

# ON YOGA IN GENERAL

---

*Květoslav Minařík*

Received December 20 2014 • Revised January 10 2015 • Accepted January 23 2015

## ABSTRACT

The problem of a happy or unhappy life is an emotional problem. As, from the point of view of yoga, this problem has to be resolved as the first, Yama is prescribed as the first step towards the yogic training. Yama means the discipline of emotion. By the help of it, happiness is literally “produced”. We wish the readers of this article to find in it clues which will help them to solve questions and problems on their path to perfect themselves.

## Key words

Yoga, yama, niyama, pranayama, pratyahara

## 1 Yoga

Yoga is generally understood either as a spiritual effort, or as a certain kind of physical exercise. In both cases, people are searching within it for something that will help them to solve the fundamental problems of life, but, at the same time, they are usually unaware what these problems in fact are. However, even though they aren't able to clearly define these problems, they are still directing all of their life's efforts towards being able to live happily. The desire for a happy life is oftentimes covered by a seeming desire for knowledge. Usually, people are not interested in the true knowledge, i.e. in an analytical knowledge of the qualities of the world and all its processes, which determine our emotional experience. They want to know how to achieve a happy sensory life.

Those, who are prompted by their desire to live happily or to obtain knowledge to seek by the means of yoga, often use inappropriate yogic means. Almost always, they let themselves be lured into the last one of the three parts of yogic training – into concentration, regardless of its

levels. Yet the first part of yogic training is the moral self-training, which in fact solves the problem of an unhappy emotional life in its full extent. Concentration either doesn't solve it at all, or does so only in some more or less abstract outline of this problem. You can concentrate with a clear and pure mind, as well as with a dull, furious and biased mind, and the results then look accordingly.

The problem of a happy or unhappy life is an emotional problem. As, from the point of view of yoga, this problem has to be resolved as the first, **Yama** is prescribed as the first step towards the yogic training. Yama means the discipline of emotion. By the help of it, happiness is literally "produced". An angry, obstinate, bothersome, limited person who is interested in many things would like to leave all this aside and simply sit in some yogic position and concentrate until they are happy. However, in the same way it is impossible to fly with a horse carriage and to ride through the town on an aeroplane, it isn't possible to arrive at feelings of happiness by concentration in a yogic position. In the same way, it is neither possible, by means of a simple moral discipline, to attain to the differentiation prescribed by yoga for the consciousness to rid itself of the last remains of ignorance.

Therefore, it is necessary to start with yama. Let's say immediately: in order not to describe stereotypical commandments of morality, how they are described by yama, let us begin simply in another way, without any slightest divergence from these commandments.

Yama prescribes that a person shall not hurt, lie, steal, live a non-chaste life, etc. What does it mean? A person should live in such a way that their mind will not narrow down, darken with malice, be aroused by hatred, ill will, etc. and will not sink into the world of sexual lust. However, to achieve that, it isn't enough that a person holds on to the prescribed moral commandments, which anyway, they immediately forget, even when they want to keep to them. Despite all of the commandments, they get angry, do not wish well, and are desirous and biased etc. Therefore they have to leave the comedy or theory of prescribed morality. For, if they want to be happy, they must implement the moral commandments through the development of a peaceful mind, happy mood, trustfulness and optimism. If they behave like this, they will not provoke anyone either by actions, or by their inner states – and their happiness will be developing. The more they hold on to these states of mind, the more they also eradicate the possible opposite mood states and when they do reach the very end of this moral purification, their happiness will be complete.

Happiness, as well as failure, are thus a matter of inner and mental states. However, while a person is corrupted by pessimism, an unkind mind and bad moods, as well as suspiciousness, the feeling of happiness does not want to appear. To those who constantly strive for good emotional as well as mental states, only time will bring the desirable result, i.e. happiness. When this happens, a person will attain success in the most important part of the yogic discipline, in yama.

The second step is **niyama**. It is concerned with physical, as well as inner, hygiene. A person should be particular about their personal appearance, attentive in contact with people, to not appear

extravagant, should educate themselves, train themselves in conscious thinking (as opposed to reflexive thinking), follow the social etiquette as well as the religious one (or, alternatively, lay morality), keep restraint in judgments, i.e. not to react to any behaviour or events spontaneously, occupy their mind by reading of religious books and seek the company of those engaged in noble actions and teachings.

Those who constantly strictly adhere to the commandments of yama and niyama, will achieve a transformation of the qualities of the natural emotional states. They will qualitatively advance in the order of creation, rise above the sphere of beings who are suffering and unhappy into the sphere of beings living harmoniously. Then they will even cross the boundary of the physically limited beings and reach the sphere of the supersensory existence. By that, they will prove for themselves, that they can and have to solve the problem of an unhappy life only by putting the transformation, or change of thought and feeling, into practice. They will realise that, by the constant moral purification and hygiene understood in the sense of niyama, they are raising themselves among gods, into the sphere of pure and blissful experiencing, to the place where their intuition itself suggests to them an idea of the highest happiness.

As a rule, most of those interested in yoga aren't longing for anything higher and if they take up further instructions of the yogic system anyway, they hurt themselves. As, they are mixing up disparate things and this has the same consequences as an excessive consumption of disharmoniously combined foods. However, if it turns out that a harmonious and blissful life doesn't attract a person at all, but they only desire to know, only then is a person sufficiently mature for a gradual realisation of the further instructions of the yogic teaching. Then yoga develops in the following way.

Niyama is followed by **asana**. However, asanas also belong to hygiene. Although the system of asanas as yogic exercises is also supposed to vitalise the body, still, they are supposed to culminate in the achievement of physical non-excitability or, in other words, in the elimination of nervousness. A yogi, who is, as a result of yama and niyama, happy, lively and optimistic, must, by means of asanas, stabilise themselves, in order to prevent the successes in yama and niyama making them again worldly. This means that, by means of the positions, they must attain serenity, i.e. absence of cravings and (presence of) equanimity. Only then should they supplement their exercise by pranayama.

**Pranayama** begins with rhythmical breathing. To this rhythmical breathing, observation of the rhythm of breathing is added. In this way, a person takes hold of prana, the physical content of breath or breathing. Thus, the rhythmical breathing achieves its purpose, that is – the rhythm and observation of breathing creates a harmony between a human and the nature. A feeling of freshness will appear, a negative aspect of which – the regripping of the world – has to be suppressed by asanas. Then a person is ready for further steps of the yogic training. These are only significant for those who need knowledge to accomplish their happiness. Through this knowledge, the questions of the place of an individual in the world and its destiny are clarified, and the prob-

blems of relationships of individuals to the world are solved, which cause absence of inner freedom or (the existence of) differentiating moments.

When a person is potentially happy and their bliss is only disturbed by a desire for knowledge, they can enter the path of the discipline of mind. This is because in such a case the mind is well prepared for it as the person doesn't desire sensory pleasures. Under these circumstances, the mind is supposed to be gradually fastened on one object and stabilised. This fastening and gradual stabilization is called **pratyahara**.

A yogi should eliminate the distraction of mind by constantly reminding themselves of their own body. Sitting in a position, they are supposed to dwell with their mind on their body, on its base, on the sitting part, whilst avoiding the trunk. However, until the mind is used to dwelling on one object, an entirely concrete object, it wanders again and again and becomes restless. Keeping the mind from this wandering is actually pratyahara. It can be characterized by tension, which originates in the struggle for the mind's stabilisation. This tension then manifests itself by various mystical effects and accompanying phenomena, which have to be refused altogether, for otherwise the mind would not stabilise.

When the mind stabilises, it passes to another phase, into concentration, which is called dharana. **Dharana** can be characterized as a state of mind, which no longer hinders the inner freeing coming to the fore. When this freeing is connected with an awareness of emptiness, limitless space and emotional freeing, it is dharana. When this concentration of mind becomes prolonged and the awareness of emptiness, limitless space and freeing does no longer disintegrate or disappear, it is the second level of concentration, dhyana and when this state becomes continuous and self-sustained (i.e. without the efforts to concentrate), it is the third level of concentration, **samadhi**.

Samadhi thus means realisation of the state of mind, which arose in concentration: that is awareness of emptiness, limitless space and inner relaxation. When these qualities develop in such a way that they become the dominant states for consciousness, when they control the whole psyche of a person and present to them the emptiness of the universe as a living reality, as the absolute, which, although it isn't the direct originator of creation, is still in contact with it, then the person has reached the **nirvikalpasamadhi**. This state crushes the phenomena of the universe into nothingness and by this the mind is redeemed from the samsaric state, from the state of being a slave to the nature. The mind can then realise the state of absolute and, by this, eliminate every predisposition of an individual to be entangled – in the form of a self-aware unit – into overwhelming impulses. At death this kind of person extinguishes themselves without the desire to continue to live or to be.

By this, a tragedy of the ceasing of the conscious being is erased. What has been said here about yoga until now, is, however, only a general description. If the highest goal of yogic education is not to be lost from view, it is necessary to start with the yogic education in the following way:

One has to start with yama. In the western understanding of the social education it means such a way of behaviour, in which an individual stands in the way of their fellows as little as possible and, as far as it is possible, he or she does not emotionally touch them at all; he or she shall take their opinion as a criterion of his or her correct or incorrect social behaviour. This is the external part of yama, which they have to complement by a direct self-restraint in the expressions of personal inclinations, especially taste. This applies to all actions by which a person caters for their whims. Then there are direct restrictions which are related to sex, for, a person shouldn't serve it "unlawfully". For example, it is not allowed for a man to invest a lot of efforts to win a woman, because this very energy must be used for more serious efforts. The question of a partner has to be left up to the guru to decide to prevent possible mixing of disparate qualities of humankind. In addition to that, a joyful and optimistic mood is required, and the kind of behavior which prevents a person from having to struggle with inclinations which he or she attacks and removes by yogic efforts.

Then there is niyama. It means purification of the body by water as well as by a pure mind. A person is supposed to have high standards of cleanliness and should not neglect their personal appearance. In the same way they have regard for their exterior, when they, so-called, 'fall in love', they should have regard for it with respect to their ideal, which can be God as well as an all-embracing, i.e. spiritual, intellectual and mental perfection. A requirement to dress and behave in a way which doesn't raise aversion in others, or as a person who belongs to a higher social class, is associated with this.

Because these commandments may be exhausting for a person and even lead them to distraction or nervousness, it is allowed to complement this effort with concentration. However, in this case, concentration is understood by meaning that a person is supposed to find a time in which their privacy will not be disturbed and in this relative solitude they should sit in one of the yogic positions and force the mind, as well as the whole inner being, into calmness.

When they eliminate all impressions of the everyday life, they should rest for a while in this pleasant mental and inner state, in order to be able to develop a better ability of observation of their own being. The inner equilibrium, disturbed by the efforts for moral and social self-training, should be renewed by enclosing oneself in one's own peace and by a mental effort to directly destroy these influences.

However, to the usual yogis – gurus – it is usually unknown what their disciple is supposed to do when they attain the so-called realisation, i.e. when they fully anchor in the states which they desired, not only on the level of awareness, but also in the subconsciousness. This is a result of the above described preparatory yogic self-discipline and a possible enlightenment, which is an accomplishment of the self-discipline in the so called 'direct yoga'. Therefore, these lines follow:

Enlightenment and a perfect self-knowledge raise a person to the level of a sage, whilst the preparatory yogic self-discipline rises them to the level of a *totally* happy person. That is, however, one

thing. Another is the fact that a yogi who attained perfection cannot be *absolutely* happy, because this depends on a continuous influence of the environment in which they are living, on their being. Therefore they still have to break the shell of the subtle selfishness and begin to base their perfection and happiness on the actions of virtue which belong to their level and their perfected state. These actions are described by an esoteric teaching, known in the exoteric conception as Mahayana, as well as magic. Also in *Buddhism*, we can encounter teachings on these actions, even though they are incorporated in another level. We can define them as follows:

Recognising myself in everything, I want to be happy in a supersensory sense. Recognising myself in everything, I want to have knowledge. Recognising myself in everything, I want only goodness to be performed. Recognising myself in everything, I want goodness to be absolutely powerful in the face of evil. Recognising myself in everything, I want to be (as the humankind) led only by God and never by his opposite. Recognising myself in everything, I want only the goodness to win.

These few formulae are perhaps sufficient. Magic is contained in them in the words "I want", Buddhism then in the words "recognizing myself in everything". This is modified, because, as I sense, this "recognising myself in everything" is related to breathing in and breathing out. Finally, Mahayana is in the system of this whole work.

He or she, who, after the accomplishment of the personal perfection, will further work in this way, will overcome the hostile influence of the environment by the path of virtue. Their perfection will then be high, wide, deep and unsurpassable. They will not be able to complain about anything anymore and will be exempt even from the destiny of some sages, as for example, Jesus, even though they, for example, continue to adhere to the very path of Jesus. But this last stage of yoga cannot be realised early. It may not be realised in this human body at all. However, time is no object, because here a person is no longer walking the path of people, but the path of Brahmas.

An opposite of this path is the path of Hinayana; it is a path of an absolute renunciation. However, here renunciation means also the loss of interest in attaining the personal perfection. But, abandonment of the idea of personal perfection must not lead to the abandonment of the path of renunciation. For, a person here, so to say, "hits the target" directly. Besides that I can add to it: what kind of sense does a personal or spiritual perfection have for the one who has renounced everything and absolutely? Thus: values have no meaning on this path. Therefore, a person usually doesn't want to walk this path and decides on the previous one, which, on its high levels, becomes the path of Brahmas. This path has its rules and these are described by all that was said above.

## 2 Yogic practice

Yoga is a two-stage discipline. Its first stage is a preparatory yogic moral self-training, which is, firstly, supposed to turn the student of yoga into a happy and socially flawlessly behaved person.

Only then is it possible to start with yoga as a system leading to the knowledge of forces moving the human being, as well as the human society as a whole, the forces controlling their whole life.

After fulfilling the moral prerequisites, which I describe else-where, the actual yogic practice is based on concentration of mind. This concentration is its main tool. However, concentration is a psychological issue. A person, who has never attempted to direct his or her mind and focus it in a disciplined fashion, cannot successfully concentrate it. If they attempt it, the mental indiscipline ambushes them and causes that their mind, instead of adhering to the chosen aid for concentration, on the contrary stiffens, and their consciousness narrows down. This is no longer the path to the development of the sense of obtaining knowledge, but it is a way for the mind to get stuck, a way to developing a fixed idea and, by that also, towards delusions, sometimes perhaps innocent, at other times in the form of a pathological fixed idea.

This difficulty is avoided in yoga by mental training. The mental training begins with a systematic exclusion of impressions originating in the daily life and continues with a gradual relaxation of the mind for so long until the mind finally becomes able to stay focused on one object.

Thus, those who want to be yogis must, after they have completed the tasks required by the preparatory yogic self-discipline, exclude impressions, which they have gathered in their daily life, until they pacify and calm the mind down and, by that, make it capable of the so-called extensive concentration, i.e. able to concentrate on the chosen object, in a similar way to a person who views with fondness something which they like. Thanks to that, the mind calms down even more and gradually, it becomes able to fasten on the chosen object of concentration with higher and higher intensity, because concentration is supposed to peak in the ability to hold in the mind one single object with the entire willpower, without the concentration turning into staring at this object, or into dullness which no longer allows a person to tell if they are thinking of the chosen object, or whether their stupefied and dulled mind unconsciously wanders from one thing to another.

As far as the object on which the mind is supposed to concentrate is concerned, the psychological reasons do not allow it to be some mental image, or anything abstract. The best object is the yogi's own body – and again taking into account psychological factors – that part of their body which is the most neutral: ideally feet and legs. The yogi is thus supposed to focus only on their feet and legs. The feet and legs are supposed to be, to a yogi, both a part of his or her person, as well as an outer object – that which they can feel, as well as that which they can think of as an object totally separate to their person. This way, their own feet and legs can serve them as an object for the training in concentration, until they reach such a level of concentration that their mind will no longer feel capable of movement without the order of the yogi's will.

Then the yogi changes their concentration into the so-called 'analytical concentration'. The mind is able to become analytical, if it is controlled and set to a total standstill. However, for that, both, its perfect focusing as well as its relaxation which prevents its spontaneous and unrestrained focusing,

are necessary. For such a mind, the yogi's being is no longer a fortress built from inner petrifications, but an entire scale of states and processes which give meaning to the personal living, because they are interdependent.

A concentration, in whose background there is a perfect self-observation and self-control, leads to the development of the abilities of discernment. With their help, a person learns the meaning of the driving forces of nature, which are always the cause of the arising of circumstances which can be controlled by a person only to a limited extent.

However, knowledge is not only a passive standpoint of the person obtaining knowledge. A yogi, who has attained high levels of the yogic training, may learn from that which they are discerning, what needs to be done in order to break the power of circumstances. Thus an absolute freedom dawns on them, and they know about it, that it will be realised in that moment when they overcome the personal considerations, when they overcome the personality which does not acknowledge the organic interconnectedness of all phenomena of the creation, and which wants to project itself as a phenomenon superior to, and surpassing, everything that exists.

A common person is a being who cannot disentangle themselves from the creation, whether we think of creation in the cosmic dimensions or only as of a human society. Besides that, a human being does not want to disentangle themselves from this society anyway. They constantly have some desires, sometimes completely earthly, another times superworldly ones, but these desires always form them into someone in the middle of something. This is a factor, or a law, which always limits the person. If the redemption according to the Buddhist conception really exists, it always relates to the realization of a state of eradication of selfness – every trace of differentiation in the yogi themselves. However, this is an infinitely distant prospect for everyone who is just beginning with yoga. Therefore they have to think in a human way and have only goals which are understandable from the human perspective. They have to make do with a promise that if they control themselves well, observe and concentrate, they will become a knowing person, a person who will understand the meaning of destinies of the human world and later also the path which leads above the level of these destinies.

However, let us return to the concentrating yogi again. Concentration becomes, to a yogi, means of disentangling from the net of innumerable moments of differentiation, i.e. individualisation and differentiation, which are the moments of inner slavery. However, here we are already on the borderline of the possibility to understand states which can be reached by a yogi, because, as soon as these moments of differentiation are overcome, the yogi finds himself or herself in the undifferentiated world, a world not differentiated in the amount of particularities. On the first levels of this world, the yogi's ability of understanding is developed to such an extent, that they understand not only the meaning of coarse 'stiffenings' or inner 'rigidifyings' which determine the process of the differentiated living with all its difficulties, limitations and irresistible drives and pressures of the circumstances, but also the fine 'stiffenings' and 'rigidifyings'. The latter means that the mind, because it understands and perceives in certain con-

cepts, is already becoming dull and becomes the bridle of a slave – the bearer of this mind. The yogis' plan is to overcome every manifestation of imperfection. Their ideal is freedom, which is being realised only above the state of the differentiated thinking. Over there, where the truths of individuals are no longer valid, the only valid thing is the stream of cognition which is a permanent factor, constantly breaking down the moments of differentiation and in this way protecting the state known as nirvana, redemption from delusions, ill will and hatred.

What do these prospects mean for a modern person? They mean the person's strength, the person's knowledge, their overcoming of every smallness of spirit and development of their abilities to learn and understand. Moreover, later they mean the reaching of a state in which they evidently detect that they have stopped the process of living as a factor creating causes of further and further urgencies of destiny, and, finally, the realisation of such a good state that it is not possible to describe it in words which would be understood.

Up to here, yoga is, for a modern person, a benefit for their life. However, it becomes the very opposite, if, of yoga as a whole, some parts are torn out – some parts evoking images of success in the society or in enjoyments in people who haven't disciplined their cravings beforehand. For, these people are never able to systematically progress in the realisation of the yogic teaching and therefore they start with hope and end with – disappointment.

In a concise summary, yogic practice carried out in this way is thus a systematic method of the gradual absorption of being into an undifferentiated essence of the universe, into the absolute. Concentration of mind is the tool for this method. The analytical concentration can be considered to be a classical concentration. By means of it, it is possible to discern the elements of our being to such an extent that the consciousness is able to identify all qualities of the universe, out of which it is the absolute which is the highest one. By its identification, a prerequisite is created for its realisation. Our 'I' can this way unify with the absolute.

### **3 Yoga and intellect**

There is a lot written about how yoga benefits health. However, in fact it also has a positive influence on the intellect, while this influence of yoga is determined by psychological factors and not by occult or divine ones.

In this sense, I want to talk mainly about myself, but this will perhaps not be of harm if we take into account that, in few words, I want to say a lot.

I already accepted the full inventory of yoga as life directions as an adolescent boy. This was after I realised my inner and physical poverty as well as their consequences for my future life, because I have been through, in total four years of school education, malnutrition and work exertion of over ninety working hours per week. During that period, my only friend brought me a paperback about yoga.

Because I believed that only yoga could help me in my situation, I devoted myself to it. I carried out breathing practices, as well as concentrations of mind. However, because I could not follow the yogic instructions about the place where yoga should be practised, about the workload and other things, I overstrained my adolescent organism by incorporating into my schedule two, four, six and later eight hours of practice daily.

However, these hours of practice didn't include only breathing, but they also included concentration, particularly out of which I intellectually obtained a lot. The work-related overstrain caused permanent damage to my health. However, let this be an uninteresting detail, as I wanted to say something about the intellectual significance of yoga which is contained in concentration.

The yogic concentration, as I have learned from my practice, must be based on the extensity of awareness on the one hand, and, on the other hand, on the intensity of thinking. The extensity of awareness is more or less given by the interest of a person in everything that constitutes their environment. The intensity of thinking is, in the yogic training, based on an effort to focus on an imaginary point as if it was a concrete thing or object which must be created by the person who is concentrating by means of the use of their own thinking.

Thus, when the imaginary point or object is so stable that the mind no longer tends to wander and the perception of the world is vivid enough not to allow a dulling immersion, the intellect improves. The psychological conditions for its improvement are simply in the fact that the thinking is to be not only stable, but also with a sufficient volume.

And now perhaps just one question is left: why is yoga connected to mysticism, or, sometimes, the delusory mysticism?

If a person attempts to fulfil the requirement of concentration in the sense that they 'hook' on an imaginary object, and, at the same time, they do not perceive the phenomena of the outer world with sufficient vividness, then their attention presents them with a not entirely conscious or totally unconscious perception of their own inner processes. This appears to a person as a peculiar, or mystical, world. In fact, it is an opposite pole of an extremely strong interest in the outer world, and it adds to the development of inner imbalance.

The degree of intelligence of an individual depends, on the one hand, on the intensity of thinking which follows from the mental stabilisation resting on an imaginary object, and, on the other hand, on the volume of awareness which depends on a vivid perception of the outer world. So far it seems that the education towards a methodical development in both directions is only contained in yoga, and due to this reason, even this aspect of yoga should not be forgotten.

I believe that yoga understood in this way is not idealistic, even in those of its practices which do not relate to the physical positions, and that pedagogy should devote attention to it.

## 4 Yoga for everyone

We all are, and have to be, interested primarily in a way which yoga can benefit us in an improvement of our inner state. For, the problems of psyche, the soul and its condition are the very thing which nobody is protected against. The rich as well as the poor, the healthy as well as the ill, those competent as well as those incompetent, old as well as young, simply all of those who went wrong in what they expected from life, suffer. Therefore, they hope to escape personal suffering if they obtain riches, power, good health, or if they develop their mental abilities better. Not even those who are able to assume the most awkward positions of the hatha yoga teaching, are spared from that.

Then, what is the point? No matter which good book about yoga we take in our hand we will always find there instruction about “yama” and “niyama” in the fore. It is yoga of its own kind, yoga, by which everyone should begin. “Yama” and “niyama” are simply yoga for everyone; moreover, all people can have even a fantastic success in it.

When the Indian writings on yoga refer to “yama” and “niyama”, they tell what a person must not do and what they must do. That is because the Indian yoga is understood there as a training system, which doesn't take into account the so-called individuality of a person. On the contrary, a person, who wants to do yoga according to the Indian sources, has to submit to the whole educational system that has a precise plan and a specific target. That target requires a deep depersonalisation, an ability to submit oneself, without allowing a person to slide into slavery, a slavish subordination.

In relation to yoga according to Indian views, we can only sigh that we are Europeans, brought up to awareness that each person decides for themselves what they want or don't want to do; we are people brought up to consider a lack of discipline to be a manifestation of personal freedom, a manifestation of a well developed individuality. Because of this, we cannot successfully do other yoga than the yoga adapted to the European mentality. It cannot be based on “you must” and “you must not”, but on one's own responsibility on the way to mental and inner recovery: a halt on the way of steep decline, which leads to the deepest demoralisation.

Yoga for everyone therefore, seemingly begins from the end: we will not sit in a position to become happy and to outshine our social environment. We are going to learn how to be happy, in order to be able to sit still and thus create conditions to be able to, of our own will, enter the transcendental world, which however has to be understood in a different way than until now.

Thus, we are supposed to learn to be happy! Is it important at all and does it really belong to yoga? In the esoteric part of the teaching about yoga, we may learn that a horrific danger of the mystical heights can be neutralised by an appropriate level of optimism and joyfulness. Some writer of the so-called occult novels has written that if people laughed more, there would be fewer wars. Through this quote, we are already finding ourselves on our ground, on the earth, in the everyday life, the problems of which we will solve aptly by this “small” yoga, too.

Its principle is very simple. We can feel happy or unhappy without an external reason, only by the power of our own will. The possibility of this is indirectly confirmed, for example by a well known fact that, when someone has some sorrow, they forget about it, if their attention is caught by something else. Based on this very piece of knowledge, a system can be created. By the power of our will, we can turn our attention away from the situations which brought us to suffering, and simply change the whole situation by fastening our attention upon things that evoke good feelings in us.

According to the yogic teaching, emotional experience is the most powerful factor in the life of creatures. It is sustained by a momentum which doesn't only steer the being, it also categorises it. This usual emotional experience can only be counteracted by repeated actions aiming to change its quality. This means to learn to rejoice and feel happy, even without any reason, over and over again, repeating this effort for so long, till joy and happiness become the only inner states which will keep on seizing us, as soon as we stop trying to create such moods.

When we reach that far, we have in fact already changed our inner condition or, in other words, we have moved from the sphere of unhappy people into the one of people constantly being made happy via the effect of spiritual factors. This is already considered as the beginning of the path of a higher type towards the goals of the practical yoga. For, only a happy person, an optimist, obtains from concentration an increasing clarity of the consciousness, an ability of a fine and deep discernment, a possibility of better perception and therefore also better understanding of everything; in short, all that which we may expect from yoga.

Then, it is really sufficient only to concentrate. Only a happy person is able to concentrate in the way yoga instructs, i.e. to think of objects and to observe them without sinking into a mental lethargy and without the clarity of their consciousness been decreased.

## 5 Conclusion

Would you like to try it, too? If the answer is yes, then stick to the following principles, which are in fact the whole of yoga in a nutshell:

1. You have to raise yourself from the state of passivity toward reflexive, i.e. automatic, unconscious reactions to the external world by a constant producing of an allsurpassing joyfulness in you.
2. You have to develop and intensify self-control, and you have to do that by a persistent awareness of everything that you do, i.e. that you stand, walk, eat, act in this or that way.
3. You have to attempt concentration in such a way that you think of (concentrate on) a chosen object (your feet and legs), but only in so far as you do not dim your awareness – only in so far as you would return again and again to the normal registering of things of the surrounding world, because only in this way you will ensure the control over vigilance. This type of concentra-

tion is called by the Buddhists 'the threshold concentration'.

4. When you will, through this sequence of steps, achieve such a high level of vigilance, that its dimming doesn't occur – not even when you are paying attention only to a single, especially imaginary, i.e. unreal object of concentration, you may change the threshold concentration into the total one. This concentration will help you to transfer the daily consciousness, i.e. the consciousness based on experience into the sphere of inner phenomena, without losing awareness whether you are dreaming or correctly discerning everything that is happening in this sphere. By this you have realised in yourself the state of wisdom.

## Acknowledgement

Published with the permission of Mrs. Zora Šubrtová, the copyright owner.

## References

Soanes, Catherine, and Angus Stevenson, eds. 2004. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11<sup>th</sup> Edition* [CD]. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. 2008. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Minařík, Květoslav. 1992. *Malý mystický slovník naučný* [Small Mystical Encyclopaedia]. Prague: Canopus.\*

\* *A Small Mystical Encyclopaedia*, which was originally meant to be a glossary for his own books about mysticism, grew in the hands of Květoslav Minařík until it became a book of popular science, accessible to every person interested in the spiritual teachings. It explains the basic terms of the spiritual teachings and their relationships to other scientific fields.

## About the author

**Květoslav Minařík**, a Czech mystic (1908–1974), who, in his youth, learned in the deepest detail and in himself realised, the highest spiritual and mystic ideals of the East, without losing contact with the social and the working life. Later, he has formulated his experience into an original, authentic experience based spiritual teaching, based on the ways of thinking and psychology of a contemporary European. The teaching leads him or her through life, and perfects their being as a whole; it does not only deal with the physical, moral or mental component, it develops all three in harmony. Out of the great spiritual teachings of the world, his teaching is closest to the Mahayana Buddhism.

*This article is published in Spirituality Studies 1 (1) Spring 2015.  
To read this issue please click on the image at the right:*

