

YOGA

In my recent article on 'The Hare Krishnas' located on <http://www.takeheed.info/pdf/December-2014/Hare-Krishnas.pdf> the subjects of **Reincarnation** and **YOGA** were both touched on.

In this article I want to take a more in-depth look at **YOGA** as this is a subject that many professing Christians have differing views on.

As with other recent articles I want to include the text of an early 'Take Heed' tract which in this case was titled "**Should you go to Yoga?**"

Should you go to Yoga?

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee"
Isaiah 26:3

INTRODUCTION

As a teenager I grew up through the rock 'n roll era and witnessed the influence many pop stars exerted on such things as fashion and philosophy. Most of the early 'greats' hailed from America – people like Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry. However in the early 1960's there emerged from Britain probably the most influential of all fashion and philosophical trendsetting rock groups – The Beatles. Most of us who lived through those times will, I believe, never forget the impact made by their unique hair styles and the famous jackets with no collars.

As the years passed The Beatles came under many influences and one of the most famous was Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who founded Transcendental Meditation. The publicity which surrounded this venture into Eastern Mysticism did much to popularise and gain acceptance for the Eastern religious practice of **YOGA**.

It is important at the outset for people to realise that **YOGA** is essentially religious and not physical or as '**A Book of Beliefs**' published by Lion Publishing Co. states (p 147) "**YOGA is a Hindu word which signifies a spiritual discipline by which men may reach union with God**". Bearing this in mind we shall endeavour to answer the question "**Should you go to YOGA?**"

THE 'GOD' of YOGA

As stated in the introduction, the goal of **YOGA** is to bring a person into union with '**God**'. It is however essential at this stage to understand the '**God**' the person practising **YOGA** is seeking to be brought into union with. This '**God**' is not the personal God of the bible, but is instead the pantheistic '**God**' of Hinduism which teaches that '**God is everything and everything is God**'. This means that everything and everyone is part of the 'Great Divine' or Brahman. When we understand this we realise that **YOGA** is seeking to point people to a '**false God**'. In the Word of God we find the position of the one true God, Jehovah, stated plainly "**I am the Lord thy god... Thou shalt have no other gods before me**" (Exodus 20:2-3); "**I am he... before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me**" (Isaiah 43:10).

THE 'WAY' of YOGA

In the introduction **YOGA** was described as a '**spiritual discipline**' and this discipline has two elements when one considers two of the most popular forms of **YOGA**. One element relates to the physical and involves diet, fasting, breathing techniques (**PRANAYAMA**) and postures (**ASANAS**). These constitute the main aspects of **Hatha Yoga**. The other element relates to control of the mind where through meditation or chanting the practitioner seeks to free his soul from the bondage of his mind and body and to prepare himself for spiritual enlightenment or supposed true self-realisation – that he is in fact part of the 'Impersonal Absolute' (**BRAHMAN**). This element is the core of **Raja Yoga**. **Hatha Yoga** is seen as leading to **Raja Yoga** and there are other forms of **YOGA** which are rungs on the **YOGA** ladder leading to union with '**God**'.

YOGA promotes a '**false way**' to a '**false God**'. In the Word of God we find that union with God is only possible when the barrier to that union has been dealt with. We find this barrier to be our sins. Speaking of God the prophet Habakkuk wrote "**Thou are of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity**" (Habakkuk 1:13). However, God Himself dealt with that barrier when God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth and sacrificed Himself on the Cross of Calvary to pay the penalty for the sins of others. The Apostle Peter wrote concerning Jesus "**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree**" (1st Peter 2:24). The writer to the Hebrews, speaking of Jesus said "**When he had by himself purged our sins**" (Hebrews 1:3).

Knowing He would remove the sin barrier on the Cross at Calvary, Jesus was able to say to His disciples "**I am THE WAY, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me**" (John 14:6). Access to or reunion with God is only possible by personal faith in the finished sacrificial work of Jesus on the Cross.

Entrance into the presence of God is by **“the blood of Jesus”** (Hebrews 10:19). Union with God for the Christian does not mean recognising oneself as part of God (SELF-REALISATION) but means becoming a member of God’s family by **adoption**. To those in Rome who had trusted Christ alone for salvation the apostle Paul wrote **“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of ADOPTION whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God”** (Romans 8:15-16).

In Proverbs 16:25 we read **“There is A WAY that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the WAYS of death”**. Those who seek union with ‘God’ by practising **YOGA** are following **“the WAYS of death”**.

THE ‘PEACE’ of YOGA

YOGA classes are often advertised as offering people the opportunity to get rid of the stresses and strains of everyday living, a chance to escape from the cares of the material world. On page 47 of ‘**Yoga Today**’ (Volume 12: No. 4 August 1987) an advert for ‘**Pranayama Yoga: The Art of Relaxation**’ stated **“it will induce the mind to calmness, eliminating tension and help one to face the demands of each day without fatigue of mind or body”**. **YOGA** classes are often held in leisure centres, schools and even on occasions in church halls. Some doctors have also been known to recommend **YOGA** to patients coming to them because they feel they *‘just can’t cope’* or *‘just can’t go on’*. **PEACE** is the promise given to those who engage in **YOGA**.

The ultimate in this sphere is to reach a state of ‘**Nirvana**’ – a state of ‘**passionless peace**’ as it is defined in the late Mr. Jim McCormick’s booklet *‘What every Christian should know about Hinduism and Yoga’* (p 11). Certainly man desires **peace** in his inner conscience and to cope with his outward circumstances, but what is true **peace**? The Word of God records the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when He said **“These things have I spoken unto you, that IN ME ye might have PEACE”** (John 16:33). The prophet Jeremiah spoke of people saying **“Peace, peace when there is no peace”** (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). **PEACE** outside of Christ is no **peace** at all. **YOGA** promises a ‘**false peace**’. To those who possess faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He says **“PEACE I leave with you (peace with God), my PEACE I give unto YOU (the peace of God)”** (John 14:27). **PEACE** with God comes at conversion through saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Therefore being justified by faith we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1). That brings **PEACE** to our inner conscience. The **PEACE** of God is ours through prayer **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the PEACE of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”**. That brings **PEACE** to us in the midst of our outward circumstances.

When we have cares, we are not to look to pagan religious practices and philosophies for respite, but we are to be, as the Apostle Peter puts it, **“Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you”** (1st Peter 5:7). True and lasting **PEACE** is found alone in the One who said **“Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28) and we learn from the Word of God that He **“made PEACE through the blood of his cross”** (Colossians 1:20). Trust Him and His finished work and know and experience true and lasting **PEACE**.

CONCLUSION

YOGA is RELIGIOUS. Hinduism, Buddhism and other groups such as **The Hare Krishnas** and those who engage in **Transcendental Meditation** all recognise **YOGA** to be essential to their religious philosophies. These religions and groups stand in direct opposition to the **“gospel of the grace of God”** (Acts 20:24).

One quote from **‘Yoga Today’** (Volume 12: No. 4 August 1987) will illustrate how the religious philosophy surrounding **YOGA** contradicts what the Word of God reveals about God and His relationship to the world. In an article entitled **‘Spirit of the Upanishads’** (‘The Upanishads’ are Hindu holy books) on page 18 we read **‘The Upanishads speak of God... maintaining that such a being is formless, all pervasive and transcendent, OF WHICH THE SOUL OR THE SPIRIT OF MAN IS A PART... To negate this universal vision and make God a tribal deity is to use religion as a divisive and obscurant force, rather than a uniting and illuminating influence in life, which its Latin root *re-ligare* (reunite) literally means. Religion becomes an opiate when it sets apart God from the world and makes him a means of escape from suffering that is part of life’**.

Having read this I was drawn to the words of the Apostle Paul when he wrote **“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”** (Galatians 4:4-5). Paul posed the question **“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”** and immediately answered it with these words **“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 7:24-25). Paul **“determined not to know anything... save Jesus Christ and him crucified”** (1st Corinthians 2:2). That was why Paul could affirm concerning Jesus **“He is our PEACE”** (Ephesians 2:14). Is Jesus your **PEACE**?

Should you go to **YOGA**? The Word of God says ‘no’. **“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them”** (Ephesians 5:11). **YOGA** is **“unfruitful”** but for those who have trusted Christ for salvation and received the promised indwelling Holy Spirit (John 7:39) **“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control”** (Galatians 5:22-23). **“O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him”** (Psalm 34:8).

By way of confirming my statement that **‘YOGA is RELIGIOUS’** I want now to include here a short article that I included in my **June 2002 ‘News From The Front’**.

YOGA – THE TRUTH

In the **‘Banner of the Truth in Ireland’** magazine [Spring 2002] issued by **The Society for Irish Church Missions** there was a most enlightening article on **YOGA** written by my brother in Christ, former Moonie, Noel Deane who works for **ICM** in Dublin and with his kind permission I am going to reproduce part of his article. After giving some helpful information on the background and aims of **YOGA** Noel wrote –

‘I read with sadness in the May 2001 issue of the Church Review, a review of a book that was promoting Hatha Yoga. That same month I read a longer review of the same book in a magazine that promotes YOGA called ‘YOGA & HEALTH’. The book reviewed was called ‘HATHA YOGA – BREATH by BREATH’ written by Godfrey Devereux [published by Thorsons] and the following statement is part of what was said about it in YOGA & HEALTH [May 2001 issue, pages 29-32]

‘Yoga is not a physical fitness system. It is not a religion, a cult, a New Age fad. It requires no strange beliefs, no blind faith. There is no need for penance, confession, humiliation or self-denial. It is not a way of life with a predetermined set of values and conventions. You do not need to burn incense or wear prayer beads. You do not need to give up onions, meat, tobacco, alcohol, sex or money. HATHA YOGA is a spiritual practice. It is a means of clarifying that which is and expressing it directly, fully and harmoniously. It is then, both a science and an art. There is rigour, objectivity and revelation in its method. There is harmony, beauty and inspiration in its expression’.

It all sounds breathtakingly benign, but can we believe what we have just read about **YOGA** or is there a more sinister reality? Noel submitted the statement to the **CLASSICAL YOGA HINDU ACADEMY** and asked for their comments, which are reproduced in the following table, and from their assessment you will clearly discover the real, not so benign, truth about **YOGA**.

YOGA & HEALTH	CLASSICAL YOGA HINDU ACADEMY
YOGA is not a physical fitness system	There is definitely physical fitness involved – this is a primary focus in HATHA YOGA
It is not a religion, cult, a New Age fad	It most definitely is a religion, the religion of Hinduism and there are cultic aspects in the sense of ‘intense devotion’ to a particular Deity and Guru
It requires no strange beliefs, no blind faith. There is no need for penance, confession, humiliation or self-denial	The “soul” purpose of all aspects of yoga is to transcend the self which does require penance, confession, humility and self-denial
It is not a way of life with a predetermined set of values and conventions	It most definitely is a way of life; i.e. the Dharma or spiritual lifestyle of Sanatan Dharma/Hinduism
You do not need to burn incense or wear prayer beads. You do not need to give up onions, meat, tobacco, alcohol, sex or money	These blind assertions are too absurd to even comment
HATHA YOGA is a spiritual practice. It is a means of clarifying that which is and expressing it directly, fully and harmoniously. It is then both a science and an art. There is rigour, objectivity and revelation in its method. There is harmony, beauty and inspiration in its expression	What he has just described (without realising it) Is the profound wisdom of living a spiritual/religious lifestyle and in this case Hinduism

Early in my Christian life the **'New Age Movement'** was 'big' and a popular and informative video was helpful in assessing this movement. That video was called **'Gods of the New Age'** and it can be viewed in full on this link –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx1WtnSABx4>

However, this full version lasts for just 14 minutes under two hours so, in the context of this article, the following link will take you to extracted portions that deal with **YOGA** and it lasts in total about 15 minutes. I should add that I am no expert in 'editing' but hopefully my 'jumpy' transitions from one portion to another will not be a distraction. These extracts can be viewed on our ministry YouTube site on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b98JsYQG0zg>

I want now to cite a couple of short quotations from three books that should also throw helpful light on **YOGA** from a Christian perspective. They are as follows -

From 'A Time of Departing' by Ray Yungen - "Physical exercises are but a skin of Yoga, its sinews and skeleton are **MENTAL** exercises (meditation) that prepare the way for a transformation of consciousness" (p 96). An ex-New Ager (p 71) said about **'BREATH PRAYER'**, (PRANAYAMA Yoga) (that was) recommended by Richard Foster, ('Prayer: Finding the Heart's true Home': 'Celebration of Discipline') "That's what I did when I was into **ASHTANGA** Yoga" (practiced by Madonna and Sting) – "Yoga is, in many cases, about emptying the mind and going into a silence that has spiritual ramifications" (p 95) – **Comment by Cecil** – No doubt hoping for **SAMADHI**, one with the Absolute, a blissful state called **MOKSHA**.

From 'Occult Invasion' by Dave Hunt – "HATHA YOGA... is alleged to be devoid of the mysticism in other forms. Not so. Yoga is Yoga, and all of the positions and breathing exercises are specifically designed for yoking with **BRAHMAN**, the Universal ALL of Hinduism... **'TRANSPERSONAL CRISES'**... Frightening ESP occurrences... out of body experiences... awakening of (Kundalini) serpent power... energy streaming up the spine, tremors, spasms... violent shaking and twisting" (p 223) **Comment by Cecil** – **SHADES** of the so-called **'TORONTO BLESSING'**.

From 'True to His Ways' by Ruth Davis – Ruth writes of "our sleepy unawareness of the true nature and dangers of the occult" and states "Occult practices crept into the church because they were not recognised for what they are" (p 138). **Comment by Cecil** – Ruth is referring to the likes of **PRANA** (the Sanskrit word for "life force"; in YOGA) = **TAI CHI** = **VITAL ENERGY** = **KUNDALINI POWER** – **All of them seek to 'awaken' or 'rouse' a pagan LIFE force and YOGA would play a leading role in this 'spirit-force' deception.**

If you're still with me in this article I would now invite you to listen to a short radio interview I gave back in August 2010 on Radio Ulster and that was related to **YOGA**.

The link to the interview is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wC2blqDbj8&list=UUY6K5SN-Z7IIOKmXclB51jQ>

Finally I would conclude this article by directing your attention to two books that should be helpful to anyone seeking to know the Christian response to the question of whether or not to participate in **YOGA**. The books are –

'DEATH of a GURU'

by
RABI MAHARAJ

In the US it is available to purchase on these links

<http://www.amazon.com/Death-Guru-Remarkable-Story-Search/dp/0890814341>

or

<http://www.christianbook.com/death-of-a-guru/rabi-maharaj/9780890814345/pd/0814341>

In the UK it can be purchased via this link

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Death-Guru-Dave-Hunt/dp/0340862475/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1418900768&sr=1-1&keywords=death+of+a+guru

'TRUE to his WAYS'

by
RUTH DAVIS

Available to purchase in various formats via Ruth's web site on

<http://www.truetohisways.com/>