

# Yoga Your Troubles Away

By Doug Chalmers

Christian Yoga, by J. M. Dechanet. Translated from the French (La Voie du Silence, 1956) by Roland Hindmarsh. Harper and Bros., New York, 1960, pp. 196, \$4.25.

This book is written by a French Benedictine and published with the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur. It is the author's record of an experiment with Yoga, within the context of his life as a Monk. The chief merit of this book is the sincerity with which M. Dechanet approaches his subject.

Far too many Westerners encountering Yoga or other schools of Eastern thought have made trash of it due to their own naivety and enthusiasm. Jack Kerouac's licentious misinterpretation of Zen Buddhism is the most recent example of this type of foolishness. M. Dechanet, with a clear sense of values due to his training in thinking systematically becomes involved in no such floundering subjectivity.

Yoga is "a particular way of fashioning oneself . . . by means of certain disciplines, both physiological (postures and breath-control) and psychical (focusing of thought)." The Upanishads recognize it as one of the six main ways of knowing.

The word "Yoga" means Union of the individual and cosmic souls (Atma and Brahma), and has the secondary meaning of a yoke or discipline (L. jugum). M. Dechanet

## SCRABBLE CONTINUED

genuine love; a time to give gifts and give of oneself. But why must we restrict the festive and hospitable frame of mind to a once-a-year event? Why do we love our fellow man for four days and hate him for the other three hundred? Why must the timid little man use New Year's Eve as a crutch to release his pent-up emotions and inhibitions once a year? ("That's okay, George. It's New Year's. Anything goes. Live it up.") Ladies and gentlemen, the answers to these questions will be found within ourselves.

So much for my annual Christmas sermon.

Late Flash: I did not write last week's Scribble. That is all.

deals with Hatha Yoga, the one of the nine Yogas which includes postures (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayamas).

## BALANCE IN MAN

The author was led to Yoga by the study of William of Saint-Thierry who emphasized that in man there should be a balance of anima (physical body), animus (reason, consciousness) and spiritus (spirit, meta-rational activity). Sin is "disorder, confusion, refusal to obey."

Granted there is a hierarchial relationship between these, with spiritus the essential factor, how can one achieve a better way of life? Prayer may not suffice for some as they may not know how to pray, having no prescribed pattern to follow.

"Go into any Church on a Sunday while mass is being said. Amongst those that are 'fulfilling their obligations', how many are really following what is happening at the altar?" (p. 19)

## DISCIPLINE ESSENTIAL

The mind wanders, thoughts are confused and fragmented. At this point asceticism come in, to restore to its proper place and function each of the three aspects of man. "Asceticism is not penance . . . (it) is basically an effort directed towards setting nature right again, and re-establishing order and balance. This effort admittedly requires discipline." (p. 74).

"Every athlete must keep his appetites under control", says St. Paul; otherwise he will not race at his best. And if the anima or lower nature of man be not controlled, it will hinder the spiritus in its operations.

## INCOMPATIBLE

In the Preface, for example, he states that "It was essential that my exercises . . . should not turn me towards the Self, the Absolute . . . the vague 'Ungraspable' of Hindu mystics, but towards the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the living God, three in one." This is what the chemist would call 'cooking the lab.'

He realizes that "these (Yogic) practices are linked up with philosophical and religious beliefs absolutely incompatible with Christian dogma." (p. 53)

This, then, is the crux of Christian Yoga: is it possible to achieve the Beautiful Vision of Catholic Christ-

ianity by non-Christian means? Dechanet solves the problem by taking the practices as simply a skill or discipline. For those who ask of the ideas behind the practices, he connects them with Christian theology (Saint-Thierry's view of man.) The author says nothing of Sankhya-Yoga psychology which has largely been affirmed by recent Western psychology, or of Yogic speculations which are parallel by post-Newtonian physics.

However, in spite of his imposition of Christian doctrine upon Hindu practices, the author is to be commended rather than condemned for this book. The middle section describes (with diagrams) various postures and Dechanet has added a few useful ones of his own invention. Noting that Indian Yoga was traditionally performed by men, he explains the different way in which women must do the breathing exercises, as the sexes breathe differently. Appendices include excerpts from the "Philokalia", a selection of writings by early fathers of the Eastern Orthodox Church whose spiritual exercises parallel classical (Indian) Yoga.

"Christian Yoga" is the sober and reflective record of experiments with Yoga. Much can be gained by this contact with Yoga and with the dedicated "Yogi of Christ", M. Dechanet.

## KUPSCH ON CUP

BY RICHARD KUPSCH



What do you intend to do about Christmas exams? The Queen's Journal, of Queen's University, Kingston, contains some good advice.

A cartoon depicting two University gentlemen seated at a table littered with books and empty bottles. One, apparently, was attempting to drown his sorrows.

His friend clapped him on the shoulder and said, "Sure you're worried about Christmas exams, but why don't you try studying?"

The Christmas Eve film at Prince Albert Federal Penitentiary was, appropriately enough, "Witness for the Prosecution".

There was one CUP editor at the CUP conference held in London, Ontario, over the Christmas holidays. She was "Miss Freshette" on her campus and has held her position for four months, under a male editor-in-chief.

It is amazing how fast you can rise in an organization when you make the best use of your God-given talents.

There have been many cries of "plagiarism" directed at this column. For all those doubters of my ability, I might point out that plagiarism is the theft of ideas and information from one source, whereas research is the theft of ideas and information from several sources.

This column is based on research. I even stole that.

Nominations are open for the positions of Senior Class Valedictorian and Historian, until Jan. 21, and may be forwarded to Peter Hyndman, Chairman, Awards Committee, Students' Union Office. Any two students may nominate a third to candidacy for either of the above positions.

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