

12. August 2020

Answering questions
“About yoga”

Actually, I had already finished the daily interpretation of the Scriptures - the reading of the day - and was about to record it with sound. Then I noticed that I had confused the year of reading and had to think of something different, because I had already sent the interpretation of the Gospel of the day last year.

Then the questions from the audience came to my help, which I answer from time to time. Among them was this one which I considered suitable to be a topic for discussion because it can be of general interest and I always bring up this topic again and again. It reads:

Can I ask you what are the consequences of practicing yoga? I do not practice it, it is my sister, she tells me that I am wrong (if I have doubts), but that it is good.

In order to answer this question objectively, it is necessary to make it clear that yoga - even if it is occasionally claimed - is not simply a methodology that is offered to the person in a neutral way, such as physiotherapy exercises.

Surely the intention can be to use Yoga only for relaxation, as a kind of neutral "stretching technique". Some, perhaps even most practitioners, will not want to associate religion with it, but will only seek a welcome strength for everyday life and inner peace in an often turbulent life.

But yoga is based on the Far Eastern world view of mind and body, which has its roots in Hinduism. The exercises are not only about physical well-being. One enters into this world view even though this may not be apparent at first. "Yoga cannot be understood without the karma principle and the reincarnation teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism," says a spokesman for the Syrian-Malabrian Church from India, which knows Hinduism from direct experience! "Only on the surface Yoga appears neutral. In its essence, it is an integral part of the Eastern religions." One must therefore become aware of this when thinking about yoga, or even more so when practicing it.

Even if the texts of the Second Vatican Council seek a consciously greater opening to the positive values of another religion, at the same time one must not close one's

eyes to the shadows of other spiritual systems that can lead away from God or hinder the path to him.

The yoga exercises are usually intended to open the so-called chakras. These are energy centres of a spiritual body, which according to Far Eastern teachings exists parallel to the physical body. "Through meditation the flow of energy should be stimulated. Each chakra is connected to a Hindu deity. Those who practice yoga may not know this, but the spiritual system is there. Spiritually higher experiences, even outside the body, should be possible." (Mike Shreve, former yoga teacher).

So one opens oneself to Far Eastern spirituality and on this way the image of God changes. Therefore it is not the deepened encounter with a personal God, but with an idea of God that comes from pantheism. By reciting and singing so-called mantras one usually invokes Hindu deities and opens oneself to their influence. Very easily, other "esoteric spaces" are then connected with the practice of yoga, and the world of all possible healing systems and practices is offered. One must not deny the real danger of occult attachments, which may have to be dissolved again. For all these reasons it is not recommended or clearly discouraged as Catholics to practice Yoga and to think that it would enrich your own faith or you would simply add a neutral practice.

However, it may be that the Lord includes a religious search, which has encountered yoga, in His saving action and then leads the person to Himself. Perhaps yoga was a first encounter with a spiritual world for those who did not find it in a mature society or even in a modern empty Catholicism. But they must not stop there. If they are true seekers of God, God will lead them on.

But the practice of yoga remains a danger to the faith with possibly considerable consequences. No one less than Pope Benedict XVI, then as prefect of faith and endowed with a very fine gift of discernment of spirits, gave the following far-reaching information:

Asked what price man has to pay when he indulges in practices such as yoga, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger replied: "the loss of faith", the reversal of the relationship man-God and "a deep disorientation of the human being, so that in the end man associates himself with the lie" and "falls into a demonic net that becomes much stronger than he is".

It should also be mentioned that the demonic dimension of yoga is clearly emphasized by exorcists like the recently deceased Father Gabriele Amorth. "To

practice yoga is diabolical. One thinks it leads to relaxation, but it leads to Hinduism. All oriental religions are based on the false belief of reincarnation.”

Now to answer the above question finally:

Yoga is not just a neutral practice. Depending on its intensity, it can lead deeper into the Asian spiritual world and it is easy to absorb its errors (karma, reincarnation). As a rule, a more depersonalized image of God emerges, even if one would like to connect it with Christian concepts of God and Jesus. From my point of view it is more than questionable if yoga or yoga-like practices are offered in Catholic houses or even monasteries. This is an indication that one has no longer opened up the Church's own rich spirituality, which leads ever more deeply to the true knowledge of God.

The effects may become more or less negative. It depends on how much the soul has already opened herself to another influence that is not God. In the worst case even occult bonds can develop and great obstacles can build up in the true knowledge of God.

The practitioner does not even have to notice this at first, and it can even be "good feeling for him" to practice yoga. But from the point of view of faith the objective situation is different and it is therefore clearly not advisable to practice yoga.

It is essential to activate the spiritual richness of our faith, so that people who are searching for God do not find themselves at home in other religions with their still existing errors and have to take detours in order to reach the greater knowledge of God, which can only be found in the Son of God!