

Should a believer practice Yoga?

צריך מאמין להתאמן ביוגה?

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Whether or not it is ok for Christ's believers to be involved in Yoga is a topic that many believers disagree about. The purpose for this study is to analyze the origins of Yoga and to examine what the scriptures reveal about the subject. In order to understand the spiritual implications of practicing Yoga and the biblical reasons for staying away from Yoga, we first need to understand where Yoga originates from. Those who are believers that support the practice of Yoga for health and fitness say that they do not participate in the religious aspects of Yoga (i.e. the mental exercises), but is it really possible to separate the religious nature of Yoga from its physical practice, as claimed? I propose that when a believer participates in the Yoga exercises one is placing one's self into spiritual bondage. This type of bondage may not be apparent at first but the spiritual impact is certain and stems from direct and deliberate disobedience to God's Word. To practice Yoga and to deny the spiritual impact that Yoga has on ones life is to be dishonest with one's self as well as to God.

According to the encyclopedia Britannica, Yoga is one of the six orthodox systems (Darshans) of Indian philosophy, which has wide spread influence on many schools of Indian thought. Yoga is the Indian system for training the body and soul using breathing exercises, physical stretching of the body, and meditation. YOGA means "to yoke," to yoke with Brahman (i.e., the "Infinite," the "Universal Spirit," the impersonal force that the Hindus call "God") via the realization of an altered state of consciousness. Through Yoga, one may theoretically release oneself from the bondage of endless reincarnation. Yoga comes out of the Hindu Vedas. It can be traced back to Patanjali, who was a religious leader. Siva, one of Hinduism's three most powerful gods, was known as "The Destroyer," he's called Yogi Swara or the "Lord of Yoga." The basic premise of Yoga theory is the fundamental unity of all existence that states "*God, man, and all of creation are ultimately one divine reality.*" YOGA also means "Union" and that the practice of Yoga unites body, breath, and mind, lower and higher energy centers, and ultimately, self and God (higher Self). Note that a parallel is drawn between the "higher self" and "God" indicating that we can become gods. One of the leading contemporary authorities on kundalini Yoga is Gopi Krishna. In his article "*The True Aim of Yoga,*" he says: "*The aim of Yoga, then is to achieve the state of unity or oneness with God, Brahman, [and] spiritual beings...*" Yoga authorities Feuerstein and Miller comment that "*the postures (asana) of YOGA and its breathing techniques (pranayama) are much more than just physical exercises*" and also that "*The goal is to control the 'vital energy' (prana) by way of breathing, like also asana, is not merely a physical exercise, but is accompanied by certain psycho mental phenomena.*" In other words, all techniques falling under the heading of asana and pranayama as, for example, the

Darshan

or
darsan

In Hindu worship, the beholding of an auspicious deity, person, or object. The experience is often conceived to be reciprocal and results in a blessing of the viewer. In *rathayatras* (car festivals), images are carried through the streets to allow viewing by those who formerly would not have been allowed in the temple. Darshan may also be imparted by a guruto his disciples, a ruler to his subjects, or a pilgrimage shrine to its visitors. In Indian philosophy, darshan also refers to a philosophical system (e.g. Vedanta).

(Encyclopedia Britannica)

50 mudras and bandhas the physical positions are symbolic bodily gestures utilizing pranayama (breathing techniques) and concentration are for physical or spiritual purposes. This is not understood by Western practitioners of Yoga. Actually, Yoga practice is intended to validate the occult theory of Yoga. As previously mentioned, Yoga theory teaches that everything is, in its true inner nature, divine and not only divine but ultimately equal to everything else which means that everything from God and the devil to the athlete and the AIDS virus are god.
55 Yoga theory also teaches that in their outer nature, everything is "maya," or illusion. For example, only in this inner spirit is man divine; his "outer nature," of body and personality, are ultimately a delusion that separates him from the awareness of his real inner divinity. Thus, another purpose of Yoga is too slowly dismantling the outer personality. The so called "man's illusory part" his body
60 stands in the way of the supposed impersonal divinity that can progressively emerge from within this hidden divine consciousness. This is why people who practice Yoga only for physical or mental health reasons are ultimately the victims of a confidence game. They are promised better health as a result of the exercises but, little do they know that the end goal of Yoga is to destroy them as individuals ("to dismantle the outer personality..."). If you missed that one go
65 back and read it again! The ultimate goal of Yoga is to dismantle one's personality meaning to destroy you as an individual.

One of the most authoritative texts on Yoga theory within the Hindu perspective is Pantajali's text on raja Yoga titled Yoga Sutras. In this text, the
70 traditional eight "limbs," or parts, of Yoga are revealed. These are defined within the context of a basic Hindu worldview which includes (i) reincarnation, (ii) karma, and (iii) moksha, or liberation. These limbs are intended to support and reinforce the Hindu religious belief system. Each "limb" has a spiritual goal and together they form a unit. The eight limbs are: (i) Yama (self control, restraints, devotion to the gods [eg. Krishna] of the final impersonal god [eg. Brahman]), (ii)
75 Niyama (religious duties, prohibitions, observances), (iii) Asana (proper postures for Yoga practices, these represent the first stage in the isolation of consciousness and are vital components for "transcending the human condition"), (iv) Pranayama (the control and directing of the breath and the alleged divine energy
80 within the human body [prana] to promote health and spiritual [occult] consciousness and evolution), (v) Prayahara (sensory control or deprivation, i.e. withdrawal of the senses from attachment to external objects), (vi) Dharana (deeper concentration, or mind control), (vii) Dhyana (deep contemplation from occult meditation), and (viii) Samadhi (occult enlightenment of "God [Brahman]
85 realization" i.e., "union" of the "individual" with God).

Now, because these eight steps are interdependent, the steps of "postures" and "breathing" cannot logically be separated from the others. The interdependence of all eight steps reveals why the physical exercises of Yoga are designed to prepare the body for the spiritual changes that will allegedly help one
90 to realize their own individual divinity. You see, the concept of prana "breath" is a key to this process. Pranayama refers to the knowledge and control of prana, or mystical energy, not merely to the control of one's physical breath. Prana is believed to be universal divine energy residing behind the material world (akasa). Prana is said to have five forms, and all energy is thoroughly to be a manifestation
95 of it. Swami Nikhilananda describes it in his Vivekananda, The Yogas and other

Works as *"The infinite, omnipresent manifestation power of this universe." Perfect control of the prana makes one god. One can have "infinite knowledge, infinite power, right now."*

100 Swami Nikhiliananada's statement begs the question "what might this power be?" What kind of power is he looking for? It is believed that one would be able to move the sun and the stars out of their places, to control everything in the universe from the atoms to the biggest suns. This is the aim of the pranayama. When the yogi becomes perfect there will be nothing in nature that is not under his control. If he orders the gods or the soul of the departed to come, they will come at his bidding. All the forces of nature will obey him as slaves.... He who has controlled prana has controlled his own mind in all other minds... all the bodies that exist...(Rammurti S. Mishra, *Yoga Sutras: The Textbook of Yoga Psychology*, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973. Back 979:592. Swami Nikhiliananda, *Vinvekananda, the Yogas and Other Works*, New York: Ramakrishna and Vinvekananda Centre, 1953. Back 979:592) The aim of pranayama is also to arouse the coiled up poser (Yoga positions) in the muladhara chakra called kundalini where *"The whole nature will begin to change and the door of [psychic] knowledge will open."* No more will you need to go to books for knowledge; your own mind will have become your own book, containing infinite knowledge. So, in other words, prana, god, and occult energy are all one and the same. The one who practices Yogic breathing (pranayama) coupled with the Yoga stretching exercises and positions are by definition attempting to manipulate occult energy. Now if you think about this, as a Christian, this should be extremely disturbing and warning signals should be going off in your head about these things as a believer. What does the bible say about these things? Let's begin by looking at how the Bible describes who God is.

Who God is Biblically...

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Description</u>
125 Deut6:4, Isaiah 44:6	God is one and only one (not multiple)
Numbers 23:19, Hosea 11:9, Malachi 3:6	God is not a man, he does not change
Isaiah 48:12	Alpha and Omega, beginning and end
Isaiah 45:23	Lord
130 Isaiah 43:11	Savior
Isaiah 43:15	King
Genesis 18:25	Judge
Psalms 27:1	Light
Deuteronomy 32:3-4	Rock
135 Isaiah 48:17	Redeemer
Isaiah 45:24	Our Righteousness
Isaiah 44:24	Husband
Psalms 139:7-12	Omnipresent
1 Kings 8:39	Omniscient
140 Isaiah 40:10-31	Omnipotent
Genesis 1:1	Preexistent
Psalms 102:26-27	Eternal
Malachi 3:6	Immutable
Exodus 34:14	Receiver of Worship
145 John 4:24	God is Spirit

The Bible describes God as the only God, that God is not a man, he does not change. God is the alpha and omega, the use of this phrase draws a parallel to the ordering of the letters in the Greek alphabet to God as our creator. The alpha and omega is at the beginning and end of the alphabet and means that God is the beginning and the end of all things. God is Lord, Savior, King, Judge, Rock, Redeemer, Our Righteousness, Husband, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Preexistent, Eternal, Immutable, Receiver of Worship and that He is Spirit. The scriptural description of God rules out the possibility of the existence of any other god and thus the concept of becoming a god through the use of Yoga is a non-existent possibility.

According to the Bible, God's chosen people were warned that their sons would turn away and follow other gods if they are not careful to teach their children the His ways in *Deuteronomy 7:4-9*:

Deuteronomy 7:4-9

⁴For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly⁵. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire⁶. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

⁷The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people⁸: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt⁹. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

To prevent their children from turning to other gods, God told his children to utterly destroy those things that are connected to the false religions their altars, images, groves, graven images, and practices. God also warns that the other nations will try to turn them away from the Lord their God. Since these things are explicitly written in the Bible, "why is it then that Christians today choose to walk in disobedience by practicing the Yoga movements which are the very thing God despises?"

Deuteronomy 8:19-20

¹⁹And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish²⁰. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

195 Performing the Yoga exercises essentially causes ones to “walk in the way
of the religious practice according to Yoga.” Our understanding about Yoga we
realize that one cannot separate the physical movements of Yoga from the mental
and spiritual religious intent. The movements were developed for the purpose of
physical occult religious practice. *Leviticus 5:17* also states that we are guilty of
200 our iniquity (sin) even if we do so out of ignorance, so one can never claim
ignorance of occult activity before God. Therefore, with what we now know, we
cannot call upon our own ignorance as a way to circumvent rebellion against
God’s word and sin by practicing Yoga.

205 According to Deuteronomy 9:4-5 and 12:1-4, God drove out the nations
because of their wickedness; the nations wickedness is rooted in following false
gods and false ways. Though God drove out the people, the places of wickedness
needed to be destroyed as they entered into the Promised Land. The application
for our lives today is that these scriptures are a warning for us about our lives
against practicing Yoga.

210 ***Deuteronomy 9:4-5***

*⁴Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them
out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath
brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations
215 the LORD doth drive them out from before thee⁵ .Not for thy
righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to
possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy
God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the
word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

220 ***Deuteronomy 12:1-4***

*¹These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the
land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the
days that ye live upon the earth² .Ye shall utterly destroy all the places,
225 wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the
high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree³ :And ye
shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves
with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and
destroy the names of them out of that place⁴ .Ye shall not do so unto the
LORD your God.*

230 The Lord provided one way for mankind to reestablish his relationship
with him. Any attempt to approach God by another way besides what he has
provided is sin. Remember it is written that it is impossible to please God without
faith (*Hebrews 11:6*). Jesus also taught that a man who tries to enter heaven by
235 another way, is like a man coming to a wedding feast without the proper clothing.
(*Matthew 22:12-13* "¹²And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither
not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless"¹³ " .Then said the king to
the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer
darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth .) This is the very thing
240 the nations that were driven from before Israel did, they attempted to reach
heaven by their own ways, and not by God’s way and is the way in which

Hinduism is doing in an attempt to become a god. The scriptures also say in *Deuteronomy 12:30 to ³⁰Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise*

In addition to this, God warns not to enquire after the nations false gods, and not to enquire after how they served their gods. Yoga movements were developed for the body to achieve the state of unity or oneness with Brahman, this is the very thing that God has commanded his children should have no part being the ways of false religious practices. It is quite obvious how alluring Yoga may be because people are using the movements for physical improvement; however do not be deceived by the deceitfulness of the flesh. The deception is that the movements are forbidden by God, this is how Christians are snared into disobedience by a lack of knowledge (see *Hosea 4:6*) and limiting God's blessing, or worse yet, causing God to turn away and allow the evil one to operate in one's life.

Deuteronomy 18:9-13

⁹When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations¹⁰. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch¹¹, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer¹². For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee¹³. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

Why do Christians believe there is a difference today in modern times that it is ok to practice Yoga? Does this stem from the belief that the Law has passed away and that we are somehow exempt from the law in Jesus Christ? Do you think that we can live in disobedience in this way and get away with it? The point is that we are not getting away with living in disobedience. We are simply tying God's hands and stopping His blessing that He has for us. In addition to these questions, "Do you think it is possible for a Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit to be deceived?" I believe that it is possible for a Spirit filled Christian to be deceived. We as Christians need to listen to the calling of the Holy Spirit in all areas of our lives and especially in spiritual matters. This can become difficult if one is dulling their spiritual senses by living in disobedience and practicing Yoga. God is a gentleman meaning that he will not force his will upon any Christian who doesn't ask for the Lord to work in their lives. In fact, we have to ask God into our heart and into our lives that he would forgive us, save us from our sins, bless us and to become his Children (*John1:12*). Satan on the other hand doesn't have to be asked; he will take advantage of any disobedient actions on our part and use it as a foothold in our lives for the purpose of limiting God's blessing and limit our ability to serve the Lord. If you choose to participate in Yoga after what you know now, Satan will use this as a foothold to work evil in your life. This would include an increase in temptation to sin and live in more disobedience to God.

290 So, why should we stay away from Yoga? It is clear that the false ways of
the nation's religious practices are not to be practiced by God's children. If we
are Christians, we are to be living for the Lord God Almighty! If we want God's
blessing on our lives, in every way that he has for us, we need to live in obedience
to him. God wants the best for his children, what God wants for us can be
295 summed up in *Deuteronomy 28:1-14*. Do not think that these scriptures are only
for the Israelites and for that time in history? We are also God's chosen people
through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord. It is through Jesus Christ's atoning
sacrifice that we have our sins forgiven according to Colossians 1:14). Stop
limiting God and his plan for your life, and start living for him, today. Forsake
300 the false way of Yoga today and start living obediently.

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Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever

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