

The Practice of Yoga in the Light of Patanjali's Sutras

(Chapter from the book «Yoga: Art of Communication»)

*The hands are dancing, the pendulum's swaying,
Green is the turquoise of heaven,
And in your soul the sinner and the just one
Are looking intensely in God's eyes.*
Svetlana Kekova

During the recent years the popularity of Yoga in the world and Russia has been growing like on yeast. The tremendous demand engenders an unlimited offer. Those interested in it paste the label of 'yoga' as a free brand to any type of physical activity without a hint of hesitation.

Symptomatic is the utterance made by Mr. Faek Biria, the leader of the Paris center of Iyengar-Yoga in Russia, several years ago: "**Had Patanjali been alive today he would never have recognized what we are doing as Yoga...**"

Since the real consequences of the practice of the so called "yogic dynamics" and "the authorial styles" begin to be obvious at last, people are beginning to be more critical of them, which, naturally, is inspiring. This chapter deals with "outdated" (as is fashionable to say today) traditional Yoga on learning which I have spent a lot of time and effort. In spite of the books published earlier (the last of which is relatively successful), I feel constantly a necessity to present the key moments of the technique as concisely as possible and with maximal comprehensibility.

The purpose of this chapter is to show what precisely is behind the Patanjali's text and what results may be obtained from practicing Yoga following the recommendations contained in the original, basing only on one of the Sutras [46, II] through a series of logical conclusions, based on personal experience.

Thus, below are two versions of that Sutra's translation and one commentary:

— **"An Asana is achieved with the secession of effort and concentration on the endless"** [“Classical Yoga”, Moscow 1992, p. 143].

— **"In an Asana, firstly, there must be perfect relaxation. Secondly, the mind must concentrated on the Ananta. The word Ananta means 'endlessness'"** [“Yoga Sutra by Patanjali”, Minsk 2006, p. 216].

— A person practicing a specific asana in accordance with instructions, **must make an effort the essence of which is the relief of natural strain”** [“Tattva vaisharadi, ii, 47, p. 113].

Clearly, the relief of such a strain may lead **only** to relaxation, and to nothing else. **What**, in this particular case, is meant by 'an effort', and **what may it be like?** Obviously, here it deals with the rejection of usual stereotypes of behavior in performing asanas, with efforts to make an asana better, like in the picture — all efforts at all. It naturally follows from this that student of any asana must achieve a **complete** (to the extent that his physical shape affords him) **muscular relaxation**. We find in D. Ebert's writings that mastering an asana is the perfection of sensorial and motoric regulation, so that the **minimization of muscular activity will reflect the growth of mastery** and that *The Yoga Sutra* formulates the basic requirement for all the asanas: **immobility and comfort**. This means that any asana is to be maintained with the **minimum of physical effort**. [“Physiological Aspects of Yoga”, pp. 42, 47].

While the relief of strain is easy to understand, then what does concentration on the endless mean? To concentrate on **everything at once**, that is on nothing in particular, means to **de-concentrate** one's mind **completely**, to make it objectless and empty. In other words, it means the achievement of complete silence of mind, temporary (for the period of practice) absence of thoughts (the process of thinking).

— “An Asana is an **immobile and comfortable** posture” [YS, II, 46].

— “Actually, any **real** yogic exercise tends to suppress the manifestation of the guna *rajas*, and therefore must be **static rather than dynamic**” [“The Book about Bhishma” 1963, p. 201].

Basing on the above, the practicing of Yoga asanas in its classical version comes to the taking of a certain **shape** by the body, but in the process:

— conditions are created for the maximum muscular relaxation;

— and for the cessation of a usual thinking process (standard mental activity);

The practical observance of these instructions means the following:

— the asanas are performed with **such** physical intensity which **should not be registered** by consciousness clearly. The mind can remain empty **only when** tension (effort) and/or the form **do not**

make themselves felt in any way. The sensations (strains) of the form or counteractions to gravitation remain latent (hidden) for the optimal period of time, as long as they don't cause inconvenience. As soon as it ends, the sensation of strain becomes perceptible signalizing that it is time to end the asana.

— The diversity of asanas is important only to train the muscular system and the joint and ligament mechanism in the conditions of socially caused hypodynamia, as required by the organs and systems of the organism.

— It is useful also in order to attain sustainable silence of the mind regardless of the change of asanas.

When the thinking **is devoid of its usual activity** as a result of **correct** (traditional, **static**) practice of asanas, then:

— any asana is performed without thinking, analysis and correction – **simply as physical readiness allows it;**

— it is also performed **without** noticeable (strong) sensations which inevitably interferes with mental relaxation;

— the absence of sensations indicates that the possibilities of the body to take and retain the form are not exceeded (we do a lot of useful work every day, and the body does not make itself felt);

— the absence of specific sensations shows that the practice is done with the observance of **ahimsa**, which **meets** the requirement of *yama* and **guarantees** traumatic security;

— it also indicates that the posture of the body during the sessions remains **optimal** (up to the moment of their appearance) and that its effect is useful;

— the mastery of performing an asana is attested by the minimization not only of the **number** of muscles engaged in it, but also of the **degree** (intensity) of their work;

— consequently, the useful time of the performance of a posture lasts from the moment of attaining immobility and till the appearance of any sensations (no matter where);

— if thinking **is engaged** in performing a posture – it **is not** an asana! This applies to novices until their practice becomes automatic;

— **only that kind of practice** is the original yoga as described in the Sutras, if the performance of asanas **stops the functioning of the thinking in the usual mode;**

— having remembered a posture from a picture or as performed by the instructor, I perform it as closely to the sample as my body allows me today, **without attempting to reach anything!** Usually, a grown-up person's behavior stereotype includes a built-in **purpose** of any conscious physical action. Not so in Yoga: an asana has neither a purpose nor an object in the outer world – it is performed as the body allows it today, and that's all;

— I retain the posture as long as a relative physical comfort, immobility and silence in the body (the absence of sensations, tremor, the feeling of warmth et cetera) is retained.

Thus, the **main result** that I have to reach directly in practicing asanas, is the **absence** of any noticeable current result (in its usual sense). There should be neither pain and sweat, nor any new or unusual sensations. Yoga is a process of unhurried change of postures of the body which it **never** assumes (not to mention retains) in everyday life, they are experienced only in a **special state of mind**. It's specifically at **this time** that a **useful effect** of an asana takes place, as imperceptible as digestion of food or blood circulation.

Consequently, **intentional, purposeful and quick change** of postures (bodily forms) **is not Yoga**; for each person, an asana is a bodily form (position, posture) freely affordable specifically to **his/her body!** We may see a beautiful yogic posture in a picture (photo, video), but **is it an asana?** Not necessarily so, since no one knows **in which state of consciousness** the performer was at that moment, or what kind of sensations were present in his/her body.

— Working **in traditional Yoga** is **the time** of performance **rather than the posture** (not to mention its complexity). Even if a posture looks absolutely simple, this does not at all mean that it yields no effect (requires an effort). Try to stand upright, raise an unbent hand at the shoulder level before you and retain this posture. It will be clear very soon **how** time works and **what** strain even the simplest posture may produce.

— Very complicated asanas are effective only in case they are **not burdensome** to the performer and allow him or her to retain complete relaxation;

— it is advisable to master and perform complicated asanas **only** to persons who are exceedingly plastic by nature; such complexity is **contraindicated** to those who have an average plasticity, and attempts to attain it are **injurious to health.**

— Yoga is the sustenance of certain postures in time, **passive work** with the body and its parts

through the resultants of holds, the interlocking of the limbs (*Padmasana*, *Garudasana* etc.) and changes of the position of the body with regard to the vector of gravity;

— in Yoga, the performer's own activity (initiative) is replaced by the sustenance of the posture **in time** and **correct** treatment of its form (the absence of sensations)!

— Acting in Yoga is **not the individual** (personally performing a series of actions leading to the planned result) but the sum-total of conditions, created, united and observed by him or her for some time;

— it is only the performance that meets the above conditions, entails the complete muscular and mental relaxation, being, at the same time, accompanied by them.

When a novice has passed the first stage of physical adaptation, the understanding comes to him or her that:

— during the practice, it is necessary **not to think but feel**, and the analysis of practicing asanas or *pranayama* should either **precede** or **follow** the practice.

— Definition: Yoga is the **art of indirect management** of (controlled and automatic) psychosomatic **functions** by the creation of **certain conditions** in the body and consciousness;

— it is **impossible** to bend the body as shown in a picture by a direct (voluntary, controlled) effort or switch off the work of the head. Otherwise, we would have had no problems.

— For instance: it is necessary to take food in order to live. I earn money, buy some food, bring it home, cook, lay the table, make myself seated, take the meal with the appropriate spoon or fork, put it into the mouth, chew and swallow. All of these are **my actions**. But what can I personally do with the food after that? Nothing at all, my voluntary actions have been exhausted. After that my organism will act independently of my will. Actions with food will continue, but they will **not be voluntary but automatic**. The whole process comprises two stages: the first is actualized by me (**I act**), the second is a natural process, which continues and develops without my participation. Without the first stage, there wouldn't not have been the second. This is why events of this kind were called **action-non-action (Wo-wei)**. If I make an attempt to arbitrarily interfere with the process of digestion, nothing good will come of it. Natural processes are characterized by their absolute perfection (in case of the absence of dysfunctions) since they are results of evolution.

— Traditional Yoga is based on the principle of Wo-wei. I **assume a posture** for the optimal time, and **what** is happening in my body, its organs and systems, and **how**, is no concern of mine. With Yoga, it is exactly as with food: if it is duly applied on the scale which is appropriate for this or that particular individual, then the result will be excellent: we are vigorous, happy and will live longer. And we live not just as usually – we live much better than without Yoga present in our life.

— But if we try to do everything in Yoga from the beginning to the end **personally**, then the effect of such practice will be similar to that of cutting wood or any other kind of **usual** physical work.

— In the process of adaptation to Yoga the beginner masters the **first** permanent switching of attention – for his/her body. As a rule, the first most convenient sphere one's attention tends to fix at are the eyes. While performing an asana, they should be closed, if possible, since the visual channel brings in the greater part of information from the outside world, thus hindering the process of relaxation. When we close the eyelids, in most cases the eyeballs begin to tremble or move uncontrollably. After some training, one manages to relax them (in the beginning, it is easier to do that in *Shavasana*) and spontaneous movements stop. The eyeballs begin to move upwards or downwards until they find a convenient position, and disappear from perception. A kind of heaviness appears in the eyelids, sometimes warmth, and attention is fixed comfortably in that area. As soon as an idea (or an image, a phrase, a concept) dashes through consciousness, the eyes make an attempt to resume a position customary for the state of waking, they begin to tighten and startle. If one manages to keep them relaxed, the process of thinking begins to be inhibited. Of course, it does not happen in all cases – sometimes as soon as one fixes attention on his or her closed eyes, an unpleasant nervous sensation arises and begins to grow. People of that constitution should look for a different way of influencing mental processes, experimenting with other areas of the body. Sooner or later they will find another area where attention is fixed by itself – this will happen at once. Very often it is the bridge of the nose, the point between the eyebrows (*Bhrumadhy*a), the skin on the forehead or on the palm, or separate areas of the face. When the neurotics' bodies are “cut” from perception (or, on the contrary, their perception is littered with chaotic impulses coming from unbalanced vegetal nervous system) it is possible to fix attention on rhythmic movements of the belly or of the chest, on the flow of the air in the nostrils (this results in something like *Vipasana*). Not infrequently, the beginner finds his or her own unique points of the body where to fix attention. One should never try to observe the pulse because this is fraught with negative consequences.

— When mind (perception, attention) is preoccupied **exclusively** with the body there remains no

place for extraneous thoughts;

— as sensitivity increases, the body's and its separate areas' perception becomes subtler and the observation of arising sensations becomes clearer;

— however, one should not plunge attention too deeply and too thoroughly – this will disrupt the desired silence of the mind.

— When muscular relaxation in asanas has been achieved the body **doesn't overwork** itself and sensations **do not arise** within the time-limit of performance (it is about such a standard of adaptation when one no longer analyses his or her sensations, interfering with bodily functions).

— When this repeats in each session, perception (attention) is switched over **one more time** – now it begins to perceive the consciousness's autonomous production.

Then it becomes obvious **what** the mind is filled with, and **how**, and the person understands what his or her representative system is.

— Representation shows the method of organizing the subject's personal experience in his/her perception and the habitual way of describing the world. This experience may be presented in perceptions (kinesthesia), images (visual system), sounds (auditive system), as a sum total of knowledge (rational or digital system), through the senses of touch and taste (rarely) or through all the channels at once (cynaesthesia), which is even rarer. The description of the world specific to an individual finds a reflection in those words (predicates) which he or she uses in communication, mimics and gestures. People will hear and understand each other in any case, regardless of the predicates, but a description in terms of the interlocutor's leading representation will be much more easy, emotional and meaningful to him or her.

In order to attain mental silence (CVN: *chitta vritti nirodhah*), it is necessary to slow mental processes. In order to let go of spontaneous thinking, one should:

— avoid remembering;

— avoid building chains of logical conclusions;

— set thoughts adrift;

— all the above will be useless if one is unable to constantly return attention to his or her body.

Today two basic types of thinking are known: analogous and digital. The former (according to G. Bateson) is a more ancient mode of the functioning of the Central Nervous System. It is mythological, intuitive, related to the unconscious, to the instincts and vegetative manifestations, uses a holistic picture of the events, although it is not quite concrete and rather uncertain. As for digital thinking, it is more abstract, based on the principles of formal logic and differentiates humans from other mammals radically. Perhaps, the logic of the ancient Indian philosophical school of Nyaya was one of the highest achievements of this mode of thinking, although the mentality of the Hindus is mythological and, consequently, tends to be analogous.

As is well known, these two modes of the functioning of the mind (intellect) are opposed to each other, and absolute domination of one of them makes human behavior unviable, but this topic goes beyond the scope of the present discussion.

In both modes of perception, the received information reaches the brain through all the five channels (in case they are efficient) and after it has been sorted and admitted by the system mind to consciousness, it is apperceived by each person in his or her own specific way:

1. Pictures: if the individual thinks exclusively in images, his or her leading representation is visual. As a rule, people of that kind are representatives of analogous mode of thinking.

2. Pictures: if the mental space is filled either with a living text or with abstract geometric (graphic) fluctuations, this is an example of digital thinking.

3. An inner monologue or dialogue (auditive representation) – the thinking is, most likely, analogous.

4. Music: – the thinking is either digital or analogous; auditive representation).

5. Neither pictures nor dialogues are present: cynaesthetic representation (people of that, digital, type are often successful in exact sciences).

6. Mixed representation; this is what is found in overwhelming majority of cases. An individual says in this case that he or she thinks in images sometimes, and at times pronounces something in his or her mind. Mental situations also happen, when speech and images are present at the same time.

7. Bifurcating thinking – as a rule, is rare. In that case, the *sadhaka* is practicing Yoga in one “part” of the mental flow and in the other, is conducting a conversation with somebody, solving a problem, etc. So, representation may be variable in general, but equal in both “parts” of the flow of consciousness. If it is different, this is indicative of a psychic disorder.

At times, representation is extremely variable, for instance, in the case of the patient L. the process of entering mental silence was as follows: in the very beginning of practice she “saw” a “crawler” on a screen reflecting situations at her workplace during the day. Then, as relaxation grew, the “crawler” disappeared and a chatter started in the mind, which also quieted down in turn, images appeared before her inner eye and consciousness began to drift. All that lasted for about half an hour.

In any case and in any kind of the leading representation, a stage of mental chaos precedes that of thoughtlessness. The flow of images becomes dreamlike and incoherent, it is impossible to remember its content after the end of an asana (or during a pause between asanas). The inner dialogue/monologue degenerates into a vague or distant chatter. In the case of those whose leading representation is cynaesthesia, uncontrolled jerks of the body and/or of the facial muscles may appear, the “hum” of the work of separate muscles or of a group of muscles may be heard, the movement of blood in the body may be observed.

The **complete** (certain and authentic) **mental silence** is reached far from at once, and not at all by all those practicing Yoga but only by part of those having digital or synaesthetic representation. If a sadhaka “sees” or “hears” his or her thoughts, the final end complete silence may not even come at all (though not necessarily so). As a rule, spontaneous functioning of the mind recedes to the background and sort of fades out. There arises a not very clear but definite distance: you are “here”, engaged in practicing Yoga and observing the absence of sensations in your body and trying not to miss signs signaling the end of the posture, while somewhere “there”, at the “bottom” of consciousness, like on the screen of a switched off TV-set, something is flickering, saying, turning up.... That part of the Self which is practicing Yoga is observing all these freaks with detachment and indifferently, without engagement, and trying to understand what’s going on, or simply ceases to notice them at all.

Generally, mental silence (CVN, – at its various stages) cannot be attained quickly, its quality depends on a variety mass of factors that cannot be traced or perceived and cannot be generalized. In some cases it is really silence and darkness, in other – a starry sky, light, a play of colors, a “film”, dreams, immersion, blackouts. According to subjective descriptions, consciousness sinks, is washed away, drifts, fades out, loses sharpness, interrupts, **almost** dies out.

Nevertheless, this “almost” is invariably present and is indicative of a third switch of consciousness – from a certain point it becomes unidirectional (*ekagrata*).

What is the effect of the attainment of mental silence (the initial stage of CVN) on the body?

In case of a usual tonus and the pressure of the routine material on the mind, the uninterrupted flow of thought is accompanied by continuous play of skeletal muscles (regardless of whether the body is moving in space or is not);

— the general strain in the muscles depends not only on the movement performed by the body at a particular moment (this strain decreases radically or almost disappears when the movement stops) but also on the emotional state, current memories, and the number and the quality of the traumatic “material” ousted into the subconscious;

— with the beginning of a deep muscular relaxation, constant blocks of chronic strains which have not been noticed earlier but which do not disappear even in sleep, begin to be apparent in the body; they are always present in neurotics, persons with a problematic childhood and those who have overworked themselves for a long time.

The individual picture of strains corresponds to every such block – as a rule, their set is limited and stable in each individual;

— not infrequently there appear stable focuses (areas, points) of pain in the areas of intersection of such pictures without a visible reason;

— as mental relaxation progresses with the practice of asanas, curious things begin to happen to the body;

— as soon as consciousness loses its focus (as mental relaxation begins) the body reacts to it with a spontaneous movement (change) of the form towards the limit of its plasticity.

If pieces of ice are put into a glass, water in **this** state does not fill the container completely;

— as long as consciousness retains its usual tonus, the habitual contractures (blocks, “pictures”, patterns of psycho-physical strain) in the muscles **cannot** “melt” completely;

— as a reaction to the isotropy of the waking consciousness, the isotropy of the body comes – it “fills” (takes) perfectly completely the form available at the moment without any special (conscious) efforts.

This cannot be reached through any efforts; it becomes possible for only a brief moment and at the risk of a high probability of traumas (in case forcible methods are used, this probability reaches hundred

percent). The wildest of the “modern styles of Yoga” require subjecting the organism to powerful physical strains, breath-holdings accompanied by *bandhas*, and hot-rooms. Naturally, this does not enhance health and the keeping of the body, and still kiss so mental silence.

Thus the daily touch to the physical limit of the form (in the state of CVN) result in the body's available plasticity increasing slowly, reaching the maximum (as for the given moment and for the given individual) value.

In case of a proper practice, this plasticity lasts for years, prolonging physical youthfulness.

Thus Hatha Yoga impedes the growth of the system's entropy, becoming the retardant of the flow of personal biological time.

The practice of asanas in a state of consciousness approaching CVN entails spontaneous purification and the rehabilitation of the psycho-somatic system.

The process of rehabilitation is triggered by **strictly dozed** applications, and traditional Yoga admits only **weak and moderate impacts**.

Weak impacts (stimuli) provoke a resonant effect comparable with that of homeopathy and the needle therapy. It is exactly that kind of **mild** practice that is needed by weak people who begin practicing Yoga in order to get rid of functional disorders. It is an excellent method of correcting extreme states.

Besides, we know that the **degree** of application determines the **quality of the individual's educability** in any sphere of activity.

Influencing the skeletal and motoric system, the topology of the viscera and blood and lymph circulation, those who practice Yoga, on the one hand, affects unconsciously a number of parameters of homeostasis (for instance, his or her specific degree of plasticity) and, on the other, allows the system to solve their internal problems.

It is exactly immobility and mental silence coming both during the performance of asanas and during the intervals that are basic conditions for starting spontaneous rehabilitation of the system.

Consciousness is switched on after waking up in the morning, and during the entire period of the waking state (up to the moment of falling asleep) the brain (mind, intellect) calculates – while the body executes – the actions that are required for the attainment of numerous goals. The subject is under the pressure of **external** circumstances requiring his or her participation and permanent reaction. As rule, in the waking state, the individual is absorbed in the pursuit of his/her **own** interests and wishes.

In everyday life, the waking consciousness engages constantly in the process of interacting with the outer world and never remains empty.

This kind of emptiness (mental silence) arises **only** in the process of performing asanas on the conditions prescribes in Sutra 46, chapter II.

As soon as psychosomatics believes (makes sure) that it is systematically left alone in peace, it begins to solve its vital problems, pursuing **its system** ends, rather than those posed by mind.

When all the external goals and purposes are removed, it chooses the parameter of its general condition which becomes the backbone factor. The entire structure is rebuilt, being oriented to a useful final result, which is always one and the same in any living organism – a stability of inner milieu – homeostasis.

In other words, a process of purification and regeneration of the system starts in such conditions (empty waking state and physiological peace).

It is exactly that process that **invariably** accompanies the practice of traditional Yoga and is its inherent feature.

It is none other than the therapy inherent in the technology of classical Yoga (rehabilitation).

As a result of such a practice, each individual restores gradually his or her **original, natural** specific psychosomatic conditions. Theoretically, from the lowest possible level. However, in reality this is not so; however mild the practice of Yoga might be, during the period of mastering it, it **requires a waste of energy** nevertheless, and it is only after some time that the sum-total growth of energy in the system begins to exceed expenses.

Yoga restores the psychosomatics to the state of stable homeostasis from **any side of deviation**, repairing all that requires correction. This kind of rehabilitation (the stage of Yoga therapy) removes only **functional disorders**, including chronic ones which have not yet passed to the stage of an organic insult.

The above was about the body; if we turn to the psyche, the processes of regeneration in it begins after some cumulation of **daily** practice of mental silence.

If a Russian (or Western) reader has reached as far as this place in the book, he or she may ask: Why nothing of the kind is mentioned today either by those who teach Yoga in the Indian ashrams or by their Western disciples and protagonists? Why no one, even in India (not to mention Europe or America)

has ever explained to Western beginners in Yoga the issue of mental relaxation and all that follows from it? Some say that the Hindus conceal that information because of malice and cunning; some are sure that they simply are unable to explain all that, although they do everything correctly themselves. In my opinion, the situation is much simpler: European philosophers have long noticed a peculiarity of the mentality of the Indians who live by heart rather by head. A lot of people who have visited India notice intrinsic psychological relaxation of the local population which envelops and shocks the newcomers. Naturally, religion also contributes to that psychological disposition of the Indians. Poverty and bare survival do not depress anyone there, while belief in immortality and a good reincarnation help maintain free-mindedness regardless of any circumstances. It's **our people** who must learn to "switch off" the head in order to avoid endless mental ado and overstrain, whereas the Hindus *en masse* are simply free from all that! If you begin to talk to them about it they most likely will not even understand what it is all about, as much as the Russians (and also the Europeans and the Americans) don't understand me when I'm speaking about mental silence to which the practice of Yoga must lead and in which it must be done. It's because mental peace is as unfamiliar to them as mental strain is to the rank-and-file Hindus. It is exactly dissatisfaction with the existent state of affairs that has always induced the Westerners to be highly active mentally, which gave birth to science and, generally speaking, our entire type of civilization. Originally Yoga was created by people with a **different type of world perception and mentality**, this is why what is a commonplace in Patanjali's Sutras (concentration on the limitless, or the complete mental silence) becomes the stumbling block for Europeans. The latter simply ignore that "small" difference. If we want assess the teaching of "yoga" in Iyengar's and the Ashtanga Vinyasa schools, it becomes clear that the originators of those "styles" had no idea (while the authors today's styles even now prefer not to think) of the Westerners' **basic difficulty – excessive psychosomatic tonus** – with the exception, of course, the inhabitants of economically highly advanced countries where, according to the standards of the former USSR, communism has been built long ago and where most people live in the state of psychological comfort. It is exactly the Hindus B.K.S. Iyengar's and P. Joyce who propagated Yoga in the West had to turn (in order to compensate for the absence of the standard Hindu relaxation and faith in one's Guru) one of them, to the endless detailization and the ideal form of asanas, and the other, to the flow of movements and overstrain. But while in the former case, although the mind of those practicing was distracted from everyday problems, it simply was not given a chance to attain the desired silence which is the goal of Yoga. In the latter, any mental activity is suppressed, nevertheless overstrain causes, in not quite healthy and flexible people (who are the vast majority in megapolices) an extra overstrain of the psychosomatics which enhances invariably the already existent one.

The overwhelming majority of the representatives of Western civilization **vitaly need to learn to rid themselves** of psychic and emotional overstrain and mental rash and master full relaxation, which is **far from an easy task**. This is exactly the genuine Yoga rather than its imitation. This is why I am trying to explain its essence and the strange situation that surrounds Yoga in the world.

Now let us see what existential overstrain leads to, which is the major specific feature of Russian (and not only Russian) life.

Human consciousness is a kind of a specific "cesspool" which automatically absorbs and sends under the threshold of perception informational and emotional fragments, obsolete and/or hazardous for the mind. If the number and quality of stresses that the individual has experienced in childhood and youthful age does not exceed the admissible average values, the protective suppression mechanism functions perfectly [a stress is pressure, sensation that is the result of a lot of events the source of which is either in the organism or outside it].

Again, if stresses start at a too early age while their intensity and frequency exceed the adaptation ability of the child's psyche, the subconscious becomes gradually a kind of a "mortuary" filled with fury, fear, despair and unbearable memories. From a certain moment on, it can no longer play its protective role, on the contrary – the emotional element of the ousted material begins to filter into the psychosomatics. Since, along with stressful situations, the memory of them is ousted too, the individual loses many fragments of his or her past – this is called emotional amnesia. The entire structure of interactions between consciousness and the unconscious part of the psyche is thus deformed, which leads to the total aberration of perception, consciousness and thinking.

Of course, no one is insured against "the leaden hideousness of the damned Russian life" [M. Gorky]. However, it's exactly the role of the parents to protect their children from the dangers of this world. But if the parents themselves have become the source destruction, then, although the child's development is formally normal, its psychic condition and social contacts become seriously aggravated.

It's well known that "As the history of mankind developed, stresses against which there were no

genetic protection programs changed, and now adaptation to the surroundings depends far more on one's psychic ability than on the power of his or her muscles, the strength of bones and tendons, or speed. Especially dangerous now is the word rather than the enemy's weapon. Human emotions which originally were intended to mobilize the organism for defense, are now mostly suppressed and adopted by the social context and are distorted over time, they are not recognized by their owner and may become the cause of destructive processes" [Radchenko, 2002]. In other words, negative emotions and unsatisfactory communication with the world, ousted into the subconscious, cause functional inhibition and disturbances and then bring about organic damage of the organs and systems.

Therefore **an effective and safe "discharge" of the subconscious is a vitally important task today**. Even if everything is okay and the ousted material has been compensated, there remains the problem of the accumulation of current overstrains. Our time demands a tremendous complication of mental activity and acceleration of reactions. Since emotions inhibit abstract thinking without which the Western people cannot do without it, on the one hand, the mechanisms of their hormone supply are continually oppressed, and on the other, the biochemical "product" engendered by communicative stresses is not utilized through the necessary and sufficient physical activity.

This leads to constant prevalence of the sympathetic system's symptoms and an excessive muscular tonus which persists even in sleep. As a result, the general nervous tension reaches a dangerous degree, accompanied by all the attendant attributes: the narrowing of the field of perception, failures of the clarity of thinking, a deterioration of the quality of communication with one's milieu, etc.

Perception is arranged in such a curious way that, if you are in a sound mind and good memory, consciousness (attention) seems to act like a ray highlighting a landscape in darkness. As soon as you direct your attention (and your glance together with it) at anything, it becomes clearly perceptible. However, it is no more than one of the illusions that make life more complicated. Deformed consciousness is like a magic lantern that adds its own distortions to the picture of the reality perceived. Such a condition is called mental poisoning, or darkening. As a rule, the individual is not aware of it, it seems to him or her that he or she is okay and that it's the outer world that is wrong. Errors multiply and add, frustrate plans and expectations and, eventually, life. "Life comes like a fairy tale told by an idiot and full of fury and noise" [Shakespeare]. As a result, adaptation failures, functional disorders, neurosis, depression, psychosis or a borderline cases follow.

The total psychic energy of each individual equals one unit (his or her unit, or one hundred percent). It is distributed in a corresponding way to satisfy the current needs of the system. In the daytime, a certain amount of it is spent on the functioning of the waking consciousness. During sleep the greater part of its resources is spent on "fuelling the inner kitchen" of the subconscious.

As has been mentioned already, in everyday life there are practically no situation when consciousness is empty, and when this happens in the practice of Yoga, the released, according with the law of preservation, part of inner psychic energy goes to the subconscious, giving extra fuel for processing the accumulated pathological material.

When such conditions (the activation of the content of the subconscious accompanied by emptying mental space) are repeated systematically, the traumatized material begins to be bled spontaneously into the rarified area of consciousness like the overheated steam through an open valve.

In this case, the traumatized material **has a place** where to be let out, since the area of the "level" of the psyche adjacent to the subconscious, that is the waking consciousness, is empty, completely free from the current routine material, and is deactivated.

The complete (temporary, for the time of performing an asana) **termination of the functioning of the mind/consciousness** and a sharp **drop of its tonus** (the prevalence of the parasympathetic functions) to a certain level is the major factor of the release of the ousted material.

The leading representative system organizes (forms) the annihilated material, **presenting it to consciousness** in a certain way, but the disciple (the patient – until the completion of the process) is only partially aware of the contents of the release. In most cases the discharge takes place spontaneously, through sensations (idiopathic pain) in the body or through obvious emotional "setbacks", being reflected in dreams in some way or other.

Many of the extant methods of psychic discharge and rehabilitation (analysis, rebirthing, NLP, hypnosis, autogenous training, gestalt therapy, tomatology, deconcentration etc.) are **surpassed by Yoga in the principle aspect: it is absolutely safe**. In Yoga, it is only the process of natural purification and rehabilitation (the practice of asanas in the state of deep relaxation) is initiated by the individual; however, they are actualized exclusively by the psychosomatics **without any interference** (and, for the most part, unawares) on the part of the personality, or any external influence.

Let us consider the most typical variants of discharge. In each example, I mention the leading representation purposefully; it is useful to know it if a serious work of the cleaning of the Augian stables of the subconscious is necessary. A successful Yoga (as any other) therapy requires a high quality communication with the patient. The internal family climate very often becomes the source of long and heavy stresses; this happens partially because “the kinesthetic individuals complain of their ‘visual’ and ‘auditive’ collocutors’ senselessness. The visualists condemn the ‘auditives’ for neglecting, because the latter do not stare in their eyes during a conversation. The ‘auditives’ complain that the kinesthetic individuals don’t listen to them, and so on. As a result of all these misunderstandings, the representatives of one group regard the other group’s behavior as intentionally unfriendly or pathological [*The Structure of the Magic*, vol. 2]. It’s necessary to remember also that there being of a leading representation system doesn’t mean that other systems’ influence is absent. Many people think by means of images and words at a time, and kinesthesia is present in any person (except for “borderliners” and neurotics). Besides, the knowledge of the leading representation is **crucial** for the choice of a suitable technique of meditation.

Variant 1. Discharge **by motion**. In practicing it, one may experience powerful negative emotions, but not the memories of their concrete causes.

Example: a man of 35, asthenic, with usual physical capacities. Poor childhood conditions. The anamnesis: half of his life spent in hay fever with strong summer recrudescences; a high level of anxiety; an excessive general muscular tonus; scoliosis; chronic weariness and insomnia.

As the Yoga technique was mastered, his general condition began to improve slowly but surely. After two years of practice, only a weak hint of allergy remained, the health became 95 percent normal, but not that was the most interesting thing. The man’s leading representation were sensations, he never saw or heard anything mentally, the thoughts appeared from nowhere. When relaxation reached the maximum depth, muscular quiver began in the body: round the eyes, in the right thy, in the biceps. While practicing *Shavasana*, convulsions began in the little left toe which spread to the whole limb slowly. At the same time, a similar process began in the right leg, the body and the arms, and finally the whole body began to convulse in a strange way as if in a fit of a chorea. No special emotions were experienced. When these sensations began to assume an unpleasant character after a few minutes of that spontaneous show, the man who did not try to interfere with the process all the while, toughened his body powerfully and relaxed, opening his eyes, and the convulsion outrage stopped. In the practice of *Shavasana*, such manifestations appeared regularly for about six months and then gradually subsided, and the mood and the world perception cleared. It was a case of spontaneous utilization of the ousted material by motion. Nevertheless, once a full visual discharge happened with that person. Viewing a feature film in the family milieu, he felt a terrible fit of nausea and just reached the toilet room when his stomach turned inside out and he clearly remembered a long forgotten episode: on a village street a drunken thug clutched a little boy by the collar of his shirt and began beating him the head. However, it was an exceptional case of discharge.

Example: a thick-set lady with a poor general state of health in the beginning of practice. The leading type of representation: kinesthetic and digital. For many years, while her husband passed from one booze to another, she had to raise her children and maintain the family. As a result, she suffered from insomnia, chronic over-fatigue, general depression and a complete loss of interest in life. By the time when the husband mended his ways and the children grew up her spiritual and physical condition left much to be desired, and any attempts to improve it (travels to India, life in ashrams, meditation etc.) proved futile. After six months of practicing asanas accompanied by relaxation, when the head began to be freed from thoughts, an active discharge of the ousted material was initiated. It was quite a sight! In *Shavasana*, the lady’s whole body moved in waves like a carpet when shaken off being held by one end, her back throbbed against the floor, scaring those relaxing around her. However, she didn’t lose the state of immersion! Sometimes (and not surprisingly) the muscles of her stomach and back ached. During the purification of the subconscious (about a year and three months) her general state and mood remained unstable, at times melancholy, idiopathic tears and physical discomfort appeared. Then her condition improved sharply, beginning with the mood and complexion and including the physical condition. Her perception, attitude towards the current problems and the nature of dreams changed. Former stresses disappeared and new ones didn’t accumulate. Although the past didn’t change, it was no longer oppressive, permanent optimism with regard to the future and life in general appeared.

Example: a man of thirty, with an athletic build and a powerful intellect; auditive representation. At the age of twenty two he survived an operation for melanotic sarcoma, which is exceptional case. Then he went in for business and endured extreme strains for a long time. When he came to me he was over-fatigued both physically and emotionally and suffered from insomnia. He had drink at least two liters of

vodka in order to relax somehow. Since he fulfilled perfectly whatever he undertook, relaxation started almost immediately and the discharge of the accumulated overstrain was extremely active. It was manifested in powerful muscular spasms in the limbs and the body. He could lay down himself on the floor in one end of a room in order to listen to the *Yoga Nidra* and come to in the other and he had no idea of how he happened to be there.

Example: an hysterical lady of thirty five. Her childhood and youth passed in extremely complicated family situation, till the graduation from school she went in for sportive dances in order to spend as little time at home as possible. After six months of practicing Yoga the following happened: once, listening to the *Nidra*, she escaped almost at once, then in the middle of the text she rose and began to move keeping her eyes half open. I cannot explain what it was like: a kind of slow acrobatics with the face of a somnambulist and incredible movements some elements of which resembled asanas. It lasted up to thirty minutes, then she sat in *Pavanamuktasana* and remained motionless for about ten minutes. She didn't remember what was next, but she felt excellent. If a mobile phone rang or anyone made a sudden movement, the lady came to abruptly and a fit of hysterics happened followed by a faint. The daily practice of asanas were accompanied by such discharges two times a month, but after six months they ended and her general condition improved substantially.

The next type of discharge is emotional. Subject to it are people with any type of leading representation; the only difference is that those who see and/or hear can know (remember, be aware) sometimes to what memories of the past, their current experiences, their emotional "storms" are related. As a rule, such knowledge is impossible for "digitals" and kinesthetics, though exceptions happen. If, of course, a negative condition has no obvious reason; when the reason is known, it's always easier to sort out the consequences.

An example of vivid vegetative manifestations: a middle-aged lady with three years of a heavy depression state. She spent several months on adaptation to asanas, after which general relaxation, including mental, began to develop. After a certain moment, when the greater part of muscular contracture in the body relaxed and consciousness began to "float", tears began to pore. They pored incessantly during the whole of the sessions and stopped only in *Shavasana*, after which groundless melancholy overwhelmed her. Tears caused a headache which obstructed routine work, since the lady practiced Yoga at home in the morning. She had to limit deep relaxation to once in two days, in order to ensure time for the eyes to settle into shape. Then lacrymation was replaced by nausea, and nausea was followed by giddiness. All that lasted for about six months, and only after the critical mass of the ousted material was annihilated, the condition of the patient was restored to the situation prior to the stress and she, in her own words, came to herself. The reminiscences remained, but became neutral and caused no disturbance. The entire process of rehabilitation took about one year.

Example: a lady of thirty with a seriously complicated childhood and youthful years. By the moment of the beginning of practice, the set of her problems included fear of bridges and of height in general, as well as of any contacts with her parents, intolerance of heat and cold, amnesia of the greater part of her childhood, permanent weariness, chronic fatigue, the lack of a normal communication with her milieu, poor function of the stomach and bowels, a strong hysterical disposition and the complete inability to concentrate. Her representation was mainly auditory, her mind was constantly full of incessant chatter that often passed into continuous noise. It exhausted her completely and prevented concentration. The rehabilitation by Yoga was slow because it was parallel to neglected (because of a poor health condition) work and unsatisfactory living conditions. After both factors improved, the process accelerated, and typical forms of discharge through emotions, the body and dreams began to show. The patient complained initially that her back and knees, traumatized during her childhood sports classes, hindered her mastering Yoga. It turned out after adaptation however, that the knees began to ache after emotional frustrations, and it increased because her general poor health condition hindered the differentiation of the sensations in asanas duly. In other words, as early as in childhood, points of spontaneous concentration of general (primarily emotional) strain had been fixed in the patient – the knees, the face and the eyes. After a sufficiently long practice the improvement manifested in that stresses stopped to influence the knees, and they, in turn, didn't interfere with performing asanas. The patient began to really feel her body. The next "channel" of discharge became the face; in *Shavasana* and, especially, in *Nidra* it was practically "chewed", after relaxation the lady felt as if she had been whipped on the cheeks.

The past was played out in detail in both relaxation and dreams, and this uneasy process took about three years. The memories regressed from the present to the remote past, down to early childhood; the major task was to carry out the discharge of the ousted material in such a way as to allow for the patient to be able to live normally and work productively. As a result, she remembered everything and became

one more healthy and adequate person who had risen from hell, who had to begin a new life after reaching the age of thirty five.

Not infrequently old physical traumas are played out in the process of a kinetic (muscular) discharge. This is a sufficiently interesting moment which is worth discussing, because the body remembers everything that has happened to it, and its memory is absolute. There have been a lot of chances to make sure.

Example. One of my patients, a former marine engineman, complained of a spine problem. Everything progressed normally, but one day in winter, when he had had a sufficient experience already, he said that he strained a knee practicing *Virasana*. "Well, man, how could you make such a fall?" – I told him. "The remedy is well known: leave your leg in peace and choose another posture which doesn't affect it." One evening he felt terribly frozen waiting for a bus in a severe frost. After that pain in the knee made him abandon the practice for a couple of weeks. I could not find an explanation, but the patient called me suddenly and told me that he just remembered that, in his student years, he had dislodged that same knee at a wrestling competition, limped for several months and was unable to squat. "Nice, then everything's clear," I answered. "You were practicing correctly, but the time came for the old trauma to play off. If you hadn't been frozen, the trouble would have passed unnoticed, but a high temperature added to the discharge aggravation, and you got it in full".

Example. A lady who had accumulated of lot of health problems. I had to cure her spine, skewness of the thigh joint and varicosity in the right leg caused by it. At a certain moment, when the practice gave good results already, she complained of pain in left fingers, especially at night. Since I knew that she had been a master of sports in handball, I asked her whether she had ever traumatized the right hand. "Of course, and a lot of times." For two weeks her right hand did not let her sleep normally, then the pain disappeared.

Later a more remarkable event happened with her, that time of a different nature. She and her elder sister had been bought up by their mother after their father died when my patient, his younger daughter, was five. Evidently, their mother was a rather severe educator, and my patient's relations with her mother were rather problematic. She was suspicious, and was always dissatisfied with herself, her own life, family, children, husband, job etc.

Her leading representation was visual, she thought "in pictures". But one day, practicing for a second year, she heard suddenly and clearly in mental silence of *Nidra*, a distant voice and realized that it had always been there. It reproached her for inutility incessantly, mocked her, ashamed and blasphemed. She recognized her mother's voice, her manner of talking to her was unmistakably obvious. Appearing once, the voice continued its monologues, there was no salvation, it seemed. But soon the lady came to a session beyond herself and said that she saw a dream that night in which she lived through a stormy quarrel with her father again, he gave her a good beating then. It was not long before his death, and she forgot it absolutely. Now she recognized her father's – not mother's – voice which obsessed her the whole of her life. "Now it has disappeared and I hear it no more! Something turned in me...." From that day on, there was one more auditive optimist in the world.

Example. It was a curious family in general. Here is the story of the lady's husband. Actually, it is with him that I began working originally, his wife came later. From his first student construction team his spine disrupted his normal life, it ached all the time at brief and unpredictable intervals. All attempts to cure it were to no avail. According to visual examination and X-rays, one of the vertebrae, located below the shoulder blades, was dislodged about 1,5 cm inside; in fact, a kind of a pit was in the spine – it was a mystery that it had not been discovered as early as in his childhood. More than that: he assured me that he had no idea something was wrong with the spine until he felt pain in it after raising the fifth bagful of potatoes. We had a lot of trouble with his spine. At the first session the patient lay facedown on the carpet, straight as a border. I told him to prop his chin with his hands for me to assess the flexibility of his back. He looked at me reproachfully over his shoulder, then propped his chin with his fist cautiously and said: "It aches". He assumed the simplest postures using a very elaborate trajectory and quitted them using another. It was necessary for him to find out acceptable ways each time. However, after ten months pain in the back disappeared suddenly. Weeks and months passed, and he began practicing new asanas. The man enjoyed life. Then, unexpectedly, he began to experience fear. "What's the matter?" – I asked. – "It's more or less okay at last, live and enjoy life". – "It's clear," he answered. – "But what if it begins again?"

One day he came for a session with a strange countenance, and at first only shook his head in answer to my questions, unable to find words. Then he said: "I saw a dream, at first it was quite common, a usual detective action story, as it happens with me often: I'm straying round Moscow, commotion all

around, bandits, shooting. Suddenly a rumor reaches me that a black beast, something like a gigantic panther, is in town and cripples people mercilessly. After some time I realize (in sleep!) that it is looking exactly for me! From that moment the dream become a nightmare. I find a flat and sit there for one day, two days, three days. The beast stationed itself opposite the entrance and is waiting for me. I'm hungry, my home people don't know where I am, there's no phone – something must be done. I understand even in sleep that something is wrong. I search the flat all over and find a rusty revolver; I don't know even if it shoots at all. The beast doesn't move from the place its has taken. Well, I took heart, put the revolver into the pocket – just in case. I'm leaving the flat, no one around, I'm shivering. The beast approaches, rears, puts its paws on my shoulders. I nearly fall. Its mouth stinks terribly, and there is a terrible storm in my soul: to shoot or not to shoot? Something prevents me: I'm aware even in sleep that something is wrong and that it's better to keep quiet. Suddenly, the beast takes its paws away, turns round, makes three leaps and disappears in the air. I was pushed out from sleep like a cork. I woke up wet with sweat, the head didn't work. My wife asked if I was okay. It was half past three. I took a shower, changed clothes and went to bed again but couldn't sleep. I had a sensation as if something had changed....

"Well, congratulation!" – I said. "First pain went, now fear related to it has gone. Good that you behaved correctly in sleep. If you ran away, anything might happen...."

The limits of rehabilitation are always individual and unpredictable, as demonstrated by the **following example**. Some time ago the boys of a team brought me a former team mate of theirs aged 32. Judging by his condition, he had had an exceptional physical training and an exceptional health. In fact, this saved him when he was dealt a terrible baseball club blow on his hindhead. Diagnosis: a vast brain blood tumor, two operations followed by a coma. The specialists passed a lethal verdict, but he regained consciousness after a month. "Miracles do happen!" – said the doctors. – "But maybe, it's better to die than live a vegetable life like general Romanov who was contused near Grozny." However, after three months the chap began to talk and after another six months he could walk. The doctors shut their jaws up and refrained from new comments.

At first he walked like a drunken man, the cops molested him regularly and only a coordination disorder invalid certificate saved him from them. I said frankly that no one could say if Yoga would work under such conditions. One could make an attempt, but no guarantee could be given. However, I was pleased to see that his friends did not abandon him in need. His initial condition was as follows: a lurch, poor coordination, wooden movements devoid of ease natural in a grownup person, a poor sight, stumbling speech, an immobile face, mimics like a nurseling's, but fully preserved intellect. According to his situation, that person had no chances to survive, yet he learned asanas from me. The fate!

He practiced Yoga thoroughly thanks to the fact that he had a lot of time. Talking about additional practice, he said that he did the chinning and the push-up, and regretted he couldn't run because of a poor coordination. I asked him to throw a ping-pong ball against a wall and catch it with left and right hands in turns.

After a year, his coordination, sight and speech improved quite considerably. Some of the indices of his stability diagram rose practically to normal from negative values. Now I am eager to witness the moment when he begins running cross-country.

A question may arise: if one is young and in good shape, or is naturally well-balanced emotionally (is a natural sanguine person), what may be the use of Yoga to him or her?

It's clear that the above technique relates not only to the asana stage, since it includes the *yama-niyama* (presumably, any grownup person who begins practicing Yoga **has already** formulated one's own ethical principles), asanas as such, *pranayama* (discussed later), *pratyahara* as well as *dharana* and elements of *dhyana*.

Thus the **classical style** of practicing asanas makes them not just physical exercises but something greater than Hatha Yoga (asanas and *pranayama*).

In fact, **such** practice (conducted in mental silence) is **partially a meditation** ("partially", because meditation implies a sufficiently long maintenance of immobility while an asana does not require it) with all the ensuing consequences. It includes both Bahiranga Yoga and the two stages of Antaranga Yoga in all their entirety.

This technique was shaped **in the presented form** as a result of **following literally** the definition of the asana given by Patanjali in sloka 46 of the 2nd of *Yoga Sutras*.

Thus Yoga gives a young and healthy individual who has no problems the following:

— the ability to completely willingly switch off mental activity, including spontaneous, for some time;

— overtime, the process of operative thinking that was present in consciousness earlier sinks below

the threshold of perception;

— the mind is freed from mental ado, the aberration of perception is minimized while inner calm makes it possible to notice a lot of events and nuances which did not exist for the individual formerly;

— the very character of intellectual activity changes. There is no need to think, as before, turning heavy grindstones in the head (naturally, this concerns rather complicated things; elementary operations with simple current events do not overload the space of consciousness). After information about a certain problem has been gathered and accumulated, it goes inside and is forgotten, and it only remains to wait for a ready answer which will “pop up” in some way or other.

This is a sign of the interaction of the unconscious and consciousness having become optimal, as well as of the operative information being processed now by the entire power of the psyche rather than by the individual’s mind alone. Correspondingly, the productivity of such work is far greater;

— a possibility of being completely present (when necessary) in a given moment – in the here and now is now available;

— intuition works regularly and in time;

— overstrain and the consequences of stresses don’t accumulate;

— the maximum physical flexibility possible for a concrete individual is attained;

— a perfect health, as well as the greatest possible effectiveness of social communication is guaranteed as a result of the power of calm;

— this power is nothing other than the accumulated sattvic quality,

— using it, the adept of Yoga makes emphasis on the interaction with the surrounding world not by energizing it to the fullest possible degree but rather by the quality of his/her inner state.

The reaction of the outer world (its “answer”) to our actions depends not only on what we are doing, but mainly on what psychic (emotional) condition we are in while doing so.

Not infrequently this is exactly the major factor that determines the developments, initiated by us in the surrounding world. Not the degree and the scope of our personal efforts, and not the resources and time spent on it, but exclusively the quality of our inner calm.

Those who have attained that by practicing Yoga need no further explanations; for those who have not experienced or understood it, any explanations are a vox. Nevertheless, I’ll try to explain it.

Emotion, the first signal system, is the most ancient communication method of the mammals. Its functioning is ensured by the most archaic brain structures. In the contemporary Western individual, emotional manifestations are under a severe control of the will, they are suppressed and hidden carefully.

But it does not mean however, that their latent influence on the interpersonal communication is ruled out. On the contrary, the more they are suppressed, the greater their influence on the unconscious aspects of our behavior.

In any verbal communication, in addition to the second signal system, the first system takes part invisibly but powerfully. When our speech is addressed to the collocutor’s consciousness with the purpose of the maximum of efficiency of the transmission (or concealment) of information, then, regardless of whether we want it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, our own emotional condition becomes a major factor of the collocutor’s perception and reactions.

As a rule, during the act of verbal communication, an unconscious exchange (mutual contamination) of emotional conditions takes place. The highly “overheated” subconscious (and, consequently, a high degree of the strain and aberration of consciousness) affect interpersonal communication especially strongly. Such individuals become a source of psycho-emotional contamination (and even epidemic; in this connection Jeanne d’Arc may be mentioned); one always feels cheap after mixing up with them and loses any desire to repeat such encounters.

The overwhelming majority of those having the overheated subconscious and an unbalanced psycho-emotional system have little chances for successful self-realization, since in any milieu (no matter how often it is changed) they attract automatically people with the same psycho-emotional condition. In this context, the proverb “One fisherman sees another from afar” is highly significant. Like a rocket with a self-homing warhead, the unconscious selects from the total range of possibilities only similarly distorted objects, ignoring the rest.

I have a sufficiently vast statistics at my disposal to confirm the following statement: as a rule, other conditions being equal, positive results are obtained from communication by those who have a high quality of psychic comfort (harmony).

As concerns Yoga, the situation is different. The practice of asanas and *pranayama* is a specific “sintering” of the body and the soul in the fire of Yoga, as the parable goes. When the body and the soul have been purified, the *siddhis* come. We will not quote their entire list, confining ourselves only to force.

I cannot describe in all entirety what happens to the individual when it comes. Everything in life begins to happen in the best of ways and the individual always gets whatever he or she needs. I emphasize: really needs rather than wants! The real needs and the wishes are very different things. If it is mental wishes, force doesn't work since it doesn't affect that sphere.

Force is the inner harmony and calm, an unshakable *sattvic* power which is the true fruit of Yoga. The impression is such that your "specific weight" has grown and your mere presence (in a given place and at a given moment of time) begins to influence tangibly the events and psychic health of those who surround you.

If the person of force is essentially light, everyone in his or her milieu always feels better, no matter what kind of problems they might have.

If the individual is dark (unfortunately, that happens too, suffice it to remember Gurdjieff) then those in his milieu become the raw material for the realization of his whishes and ideas. And they will feel cheap. But the utilizer will have to be responsible for that, if not in this life, then beyond it.

We are discussing now mainly a typical human life in which Yoga is merely a fragment of the general picture of being (specific activity in a specially allocated period of time) designed to bring it to its highest quality; therefore when force comes, at first it works in a narrow circle of the relatives, friends and acquaintances. The individual ceases to need any kind of support; on the contrary, from a consumer of calm he or she becomes its generator and passes to the category of supporters, shoulders to cry on, sources of energy and Iron Woodcutters.

Force returns manifold no matter how much you give to those around you, albeit only to alleviate their suffering.

When inner calm comes, the students of Yoga notice with surprise that the success (and a positive result) of the performance of any complicated sequence of operations, of an event or a process depends exclusively on the quality of calm.

Even if the forecast of the development of events is unfavorable, the stability of inner harmony may direct it along a favorable path.

Thus, in case of practicing Yoga, even the life of a naturally healthy and well balanced individual reaches a much higher quality and is enriched by many additional bonuses and possibilities, including the prolongation of life in general and of its active period in particular.

To conclude, I will describe the final algorithm of practicing Yoga which may be mastered only by those who have already mastered the technique of classical Yoga perfectly. In fact, anyone may try it, including amateurs, without any negative effect for themselves – but without any profit either.

The first condition for reaching that mode of practice is the complete and incessant relaxation of all the body muscles (not participating in the maintenance of an asana) in general and of the abdominal area in particular.

While entering an asana, maintaining it, quitting it and during a pause before the performance of a next one – in other words, during the entire Yoga session – the abdominal muscles must be relaxed completely (except, of course, those postures in which they are engaged).

The muscles of the abdominal wall should not be used in the practice of Yoga at all! They should not "notice" any changes in the position of the body. They only passively take part in the breathing process which must be always free and spontaneous in an asana.

And all the while, any movements of the transition from a posture to another become smooth and slow (one simply doesn't want to make quick or sharp movements).

If the first condition is fulfilled correctly, then after a time one notices that the pattern of the breath has changed: it becomes light, shallow (superficial) and rare and a new pattern comes: a brief, hardly noticeable inhale followed by an exhale which is slightly longer, and then a long pause. This rhythm is continuous and automatic like a slow telling of beads.

Another variant is also possible: the breathing cycle begins to be so prolonged that the practicing individual becomes unable to understand at a certain moment what he or she is doing actually: inhaling or exhaling?

When bending, it's useful to make (rather, it happens spontaneously) one usual (deeper) breathing cycle, and in the next asana breath retains the same pattern and rhythm as in the interval between postures, at rest (although, as a rule, the volume of breath is considerably smaller in an asana).

When unbending (stretching), several spontaneous deeper breathing cycles take place, and in the starting position the breath becomes at once the same as before performing an asana.

In other words, it is disrupted no more as if you were doing nothing.

If such a breath begins, one should attach attention to it, detaching it from the abdominal muscles.

If you listen to it attentively, the spontaneous short inhale sounds like the syllable “so” and the slightly longer exhale sounds like “aham”.

Actually, this kind of breathing is nothing else than the natural mantra “so–aham” reproduced by the body.

The continuous repetition of a mantra is known as *Japa*; when a mantra is repeated spontaneously, it is a meditation called *Ajapa-japa*.

In this case it takes place in traditional practice of asanas.

This breathing mantra should be harkened! – Harkened incessantly, both in the asanas and in the intervals between them.

In this case consciousness becomes similar to that of a half-dreaming state, but there is no temptation to fall asleep, because attention is fixed on the sound of breathing continuously but without any strain.

When the breathing pattern begins to be disrupted, it's time to stop the session.

A session of practicing asanas conducted in that state (that way) engenders a perfect state of health and over time, the state named *santosha*.

Sutra 49 of the second chapter says that in this asana *pranayama* is practiced.

The breathing pattern that has changed spontaneously is exactly spontaneous *pranayama*!

Thus, basing on only two postulates of Sutras, we have reached naturally such a situation when not only *pranayama*, but also mantra is practiced along with physical Yoga exercises. That is to say, the exercise of asanas becomes meditation without any special efforts by the practicing individual.

Thus, the interpretation of practical aspects of Yoga in Patanjali's Sutras has not become outdated – on the contrary, it affords its student unlimited possibilities of self-perfection.

This is why it has been preserved over ages.

10.10.2006 – 9.01.2007 Hammamet – Langkawi – Kuala Lumpur – Moscow