



The Author in the Himalaya Mountains.

YOGA FOR THE WESTERN WORLD

by

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STUDENTS OF WESTERN YOGA
(REGD. IN U.K.)

Works by the same Author:

THE UNENDING QUEST
SECRET AGENT 'S.T.25'
COME HAMMER, COME SICKLE
AN EPIC OF THE GESTAPO

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P R E F A C E

THIS BOOK IS COMPILED from a series of lectures delivered in England and South Africa amplified by notes of demonstrations given on television for the B.B.C. Much of the material was also used in later lectures delivered under official auspices in India at the invitation of the Director of Medical Services of the Indian Ministry of Defence.

The author's aim in writing the book has been to present newcomers to the subject with a general survey of the scope and purpose of Yoga expressed in Western terms. With this in view technicalities have been avoided as far as possible and Sanskrit terms used sparingly. In this completely revised edition elementary exercises for respiratory and abdominal control have been included which will be found useful by those who have no access to direct tuition. The author has a major work in preparation dealing with the exercises and postures of Hatha Yoga and their true purpose, and it is hoped its publication will follow shortly on this new edition of the present book. The story of how the author originally became interested in this subject and many of his experiments in it have already been told in his earlier work, *The Unending Quest* (Cassell & Co.).

It is sometimes thought that physical Yoga, to be pursued successfully, must be taken up early in life and that it had best be left alone once middle age is reached. This is a great mistake. Middle age is the period when the virtues of physical Yoga for the improvement of general health can be most highly appreciated. One of its objects is to preserve the full vigour of the prime of life into the eighth and ninth decades and even beyond. The author has included illustrations of himself in a number of Yoga postures in his seventieth year. The photographs were taken following a trek of some two hundred miles on foot in the Himalayan mountains visiting remote ashrams. The elementary exercises of physical Yoga can benefit everybody, but their effect is greatly enhanced by acquaintance with the underlying philosophy of the subject, and it is to provide for this want that this book has been written for the general reader.

I

YOGA — ITS ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

THERE IS A STORY of a Chinese sage in ancient times who with his followers embarked at sea in a small and rather frail vessel. They were overtaken by a heavy storm which threatened to sink the ship. The sage, in spite of this, fell asleep and was only aroused at the last moment by his followers, who awakened him in fear. His only remark was: "Are we still on earth?"

That little story illustrates, firstly, the complete indifference of the sage towards the tumult of the storm, and secondly, indifference to whether the rubicon from this life to the next had been crossed. It seems to me that that little tale has a bearing upon the world as it is today, for the whole world is in a state of turmoil. We all live in a state of apprehension as to what the morrow may bring forth. Everything seems unsettled and uncertain and this state of affairs undoubtedly affects the morale and even the health of a great many people. If one could discover a means by which, amid all this uncertainty and in spite of the general apprehension, one could retain peace of mind, a poised and balanced condition of body and mind, such a discovery would be a blessing to a vast number, for peace, the quiet mind, serenity of spirit seem almost impossible of achievement in the modern world of competition and turmoil.

Many seek these treasures, and many are the agencies—religious and philosophic—that purport to help us find them. Those who find solace in the bosom of such should cling fast to the treasure they have found. The trouble is that such bodies, when they become institutionalized, tend to become slaves to formalism and dogma, and thus defeat the object with which they came into being. Furthermore they quickly fall into confusion through divorcing from each other the three inseparable aspects of man on this plane—body, mind, and spirit—which act as a unit throughout the duration of this life. They make the mistake of treating them as if they were quite separate from each other. Spirit they tend to regard as the province of religion, mind as the province of the schools and universities, and the body—well—the body is left more or less to fend for itself until it tumbles into the doctor's hands for repair!

My personal observations over many years lead me to say with conviction, in speaking on the subject of the very ancient philosophy of Yoga, that many have found satisfaction in its common sense idealism after suffering disappointment in their search for enlightenment in other fields. It is a philosophy to which I myself owe much and I have seen it become of assistance to many who were left stranded and in despair from the confusion of voices in religious or philosophic societies. Nobody knows exactly how old this philosophy is or where it originated, but it seems to have had its first home, in this era of mankind, in the highest table-land of the world, the Himalaya mountains and the regions north of them. Thence, little by little, with the opening up of India and improved communications between East and West in the past hundred and fifty years, it has percolated into the Western world, where it is now becoming increasingly popularized. Its greatest modern exponents and commentators are either British, French, German or American, or else brilliant Indian philosophers brought up under the British regime and expressing themselves mainly in the English language. Study of this, the most ancient philosophy known to mankind, has given many people a new outlook on life, improving them in body, mind and spirit. It is a pity that it is sometimes presented in distorted forms quite at variance with the true teaching, but I will come to that in a moment.

The first thing to ask ourselves is what does the word Yoga itself mean, literally. The plain and literal answer is, "yoking ourselves to Nature, or the Source of our being, or to Perfection, or to the divine or supreme Power of Creation". The word Yoga is the original of our English word "yoke" in the sense of yoking, joining, uniting. Yoga is the process of uniting ourselves to that which is divine. The divine can of course be interpreted in different ways according to our approach. Some will say Cosmic Consciousness, others the Infinite, the Source of all being, the Fundamental Energy, the Ultimate Reality, the Creator, or God. It does not matter what term we use—it is not the term that matters, and as a matter of fact no term is adequate, for the Infinite cannot be defined. To do our best to express it in simple language perhaps we may say the highest ideal we can possibly conceive, shall we say Perfection, since Perfection in any form must be an attribute of divinity.

Yoga means nothing else than this. It has nothing to do with queer sects or stunts such as fakirs perform, lying on beds of nails, self-mutilation, and other perverted and revolting

practices, and it is sheer falsification if such aberrations are performed under the name of Yoga. It is true that there may be an ascetic side to Yoga. Taking the analogy of Christianity, some devotees feel called to become monks and nuns, but you do not have to become a monk or nun to be a good Christian, nor do you have to be an ascetic to be a good Yogi although in some circumstances it may help. There is a very real sense in which, for most people, the highest Yoga is that which is practised in the home, the office, the workshop, in a word, amid the ordinary circumstances of daily life.

Yoga, as I have said, is the oldest philosophy in the world. It is the expression in practical form of the wisdom of the Vedas, the most ancient recorded books, written several thousands of years B.C. A great deal of the philosophy has been embodied in later religions and teachings, including the Christian Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul. Yet Yoga itself is not a religion in the Western sense and must not be confused with one. It has no dogma, no creed, no fixed form, no highest authority other than the original scripts, no church, no organization, no imposed beliefs of any kind. Nor does it concern itself directly with the after-life. It concerns itself with *this* life, it believes in attaining heaven in this world. It is a practical philosophy for living healthily, happily, efficiently, longer, better, and in such a way as to radiate this happiness to others and thus make this world a better place to live in. I stress the term *practical*. This constitutes the main difference between Yoga and many other forms of study of religious, philosophical, learned, or occult subjects which confine themselves either to theory, or, if to practical study, to observing external phenomena. Yoga teaches that we cannot possibly count on understanding anyone or anything else aright unless we are quite sure we first understand ourselves. So Yoga teaches us to put our own house in order before we begin telling others what they ought to do. This is surely the best preparation for whatever after-life is to come. But what church or religion or philosophic body a man chooses to belong to, that is his own affair.

Another distinguishing feature of Yoga is that it not only offers a philosophy of living but it gives clear indications how to realize it. It is thus also a method, or technique. Life is an art, and all art has its accompanying technique, without which perfection can never be attained. Yoga teaches not only the "what", but the "how". To make a comparison with music, even the greatest music lover, if he does not study the technique

of music, will remain a mere amateur, however much he may love music. To become perfect, to understand music fully, and to be able to interpret it to others, he must acquire the necessary technique. Then only will his own understanding be perfect, and then only will he be qualified to transmit his knowledge to others and help them along the path.

Down through the ages in all ancient religions and philosophies there is inherent a certain message, namely that it is possible to realize within ourselves our essential union with the ultimate Supreme Power of the Universe. We are part of it, and in a sense we are, each one of us, all of it. This is expressed in the Christian doctrine by the words: "I and my Father are One." The doctrine of the essential unity of all beings is, to use a colloquial expression, Yoga in a nutshell. If we could find the key to this union with the ultimate Reality, with the Deity, with Divinity, as we conceive of Divinity, and find it in ourselves, there would lie the key to a new attitude towards the troubles of life, its sorrows and grievances, its turmoils and its troubles; a source to which we could always escape out of the narrow self. This is what Yoga sets out to achieve. This is the essential meaning of the word: conscious union—or re-union—with the ultimate Reality or Source of all being. But its approach is practical and scientific.

To continue the musical analogy, just as there are many branches of music which will appeal to students of different temperament so there are branches of Yoga. People differ greatly in temperament and natural tastes. No two people are exactly alike. Nature abhors equality as she abhors a vacuum, and strives ever after infinite diversity and variety. This is what makes the world interesting to live in, for if we were all alike, or patterned in one mould as some social and political systems would have us, there would be no ideas to exchange, no room for discussion, and no possibility of development. So Yoga has several branches or different avenues of approach. For the sake of brevity I will mention only a few.

The branch of Yoga which is generally placed at the head of the list is called Raja or Royal Yoga. Raja Yoga, briefly, is the study of consciousness. What constitutes consciousness? A complicated subject because we are all conscious of being conscious, and yet what we commonly call consciousness is only partial, a state of semi-consciousness. For we know also that there is a sub-conscious which is working within us all the time, a field of consciousness which is much more important than the ordinary consciousness. In fact, ordinary consciousness

is largely conditioned by the sub-conscious. There exist also states such as sleep and trance, which are also states of consciousness, but very different indeed from ordinary consciousness.

Raja Yoga is a study of all this with a view to discovering a permanent and unchanging consciousness which lies behind all these various forms of consciousness. Furthermore, even our ordinary consciousness is obviously different at different times of the day, for instance, when we are tired or when we are fresh, drunk or sober, when we are angry or when we are pleased. Raja Yoga then is the study also of these varying changes of consciousness, Raja Yoga says that the consciousness with which we commonly operate is only a state of being half-awake. Take for example this present moment in this hall. Your attention for this moment is concentrated on me, as the speaker, and you have accordingly forgotten yourselves. If you observe yourselves during the day you will notice that that is constantly happening. Yet your ability to hear me depends upon that other consciousness of which you have lost consciousness. You are conscious and yet you are unconscious! Raja Yoga includes in its embrace the sub-conscious and every other kind of consciousness. This necessitates examination of what we mean by the pronoun "I". You say in the morning: "I am going to do such-and-such, I am very happy about it." Half-an-hour later you open a letter and find that you have lost a lot of money on the stock exchange and you say "I am miserable". Now which is it: I am happy or I am miserable? I am tired or I am not? Which is "I"? We discover in Raja Yoga that the vaunted "I" is a very variable quantity, and so far from being a fixed and unvarying yardstick of measurement it is in most people very unsettled. We want to discover an "I" which is not a fiction, an "I" which does not vary. It is then found that the underlying, unchanging "I" is a spark of that Divinity which never varies, which is the ultimate unchanging Reality and the Source of all being. Control of the mind depends upon discovering this ultimate Reality. Raja Yoga may be said to be the approach of the psychologist, only it goes very much deeper than psychology. All too often students of psychology put the cart before the horse by saying: "Now I am going to study mind." Yet what is the "I" that is going to do the studying? That is taken for granted! But it must not be taken for granted. The first thing that must be clarified is what is going to do the studying. We must make sure that the yardstick with which we are going to measure is accurate and unchanging. How other-

wise can it measure accurately? Its judgments will be as unstable as itself.

Another branch of Yoga is devotional Yoga, called in Sanskrit Bhakta. This is the Yoga of love, of devotion, of worship. The intellectual approach does not appeal to everybody. There is another type of man whose feelings are profoundly stirred by contemplation of the wonder and majesty of the universe and the mysteries of nature and life. He does not seek to analyse them, such a process would appear to him futile if not irreverent. He contemplates with awe the incomprehensible miracles of even the most trivial elements that compose our existence, and by meditating upon them, so to speak merging his whole being with them, he seeks an understanding of them through absorption. Like Raja Yoga, this path also leads to self-abnegation, the denial of the limited personal self, the realization that, as personalities, we live in a world of make-believe on this plane. But it arrives at these conclusions by a different method. It is the method of the mystic who, through meditation, or if you prefer the term, prayer or communion, contemplates a thing until he realizes its inner truth. It is the Yoga of the religiously-minded person, it leads to merging with the Deity.

Another branch is Karma Yoga. The word Karma means, literally, action or activity. There is the type of person who would naturally be as impatient with cold scientific analysis as with what would appear to him to be mere dreaming, inactive meditation. The typical "man of action" might easily reject both these paths as unsuited to him, and still be a sincere seeker. He would have to find the path through creative activity. But what *is* action or activity? This is a much more profound subject than appears on the surface, for, the moment you begin to look into it, you find there is no end to study of causes and effects, the way to do things so as to achieve the maximum of result from the minimum of effort, the true economics of endeavour, the inexhaustible process of action and reaction. An enormous number of our actions are unconscious, in fact the majority of them. While sitting there you shift your feet or cross your knees, but you do not notice that you are doing it. And while sitting there your heart is beating, your vital functions proceed, you are quite unconscious of this activity, and yet the consciousness of which we are so proud depends entirely upon these functions. Karma Yoga is the study of activity in every sense, and of the degree of importance of activities in which we are concerned. This leads to a study of the results of all

action, conscious or unconscious. One thing leads to another. Karma Yoga therefore is also a study of cause and effect in general, and this involves delving into our most minute actions, including the action of thought. The field is enormous. By studying this one's consciousness becomes greatly expanded because, as we shall see, the field of action to which we usually confine our consciousness is very narrow indeed. Karma Yoga is the branch of Yoga which would appeal to people whose natural temperament leads them to be men of action, who find satisfaction in work, especially labours of an altruistic nature. It also includes a study of what is often called fate or lot. It teaches that "As you sow, so shall you reap".

Another Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge, Jnana Yoga, is the approach to union with the Deity through the accumulating of knowledge, leading to wisdom. In this Yoga, Nature is regarded as "God made manifest". It is the approach of the scientific research worker, of people who are interested in accumulating knowledge of nature around them, who thus approach an understanding of God by accumulating data about His works. This is Jnana Yoga, the Yoga of knowledge and wisdom.

Then there is what is called Mantra Yoga, the Yoga of sound. Sound means vibration. Everything in the universe moves and exists through vibration. Sound is the most convenient form in which to study vibrations, since wherever there is vibration there must be sound, and *vice versa*. We begin with the effects of sound on the human organism. The sound may not be audible to our ear, in fact our ear registers only an infinitesimal range of sounds; but just as we can measure and manipulate light that is invisible to the eye, so we can do the same with sound that is inaudible to the ear. Audible sound can bring us into contact with inaudible sound through the law of octaves, and this is the basis of incantation in religious worship, though the art has been lost now in the West. We shall elaborate this subject when we come to the Yoga of Sound.

Another branch is Laya Yoga. The word Laya is translated differently by different people, but one may say it means, in general, energy. Laya Yoga is the study of energy as manifested in our physical organism. Where does our energy come from? Where is the power house? What causes bodily heat? What constitutes the life force within us? What energy is it by which we live, move and have our being? What is the dominating energy of sex by which the species reproduces its kind?

Finally, it is clear that on this physical plane of existence and during this particular life all these Yogas and all expressions

of human life are manifested through the medium of the human body. The physical organism is the instrument of the mind and soul. It is only through our nervous system and the brain (which is part of our nervous system) that we can approach any study whatever and express ourselves. It is therefore of vital importance to see that this instrument is kept in the highest state of efficiency. Hatha Yoga is the branch of Yoga that deals with this subject. It seeks to achieve perfect health of body, mind and spirit. In the West we tend to divorce from each other these three aspects of our being. As *aspects* of our being they are quite distinct, but during the life on this plane they operate together, and in whatever we do all three are involved. The Yoga of Health, seen from this viewpoint, becomes of paramount importance, and it is with this that we start.

In physical Yoga training is concentrated on the nervous system, to bring it into a state of harmony and poise. Anybody will admit that if our nerves are upset the whole mechanism of our being is disturbed. The nerves are brought into a state of equilibrium largely, though not solely, through training the breathing. One of the most prevalent causes of disordered nerves is wrong breathing. This is not apparent at first sight, people will ascribe their nervous troubles to all sorts of things, mostly extraneous to themselves. Nevertheless, the key to mental and spiritual health lies within us, not outside, and the most direct path lies in the regulation of that which primarily gives us life itself, namely breath.

It is strange that the great majority of people allow this study to go by default, paying no attention to it whatever, and then wonder that their nerves get out of shape!

In the Yoga philosophy the universe is said to be permeated by an infinitely subtle essence called *Prana*. Modern science holds the same theory, sometimes calling it the ether. Prana is said to be the "cosmic breath", that power through which manifested creation becomes manifest, just as living beings become alive through breathing; and it is significant that the ancient sages applied exactly the same word, *prana*, to physical breath as to the cosmic breath. This is why so much stress is laid in physical Yoga on breathing, both to maintain the highest standard of health and achieve the highest development also of mental faculties. Breathing is the function through which we come into the most direct contact with the Life-force. Even when, through negligence, we take the line of least resistance and breathe the least possible we are still taking in life, but only just sufficient to keep body and soul together. Why not

take it more abundantly? Why not quaff more deeply and more fully from the free fountain of life?

Further, in the initial training posture occupies a prominent place. How we sit, stand, and move is a matter of importance, affecting us all the time. Combined with a study of breathing and of posture certain exercises are advocated which have the effect of improving our vital processes, particularly digestion and evacuation, defects of which affect our nerves adversely. These movements also stimulate our nerve centres directly, bringing them into harmonious working. The result is an improvement in general health and sense of well-being, and this is regarded as the first essential for the further study of the philosophy of Yoga, from whichever angle it is approached. Briefly, then, Hatha Yoga is the study of the human physical organism and all the potentialities of mind, soul, or spirit that lie within it. Its most appropriate motto is not found in any of the Sanskrit or Oriental scripts. It is found in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Glorify God therefore in your body".

Summing up these various branches of Yoga one may say that Raja Yoga, the Yoga of consciousness, contemplates the Supreme Power as Mind; Bhakta Yoga as Love; Karma Yoga as Motion, Action, Activity; Jnana Yoga as Knowledge and Wisdom; Mantra Yoga as Vibration; Laya Yoga as Energy; and Hatha Yoga as the power which informs the activities and potentialities of the physical organism.

Now it requires very little thought to see that these branches overlap. In fact they are all one. You cannot practice any Yoga without bringing into play the Yoga of consciousness. You cannot have the right attitude towards study unless you start out by being something of a Bhakta, having a devout attitude towards the subject. Karma Yoga, the Yoga of activity, depends also upon thinking, and so forth. They all overlap, and they all depend in a high measure on the condition of this physical instrument through which the mind and the spirit operate.

The term "instrument", as referring to our physical organism or "self", is a convenient one with which to begin a study of this subject, for the conception of our bodies as instruments provided by our Creator with which to live and work on this physical plane of existence is as convenient a formulation of the matter as can be found for the Western world. The term "instrument" is constantly found in the writings of mystics

throughout the ages, who have always come to see themselves as instruments of the Most High. There is, for example, a prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which is very appropriate to this subject, and which runs:

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love, where there is doubt, faith, where there is despair, hope, where there is darkness, light, where there is sadness, joy. Grant that I may seek to console rather than be consoled, to understand rather than be understood, and to love rather than be loved; for it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.”

Some people imagine that Yoga consists exclusively of physical exercises, but no greater mistake could be made. Certain physical exercises are indeed advocated, and are in fact important, but they are prescribed only with the ulterior purpose of clarifying and refining the mind and exalting the spirit. Yoga in the fuller sense is a process of death and rebirth; death to the old life, birth to a new one. Constantly, throughout the messages of all the great teachers, we find the idea put forward that we must die to be born again. In Yoga this process is regarded first as a physiological one if it is to be complete, because all manifestations of our mental and spiritual being take place on this plane through the medium of the physical mechanism. The duller the physique, the duller will be the operation of mind and spirit. Purification is the keyword of Yoga; the physique must be purified in order to liberate mind and spirit.

Health is of course a relative term; who shall define absolute health? We must all recognize inescapable limitations. We are, for example, all mortal. Yet the onset of decline can be greatly postponed. We all suffer from some physical defects, especially in the circumstances of Western civilization which are highly artificial. Yoga consists in doing our utmost to rectify our deficiencies, and if we fall a prey to accident or irreparable injury, still to accept this cheerfully and face it manfully. Summing up we may say that when all allowances are made, and recognizing that we do have, each one of us, our limitations, it still remains true that it is our duty to provide our Creator with the fittest instrument that circumstances and our abilities permit, with which He may work.

What do we really mean by “health”? Many people regard themselves as healthy if they merely have no pain or observable

malfunctioning. But there are latent diseased conditions that can be discovered only by careful examination. Again, is a disgruntled or malicious disposition healthy? Cheerfulness is a most important factor in lasting health. We are meant to be joyful, not miserable, to radiate light, not gloom. To overcome both physical and mental defects involves effort. Those who take up Yoga seriously cannot expect to have it handed out to them on a golden platter ready made. It always entails struggle against the lower self, it requires readjustment of one’s point of view, a revision of one’s conventional values and the accepted standards of the world.

A happy disposition is therefore an important ingredient of health, both physical and mental, the ability to see the best side of things, even when they go wrong, a readiness to laugh, especially at our own selves. Laughter is regarded as a divine faculty, and some of the Yoga exercises are actually based on the physical motions of laughter. Great muscularity is not necessarily an attribute of health, muscularity can even be excessive; but endurance and resistance to disease, even in an apparently frail body, are signs of true health. In exceptional circumstances, of course, anybody may fall a prey, we are all liable to accidents, in street, trains, aeroplanes. Nevertheless we can cultivate a greater degree of resistance so as to suffer less and recover quicker. A further important point is the ability to relax at will. This results in better sleep, and because it is better, less of it is needed. This means in a very real sense prolongation of life, for if you can add, say, an hour or two to your daily waking life you have extended your life in a much more real sense than if you lived for a century and slept through half of it.

If I occasionally make references to the Deity or our Creator I want it to be clearly understood that I am simply trying to choose terms which are convenient and familiar to the West. I have already emphasized that Yoga is neither a religion nor a cult, nor does it seek to supplant anybody’s faith. Quite the contrary, it seeks rather to reinforce it, for the man who is devoid of faith is really only half alive. But faith can express itself in many terms, and it is not the business of Yoga to dictate what form it shall take. Yoga is a process of striving, striving after union with whatever we regard as our most perfect ideal. In whatever department of life your occupation may lie your striving must be to do it ever better, whether it be business or domestic life, art, athletics, philosophy, or anything else you find yourself called upon to do. Perfection after all is only

another word for Divinity. Yoga is a method and a philosophy of life based on reason, which shows us that it is possible to yoke ourselves in all our activities to that Power that pervades this universe to which we belong.

But just as one finds good and bad among those who profess religion, so also good and bad are found among those who call themselves Yogis, that is, practitioners of Yoga. Unfortunately there are bogus Yogis. There was a case in America of a man who had given himself an Indian name who offered a correspondence course *to heaven* for ten dollars, and the correspondence course was on Yoga! Books and correspondence courses may sometimes be better than nothing if direct sources are not available, but caution needs to be exercised. Not everything said and written about Yoga is authoritative.

I touched earlier on the point of asceticism and mentioned that at certain stages, depending on how much time you have and how far you wish to go, ascetic practices may be prescribed for a certain time. It is, after all, rather like training for the Olympic Games. People who train for the Olympic Games have to change their habits of life, they must moderate their diet, they must severely regulate their life. They must practice to some extent an ascetic life for a time in order to achieve a certain objective. Having achieved that objective they can either keep it up or not keep it up, according to their wish. Exactly the same applies in Yoga. Ascetic practices are prescribed to achieve certain results. When you have achieved the results you can revert to a more ordinary state of life. On the whole asceticism is not regarded as essential, especially in Western conditions.

Let us in conclusion of this preliminary survey sum up what benefits may be looked for from the study and practice of this subject in its simplest and most elementary form by ordinary people in average circumstances of business or domestic life. The first benefit to be gained is simply increased joy and pleasure in being alive, sheer *joie de vivre*, to use the French expression. This results from improved digestion, stimulation of the nervous system, and an all-round better state of health. The second is increased efficiency in whatever tasks one has to perform, coupled with greater energy and less fatigue in performing them. The third is greater mental alertness, a more lively response to outside impressions, quicker mental reactions and decisions. The fourth is a greater degree of balance, poise and self-control, with less tendency to fear or despondency

arising from the troubles and difficulties of life, a better comprehension of the laws of cause and effect. And finally the satisfaction of knowing that by radiating this increased measure of life-force you spread hope and optimism to all with whom you come in contact, and thus help to make this world a happier place.

These are the results that may be expected by any normal person who applies himself diligently and perseveringly to the study and practice of Yoga in an elementary form adapted to the circumstances of everyday life in the West. And finally, for the sake of those who are interested in the more far-reaching view of the aims and purposes of Yoga and the stages of its attainment, here is a more complete summing-up which I put into English at the suggestion of one of my Teachers:

“When your body is vigorous, your mind clear, your spirit exalted, your blood pure, your nerves disciplined, your physique resistant to disease, when you have made of your physical frame an instrument worthy of the Divine Player—this is the beginning of Yoga.

“When your service is to your Creator and your fellow-man, when you perform hateful tasks joyfully, when you are humble in success and cheerful in adversity, when you are indifferent to praise or offence, and when you bow down in gratitude for the difficulties and obstacles you encounter—this is the progress of Yoga.

“When you are master of thought and ruler of emotion, when amid all vicissitudes your calm enjoyment of inward peace is complete, when every detail of existence evokes in you wonder and awe, when you feel each moment of life to be a miracle, when you merge your infinitesimal soul in the ocean of infinite silence, and when you truly love all living things as part of yourself—this is the attainment of Yoga.”

Is the ideal too high, the goal too inaccessible? If this is what you feel, then simply remember the ancient Chinese proverb: “A journey of ten thousand miles begins with the first step”.

II

THE YOGA OF HEALTH

WHEN, AT BIRTH, we come into this physical world, we come with two gifts only: the first is the physical body; the second is time, a limited number of years before us. The body contains all those inherent potentialities (known to the ancients as *samskaras*) which will manifest as mind, intelligence, individuality, talent, genius, and character, briefly all those phenomena covered by the common terms personality, soul, spirit; and how the mind, soul, or spirit shall flourish during the present life depends primarily on what befalls their vehicle, the body, in the course of its adventures on this plane. If its quality is poor and frail it may quickly wither and perish. If it is neglected or abused, again it may not last long and its potentialities will be lost to the world. Their blossoming depends first and foremost on what is done to preserve their vehicle in a suitable condition, much as the blossoming of a flower depends on the conditions and environment of the plant. If the body is extinguished, so are its powers of manifestation in this world; if it is crippled or diseased, its powers will be correspondingly circumscribed; if it is maintained in the highest possible state of health, those powers will be able to bloom as a healthy apple or cherry tree displays in course of time its gorgeous array of flowering blossom and gives the world its fruit. In the sense that physical Yoga deals specifically with an organ that is transient and doomed to disintegrate it may be regarded as the last of Yogas, but it becomes the first when we realize that it is the only instrument we possess through which to practise any other kind of Yoga whatsoever; in other words all other Yogas depend for their successful achievement on the body being in a condition that will allow of its functioning in the required manner, and it is only reasonable to assume that the more highly trained and perfected the instrument is, the more likely is it to allow freedom of operation to its spiritual tenant. Viewed in this light it becomes an interesting illustration of the Biblical dictum, "The last shall be first and first last". (If theologians who are puzzled by the many paradoxical utterances of the Lord Jesus would examine them from the standpoint of Yoga philosophy they would find much new light thrown on them.) Such a view

acquires still greater force from the fact that Hatha Yoga seeks to train the physical instrument to a pitch of perfection that allows an infinitely greater development than can ever be possible by the most perfected methods of what is commonly known as physical culture; it seeks to evoke not only all those faculties which are now known to science, but also those which are latent, those hidden potentialities which are still unrecognized officially by Western science but whose existence is widely accepted by the more adventurous physiologists and psychologists who are seeking to reduce to scientific terms the phenomena exhibited by exceptional individuals in whom telepathy, clairvoyance, and other phenomena reveal themselves accidentally or as the result of conscious training.

Artificial distinctions between body, mind, and spirit therefore find no place in Yoga philosophy. Nor is there anything in our physical organism of which we need ever, in any circumstances, be ashamed, unless we have neglected or abused it. All parts are equally worthy of care, equally holy. There is still prevalent in the Western world a false modesty, a shamefaced puritanism about this matter. But if you divide up the human body and say this part is good but that is bad, this is honourable but that is dishonourable, this is praiseworthy but that is shameful, you are simply condemning your Creator for having made you as you are. In Yoga we do not accept that attitude, we regard the human organism as a unit without any reservations.

For convenience, although the distinction is artificial, we may divide this branch of Yoga into two parts, metaphysical and simply physical. The distinction is artificial because there is no borderline, whatever meaning one attaches to the word "metaphysical". But this term is commonly employed to designate those aspects of physical manifestation to which we have referred above, that have not yet been precisely defined, measured, classified and docketed by academic science and consequently still are open to speculation and experimental investigation. Firstly I will deal with the latter aspect of the matter. It is of interest to all who read books on Yoga, because of the promises held out of what is called "psychic" development—always a matter of curiosity—and the pictures with which the books are usually illustrated showing people in what appear to some to be strange postures, the renowned *asanas*, which are reputed to develop the so-called "psychic" powers referred to.

The word "Hatha" is composed of two words, "Ha" which means "the sun" and "tha" "the moon". Hatha Yoga therefore means literally "Sun-Moon Yoga". The sun is said to have its

counterpart in the physical organism in the solar plexus, as the name implies. The moon has its counterpart in the brain, as is also implied in the word lunatic, meaning a person whose moon-organ, the brain, has got off its course. The object of Hatha Yoga is sometimes said to be to establish the right relationship between the sun and the moon in the body, in other words the solar plexus and the brain. According to the metaphysical interpretation of the human body, however, not only the sun and moon but also the other planets of the solar system have corresponding centres in the physical organism. The body is in fact a replica in miniature of the solar system, and these centres can be recognized and brought under conscious control.

Prana, the universal all-pervading essence of Creation, being the medium through which life itself manifests, we will speak of as the Life-force. This force, of course, permeates all organs of the body at all times as it does all matter, yet it is through the rhythmic flow of the breath, learning to regulate the inflow and outflow, that we are able consciously to control and direct it, and in this way raise the vibrations of the physical organs to respond to those of more subtle planes of existence. It has been conclusively proved by Western science that our brain and nerves operate in response to electrical stimuli. Prana, like electricity, is indivisible, yet it has its positive and negative aspects. Prana that enters through the right nostril is positive and is called *Pingala*. Prana that enters through the left nostril is negative and is called *Ida*. These two forces send nervous impulses down the spinal cord until they reach the base of the spine. There they unite, provided circumstances are favourable, and together pass up the spinal cord, through the central spinal channel, called *Sushumna*, until they reach the brain. The force that passes up the *Sushumna* is sometimes referred to as the *Kundalini*. The *Kundalini* may be described as a concentration of all the vital forces of the organism, including all the latent powers inherent in us, which in most people lie hidden as undeveloped potentialities. The object of advanced physical Yoga is to bring about this concentration of forces, and awaken the dormant nerve centres within us. When this power reaches the brain, illumination is granted to us.

Hatha Yoga teaches that this can be aided and promoted by certain physical practices, directed by intense mental concentration. Anybody who is interested in the metaphysical side of the subject should realize that those who go in for it have to devote a very great deal of time to it, perhaps their whole life, and do nothing else. The famous *asanas*, about which

I shall have a word or two to say later, some of which concern also ordinary physical Yoga, are all designed to effect pressure on nerve centres in the body and stimulate them to higher activity. These things can only be done in carefully prepared circumstances under proper guidance. It is not for ordinary people to hanker after powers which enable human beings to perform such feats as levitation or simulating death, nor are such powers of any use in ordinary life. Such seeming "miracles" are possible and they are done, but only by exceptional people who have had exceptional training in exceptional circumstances and with exceptional guidance. And even then the powers are of no value in themselves, but are of value only insofar as they are accompanied by spiritual development for the service of mankind.

The acquisitions to which physical Yoga attaches greatest value for daily life are first and foremost an increased joy in sheer existence, greater appreciation of the miracle of life, a deeper urge to make the most of it and put the most into it. Endurance and heightened resistance to disease, quicker recovery powers, longer and fuller life, these too follow in the train of the Yoga discipline. Not that mere length of days is craved for; the desire for longer life is motivated by the ambition to achieve more both in one's inward and outward life. It is the prime of life, the best part of it, the period of full maturity that we seek to prolong, the years of the greatest productivity and creative activity.

Four physical processes dominate life in the human organism: they are Respiration, Alimentation, Elimination, and Relaxation; and because the operation of our mental and spiritual functions depends on the happy working of these four departments of physical existence they are sometimes referred to as the four Sacred Physical Arts. Respiration, being the primary function of life as has already been stressed, is the first object of attention in practical training, since by it we live from moment to moment. The lungs may be likened to bellows, and most people breathe only with the middle range of the bellows. We should learn to expand these bellows to the full as a habit. Moreover it is instructive to study the various modes of breathing that Nature indicates to us at special moments. Besides speaking, singing, and chanting, also whistling, yawning, gasping, sighing, laughing, crying, panting, puffing, sniffing, humming, and sneezing are modes of breathing examination of which repays us handsomely. Laughing, for instance, is a truly divine impulse—genuine laughter, of course, not a mere

chuckle. Side-splitting laughter is a cleansing breath on which important Yoga exercises are based. Properly performed, laughter completely clears the lungs, stimulates the intestines, accelerates the circulation, causes perspiration which cleanses the skin, and provokes tears which are nature's own eye lotion. Yawning also provides a key to valuable respiratory exercises. A yawn is an internal stretch which so to speak recharges our psychic accumulators. It is usually, and ought always to be, accompanied by stretching the limbs to squeeze out the sluggish blood and thus stimulate circulation which tends to slacken when we are physically inactive. A yawn consists of a deep inhalation, retention of the breath, while face and throat muscles are distended and contorted, and finally a complete exhalation, which is always followed by a feeling of relaxation and refreshment if the operation has been correctly performed. These are truly divine impulses, reminding us that we have been neglecting the intake of the Life-force that is given us so freely and abundantly and enabling us to make up for the deficiency by these special devices. Consider the matter also in this way: suppose we were to breathe less and less until we ceased breathing altogether, how much life would be left? It would quickly be the end of us. Yet few people perceive that by working in the reverse direction, namely by breathing more and more, it might be the saving of us through doubling or trebling the Life-force we absorb.

EXERCISE ONE. To acquire the habit of deep complete breathing the learner should proceed as follows. Lie flat on the ground and allow the limbs to go quite loose. Take care that the mouth is closed so that breathing shall be through the nostrils only; and that the teeth are not touching, this aids relaxation. Empty the lungs completely. Then, in inhaling, see to it that the lower part of the lung is filled first. For this the diaphragm must expand downward and outward so that the abdomen swells slightly. Every deep breath must be an abdominal breath. To make sure of this the fingers may be placed lightly on the body so as to feel the movement of the abdomen. Continuing the inhalation the middle and upper parts of the lungs are filled, the upper part of the chest rising with the last in-drawing of air, the general sensation being one of drawing everything up inside the body. With this the lower abdomen should be slightly drawn in. Hold the breath a very brief instant, then let it flow out gently, like a sigh of relief and satisfaction, making sure that the exhalation is complete. Pause, relaxed, until the impulse to inhale reappears, then repeat the

breath. As an exercise the whole operation should be performed half a dozen times as slowly and evenly as possible.

The average rate of ordinary breathing is about 18-20 times a minute and because this is the average many mistake it for the normal. But to breathe twenty times a minute is only possible if the respiration is shallow and a considerable area of the lung surface is not expanded and consequently runs to waste. The faster and shallower the lungs are made to work the worse is the effect on the nerves. To breathe, say, thirty or forty times a minute as a habit is ruinous and liable soon to cause a nervous breakdown. To breathe twenty times a minute is only relatively less harmful. The actual rate of respiration must of course depend to some extent on the degree of physical exertion at the time; but when no particular physical exertion is being made the rate of breathing should not exceed six or seven respirations a minute. Lying on the ground or seated quietly it can easily be reduced still further. In this mode of deep breathing far more oxygen is imbibed than in more rapid and shallow breathing, for the entire area of the lung receives aeration, whereas in shallow breathing only a restricted area receives any aeration at all, and the more rapid the breath the smaller the area aerated.

The habitual breathing of some who regard themselves as normal individuals is so bad that first attempts at practising even this mild exercise tend to make them dizzy. This is one of the reasons why it is suggested that the first attempts should be made lying down. It should then be practised sitting and standing until it becomes a regular habit. The spine must always be held erect, the shoulders lightly pressed back, and the lower abdomen slightly drawn in. Seated on a chair the torso and thighs, and the thighs and legs, should form right angles. The eyes should be closed and the period of holding the breath with the lungs full should gradually and cautiously be extended.

EXERCISE TWO. This consists in adding vertical arm movements to the above exercise. During inhalation, slowly raise the arms, fully extended, sideward behind the line of the shoulders. Clasp the hands overhead and turn the palms upward (Fig. 1). In this position remain immobile, with the breath held, for as long as is comfortable to do so. As soon as the slightest strain appears unclasp the hands and bring them down slowly, behind the line of the shoulders, slowly releasing the breath. The whole movement is followed by a series of full breaths without arm movements, the body being relaxed.

The exercise should be repeated, slowly, several times. The degree of stretching overhead may be gradually increased as the ability to hold the breath longer grows. The most tranquil-



Figure 1



Figure 2

izing effect is produced by performing the entire exercise with closed eyes. These elementary exercises may have a profound effect in calming the nervous system of people who have never before attempted to study the art of correct breathing. The feature that distinguishes them from any form of mere gymnastic is that they must be performed with the breath held.

Further developments of this exercise may be performed standing, as follows:



Figure 3

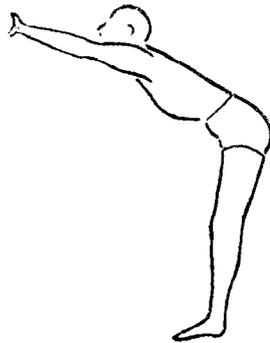


Figure 4

EXERCISE THREE. After completely emptying the lungs inhale deeply, raising the arms laterally behind the line of the

shoulders, clasp the hands overhead and turn the palms upward, look upward, hold the breath a brief instant in this position (Fig. 2), then unclasp and bring the outstretched arms down slowly behind the line of the shoulders while slowly exhaling. At first the breath should be held only for one second but with practice this can be prolonged. As the arms descend to the sides they relax, together with the whole body. Two or three deep breaths should then be taken without arm movements before repeating the exercise. These breaths must be full and deep, resembling tidal waves, the body relaxing completely after each one except for the slight effort required to maintain the standing position. When accustomed to this exercise the student may repeat it several times. It will also be found refreshing to do it occasionally, once or twice, at any time during the day.

EXERCISE FOUR. When the student is able to hold the breath a few seconds in the upstretched position (Fig. 2), he may, while holding the breath, gently bend the body sideward (Fig. 3). At first he should do each side separately on single breaths, and as he acquires proficiency he may do both sides on the single held breath. The degree of stretching should at first be gentle, but may be gradually increased. The descent and recovery breaths are the same as in Exercise Three.

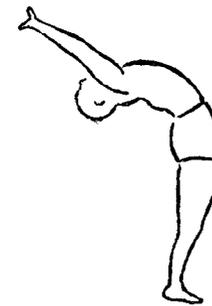


Figure 5



Figure 6

EXERCISE FIVE. Instead of bending sideward, the body bends forward (Fig. 4). The knees are kept stiff, the bending of the body is from the hips so that the back is quite straight, and the arms press upward, the head being held well back. Again at first the degree of stretching should at first be gentle, gradually increasing with practice. Exhalation and relaxation are as in Exercise Two.

EXERCISE SIX. The body may now be bent backward instead of forward (Fig. 5). The bending must at first be very slight, as balance is more easily disturbed in bending backward than in bending forward. Exhalation and relaxation as in Exercise Three.

With practice the student may perform the forward and backward bendings on the same breath, and eventually all four positions of Exercises Four, Five and Six in sequence on one breath.

These various movements not only greatly strengthen the lungs, but stretching of the limbs and the bending of the torso serve to squeeze the sluggish blood from the tissues and render the body more flexible. Prolongation of youthfulness depends in large measure on the degree of suppleness and sinuosity of the body.

EXERCISE SEVEN. The student may now combine all above four positions in a rotary movement. From the position of Fig. 2, the body is first bent forward as in Fig. 4, then rotated laterally to the position of Fig. 3. There it is held an instant to make sure the position is correct, then the rotatory movement is continued round to the backbend position of Fig. 5, then further to the side-bend position on the other side, and is finally brought back again to the front (Fig. 4), raised to the straight (Fig. 2), and exhalation and descent take place, followed by recovery breaths, as before.

As in preceding exercises, the degree of stretching and pressure in any direction must at first be slight, but can be increased little by little. Also at first the rotation must be sufficiently fast to be easy, and then may be gradually slowed down; or, the double rotation can be performed on the single breath.

All the above exercises are of immense value for elementary Yoga preparation, and, combined with the further exercises for abdominal control, will go far toward restoring vigour to both body and mind, provided due moderation is observed in the habits of eating, with special attention to thorough mastication of every mouthful.

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Alimentation, the second of the Sacred Physical Arts, is the art of nourishing the body. Nourishment is obtained in four forms: solids, liquids, air, and mental impressions—impressions from outside, obtained through sight, hearing, and smell. Impressions can greatly modify the effects of food. Bad news received during a meal may leave us devoid of any further desire for food. Equally an unpleasant sight or smell may spoil

one's appetite by the impressions caused. They may even provoke vomiting. As for food in the usual sense, Yoga pays no attention to the periodic array of dietetic fads with which the otiose obese and self-inflicted dyspeptics seek to console themselves. Provided common sense is observed, which includes moderation in all things and frugality in luxuries, the best thing one can do to every peddler of diatetic cure-alls is to turn a deaf ear and get on with the business of living reasonably. There are three sins of which most people are guilty in greater or lesser degree: one is eating too much, the second is eating too fast, and the third is eating too often. It is very hard to convince people in this matter, but the truth is that we lose a considerable amount of energy with every single morsel that we eat beyond the strict requirements of the body. It becomes, so to speak, excess baggage, a burden that has to be carried about and disposed of. When people struggle against the bad habit of eating beyond the body's requirements they may suffer discomfort for a time in the process of curbing their cravings; but the choice has to be made, either to curb indulgence and improve the health, figure, general appearance and sense of well-being, or else accept the consequences of systematic gluttony, and contract dyspepsia, constipation, rheumatism, diabetes, and the rest of the dictionary of ailments. It is surprising how little the organism can subsist on and feel much stronger. By eating only the right amount one saves a great deal of energy, all that energy which was previously expended in digesting the superfluous food and carrying about the consequences heaped round the waist, hips, and loins. Besides, by eating too much and too fast—the two things generally go together—one quickly ceases to enjoy—and nothing is more necessary than to enjoy one's food! Both eating and drinking should be part of that legitimate enjoyment which is necessary to the body.

It is, however, difficult to generalize on actual diet because people's requirements differ according to circumstances and occupation. There cannot be a fixed general diet exactly suited to everybody. Age, sex, climate, occupation, and special circumstances must all be taken into consideration. Each must decide for himself how he is to cope with details of the subject. But the principle remains true for all, that we ought to eat less than is the prevailing custom, and that little should be consumed slowly. Nature has her own tempo and rhythm in these matters, she cannot be rushed with impunity. It must be remembered that what we are aiming at is *more energy, greater efficiency,* and a deeper satisfaction and contentment. To achieve these

blessings we must avoid all forms of excess. All too many people are like the old lady who was prescribed a diet by her doctor; her daughter came in in the evening and found her stuffing herself with a huge meal, so she said, "But, mother, didn't the doctor prescribe a diet for you?" To which the old lady replied, "Oh yes, and I had my diet this morning, now I'm having my dinner!"

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The third Sacred Physical Art is Elimination. Elimination (of waste matter and toxins) is another word for Purification. It is just as important as Respiration, and should really come before Alimentation, for you cannot refurnish and renovate your bodily habitation until you have thrown out unwanted rubbish. Purification is the keynote of practical Yoga. Every inhalation and exhalation constitute a process of purification. There is a common saying that cleanliness is next to godliness, but in the philosophy of Yoga cleanliness is regarded as an essential feature of godliness. Of the two kinds of cleanliness, outer and inner, outer cleanliness, however desirable, matters little by comparison with inner cleanliness. The purification to which we attach prime importance is inner. The four channels of physical purification are the lungs, the large bowel or colon, the kidneys, and the skin. All these organs must be brought into increased activity: the lungs through special exercises of which one elementary example has been given; the bowel through exercises and water cleansing, the kidneys through water cleansing, and the skin through the cleansing action of both water and air. The organs are thus made to operate in a more efficient manner, and thereby life may become completely transformed.

EXERCISE EIGHT. The following simple abdominal exercises will be found helpful in stimulating digestion and regular evacuation of the bowel, but they must not be performed too soon after a meal. Early morning is the best time.

Lie flat, and let all the limbs go loose, as described in the first breathing exercise. Take two or three full deep breaths as there indicated. After the third, empty the lungs, and, without drawing in any further breath, pull up the abdominal wall under the ribs and hold it there a second or two. Then let go, and take several deep full breaths before repeating the operation. When the abdominal wall is thus pulled up it should be possible to feel the ribs protruding through the skin, for which reason this exercise is sometimes called the skeleton movement—a highly encouraging phenomenon to those desirous of

reducing their superfluous "padding". A word of caution, however. This exercise should be commenced gently, and stopped at once if discomfort is felt. In this case it should be recommenced after a pause again very gently, aided with light massage with the fingers of the region thus brought into play, and the position held only one or two seconds. After a while it can be prolonged, and the movement of tensing and releasing repeated several times at each performance. This exercise not only greatly stimulates the region of the stomach, liver, pancreas, intestines and transverse colon, thus promoting digestion and assimilation through renewal of the blood supply, but it necessitates several full deep breaths between each performance, thus promoting complete breathing as a regular habit. It also stimulates peristaltic action throughout the whole intestinal canal and therefore encourages quicker evacuation of the bowel. (See illustration facing page 27.)

EXERCISE NINE. The following exercise combines gentle internal pressures with massage of the spine and rhythmic breathing. It should be done on a soft rug or carpet.

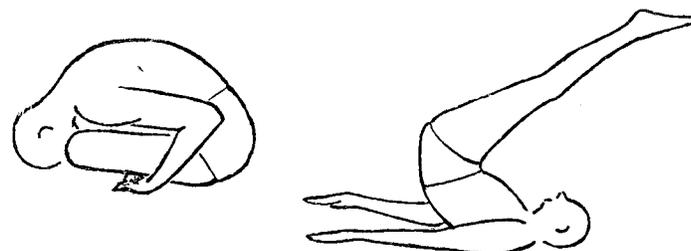


Figure 7

Figure 8

Adopt the cross-legged sitting posture, spine erect, and clasp the right foot with the left hand and the left foot with the right hand (Fig. 6). Exhaling, bend forward (Fig. 7). From this position, roll back onto the spine, releasing the feet, straightening the arms on the floor, and extending the legs in the air (Fig. 8). Without pause, roll forward again to the starting position (Fig. 6), grasping the feet once more. Inhale deeply, exhale and recommence. To get used to this movement it may be done a few times without special attention to the breathing. Accurate rhythmic respiration can then be added as follows. In the starting position (Fig. 6) inhale fully, straightening the spine. Bend forward exhaling, roll and recover to the starting position with empty lungs. Inhale again deeply, and recommence. After every two or three rolls performed

thus, a pause should be made to take two or three slow complete breaths before continuing. The exercise may be repeated in this way as many times as is comfortable.

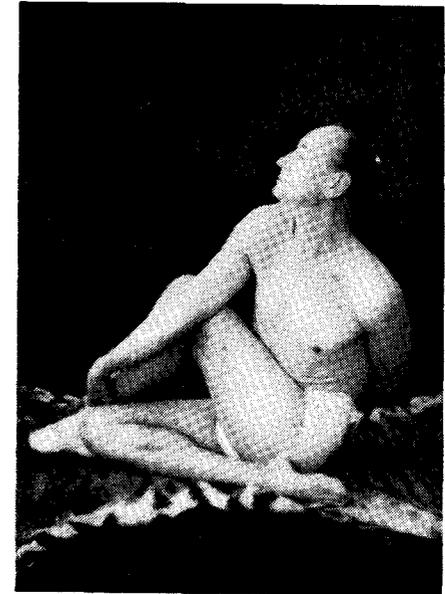
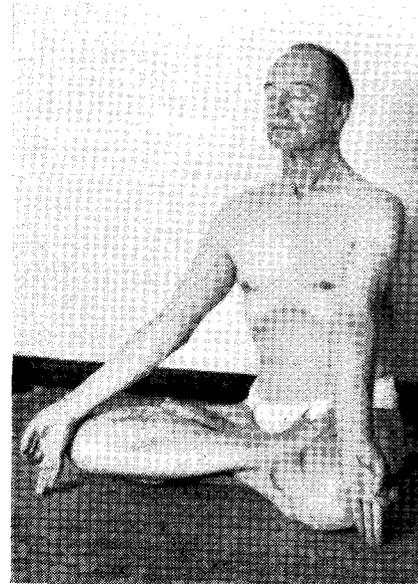
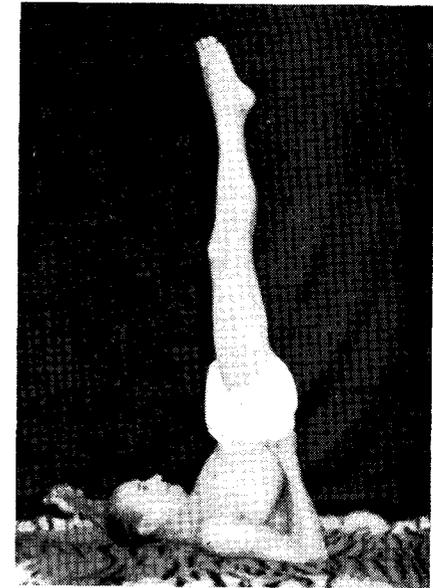
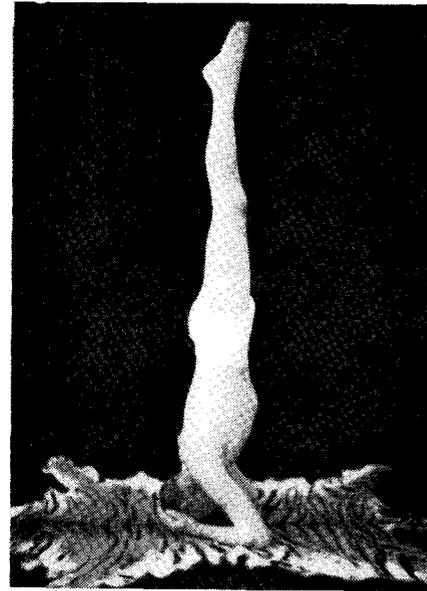
EXERCISE TEN. The Shoulder-stand. This posture is highly beneficial in that, by inverting the position of the body, the downward drag of gravity on the internal organs is reversed, thus relieving any tendency to varicose veins and internal prolapses, while the pressure on the region of the neck and throat stimulates the thyroid gland and administers valuable massage to the vocal organs. From the rolling position (Fig. 8) the legs are lifted, the hands raised to support the body in the small of the back, until gradually the body is pushed up straight and held there for a few seconds. Deep breathing is impossible, but though shallow it should be rhythmic. The period of holding the posture can be very gradually extended. After each practice of a shoulder-stand, relax completely, lying down and taking a few deep breaths before repeating.

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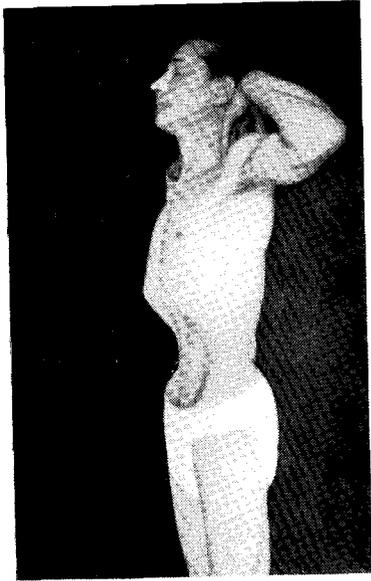
Finally, the fourth Sacred Physical Art is Relaxation. Many people find it a source of trouble that they cannot easily relax. We live, of course, a truly crazy life in our modern cities, regulated not by our natural requirements but by office hours, limited meal times, and the manifold duties of daily life, all of which necessitate an artificial mode of living, and consequently we tend to get tied up in nervous knots, mental as well as physical. Knots are not untied by giving them a jerk, that will only tie them tighter. The worse the tangle, the more gently it must be unravelled. If you can do it the mental way (which is, of course also physical, operating directly through the brain) well and good. Lie down and truly *will* yourself to relax—but bear in mind that willing does not imply any mental exertion; it means implanting one idea in the mind and letting it germinate there undisturbed like a seed in the soil. Some find this difficult, however, for the very reason that the mind itself is too taut. For such people symmetrical and measured alternation of physical tension and release is the best method. Tension and release are like light and shade. The deepest shadow is cast by the strongest light. A convenient procedure is as follows: Lying flat, deliberately stiffen the whole body, tightening the fists and tensing the limbs to the maximum. The subsequent sudden release brings natural relaxation in its train. Breath may be held during tensing, followed by full deep breaths in relaxation.

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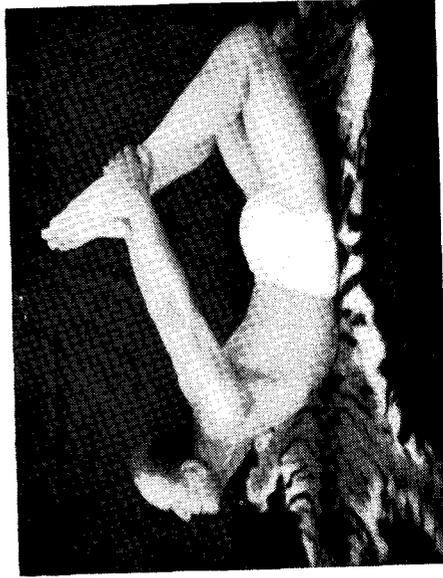
Yoga aims to achieve a sort of economy of activity in the physical organism which resembles in a way the economics of



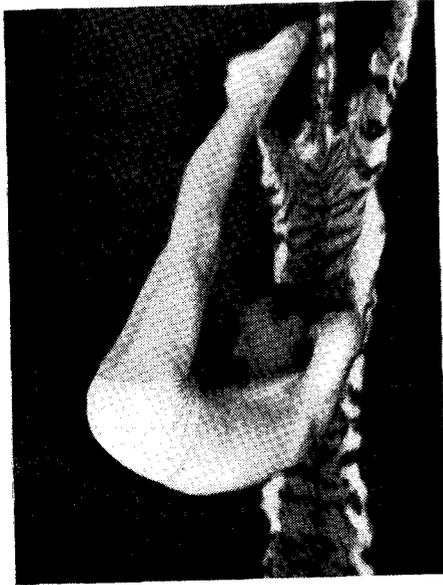
*The Author in Yoga Postures.
Headstand, Shoulderstand, Lotus Posture, Spinal Twist.*



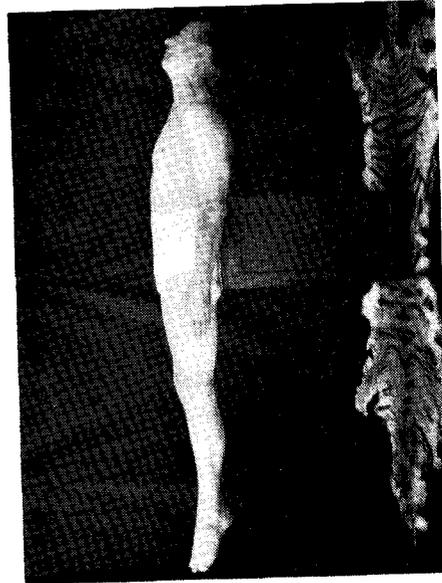
Abdominal Squeeze ("Skeleton").



Bow Posture.



Posterior Backbend.



Catleptic Posture.

finance. When we invest money we hope to get the best return and if we do not get a good return we are dissatisfied. Now we should eat, sleep, work, yes and even play, as an investment. Over-capitalization, as any financier knows, is often a serious danger, and so is over-eating, over-sleeping, over-working. There is an economics of these operations. Yoga teaches us to work out the art of living in such a way that every effort we have to make shall cost the minimum in exertion, and yet produce the maximum result, still leaving a reserve for emergencies.

The centre for the distribution of energy is the solar plexus. Consequently, the abdomen is, as it were, the office and power-station where the economics of energy are worked out and put into operation, so that if our abdominal region is cluttered up with adipose tissue or intestinal accumulations our physical (and consequently mental) economics cannot be calculated to best effect. It is commonly recognized that our thought is largely determined by our emotions, and that the seat of our emotions lies primarily in the solar plexus. This is admitted in vulgarisms such as "a man of guts" or "bowels of compassion", popular expressions which reveal deep truth. The power of feeling, our capacity for reverence, worship, aspiration, idealism in general originate from here. When we are angry it is our "stomach" that turns, when we are frightened it is in the abdominal region that we get that "queasy" feeling, when disgusted it is our stomach that vomits. This is why we associate mental impressions with nourishment, and why it is always good to be cheerful at table. It is by our emotions that the quality of our thought is mainly determined. In Hatha Yoga, therefore, it is the nervous system, as a whole, but at first particularly the nerve centres of the abdominal region that receive first attention. To start with the brain, or thinking apparatus as we commonly understand it, and let the rest of the organism take care of itself is to put the cart before the horse.

In examining this subject we need not go further than the sun and moon in recognizing the correspondence of the microcosm of the human body with the macrocosm of the solar system, especially as it would be difficult precisely to determine which of our nerve centres in terms of Western science correspond to the so-called "chakras" of Hatha Yoga. But the implied recognition by the West of the correspondence of the solar plexus and the brain leads us to conclude that further correspondences will later be recognized.

The philosophic implication of this recognition lies in the fact that it leads us inevitably to the conclusion that, as

individuals, we should regard ourselves as integral parts of the universe. An acute realization of this would have a far-reaching influence on our thought, since to recognize this fact fully would inevitably bring our individual consciousness into line with the universal consciousness, in other words with the creative principle of the universe, which is the whole aim of Yoga. In fact, it may be said that the aim of Sun-Moon or Hatha Yoga is so to train our bodily functions and activities, including thought, which is one of the most important of our bodily activities, that they shall operate in a manner fully reflecting the beauty, harmony, rhythm and ordered symmetry of the heavens above and around us. In the microcosm of the human body this will find expression in perfect harmony of body, mind and spirit.

It is a peculiar feature of Western "civilization", as we are pleased to term it, that the vital process of breathing, the very basis of our consciousness, is left almost entirely to take care of itself. Parents teach their children how to read and write, how to walk, run, sit and perform other activities, they teach them how to behave and deport themselves, but the vast majority of parents would stare at you blankly and uncomprehendingly if you asked them if they had taught their children how to breathe! And naturally enough, since in the vast majority of cases they never learnt themselves! Children are taught Latin and mathematics, but not how to breathe. Adolescents proceed to universities to have their heads filled with all sorts of knowledge, useful or otherwise, without anyone ever having even dreamt of teaching them the greatest of all arts and sciences, that of how to perform most effectively and with the maximum of advantage that function which constitutes our immediate and most intimate link with Life itself. The process of *living* is treated as something entirely haphazard, accidental, to be taken for granted much as brute creatures take their existence for granted.

But it is precisely with this operation of the Life-force within us and discovery of its hidden secrets that Hatha Yoga concerns itself. It is the most profound and the most reverent of all studies, without which the study of philosophic or religious matters assumes a certain ironic character. Truly do we all too often cast aside the substance for the shell. Even serious students honestly seeking truth often get lost in the pursuit of phenomena external to themselves or through adherence to forms and practices dictated by dogmas or creeds imposed from without, with the result that the search for the kingdom of heaven *within* us is neglected and may even be regarded askance. Anything

to do with the "body" is considered as unworthy of attention or even improper, something to be discouraged; and yet these same persons neglecting their own instrument, would hardly invite a first-class pianist to extract music from a second-rate untuned piano.

In the West, only for the purposes of singing and athletics is any kind of breath-training frequently practised, and then only to achieve certain limited external effects. For the rest, it is allowed to go completely by default.

In popular books on physical Yoga a great deal of attention is usually devoted to descriptions of certain bodily postures to which importance is attached. Some of these are indeed important as placing the body in an attitude of symmetry with pressures effected on vital centres, but it is a mistake to think, as some seem to imagine, that simply by twisting the body into these unusual positions supernatural powers will be developed. As a matter of fact, performed maladroitly and without proper guidance they may do harm. No two individuals are constructed exactly alike, and structural peculiarities must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, there is a long series of exercises, physical and mental, that must precede the postures in order to prepare the body for them and for results that are expected from them, and these exercises are rarely indicated in books in any adequate manner, once again for the reason that there cannot possibly be any universal rule applying equally to everybody, since we are constructed differently, not to speak of differences of temperament and mentality which also have to be considered.

To sum up, physical Yoga is designed to prepare the body to be a perfect instrument through which the mind and spirit of man may manifest on this plane of existence. Though only by special training can its more advanced forms be practised, in its more elementary stages, adapted to the conditions of Western city life, it can still be of immense benefit to health and general well-being, inducing peace of mind and serenity of spirit even amid all the turmoil and anxiety of modern life.

It cannot be too often emphasized that Yoga differs from ordinary physical culture in that it does not seek to develop big biceps or athletic prowess—however admirable these may be in their right place—but that it seeks by means of training and control of the breath, coupled with symmetrical movements and postures, to establish harmony in the nervous system with consequent balanced collaboration of body, mind and spirit. The right mental attitude to the subject is essential from the

outset, and it must constantly be borne in mind that the body is to be trained to be a fitter instrument for the efficient manifestation of the soul.

Pranayama, the control of breath or spirit, which is the first step in the process of tuning, is brought about by various exercises, ranging from forced breathing for the purpose of purifying the lungs and effecting a complete clearance of all the bronchial and nasal passages, to slow rhythmic breathing involving the use in a scientific manner of each nostril separately. Retention of breath for long periods also plays a vital part in Yoga practice. Training of the breath must be accompanied by a scientific study of the postures to which I have already referred. It is fully admitted in the West that the manner in which we hold ourselves while sitting and standing has a marked influence on our health and well-being. In Yoga the study of this subject is carried much further. Not only must the body be held at all times in a free and easy position and the general musculature kept lithe and supple for this purpose, but by the exercise of pressure on nerve centres and glands through the practice of special postures accompanied by holding of the breath these centres can be awakened to an unsuspected degree. The essential feature of all the Yoga poses is their symmetry. The body may be twisted and contorted in a manner that seems strange to those who view such postures for the first time, but the positions in which the body is placed are always symmetrical and harmonious. The simplest of them for the purpose of sitting comfortably and symmetrically is the cross-legged position with the spine erect and the hands lying on the knees. This is the basic posture for the commencement of elementary study.

A posture that generally arouses a good deal of curiosity is that of standing on the head. When properly approached there are very few people in average health who cannot perform this. It has many benefits. Its chief object is to reverse the effect of gravitation on the internal organs and the bloodstream. Gravitation exerts a powerful drag downwards on our insides, especially on the vital organs of the abdominal region, causing prolapses and other disorders of the intestinal tract, particularly in people of sedentary habits. Its influence is powerful on the circulation of the blood, causing varicose veins and other troubles. All these can be relieved and often cured by the simple practice of inverting the position of the body. This is becoming increasingly recognized by the medical profession in the West, and various devices have been invented for tilting the body at such an

angle that the head shall be lower than the rest of the body for prolonged periods. In a person of average health the use of such mechanical devices is merely paying tribute to sloth, for much benefit is gained by the actual process of learning to stand on the head. The process is gradual and gentle, and when correctly instructed the learner finds himself standing upside down comfortably and without effort quite quickly, sometimes to his own great astonishment—and always to his delight. The practice is especially beneficial to women on account of the wider pelvic basin, but they must approach it cautiously.

Prior to this, of course, the abdominal muscles, which come prominently into play in getting up and down from a headstand, must have been suitably exercised, and the training of these muscles forms an important feature of elementary Yoga exercising. This not only improves the digestive apparatus, diminishing any tendency to constipation, but by exerting suitable pressure on the nerve centres of the lower body it tones up the nervous system generally, filling the student with a new sense of vitality.

Some people seem to fear that these exercises may put a strain on the heart. Without denying that cases exist where care must be taken in that direction, it nevertheless remains true that the danger of straining the heart can be easily exaggerated. The heart is a sturdy muscle, never ceasing its labours from birth to death. The following is an amusing but instructive report from the *Times* of a case from East London. It is headed "The Man with a Weak Heart—His Quiet Day": and reads as follows:—

A dispatch from the East London correspondent of the *Cape Times* says that this week an East London man was told by his doctor that his heart was weak, and that he must avoid exertion, and, above all, excitement. While driving to his office from the consulting-room he was stopped by a crying woman and asked to batter down the doors of a garage in which her husband was trying to hang himself. He did so, pacified the man, who threatened violence, and reconciled him to his wife. Returning to his hotel from the office later, the "invalid" was asked by a traffic policeman to give chase to a speeding driver. He caught the driver after a chase of several miles, sometimes at sixty miles an hour. Going to bed for peace and quiet at last he was disturbed by groans outside his window, and found on investigation a Native woman in labour. He rounded up Native female servants in the hotel and assisted in the delivery of the child.

He then returned to bed to sleep well, telling the correspondent next day, "My heart is still beating".

In practice, the heart is greatly strengthened by the exercises of elementary Yoga which devote so much attention to systematic improvement of the action of the lungs and the gentle stimulation of the nerves, alternating with periods of complete relaxation. The headstand, provided it is learnt in the proper sequence of events, is actually a relief to the heart, facilitating as it does the flow back to the heart of venous blood from the lower limbs, and providing for a temporary increased flow to the head, which requires a greater proportional blood supply than the lower body anyway. Everybody knows that the first thing to do when persons feel faint is to make them lower their head below the knees.

All the exercises of Yoga, whether elementary or advanced, are based on natural principles, and they are derived from a direct study of natural impulses. There is nothing "odd" about them. The only thing that is odd is that they could ever be regarded as "odd". Negative reports about them only arise through ignorance, or from another factor that does unfortunately sometimes present itself, namely instruction by ignorant and inexperienced instructors who merely exploit the term Yoga for their own ends.

The subject can be summed up thus. Physical Yoga aims at producing a physical instrument that shall be a worthy medium for manifestation of the mental and spiritual aspects of our being. For the religiously-minded the best way to express it is to say that through Yoga we seek to provide our Creator with an instrument worthy of His Divine hand through which to work in us on this plane of existence. If you are a philosophically-minded person you may say you seek to fulfill your inner being in the highest possible degree. And if you are just an ordinary commonsense citizen of the world you may simply say you want to live more healthily, more happily, more contentedly, more peacefully in mind, body and estate, and to radiate this atmosphere around you. It doesn't much matter how you express the aspiration as long as the aspiration is there. And the ultimate aim is to unite or yoke ourselves to the Life-force from which we derive our being, for that is the very meaning of the word Yoga.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE POSTURES OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS

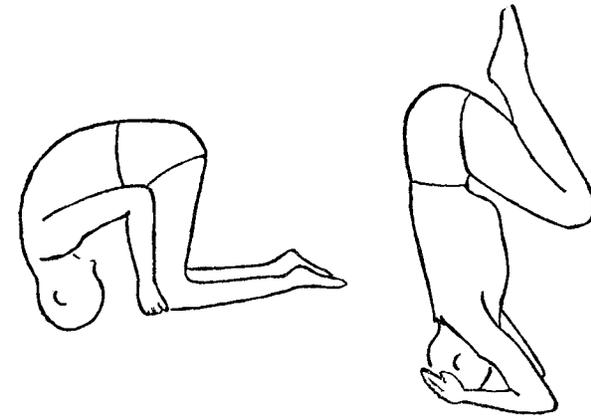


Figure 9

Figure 10

These postures usually require expert help. The Headstand should be prepared for by first strengthening the neck and accustoming the head to be held lower than the body. This is best achieved by kneeling, placing the head on the ground as in fig. 9, and swaying the body gently to and fro so as to bring pressure to bear on the back of the neck. This should be practised for some days until head and neck are accustomed to the pressure. Then by framing the head with the hands as in fig. 10, and gently kicking off the ground with the feet but without straightening the legs, the hunched-up body may gradually be lifted to the halfway position (fig. 10); in this operation the body should first be lifted only an inch or two from the ground and drop back again, the lift being increased little by little at each practice. When a learner loses balance it is almost always through trying to go too fast. The halfway position (fig. 10) is the "control point" through which the body passes in both rising and descending every time a headstand is performed. When the halfway position can be held steadily, then the legs may be extended little by little. The slow and gradual way of learning the headstand is not only the safest and surest, it is also best for symmetrical development of the muscles of the neck and upper spine at the same time. These preparatory stages are valuable exercises whether the headstand is achieved or not.

The Bow is arrived at by lying flat on the stomach, seizing the ankles with the hands and pulling them so that the knees rise off the floor.

The Twist is a complicated posture designed to impart a spiral twist to the spine.

The Cataleptic posture should not be attempted without expert instruction.