

Yoga in cyberspace?

The web pages of yoga studios in Turku/Åbo

In this article, I will offer some comments on the web-sites of the nine yoga schools which are active in the city of Turku/Åbo at the present moment (see sources for the links).^{*} This work is part of a larger, ongoing research project on yoga in this city within the PCCR or Post Secular Society and a Changing Religious Landscape Centre of Excellence research project at the Department of Comparative Religion, Åbo Akademi University.

YOGA IS A POPULAR FIELD OF RESEARCH TODAY, both in terms of historical studies and contemporary ethnography (see e.g. Singleton & Byrne 2008 and White 2011). However, studies on yoga and the world wide web are scarce. Moreover, Finland has both one of the highest internet penetration rates in the world (number ten, according to <http://www.internetworldstats.com/top25.htm>) and a high number of yoga practitioners (Ketola 2008: 167), this study may not be completely without interest – particularly since some researchers (e.g., Cheong *et al.* 2009) have indicated that the internet and new media enable representational practices which are creating new modes of social communication.

In a recent article, Heidi Campbell (2012) has argued that what she calls ‘networked religion’ is defined by five key traits, which are; a networked community, storied identities, shifting authority, convergent practice, and a multisite reality. These key traits, she claims, highlight central research topics and questions explored within the study of religion and the internet. Studying religion on the internet,

therefore, should provide insights not only into the common attributes of religious practices online, but also help explain current general trends within the practices of religion in a networked society. Towards the end of the article, I will return to this claim, and offer some general conclusions based on the material at hand.

The material for this study is gathered from the websites of the active, commercial, or semi-commercial yoga schools in this town. I have previously conducted in-depth interviews with teachers from all these schools, and while I do not use that material here *per se*, I do sometimes use information from those interviews to fill in the background. I have not included gyms or other institutions offering yoga as part of a larger curriculum. By the term ‘yoga’, I here refer to what Elisabeth De Michelis (2004) has called ‘modern postural yoga’ in its many variants – though, as we will see later on, some of these schools offer other kinds of yoga practices to their customers as well.

Yoga in Finland

As in many other European countries, in Finland the first people who talked about yoga as a beneficial practice Westerners might take up, rather than as a quaint oriental custom, were the theosophists. The first theosophical lodge in Finland was founded in 1894 (the first in Turku in 1907), but even though theosophical authors did deal with yoga at some length in their publications, their yoga was very different from what people generally think of as yoga today (Ahlbäck 1995: 144). H. P. Blavatsky and others were very critical of the physical practices of what they called ‘Hatha Yoga’, understanding the so-called Raja Yoga of Patañjali as ‘real’ or ‘uncorrupted’ yoga.

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For them, the term yoga referred an internal, meditative practice.

Modern postural yoga arrived in Finland with the translation of Yogi Ramacharaka's (William Walker Atkinson's) books, the first of which was published in 1911. However, it was not until the opera singer, Ture Ara (1903–79) started teaching yoga in the 1940s that yoga began to acquire a public face in Finland. Institutionalized yoga teaching began in the late 1950s and what today is known as the Yoga Federation of Finland was founded in 1967. I will return to this federation shortly.

Little is known about yoga practice in Turku before a local branch of the Yoga Federation of Finland was founded in 1969. However, an interest in yoga must have been already present, for the courses immediately started attracting large numbers of students. Much as in other localities in Finland, the Yoga Federation commanded a virtual monopoly on postural yoga in Turku until the advent of several commercial yoga studios in the early 1990s.

As in some other Eastern European countries, Finland's yoga scene today is bifurcated between an



Headstand at an Astanga Vinyasa retreat.

older and a newer style of practice. What we could call the old style is represented by the Yoga Federation of Finland, dating from 1967. It is characteristic of the so-called Hatha Yoga taught by this group that the practice has been explicitly severed from its Hindu roots in order to create a type of completely secular yoga, said to be uniquely suited to Finnish people. Within the Yoga Federation of Finland, yoga is typically taught by volunteers in adult education facilities. Somewhat like the British Wheel of Yoga, the Yoga Federation of Finland does not follow any particular Indian guru (though a rather loose link with Tirumalai Krishnamacharya is often emphasized today; see e.g., Tavi 2011), and the style of yoga taught is very gentle and soft, so as to suit anyone, regardless of age or physical condition. Perhaps as a result of the rising median age of its teachers, the gentleness of the Yoga Federation's style of practice has increased in recent years.

Scholars have noted the importance of the Federation's decades of work in the popularization of yoga in Finland (Ketola 2008: 167). Its extensive and dedicated network of teachers giving classes in their spare time means that classes are available all over the country and for a very low price. At the Turku Adult Education Centre, you can get fifty hours of yoga for 50 euros.

The newer style of yoga is represented by the commercial, international brands of yoga that started arriving in earnest in Finland in the 1990s. The dominant position is held by K. Pattabhi Jois's Astanga Vinyasa Yoga method, but most international styles of yoga can be found in Finland today. These schools are urban, often celebrate their Indian roots, cater mainly to young people, and are set up along commercial lines. This yoga is clearly a transnational cultural product (Strauss 2005: 9).

These two styles of yoga may well be viewed as belonging to two discrete worlds. However, there is considerable traffic between them, in both directions. Both sides have less than flattering views of each other: the urban youth calls the yoga of the Yoga Federation 'woollen socks yoga' or 'grandmother yoga', while the Yoga Federation practitioners scoff at the soulless gymnastics of the young.

The Yoga Federation teaches almost twenty groups in Turku every week. In addition to this, Turku today has eight professional yoga studios, which is the second largest number in the country.

Contents of the websites

The nine websites that I will deal with here naturally differ from each other in many ways. Two are very rudimentary, barely functioning, home-made sites, with information and pictures from events held in 2007 and 2009, broken links and at times barely readable text. Likewise only two of the nine can be said to be professionally done. Despite all of their differences, however, the web pages are also characterized by a uniformity of graphic style and colour, or perhaps, lack of colour. Only one or two stand out from the others.

What do these websites, then, contain? All of them provide basic information about the services presented at the school in question, such as the types of classes offered, timings and location. All but one provide information about prices. I do not know why one school omits to do so, but this may reflect the unease some teachers feel about charging money for teaching yoga, a theme that surfaced constantly in my interviews. Most contain pictures and short presentations of the teachers – sometimes in an implicitly hierarchical way, such as at the Aura Yoga School, where the owners are presented first and with their full names, while the associates are presented only by their christian names. Some offer a definition of yoga, such as ‘an ancient system of self care. . . [which is]. . . gentle yet efficient’. Many of the websites deal with the effects of yoga, stating for example that yoga ‘activates the parasympathetic nervous system and helps with healing and rejuvenation’. Some speak of yoga reducing stress, one offering the helpful clarification that providing yoga classes for your company employees will increase their energy, productivity, and all-round well-being, at the same time as decreasing tiredness and stress; to the extent that each euro spent on yoga (and other health-related activities in the workplace) may save your company up to six euros!

Apart from ordinary yoga classes, several of the sites offer private tuition and special groups (e.g., for hen parties). Two are clearly geared to a corporate audience, one by offering courses

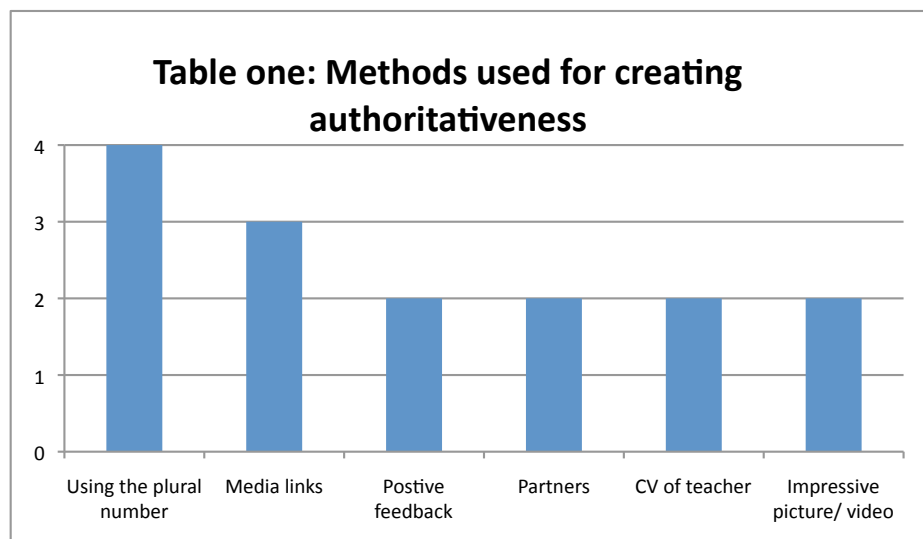
in mindfulness in addition to more general yoga classes.

It is also interesting to look at what these web pages do not offer. None of them features any kind of blog (or links to one), none offer any kind of discussion forum or space for comments, though two contain links to corresponding Facebook pages – pages, however, that are again used only for posting updates and other news, not really interactively. In these cases, then, the oft-mentioned interactive or participatory nature of the internet (e.g., Lövheim 2007: 85–103) is not utilized. There is no networked community, to use Heidi Campbell’s term, here. There are of course Finnish forums on the internet where yoga is discussed (notably jooga.meditaatio.fi and keskustelu.suomi24.fi, under ‘sports’), but they are institutionally independent and indeed many of the discussions there are quite critical of teachers and other yoga authorities (see e.g., Anon 2011).

Creating authoritativeness

Let us pause now to look more closely at these authorities. It has often been remarked (e.g., Lövheim 2007: 73–6) that cyberspace offers a forum for novel ways of negotiating authority. For Heidi Campbell, as we read earlier, this is the fifth of five characteristics of networked religion. Four out of the nine yoga schools featured here are run by a single person. How do these people go about presenting themselves as authoritative, or perhaps better to say, authentic teachers?

All of the four schools operated by only one teacher presented their activities in the plural num-



ber: 'we' provide these kinds of classes, 'our' students say, etc. One school even spoke about 'our teachers' when my interview with the owner of the school clearly indicates that there is only one teacher (IF mgt 2011-107). Apparently, then, it is felt that being a single, private entrepreneur in the field of yoga is not considered trustworthy. It is also possible that in these cases, the perceived weakness of being a single teacher is also linked to the fact that each of the founders are women.

Three schools linked themselves with, or quoted newspaper articles about their activities or course content (e.g., the recent craze of courses on mindfulness in the corporate sector). The content of the quotes seems to be secondary to the general fact of having been featured in the media. This is apparent from a rather dismissive article quoted without comment on the Facebook version of one of these web pages (Pune joogakoulu 2012).

Two websites quoted positive feedback from students, two gave a list of 'partners', that is, companies that arrange or perhaps at least have arranged courses provided by the particular school. The two schools that featured this were also the ones most obviously geared towards a corporate customer base.

Despite having presented themselves in the plural, two of these schools also featured short CVs of their founders. Compared to other similar texts, these were surprisingly humble in tone – perhaps reflecting the stereotypically Finnish disdain for self-praise, or perhaps also the fact that both of these teachers were women – detailing the ways in which teachers found yoga, but also describing their previous corporate background. Again, unsurprisingly, these two schools were the ones catering primarily for companies.

Surprisingly, despite yoga culture often being held to be fixated on external appearances, only two of these schools presented pictures of their founders which showed them adopting any more or less impressive yoga postures: one by means of a picture of its founder sitting in the lotus pose, dressed in some kind of exotic, oriental robe; the other by a video of the founder doing a series of (actually rather ordinary) yoga postures.

Drawing on the writings of Erving Goffman and Anthony Giddens, Heidi Campbell (2012: 71) considers the social sphere as offering individuals various resources and meanings from which they can select, assemble, and present a sense of identity. It is clear from research, she writes, that nobody's networked religious identity is created purely online

Pune joogakoulu
28 May

Aamulehti testasi etäjoogaa: suosittelee kaikille jotka kaipaavat venyttelyä sekä virkistävää ja rentouttavaa taukoa kätevästi omalla työpisteellä. Erityisesti toimistotyöntekijöille.

[See translation](#)

Etäjooga rentouttaa tietokoneen ääressä

Mikä: Joogakoulu Punen etäohjattu taukojooga, joka perustuu iyengarjoogaan. Osallistuja ottaa tietokoneen avulla etäyhteyden joogaohjaajaan. Ohjaajan näkee kuvaruudulta. Myös ohjaaja näkee joogaan osallistujat, joita voi olla useita. Taukojooga kestää puolisen tuntia ja siihen voi osallistua työvaatteissa. Osa liikkeistä tehdään seisaallaan, osa istuen. Apuvälineiksi riittävät pöytä, tuoli ja seinä.

Kenelle: Kaikille, jotka kaipaavat venyttelyä sekä virkistävää ja rentouttavaa taukoa työpäiväänsä. Erityisesti toimistotyöntekijöille.

Huonoa: Kannettavan tietokoneen pieneltä kuvaruudulta oli välillä hankala tihrustaa ohjaajan liikkeitä samalla, kun itse teki liikkeitä perässä. Olisi hyvä, jos yhteyteen voisi käyttää esimerkiksi videoneuvottelulaitteita tai muuta isoa kuvaruutua. Joogasin rauhallisessa aulatilassa, jossa liikkui ihmisiä taukojoogan aikana. Se häiritsi hieman keskittymistä, vaikka jooga ei mietiskelyä ollutkaan. Liikkeet olivat helppoja, mutta välillä mentiin turhan reipasta tahtia liikkeestä toiseen. Työvaatteet sopivat hommaan hyvin, mutta kiristävä vyö tai kra-

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6 1 1

Links to a newspaper review.

or offline. Rather, drawing on the various resources available online, internet users create and perform a unique online identity. Such processes of construction and performance often lead people to seek out what Campbell calls a 'storied identity', that is, an identity of several connected layers, as they attempt to find and create coherence amidst the fluidity of the internet.

As we have seen, there is not very much material to work with in order to analyze the identity formations of the yoga teachers on these web pages, but it is notable that all the sources they use for constructing their identities here are offline sources: the CVs of their offline life, links to offline media and pictures from offline contexts. That is not to say, of course, that their online identity would be exactly the same as the offline version, but it is clear that little effort has here been put into creating a specifically online identity. Likewise, because of the 'bulletin board' nature of many of these web pages (see below), there is little room for any narrativized identity here: here, teachers are teachers and very little else.

Online yoga

Scholars have been fascinated by the opportunities the world wide web presents for 'doing religion' online; one oft-quoted example is offering Hindu *pujas* which can be performed by clicking and dragging with the mouse (Young 2004; Lövheim 2007: 52). Do these sites, then, offer any opportunities for doing yoga online, that is, online yoga rather than yoga online? Perhaps surprisingly, the website of Yoga Studio Samadhi school, the most elementary of all these sites, is the only one offering descriptions of (meditational) practices that can be done at home. However, these are not online practices in any other sense than being described online; the actual activity is done elsewhere. Similarly web-mediated practices are offered by the arguably most technologically advanced website, that of Yoga School Pune school, which offers distance learning classes using ordinary video conferencing technology. Still, most schools content themselves with using their web pages as little more than bulletin boards, offering at most some hints about how to prepare for class (for example, by maintaining good hygiene, avoiding strong perfumes, etc.).

As I see it, there are two main reasons for this. Since these schools are commercial businesses, it would not make much sense for them to give out their teachings for free on the internet. Secondly, and more importantly, there is a strong discourse within yoga of its being properly communicated only hands-on from teacher to student. This is apparent from the website of the Astanga Yoga school, which, while offering a reading list, maintains that yoga cannot be learnt through the medium of books. Apparently, then, this principle can be extended to the cyber media as well. That this discourse can also be linked to questions of power almost goes without saying. Further, within all of modern postural yoga, it is the experience generated by the physical, bodily practice of yoga postures that is central. Recreating this experience within the disembodied world of cyberspace may not be the easiest of tasks.

How do these nine websites, then, locate themselves within the cyber universe? P. H. Cheong *et al.* have noted how 'religion-online' constitutes new sacred



Connecting with the world (or at least a pillar).

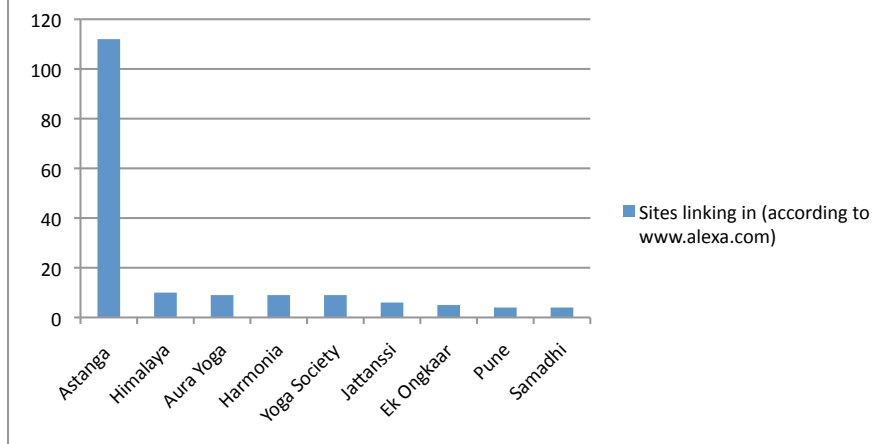
geographies of the information age (2009: 291–302). This loosely corresponds with what Heidi Campbell (2012: 80) calls a multisite reality. How does that geography appear here? All these websites contain details of the location of the school they represent, often providing maps. However, there seems to be much less of an interest in carving out a particular presence within cyberspace itself, since only five out of the nine websites contain hyperlinks. Yoga Centre Himalaja, true to the catholic ambitions of its founder Lasse Aittokari, provides links to all kinds of yoga traditions, including all but two of the Turku yoga studios, these two probably left out by oversight. The Astanga Yoga School of Turku comes closest to achieving completeness by, after a rather long list of other Astanga Vinyasa sites, giving hyperlinks to three other local studios; Yoga Centre Himalaja, Yoga School Pune and Yoga Therapy Harmonia (though the links seem to be broken). These links are some-

Koti
[Tuntikuvaukset](#)
[Aikataulu ja Hinnat](#)
[Opiskelijoiden Edut](#)
[Mitä Jooga on?](#)
[Klassinen Jooga](#)
[Jooga Suomessa](#)
[Kuvia Himalajasta](#)
[Kuvia Musiikkijuhlasta](#)
[Linkkejä](#)
[In English](#)
[Joogatapahtumia](#)

- **JOOGAA USEISSA KAUPUNGEISSA:**
 - [Suomen Joogaliitto](#) (Hatha-Jooga)
 - [Alueelliset Joogayhdistykset](#)
 - [Suomen Joogaopisto, Saarijärvi](#)
 - [Astanga Joogakoulu](#)
 - [Suomen Sahaja Yoga](#)
- **TURKU:**
 - [Joogakeskus Himalaja](#)
 - [Turun Joogayhdistys ry](#)
 - [Astanga Jooga Turku ry](#)
 - [Joogastudio Samadhi](#)
 - [Joogaterapia Harmonia](#)
 - [Sahaja Jooga Turku](#)
 - [Aurajooga](#)
 - [Kundaliinjooja](#)

Links at the Yoga Centre Himalaja site.

Table two: Sites linking in



times marks of institutional or ideological affiliation (such as that between Harmonia and the Yoga Society of Turku), but they may also be indications of personal friendship between teachers (such as that between the Astanga school and Himalaja). However, it is noteworthy that four out of nine websites do not provide any links at all, constituting themselves, as it were, as isolated planets in cyberspace.

It has often been said that the internet offers a dramatic realignment of power, in that a person or an organization with the necessary know-how but very slender financial or other resources can create a very impressive website, thus taking up a much larger presence in cyberspace than in the offline world (e.g. Helland 2008). Campbell (2012: 74) calls this shifting authority. A quick look at these sites through Alexa.com, one of several web information companies built mainly for the benefit of web-based advertisement, reveals that only two of these websites have enough traffic to be even noticeable – and they are the Turku Astanga Yoga School and the Yoga Society of Turku, by far the two largest yoga schools in town. There is, in other words, not much of a shift of authority here. With regards to other sites linking in, another indicator of the popularity of a website, the Turku Astanga Yoga School – no doubt mainly because of its being a sub-site of the very suc-

cessful Helsinki Astanga Yoga School – is way beyond the others, as the following chart shows. However, neither the Astanga nor the Yoga Society web pages can be said to be impressive, either in terms of content, functions or packaging. It is thus clearly the small yoga studios that feel the need to invest in their web pages, the larger ones being confident in attracting and reaching out to enough students through other means.

Yoga and religion

A question often posed both by yoga practitioners as well as scholars is, what is the connection between yoga and religion? The answer would seem to be ‘none’, if you consult the websites themselves. None of them even mention concepts such as ‘God’, ‘Ishvara’ or ‘religion’, except for the Astanga yoga website, which explicitly says that ‘yoga is *not* a religion’ but

a philosophy and practical system, born about 5000 years ago in India which offers the tools for spiritual growth and balance of body and mind. Yoga has developed within Hinduism

Turun Astangajooga

Turun Astangajooga

Harjoittelemme salliamme astangajoogaa intialaisen Sri K. Pattabhi Joisin perinteen mukaan. Astangajoogasta on tullut länsimaissa yksi tunnetuimmista joogan muodoista – ja Suomessa tämä on nykyään luultavasti suosituin sellainen. Astangajoogaa sanotaan usein fyysisesti vaativimmaksi joogan muodoksi, mutta jo peikastään tämänkin takia se vaatii myös mieleltä paljon. Astangajoogan ominaispiirteinä ovat tiukimmat asennot ja asanat, jotka sidotaan yhteen hengityksen rytmittäväksi virtaavaksi liikesarjaksi. Harjoituksen vaatavuudesta huolimatta harjoituksesta voivat hyöttyä ja nauttia kaikki ikään, sukupuoleen, kuntoon, notkuteen tai motiveihin katsomatta; koska viime kädessä jokainen joka tapauksessa tekee harjoitusta oman kehon ja mielen rajojen mukaan.

Sri K. Pattabhi Jois on tallentanut opetuksensa kirjaan Yoga Mala, mutta joogaa ei voi varsinaisesti oppia kirjoista. Astangajoogan voi aloittaa viikonlopun mittaisilla alkeiskursseilla, joita järjestämme vähintään kerran kuukaudessa; ilmoittautuminen etukäteen Kurssikalenterin kautta. Alkeiskursin jälkeen voit harjoitella salliamme oman aikataulusi mukaan tunnelliämme, joita järjestetään päivittäin. Tunnelliämme ja kursselliämme tehdään joko suullisen ohjauksen mukaan tai oman hengityksen tahdissa jooga-asanaharjoitusta, kunnioittaen astangajoogan mestarin Sri K. Pattabhi Joisin (1915 - 2009) mottoa:

"Astangajooga on 99% harjoitusta ja 1 % teoriaa."

Tervetuloa!

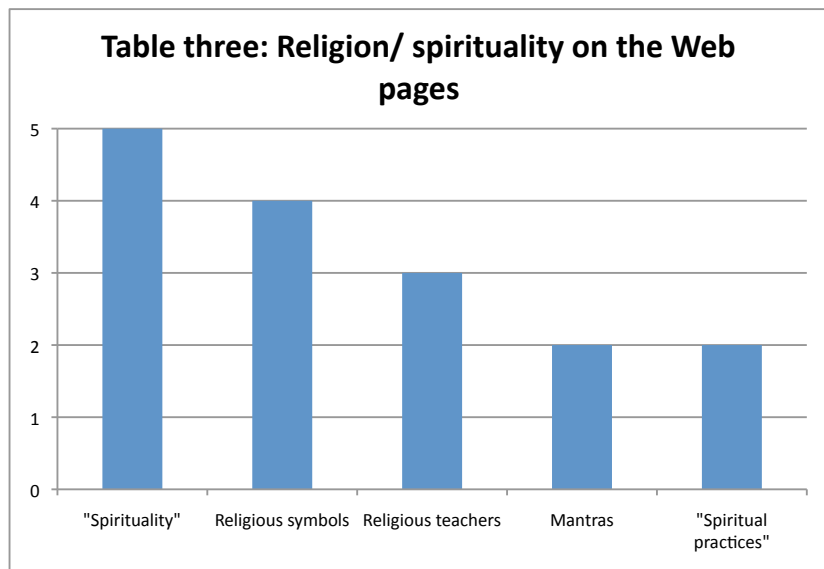
Ilmoittautumiset alkeiskursseille vasemmalla olevan valikon Kurssikalenterista, kiltois:-)

Introduction to the Turku Astanga Yoga school.

and Buddhism, but it is by its basic nature a method which is universal, religiously independent and which develops all people equally, regardless of their view of life. (Astanga joogakoulu 2012.)

Nevertheless, there are some indicators showing that these websites do not view yoga as purely a sport or gymnastic activity either, in other words, as a simply physical practice. No doubt other indicators could be used as well; this is just to indicate a dilemma which many of these websites seem to fall into, between pronouncing yoga to be non-religious but still wanting to retain something of its 'spiritual' side – arguably one of the most important factors in the success of modern yoga today.

The majority of the websites (five out of nine), as in the above quote, make use of the word 'spiritual' (*henkinen* in Finnish) in connection with yoga. For example, on the otherwise matter-of-fact Aura Yoga site, it is said about both of the main teachers that as of late, they have become interested in the 'spiritual side' of yoga. On the Turku Yoga Society and Himalaja sites, yoga is said to suit anyone who is interested in

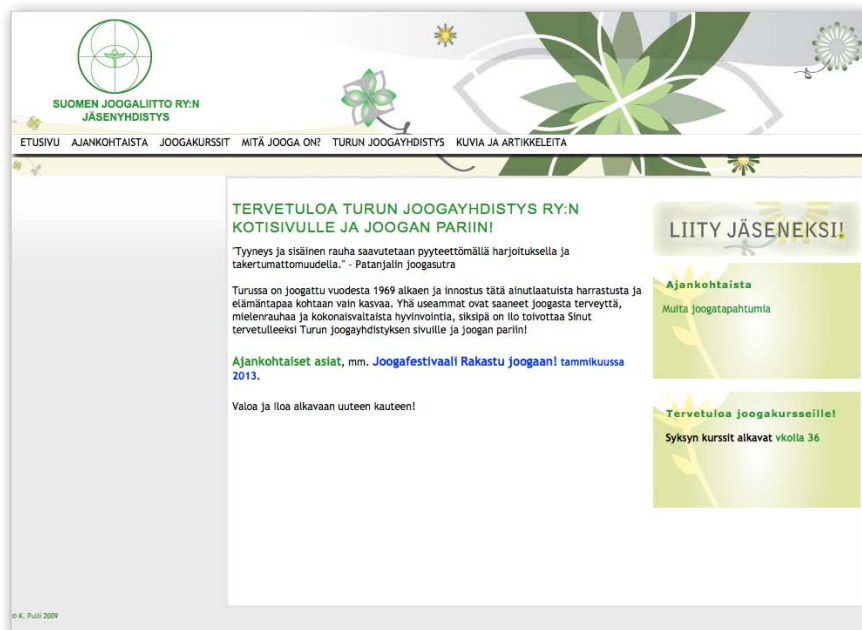


'their health, well-being and spiritual growth'.

Four websites use religious symbols, but not in a very obvious way – none use the standard *Om* symbol, for example. It could also be argued that these symbols are simply used for their exotic, visual value, but since these pages in general are not very visually oriented, they do stand out. Three websites promote, or at least mention explicitly, religious teachers, such as the Finnish Buddhist Monk Tae Hye Sunim. Two feature mantras and explanations of them – the Astanga school and the Ek Ongkaar Kundalini Yoga School, and two again feature descriptions of what

could perhaps be called 'spiritual practices'. In one case, this is a form of Buddhist meditation, though the term 'Buddhist' is not mentioned in the description. The other case is again the Ek Ongkaar Kundalini Yoga School, which advertises many such practices, such as how a woman may clean her aura of the negative imprints of men that she has been intimate with.

When it comes to this question of religion versus spirituality, the Ek Ongkaar Kundalini Yoga School website is in many ways the most interesting one. Though it advertises itself as offering Kundalini Yoga in the tradition of



Non-denominational symbolism on the Yoga Society site.

Yogi Bhaĵan (1929–2004), the founder of the neo-Sikh Healthy, Happy, Holy (or 3H) Movement, and sometimes quotes him, it never explains either the term ‘Kundalini’ or who this person is. A workshop on turbans purports to explicate ‘turban technology’ – an instance of the old strategy of aligning yoga with science rather than religion (see e.g., De Michelis 2004). Nevertheless, with its exotic sounding names (the name of the Finnish woman who leads the school is Siri Karta Kaur), its descriptions of energies and auras, long mantras and pictures of white-clad, turbaned young yogis, this website makes it obvious that the yoga offered here is something quite different from the run-of-the-mill, stretch-your-limbs-on-your-mat yoga.

What comes through loud and clear, then, is that yoga teachers in Turku, regardless of which yogic tradition they represent, are extremely wary of presenting yoga in terms of religion or often even ‘spirituality’. Two of the nine schools had *none* of the above-mentioned indicators on their sites. The in-depth interviews that I have conducted with these teachers for my more general study confirms that in some cases this reflects the particular teacher’s own purely this-worldly interest in yoga; in other cases it seems to have more to do with marketing, that is, with not wishing to put off potential pupils by doing anything that might smack of religion.

Summary

Early scholars of religion online (famously O’Leary 1996) asserted that it would transform religious beliefs and practices in revolutionary ways. Today such prognostications have been considerably toned down. In the case of the websites of yoga studios in Turku/Åbo, even the more modest claim that the internet and new media enable representational practices which create new social modes of communication does not seem to hold true, let alone the more utopian assertions of early scholarly studies of religion and the internet. All of the websites I have looked at very much represent traditional, one-way movements of information. That this is not just an indicator of lazy web design is indicated by the fact that it is the least advanced websites which share most of their teachings online, while the more advanced sites focus more on basic – albeit nicely packaged – information about the teachings and courses offered offline and sometimes offer the option of online class bookings. In fact, the websites seem to reflect the well-entrenched discourse of modern yoga that it can

be learnt only from a physically present teacher, and that real yoga is a physical, bodily experience.

How well do these web pages, then, conform to Heidi Campbell’s notion of networked religion? Little enough: there is hardly any networked community here, little indication of storied identities, no shifting authority, only a little convergent practice, and a poorly developed multisite reality. However, Heidi Campbell (2012: 84) has argued that studies of networked religion show us more than just religion online; rather, they indicate shifts at work in our emerging information culture in general, as the internet serves as a microcosm displaying popular notions of being and sociality. I believe this to be true in this case as well: regardless of all the talk of ‘spirituality’ in connection to yoga, yoga schools still generally operate along hierarchical lines, with clear authority figures and sharp boundaries towards perceived heteropraxy and competing authorities. The so-called ‘ethical guidelines’ for teachers of Iyengar Yoga in the United States, is a particularly poignant example of this (Iyengar Yoga 2012).

Some scholars may therefore be disappointed: there is no religion or spirituality being ‘done’ on these websites – as indeed, there is not on most religious websites. Much digital religion is admittedly very boring: the vast majority of websites in general do not, for various, often compelling reasons, utilize the more exciting aspects of the world wide web. Nevertheless, if we look a little closer, we will see plenty of interest here. These websites negotiate the complex relationship between yoga, sports and spirituality with sometimes surprising creativity. By close observation of what these web pages say, through text, images, hyperlinks and omission, we can add one more piece to the wonderfully colourful and intricate puzzle of religion and spirituality in a post-secular society. ■



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