

YOGA

If it's good for my body, how can there be any harm in doing it?

What are the origins of yoga?

“Despite more than a century of research, we still don’t know much about the earliest beginnings of Yoga. We do know, though, that it originated in India 5,000 or more years ago. Until recently, many Western scholars thought that Yoga originated much later, maybe around 500 B.C.E., which is the time of Gautama the Buddha, the illustrious founder of Buddhism. But then, in the early 1920s, archeologists surprised the world with the discovery of the so-called Indus civilization—a culture that we now know extended over an area of roughly 300,000 square miles (the size of Texas and Ohio combined). This was in fact the largest civilization in early antiquity. In the ruins of the big cities of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, excavators found depictions engraved on soapstone seals that strongly resemble yogi-like figures. Many other finds show the amazing continuity between that civilization and later Hindu society and culture. “¹

What does Yoga mean?

What do the poses (asanas) mean, if anything?

How does exercise fit into Yoga and Hinduism?

Hindu gods/goddesses related to Yoga

Kundalini: Hindu goddess in the form of a female serpent lying dormant at the base of the spine

Shiva: Male god; Divine “lover” residing in the brain

Types of Yoga

hatha: physical; **raja:** mental; **bhatki:** devotional; **jana:** knowledge; **siddha:** psychic powers; **karma:** action or social responsibility; **laya** or **mantra:** sound



What do people say about yoga and its outcomes?

“Yoga and Christianity are founded on a similar base of wisdom.” – Thomas Matus, *Yoga and the Jesus Prayer Tradition: An Experiment in Faith*, Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984. ²

“All the systems of yoga...are designed to bring about those psychosomatic changes in the body which are essential for the metamorphosis of consciousness. A new [divine] center – presently dormant in the average man and woman-has to be activated and a more powerful stream of psychic energy must [be awakened]. – Gopi Krishna, “The True Aim of Yoga,” *Psychic*, Jan. – Feb., 1973, p. 15.

“There are many different methods of yoga, all leading to the same goal of Self-Realization.” – Swami Ramaa, *Lectures on Yoga: Practical Lessons on Yoga*, Glenview, IL: Himalayan International Institute of Yoga, Science and Philosophy, 1976, rev., p.7.

“When aroused by yoga practices, she uncoils, travels up the spine toward her lover, opening the alleged psychic centers called *chakras* in the process. When the crown or top *chakra* is reached, the union of Shivi/Shatki occurs, supposedly leading the practitioner to divine enlightenment and union with Brahman” – Gopi Krishna, *The Awakening of Kundalini*, NY: E. P. Dutton, 1975, p.13
Hatha:

“To practice pranayama [breath control] without real guidance is very dangerous. I know of three persons who have died from it...” – Sri Chinmoy, *Astrology, the Supernatural and the Beyond*, Jamaica, NY: Agni Press, 1973, pp. 53-68, 87-89

“Physical yoga, according to its classical definitions, is inherently and functionally incapable of being separated from the Eastern religious metaphysics. The Western practitioner who attempts to do so is operating in ignorance and danger, from the yogi’s viewpoint, as well as from the Christians’s.” – David Fetcho, “Yoga,” Berkely, CA: *Spiritual Conterfeits Project*, 1978, p.2.

“Again we see that the control of the vital energy (prana) by way of breathing, like also asanas, is not merely a physical exercise, but is accompanied by certain psychomental phenomena. In other words, all techniques falliung under the heading of asana and pranayama as, for example, the mudras and badhas [physical positions of symbolic gestures utilizing pranayama and concentration for physical or spiritual purposes] of Hathayoga, are psychosomatic exercises. This point unfortunately, is little understood by Western practitioners...” – George Feuerstein, *Jeanine Miller, Yoga and Beyond: Essays in Indian Philosophy*, NY: Schocken, 1972, pp. 27-28.

“Yoga comes from connecting to God, just as the word religion means in western context. There are many schools called *sampradajas* with different forms of yoga. All teachings guide an embodied spirit in a (non)-personal relationship to God.” – www.spiritweb.org

¹ <http://www.yrec.org/shorthisory.html>

² <http://www.ankerberg.com/>

Newsweek, pp. 52-53, July 7, 2003. – The New Age of Rave

[...] It's two hours past midnight in a loft in New York City's Chelsea district, and more than 100 blissed-out 20-somethings spin with her in the half light. Down a dark hall, in the "chill out" room, others sit-eyes closed, hands clasped-looking blank. What are these people on?

Nothing, it turns out. Or rather, Schmidt and her friends are high on "New Age raves," an underground movement that blends the healthiest elements of raves-electronic music and dance marathons-with yoga, meditation and other spiritual rites. [...]

Dr. Dean Ornish, an expert on the health benefits of yoga and meditation, would put it another way. "It's a more healthful way [than drugs] to open up into altered states of awareness which dance and music can bring you to."

Evenings begin with yoga and meditation sessions that last up to three hours. Then, participants listen to lectures on Eastern philosophy and how to save the environment before roaming through three rooms where they can sample a smorgasbord of raw food and herbal drinks. Massage therapists are on call to loosen dancer's muscles before they hit the floor.

In Chicago, a crew called TranceZenDance Tribe throws similar events, also drug and alcohol free. After a guided meditation focused on what organizer Travis Robb calls "linking consciousness with everyone on the planet," and a sound healing session (in which a musician on an Aboriginal instrument called a didgeridoo circles the room playing at everyone's feet), TranceZenDance deejays crank up the music. Images of the Taj Mahal and the Pyramids, and geometric shapes flash on a wall-size screen. [...]

Why has Yoga become so popular?

Is it possible to do the exercise without engaging in the worship?

Should one, especially a Christian, meditate during yoga?

Should mantras be said during yoga?

Should Christian churches have yoga classes?Bible:

What does the Bible say that may be relevant?

Paul's discussion of food offered to idols

Whatever you do...do it unto God. What is encompassed by "whatever?"

Body is called a temple –how healthy should we be?

Physical exercise is good...spiritual exercise is better.

Days of man limited to 120 years

- **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and Nebuchadnezzar – Daniel 3**
- **Daniel and Belshazzar – Daniel 6**
- **1 Corinthians 6: ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**
- **1 Timothy 4 ⁷But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.**
- **Genesis 6 ³And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."**
- **1 Corinthians 10 ²⁶for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness." ²⁷If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. ²⁸But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness."**
- **1 Corinthians 10 ³⁰But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? ³¹Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.**

Should those with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ be involved with Yoga?