation movement (Contemplative Spirituality) leaders, and Emerging Church leaders are promoting other methods of eastern spirituality as well—but they label it as “Christian”. Those Christian leaders who endorse these things and, or, do not warn people about the dangers of yoga and eastern mysticism and occultism are doing an incredible disservice to the body of Christ. Christian pastors and church leaders ought to be warning people that yoga is not Christian but has simply been keenly re-processed for the Western world.

PASTORS JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON

To make things worse, many leaders in the Church today will not speak out against yoga, contemplative “centering -prayer”, Christian “mantras”, and other experience-based methodology. These so-called spiritual methods being employed by Christians are also used by occultists in order to have a “*direct experience*” with the “*Divine*”. Instead, the bandwagon approach to justifying these practices has come into full play. “*Pastor ‘so-and-so’ endorses it, so it must be OK!*” Here is a sample of the mentality people are using to justify doing yoga, etc. “*Yes, but Rick Warren taught at the National Pastors Convention and they had yoga classes offered at the conference, in the morning, the day Pastor Rick spoke. It must be OK to do yoga if they have it at the National Pastors Convention! Leaders endorse it so why can't they do it.*”

As previously mentioned, the 2004 National Pastors Convention that offered a workshop on yoga is old news. But the Christian yoga craze and Contemplative Spirituality has virtually exploded across denominational borders. Interestingly, at the

same 2004 National Pastors Convention, contemplative spiritual director Ruth Haley Barton gave a talk on “The Art and Practice of Discernment”. Somehow the leaders [See list of leaders at endnote 17] at this “National Pastors Convention” did not discern that yoga is historically rooted in paganism. Furthermore, yoga can convert people into full blown occultists. Where in the New Testament, and Old Testament for that matter, do we see “Holy Yoga”, “Body Prayer”, “Trinity Yoga”, “Yahweh Yoga”, “Christian “mantras”, “Centering Prayer”, etc? Jesus taught His disciples not to pray like the heathen. Jesus said:

“...But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...” (Matt.6:7-9).

Why did Pastor Rick Warren and many other speakers at the National Pastors Convention 2004 not protest the “Prayer Labyrinth”, “Contemplative Morning Prayer Exercises”, and the “Sustainable Life Forum: Stretching and Yoga” sessions that were offered? [18] The 2007 National Pastors Convention will have workshops promoting the controversial, occult based Enneagram. [19]

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

These and many other such things are being promoted through Christian book conventions, publishing houses, conference and retreat centres, bookstores, churches and more. Those that speak against the promotion, sales, endorsements, and distribution of materials that mix paganism with Christianity are labelled as divisive, unloving, etc. Worshipping Jehovah by mixing paganism, yoga and Eastern contemplative methods with Christianity is an outright abomination to God. Relabeling mysticism and paganism for Christians, in the name of “emerging” and “contemplative” worship is horrific. Second Kings 17:10-12 speaks about how Israel provoked the LORD to anger when they served idols. God very clearly said to them, *“You shall not do this thing.”* Is it any different when Christians do worshipful Hindu poses [*asanas*] and get “stretched out in worship” with “Yahweh Yoga”?

God spoke very clearly to Jeremiah the prophet, *“The Lord says, ‘Do not learn the way of the nations...”* (Jer.10:1). Deuteronomy 12:2-4 speaks of the nations that worshipped other gods. Their altars and images were to be destroyed. *“You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things.”* And further on in Deuteronomy 18:9 *“When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.”*

CHRISTIAN YOGA IS NOT CHRISTIAN AT ALL

Christian Yoga is a lie! Those who are caught up in it are deceiving and being deceived. The ultimate goal of yoga is “Self-realization” – to realize ones own divinity. This is the lie Satan gave to Eve:

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5).

Christianizing Yoga is pure chicanery. This is exactly what Christian Yoga is. It is

“*deception by artful subterfuge or sophistry*”. Christian Yoga is a form of satanic deception masquerading as “a deeper form of Christian spirituality.” These things ought not to be so. We urge:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” (2 Thess. 2:3)

Yoga’s goal is “Self-exaltation”, “Realizing” ones own “divinity” and “yoking with the Universal Consciousness”. These things have nothing to do with Jesus Christ and everything to do with Satan. Christian yogi’s it is time to repent!

Notes:

1. <http://www.hollyogaministries.org/About.html>
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surya_Namaskara
3. Ibid.
4. <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/subterfuge>
5. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theosophy>
6. Yogi Ramacharaka, *The Hindu-Yogi Science of Breath*, London, England: W. & J. Mackay & CG. Ltd., Chatam, 1903, p. 9.
7. Ibid.
8. <http://www.fromthelighthouse.com/blog/index.php?cat=31>
9. http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/2006/1-3/09_opinion.shtml
10. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoga#Etymology>
11. <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/yoga>
12. http://www.atmajyoti.org/med_what_is_yoga.asp
13. <http://www.experiencefestival.com/yoga>
14. http://www.yogajournal.com/newtoyoga/820_1.cfm
15. <http://www.sullivan-county.com/id3/exposer.htm#Y>
16. <http://www.exoticindia.com/book/details/IDG087/>
17. <http://www.psitapesales.com/pages/sandiego2004.html>
18. <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/nationalpastorsconv2004.htm>
19. <http://www.zondervan.com/Cultures/en-US/NPC/NationalConvention/ccc.htm>