

# Yoga Beliefs Versus Biblical Christianity

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*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15 NIV*

Historically, yoga comes from the practice of asceticism. (See footnote \* bottom of page.) The Apostle Paul battled asceticism in the church. He was talking about asceticism when he said,

*These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, {but are} of no value against fleshly indulgence. Colossians 2:23*

## #1. Key Person, Date, Location, Brief History

Yoga is one of the six primary systems of orthodox thought in Indian philosophy. Yoga is a New Age Religion which has no centralized structure, and teaches many conflicting belief systems. There are many types of yoga: Hatha, Karma, Bhakti... Kriya yoga was started by Paramahansa Yogananda who established the Church of All Religions and the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1949 in Los Angeles, California. Kundalini yoga was started by Yogi Bhanjan who came to the Western world from India in 1969. The oldest form of yoga, Vedic yoga, supposedly dates 3000 BC.

## #2. Key Writings

The Vedas of Vedic yoga are so-called sacred scriptures of Brahmanism, the basis of modern-day Hinduism. The classical component of yoga

philosophy is the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali (200 BC) intended to be practiced alongside the physical yoga poses with yogic meditation taught by a teacher in person. The Bhagavad-Gita is a 700-verse Hindu scripture of Krishna's guidance. Yoga experts insist that the philosophies are foundational to the practice of yoga, and are in fact, the "entire essence of the subject." (Yoga Journal, May/June 1993 p. 68)

### **#3. Who is God**

Yoga teaches that our identity is an illusion to be overcome in order to find the divine Self within. Yoga, which means yoke, teaches the practitioner of Yoga (Yogi) how to achieve spiritual absorption into the Supreme Absolute or God, described by names such as "Universal spirit," "Shiva (the destroyer)" and others. Yoga accepts all "paths" to god and embraces all religions except Biblical Christianity because it teaches salvation through Christ alone. 330 million gods are revered in Vedic Yoga's religion of Hinduism, but the Impersonal Absolute, or Ultimate Reality is referred to as Brahman. The "Ohm" gesture (thumb and middle finger together) used during meditation represents the yogi's desire to unite with Brahman.

### **#4. Who is Jesus**

In the yogic mindset, Jesus was a human who may have been one of the spiritual teachers who transcended to find the divinity within or an Avatar or medium.

### **#5. Who is the Holy Spirit**

The Kundalini spirit is one yogic concept, a spiritual snake energy lying dormant at the base of the spine. As the yogi opens up chakras, through yoga postures and meditation, the Kundalini is said to wind up the spine over a period of time, finally moving to the crown chakra of the head where the Universal spirit becomes one with the person causing enlightenment. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit is like a dove, bringing peace, gentle and harmless. The Kundalini spirit is a snake, a poisonous creature associated in the Bible with the Devil, original sin and deception.

### **#6. How to be Saved**

Samkhya, or Moksha, the concept of liberation or enlightenment, involves the freeing of the individual soul from the cycle of rebirth described next.

### **#7. What Happens After Death**

Reincarnation after death is working one's way to enlightenment through living hundreds, thousands, of lifetimes to get it right. The Bible teaches that no one has ever been perfect except Christ, and that after our one life comes judgment.

## **#8. Other Facts, Beliefs, or Practices**

Yogic meditation is not biblical meditation, but Transcendental Meditation (T.M.), teaching the repetition of the names of Hindu gods (mantras) to open up spiritually. Yogis seek out of body experiences during meditation however the practitioner is often cautioned that contact with spiritual entities may be dangerous and have been known to cause mental illness. Yoga is subtly used as the evangelical arm of Hinduism, T.M. and New Age Religion under the guise of exercise. Christians often are unaware of the hidden agendas. "Christian yogis" practice yoga and thereby condone yoga philosophies. The term, "Christian yoga" sends a confusing message to pre-believers, just as "Christian Alcoholism" would. (1 Cor. 8:9) Many Christians actively voice their concerns about yoga and find alternative methods of exercise. A few Christian para-church organizations train Christian leaders to educate the public and purposefully infiltrate and evangelize the yoga community.

(To see the difference between the Christian yoga mindset and the alternative to yoga mindset click [here](#))

## **#9. Belief System of Yoga vs. Biblical Christianity**

The very real spiritual powers the classical yogi seeks, are not from God and are therefore identified by the Bible as the principalities of wickedness in the heavenly places. The Bible teaches relationship with an intimate, loving, personal God; Abba, Father, not an amorphous Universal spirit. The Holy Spirit descends as a dove, not a venomous snake. When a child asks for bread will His father give him a snake? In yoga, "yes." With God, "no, never."

## **#10. Beliefs for Salvation of Yoga vs. Biblical Christianity**

Jesus taught that salvation is a gift of grace accepted through faith; yoga teaches Samahdi (enlightenment) through works. There is no need for salvation in yoga, neither any need for a Savior since all divine power supposedly lies within the Self and immersion in a yogic lifestyle contains the "complete path." Yogic Samahdi is found by looking inward; biblical

salvation is found by looking upward to Jesus.

## **Christian Based Links:**

*In Search of the True Light*, by Mike Shreve;  
<http://www.thetruelight.net/links.htm>,

*Encountering God*, by Mike Shreve; *The Kiss of God*, by Vail Carruth

## **Bibliography**

Yoga Based:

*The Sivananda Companion to Yoga*, by Vishnu Devananda; *Light on Yoga* by BKS Iyengar; *Ashtanga Yoga* by David Swenson; Dr. Georg Feuerstein, online interview:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ua17Cw75uas&feature=related> , <http://www.traditionalyogastudies.com/>

Christian Based:

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<http://www.thetruelight.net/links.htm>, *Encountering God*, by Mike Shreve; *The Kiss of God*, by Vail Carruth, <http://www.wholyfit.com>

Footnote\* Page 41, 42 The Essential World History sixth edition by William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel SAY THIS:

"Asceticism, of course has been practiced in other religions, including Christianity and Islam, but it seems particularly identified with Hinduism, the religion that emerged from early Indian religious tradition. Eventually, asceticism evolved into the modern practice of body training that we know as yoga ("union"), which is accepted today as a meaningful element of Hindu religious practice."