

## **Bulgarian Synod warns against neo-Hindu “spiritual teachers” with false Christian elements**



The Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has issued a strongly worded statement warning Bulgarian citizens against what it calls “pagan neo-Hindu propaganda with false Christian elements” being spread by touring gurus and self-proclaimed spiritual teachers.

In the statement published yesterday, the Church leadership expresses concern about religious groups that “interweave their pagan beliefs with incorrectly used elements from Christianity” with the goal of leading “as many people as possible into spiritual delusion” to increase their followers.

The Synod specifically names several prominent figures including Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sri Chinmoy, Sri Mataji Nirmala Devi, Osho Rajneesh, Sai Baba, Shibendu Lahiri, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar among the “neo-Hindu spiritual leaders” whose initiatives are being promoted in Bulgaria and abroad.

The Synod expresses particular outrage at attempts to present Christ as merely another “spiritual teacher” or as an “incarnation” (“avatar”) of the Hindu deity Krishna. “We consider unworthy any attempt to diminish the redemption given to us by our Savior on the cross, and to replace His work with the false teaching of karma and reincarnation,” the statement reads.

The Synod warns that these groups often present themselves as focused on educational, cultural and sports programs, stress relief seminars, health improvement courses, and peace projects, thereby infiltrating cultural and educational institutions. The Church leadership expresses concern that Bulgarian citizens are being misled into participating in initiatives that work against their Christian worldview.

Beyond doctrinal concerns, the bishops cite their pastoral experience in warning that such pagan cults often pose threats to people’s physical and mental health, property, family stability, professional advancement and social integration.

The statement concluded with Biblical warnings against false prophets and a call for Bulgarians to remain faithful to Orthodox Christianity, invoking the protection of St. John of Rila to “keep the holy Orthodox faith” and witness that “Jesus is Christ is the only Way, Truth and Life for all people.”

Read the full statement below:

We address our God-protected Orthodox flock in Bulgaria and around the world, as well as the media, cultural-educational institutions and the public with a call for greater vigilance regarding touring gurus, self-proclaimed “spiritual teachers” and the communities gravitating around them. They carry out preaching and religious activities in our country, interweaving their pagan beliefs with incorrectly used elements from Christianity. Among the main goals of these “spiritual leaders” is to lead as many people as possible into spiritual delusion and thus increase the number of their followers.

In our country and beyond, the initiatives of neo-Hindu “spiritual leaders” such as Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Sri Chinmoy, Sri Mataji

Nirmala Devi, Osho Rajneesh, Sai Baba, Shibendu Lahiri, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and many others are often promoted.

Most communities that deify these leaders claim to the public that they aim to perfect the individual person and society as a whole by creating attitudes, skills and conditions for “self-realization” and “harmony.” The cults operating in the name of such gurus claim that their work is focused on educational, cultural and sports programs, seminars and courses for self-improvement, stress relief, health improvement, enhancing concentration and memory, peace projects and universal progress of all humanity. Through such positive messages they infiltrate temporarily or permanently into the calendar of numerous cultural and educational institutes. Thus, unfamiliar Bulgarian citizens are misled: mayors, directors, secretaries, teachers, educators, parents and children, who are placed in a situation where they participate in initiatives directed against their Christian worldview and destroying their Orthodox identity.

It is completely unacceptable to us for the Lord Jesus Christ to be presented by one guru or another as just another of the many “spiritual teachers” or as an “incarnation” (“avatar”) of the Hindu deity Krishna. We consider unworthy any attempt to diminish the redemption given to us by our Savior on the Cross, and to replace His work with the false teaching of karma and reincarnation. We reject any encroachment upon the millennial Christian morality of the Bulgarian people and its replacement with the false freedom of Eastern false teachings, according to which “there is no good and evil,” life is a cycle, and the human personality is a “rag doll” without any significance (Sri Sri Ravi Shankar). If the Orthodox saints achieved righteousness and holiness, from which we take example and benefit to this day, they accomplished this feat through God’s grace and with full awareness that they have one single life, during which they labored in humility, obedience to the Church, fasting, prayer and virtue. Therefore, any attempt to compare Eastern meditation with Orthodox prayer, the emptying of consciousness in sects with self-knowledge and knowledge of God in the Church, or yoga with Orthodox asceticism is a gross distortion of the fact that between paganism and Christianity there are essential differences, stemming from which gods the Hindus worship, Whom Christians revere, and what are the aspirations of pagans and Orthodox believers.

The Holy Synod is concerned not only for the members of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church-Bulgarian Patriarchate, but also for Bulgarian families, schools and kindergartens, Bulgarian cultural centers and libraries, concert halls, social and cultural centers, which are massively used for such religious propaganda and this aims to alienate our people from their ancestral traditions and spiritual roots.

Furthermore, proceeding from its many years of pastoral experience, the Church knows that such pagan cults are in many cases a threat to people's physical and mental health, to their property, to the strength of their families, to their professional realization and social integration.

Let us show more common sense, as well as gratitude toward the caring love of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who through the Gospel enlightens us and warns us as His beloved children: Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and will deceive many (Mk. 13:5-6); Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But you, take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand (Mk. 13:21-23). Faithful to Christ's commandments, the Holy Apostles also protect us from impostors who strive to separate the faithful flock from the Good Shepherd. The holy Apostle Peter says: But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord Who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction (2 Pt. 2:1). Let us stay away from demonic superstitions, from the false bliss of pride and vice, and let us stand in the covenant of St. John of Rila to keep the holy Orthodox faith, live blamelessly and witness before the whole world that Jesus is Christ (cf. 1 John 5:1) is the only Way, Truth and Life for all people!

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