

## Yoga or Religion?

Often we hear strong denials that Yoga is not a religion. Although the words Yoga and Religion are not originally of the same language, they are in essence related and as far as any words can be are synonyms.

The word Religion means to rebind, that is to bind back to the source. The 'lig' root in the word is found in words like ligature, meaning to bind. The word Yoga is used in a similar sense in that it means to yoke or join with the source of one's being.

Most Yoga practitioners have no desire to offend the established church and when we hear of the occasional Yoga class being banned from a church hall. The statement often accompanies that Yoga is not a Religion. This can be made in all earnestness when the exercises are taken out of context and it is believed they belong in sports or keep fit category.

To the knowledgeable and discerning Yoga reaches far beyond matters that relate just to health and into the philosophical and spiritual realms in a way that no other practice can.

The Yoga Philosopher seeks to discover the link factors that exist between all manners of disciplines, ideals and different religious practices, so that a more holistic view of life is developed.

No matter how strong the denial that there is a connection between Yoga and Religion, for those who practise Yoga there will be gradual awakening to what is best described as the dawning of the spiritual. To concentrate on Hatha Yoga leads to a truer and nobler way of life, with improved control in all aspects of living. Even the most physically orientated individual can glimpse the way of the Bhakti, as without love for what we are doing there can be no real progress.

Recently I spoke with someone who had attended several Yoga classes and he thought that Yoga was somewhat selfish and self orientated. In

Some aspects he was right as Yoga is toward a higher selfishness that ultimately transcends the lower orientation of the self and ego.

Self-Realisation as the goal of Yoga is best expressed if spelled with a capital 'S' rather than otherwise as it is the level of transcendence and immediacy of spirit that transcends ego.

If there is uneasiness about things Eastern why not practice Christian Yoga, as it will be discovered that as knowledge and understanding deepens, inconsistencies melt away and that there will be awareness of the best practice and with The Way, The Truth and The Life.

It is the quality of the Will that is of importance and The Way is the Will to the highest. The Truth is the light of Consciousness expressed as Logos or Word. The Life is the Love that works for the development of the potentiality of all beings.

This does not mean that there are different powers as the Trinity expresses the triune nature of an Absolute that is without limit yet complete in itself. Whether or not we use a traditional Yoga terminology or not, it is important that we define our terms correctly and clearly as this will help dispel fear. As ultimate reality is Divine Power that is only limited within us by lack of understanding and misrepresentation.

Yoga is about relationship between all levels and with each other. The Will of God includes the birds of the air, the fish of the sea as well as man. It is identification with difference that separates us from each other. Yoga is the opposite movement and is towards integration and understanding.

We speak in differing tongues and language but Yoga like the different spokes in a wheel links us into a harmonious whole, which is life itself.

Gordon Smith