

YOGA IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIANITY

“Yoga” is the ancient Sanskrit term for the physical practice used to develop Hindu spiritual disciplines. The word *yoga* means “yoke” or “spiritual union,” indicating the innate spiritual nature of the practice. Thousands of years old, yoga teachings are detailed in the Vedas, or sacred Indian texts. These teachings include polytheism (worshipping many gods and goddesses), monism (a belief that all things in the universe are one, without distinction), reincarnation, karma, idol worship, and the goal of realizing one’s own divine identity. Many of these teachings are also prevalent in Buddhism and the New Age Movement. Because these beliefs are incompatible with the teachings of Christ, embracing the practice of yoga is contrary to Christianity. Simply put, to practice yoga is to practice an important element of Hinduism and/or New Age beliefs. Most people in yoga fitness classes do not understand the roots and purpose of yoga and therefore do not understand all they are participating in. While we respect the freedom others have to observe their religious practices and beliefs, it is important for us to become aware of the truth, in order to avoid activities that are contrary to and at odds with the Christian faith. Let us take a look to see how Christianity and yoga are two conflicting opposites.

There are two fundamental teachings of Christianity: i) There is one God, the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), Who created the universe, and ii) The second Person of the Holy Trinity, namely the Son of God, became man—Jesus Christ—Who is God. Yoga is predicated upon the belief in many gods; that is, in many false gods; more correctly, in many evil spirits—which is idolatry.

Christians worship Jesus Christ as their God and Savior. Yoga offers worship to spirits and deities within the Hindu pantheism.

Christians call upon the name of Jesus Christ to receive grace and blessings. Yoga calls upon the names of spirits and deities within the Hindu pantheism to seek demonic energy and power.

Christianity teaches that God is the source of all good things: “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights” (James 1:17); furthermore, Christ taught us that without Him, we can do nothing: “For without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). Yoga teaches that man himself has power hidden within himself, and that man himself is at the center of the universe.

All this becomes apparent when we examine the various elements of yoga.

Chanting Mantras – “A mantra is a sound, syllable, word, or group of words that is considered capable of ‘creating transformation.’”¹ Mantras are commonplace in yoga. Two of the most commonly know are Aum/Om and So’ham. The first sound invokes the name of a Hindu false god, while with the second phrase man professes himself to be God. **Aum/Om:** “The popular Aum chant is fully described in the Hindu scriptures and *is synonymous with the Hindu Deity Ganesha.*”² Deepok Chopra, M.D. explains it this way: “The primordial vibration Om (or ‘aum’) is considered the most sacred sound in Hinduism and Buddhism ... People have used Om as a mantra since ancient times, chanting the sound or silently repeating it in meditation to expand their awareness of the divine. In the Yoga Sutras, the philosopher Patanjali states that *the repetition of Om, along with a deep contemplation of its meaning, is a direct path to enlightenment* ... The symbol is also incorporated into the design of all Hindu temples and family shrines. In the Western world, repeating Om at the beginning and end of yoga classes is common, and more and more people are using the sound as a mantra for meditation and sacred ceremonies.”³ **So’ham:** According to *Yoga for Dummies*, “The mantra so’ham” (pronounced *so-hum*) means ‘I am He,’ that is, *‘I am the universal Self.’* It is repeated in sync with breathing: *so* on inhaling, *ham* on exhaling.”⁴

Chanting in Sanskrit – Many yoga classes feature chanting at the beginning or ending of class. The chanting is done in the ancient language of Sanskrit, so most participants have no idea what they are saying. There are many chants, but portions of common chants offering worship to Hindu false gods are translated below:

1. *I bow to Lord Shiva*, the peaceful one who is the embodiment of all that is cause by the universe.⁵

2. I bow to the lotus feet of the gurus, the awakening happiness of one’s own self revealed; beyond better, acting like the jungle physician; pacifying delusion, the poison of samsara ... *to Pantanjali, I salute.*⁶

¹ Wikipedia, Mantra <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mantra>

² Classical Yoga Hindu Academy, <http://www.classicalyoga.org/Modern-%22Yoga%22.php>

³ Deepak Chpra M.D., *What Does Ohm Really Mean?*, <http://www.chopra.com/articles/2010/03/26/what-does-ohm-really-mean/>

⁴ George Feuerstein, PhD, Larry Payne, PhD, *Yoga for Dummies*, p. 317

⁵ Yoga Journal, *The Beginner’s Guide to Common Chants*, <http://www.yogajournal.com/lifestyle/841?print=1>

⁶ Wikipaida, Astanga Vinyasa Yoga, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtanga_Vinyasa_Yoga

Body Positions to Channel Energy – There are specific hand, body, or eye positions in yoga called *yoga mudras*. Yogis believe that by forming these positions, one can direct the flow of energy. These positions are utilized by skilled yogis to induce alternate states of mind and consciousness. Through these positions, unfortunately, a person surrenders himself to and receives a seal from a demonic spirit. Whereas, Christians have surrendered themselves to Christ and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit through baptism (Eph. 4:30). An article in *Yoga Journal* explains, “Fingers and toes are charged with divine power, which, when intelligently accessed and properly applied, can intensify the transformative power of the practice... Symbolically, a mudra seals or ‘stamps’ the mark of the god or goddess on the practitioner much like a signet ring stamps an impression on soft wax, signaling her complete devotion and self-surrender... some texts claim, mudras confer magical powers on the practitioner, such as healing others’ illnesses (and maybe even exacting revenge on enemies) and assisting in the awakening of kundalini.”⁷ Kundalini Yoga is a particular type of yoga that aims to develop spiritual awareness by freeing the serpent power (kundalini) that is coiled in the base of the spine through exercises and meditation that draws it upward through the seven chakras (energy centers).

Chakras - The concept of *chakra* originates in Hindu texts and is in yogic traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Chakras are thought to be the seven main energy centers in the body that are located along the spine starting at the base and running upwards to the crown of the head. They believe the chakras can become blocked, and that by practicing poses that correspond to each chakra, you can release these blocks and clear the path to higher consciousness. It is also believed that with the healing of each chakra comes the gift of certain powers. This comes from the University of Metaphysical Sciences: “In addition to its connection to the body, the third eye chakra is also highly related to the spiritual realm. This chakra is said to be associated with the ability to experience and even see into other dimensions during meditation. When the third eye chakra is awakened during meditation, a number of abilities are said to open up including higher cognition, remote viewing, intuition, telekinesis and telepathy. Inasmuch, psychic powers are often said to be related to this chakra.”⁸

⁷ Richard Rosen, *Seal the Deal*, *Yoga Journal*, <http://www.yogajournal.com/widom/1740>

⁸ University of Metaphysical Sciences, *Understanding the Third Eye*, <http://www.umsonline.org/third-eye.htm>

Yoga poses are often sequenced to unblock the chakras, and meditation on the chakras in yoga class is commonplace. There are many dangers associated with kundalini rising through the chakras, including psychological disturbances. Numerous websites, written by those who have experienced kundalini rising, are devoted to describing the dangers of this practice.

Yoga Meditation – Yoga uses various meditation techniques to access magical and demonic powers from evil spirits. The Transcendental Meditation technique is based on the ancient Vedic tradition of enlightenment in India. It is believed that, through yoga meditation, one can open the chakras that lead into yogic powers (siddhis). According to traditional sources, the five siddhis of yoga and meditation are:

1. *Knowing the past, present and future*
2. *Tolerance of heat, cold and other dualities*
3. *Knowing the minds of others*
4. *Checking the influence of fire, sun, water, and poison*
5. *Remaining unconquered by others*

There are also other powers that can be achieved. *“These powers include items such as clairvoyance, levitation, bi-location, becoming as small as an atom, materialization, having access to memories from past lives, etc.”*⁹ The desire for such powers is contrary to the teaching and spirit of Christ and the Gospel, which instructs us to humble ourselves and to keep God’s commandments.

Announcement by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece

“Yoga constitutes a fundamental principal of Hinduism, it contains a diversity of beliefs, branches, applications, and inclinations, and it does not constitute a simple form of exercise; consequently, it is completely incompatible with our Christian Orthodox Faith and has no place in the life of Christians.”

⁹ Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhi>