

Excerpt from “Yog: The Business of Spirituality”

By Ananya Vahal

“Put your leg over your shoulder like this.”

By now, I had practiced yoga with a couple of different yoga teachers so I thought I knew what to expect. Katie was extremely flexible and had shown me some cool yoga poses earlier so Carlos and I decided to give her class a try.

To my surprise, I managed to lift my leg up over my shoulder. It was uncomfortable but doable. I thought I was doing pretty well for someone who didn't practice yoga regularly.

“Yeah that's good. Now, just put your leg behind your head. You can do it,” Katie said.

“Uhh. No I can't,” I said out loud.

“You can do it. Just put your leg behind your head like this. You're almost there,” she said.

Feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable I averted my eyes away from her and avoided eye contact when she looked in my direction for the rest of the class. It wasn't just her unreasonable expectations that made me feel embarrassed, it was also the crooked *bindi* on her forehead. It wasn't quite in the center where it should be. *If you're gonna appropriate my culture, at least do it well*, I thought to myself. I looked over at Carlos and met his eyes. He knew exactly what I was thinking. We worked extra hard during this yoga class just to hold our laughter in until it was over.

After class ended, I felt more limber and flexible than I did before class started but I also felt more awkward and embarrassed than I did before class started. I decided to never take her yoga class again and gladly ignored the invitation to her new “hip-hop yoga” class.