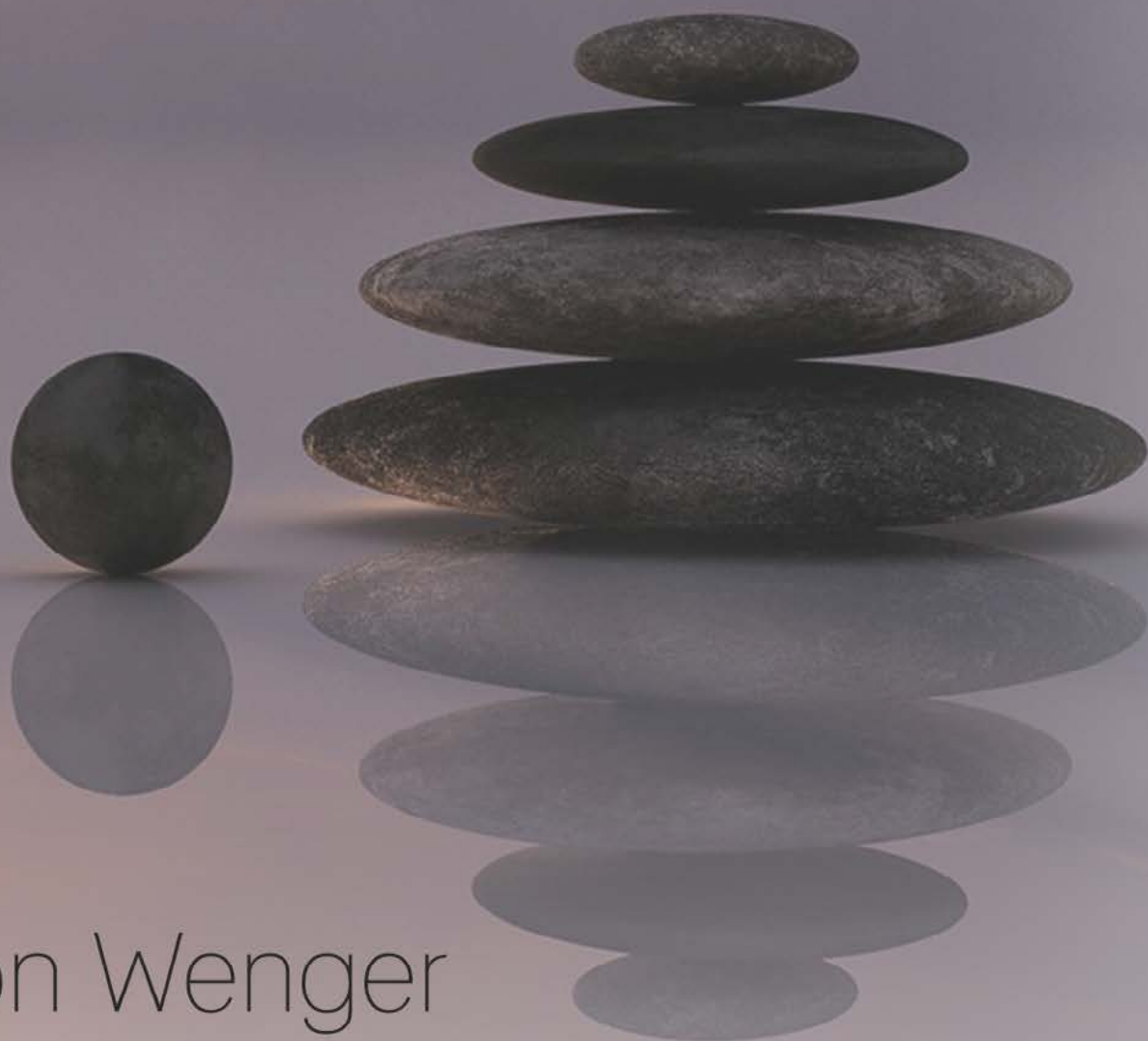


May a Christian Practice

YOGA

Exercises?



Jason Wenger

What is Yoga?



We hear much about Yoga in the world today. What is Yoga? Yoga is a Sanskrit word meaning to “yoke,” and its aim is to yoke with the Hindu concept of God, by “the enlightenment of realizing that atman, the individual soul, is identical to Brahman, the universal soul—in other words, that we are God.”¹ How would they go about yoking, or converting a “Christian” nation to Hinduism? By disguising their religion as science, health, higher states of consciousness— anything but religion.

The world’s largest missionary organization is not Christian, but the Hindu “Vishva Hindu Parishad” (VHP). Already in 1979, a speaker at the VHP-sponsored second “World Congress on Hinduism”, declared to 60,000 delegates, “Our Mission in the West has been crowned with fantastic success. Hinduism is becoming the dominant world religion and the end of Christianity has come near.”²

The Bible teaches there is only one way to salvation, and that is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Hinduism, which originated in India and dates from about 1500 BC. teaches there are many gods and three major paths to salvation, none of which include Jesus Christ. The Bible says in 1 John 2:22 “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”

Yoga is a system of exercises (physical, mental, and spiritual) practiced to promote control of the mind and body. According to the Encarta Encyclopedia, Yoga is one of the six classic systems of Hindu philosophy developed around the 2nd century B.C. by Indian scholar Patañjali who derived his doctrine from the oldest of the classic systems of Hindu philosophy, Sâmkhya. Encarta also says that hatha (physical) yoga, which is popular in the west, is the basic system because it is

concerned with developing those bodily controls from which all else follows.

While yoga was developed as a part of the Hindu religion, its exercises are also practiced by Buddhists and other eastern religions and have even gained acceptance among some Christians. The physical exercises are even recommended by many U.S. doctors as a way to stay physically fit and reduce stress.

Debra Lardie, in the book *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age*, describes Yoga this way: “A Hindu physical and mental discipline. Hinduism teaches that the self is divine and distinct from the activity associated with the body, mind, and will. Through yoga’s system of exercises, people can train their consciousness to control the body and mind, thereby attaining a higher state of awareness...”³ Through the regular practice of yoga, people can achieve perfect spiritual insight, tranquillity, and well-being, experiencing freedom from ignorance, suffering, and ultimately achieving rebirth. ⁴ Hindu reincarnation)

This dictionary also describes several types of yoga that exist: Jnana yoga refers both to the path of discrimination and wisdom, whereas bhakti yoga refers to the path of love and devotion to a personal god. Kama yoga refers to the path of selfless action, whereas hatha yoga, which is popular in the West, stresses physical control over the body by adopting different postures or positions. Japa yoga requires the repetition of mantras, or sacred sounds, to enable a person to concentrate without being interrupted by external distractions. Kriya yoga enables devotees to channel cosmic energy to their souls in order to establish a harmonious union of the mind, body, and spirit, releasing innate miraculous powers. Kundalini yoga emphasizes opening psychic energy centers called chakras supposedly located up and down the spinal column. This is thought to animate the Kundalini (serpent power), a cosmic force coiled at the base of the spine.

Author Debra Lardie states: “Some in the West incorrectly think of yoga as mere breathing and relaxation exercises to develop, stretch, and strengthen the body’s muscles, extend and align the spinal column, and enhance cardiovascular circulation. The practice of yoga serves as a gateway to Eastern mysticism and

occult. Certain postures, such as the lotus position, are taken to activate the psychic energy centers. And specific breathing exercises are practiced to infuse the soul with cosmic energy floating in the air. A guru (spiritual teacher) might have students gaze at a single object, such as a candle, to develop and focus concentration. The guru might have them chant a mantra to clear their minds and become one with the object in front of them. The goal is to achieve increasingly higher meditative states until reaching oneness with the cosmic consciousness. This state of being is characterized by a blank stare in which the devotee is receptive to esoteric wisdom from the Universal Mind.”⁶

After reading the above definitions of yoga, Christians should recognize that yoga exercises are in opposition to the Word of God, for several reasons. Yoga is practiced:

1. To train the consciousness to control the mind and body. But the Bible says in Romans 6:13b “but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” 2 Corinthians 10:5 “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” The Bible teaches that we need to yield our mind and body to God and not open it to the control of other spirit entities.

2. To achieve perfect spiritual insight. But the Bible says in Psalms 119:104, 130 “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way... The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.” We should seek spiritual insight only from God and His Word.

3. To achieve physical rebirth (Hindu reincarnation). But the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men *once* to die, but after this the judgment.” The Bible teaches that we have only one life to live on this earth.

4. To activate psychic energy centers. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:11 “And

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” If yoga is capable of activating psychic power, it is obviously a work of darkness with which we should have no fellowship.

5. To clear (or empty) the mind. In Philippians 4:8 we are told to “*Think on these things.*” God does not want us to empty our minds, but to think and meditate on His Word. Meditation, as is taught in the Bible is thinking on things of God, this is the opposite of Hindu meditation, which is *not* thinking anything, so a demon can gain control of the mind.

While there are many good exercises that were scientifically formulated for various health benefits, yoga was developed by Hindus primarily as a means to obtain spiritual enlightenment. Some of the physical exercises of yoga are very similar to other exercises, however yoga is practiced (according to yoga textbooks) for the purpose of mental and spiritual growth. Yoga also includes the repetition of mantras, and breathing exercises to clear the mind of normal thought patterns, which opens the mind to demons.

-Jason Wenger

*“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
Abstain from all appearance of evil.”*

1 Ths. 5:21-22

1. Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*, p.221, Harvest House Publishers

2. Ibid, p.219

3. Taken from *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age* p. 288 © Copyright 00 by Debra Lardie (Dan Lioy and Paul Ingram - contributing editors). Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

6. Ibid