

VLADIMIR IVANOVICH ORLOV

**A COURSE OF LECTURES ON**

**THE PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES OF YOGA**

**Lecture 1**

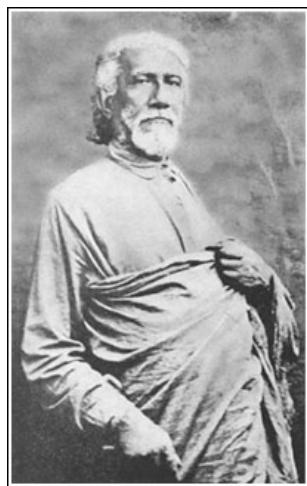
**PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS AND INTRODUCTION**

This course of lectures is intended for scientific researchers; in particular, physicists, mathematicians, chemists, and biologists. Thus, unlike all previous manuals on this subject, my presentation of the material will be strictly deductive, concise, and free of repetition, relying on my audience's highly developed logical capacities and complete lack of intuition. In addition to its indirect goal of imparting certain information on the psychophysiology of Yoga, my course has the purpose of developing my audience's intuitive capacities, capacities that are very important not only to a practitioner of Yoga, but to every spiritually enlightened European.

We will virtually refrain from using Sanskrit terms, with the exception of one, Yoga – meaning union or unity.

Nowadays we frequently speak about comfort, about how, with every year; our life is growing richer and more colorful, more interesting and comfortable. Scientists speak of a comfort zone; housewives seek to create comfort in their homes, and all of us strive to keep our minds and bodies from experiencing discomfort. When an airplane is equipped with well-padded seats, air conditioning, and the latest newspapers are there on the tray before you – is that comfort? And if a television has been installed in front of you, and the TV remote is in your hand so that you don't even have to get up from your seat to turn it on, is that comfort? Of course it is! We all sense this intuitively.

Comfort is the state in which we have satisfied the greatest number of our desires with the least effort. Is this biologically justified? Yes. We have always striven for comfort, but for a comfort that is reliable, enduring, and permanent. Sometimes we even refuse high status jobs with all their attendant benefits, such as company cars, comfortable offices, and high salaries, precisely because we are striving for enduring comfort. Such jobs involve unnecessary anxieties, difficult stressful work and the constant fear that we will not be able to cope and thus destroy our feeling of comfort. Such negative emotions within us cancel out any external comforts. It would seem then that we had better define the comfort zone as the conditions under which a person feels complete inner satisfaction. Does this require a high salary, a television remote, or a bright green Cadillac that you drive to Florida every summer? Thousands of years of human wisdom say no. Moreover, almost nothing that we currently consider absolute prerequisites for happiness, i.e., for living in comfort, is necessary either.



Shri Yukteshvar

My old friend Sri Yukteshvar told me of an ancient belief that at one time conditions on Earth were very different than they are today. I can't specify precisely what the source of the difference was: whether there was a different radiation level, different gravitational fields, or a different atmosphere, but the people who lived under these conditions were spiritually advanced and lived in absolute comfort. Then suddenly everything started to change rapidly. Some people died. Some, the strongest of the lot, adapted, acclimated themselves to the new conditions, and survived; and some, the wisest ones, retreated into deep caves or climbed to the tops of high peaks, where this process of atmospheric transformation was proceeding more slowly and there they searched for methods that would allow them to survive without changing. They found these methods and called them Yoga. All this took place in the region of Tibet. And the people called their method Yoga, not only because it united them, the possessors of truth, in a tightly unified sect, but also because this name exactly reflected the essence of their method. In order to survive they had had to focus all their strength on a single task, to unite

all their forces to combat the danger that threatened them. They sought to unify consciousness and unconsciousness, not because these people did not trust the unconscious or did not believe in consciousness but because they feared any disjunction. And they chose the most beautiful, powerful, and poetic name for their science, calling it "unity." I hear laughter in the auditorium but do not be too quick to laugh. I know, as well as you do, that a long time ago Otto Yulevich Schmidt proved once and for all that nothing that I have just described took place or could have taken place. Think of what I have just told you as merely a pretty parable told to me long ago by a dear friend.

Now, let us get back to business. It turns out that comfort, in many respects, depends but little on external conditions in the sense of enjoyment of the fruits of civilization. It depends on these things only a little, but it still depends on them. And of course we should not flee from comfort, as long as we do not have to pay too dearly for it – by poisoning plants and animals; so that, since we eat the meat of these animals, we are poisoned too. Our brains are poisoned by trivia and anxieties; by idiotic fears, fear of ourselves, our neighbors, and our friends. Can this be considered a state of comfort? Of course not. And when we are offered a way to continue to live in society and yet remain healthy, young, and life loving, do we have the right to refuse it? Of course not. And yet we refuse, we scornfully turn up our noses at all methods for avoiding spiritual malaise. Do many of you calisthenics in the morning? There are 100 people here and only two raised their hands? Morning calisthenics, of course, is a very weak method and cannot impart normal vitality to the body, but I am not at all sure that an effective method, such as the Yoga system, would find many followers either.

What is Yoga? I will be asking this question many times in each lecture but I will never give a complete answer because it is extremely difficult to exhaustively deconstruct and describe a true work of art and one that, furthermore, was created by a master of genius. Yet this is precisely what I am trying to do. This is why there are so many good teachers and not one decent book on Yoga. No there is not, and I venture to say that there never will be a book that can teach Yoga. Yoga has to be demonstrated and it cannot be demonstrated to a hundred people at once. It can only be shown to one or two of the most capable. And yet I want, want very much, to kindle a spark of love for Yoga in everyone. And for this reason I have undertaken this task, although I know ahead of time it is hopeless.

How can we concentrate the forces of a human being in a single direction? Well in psychophysiology, there is a law of transfer amounting to the following.

If we exercise our right hand, after a period of time, we will notice, to our surprise, that the left one has also gained in strength.

If we train our gaze, focusing on a single point for a long period of time, then we will notice, with even greater surprise, that we are beginning to demonstrate more endurance and efficiency not merely in mental, but also in physical work. Or if we train ourselves to overcome our natural inclinations and hold our breath or maintain a very uncomfortable position, we will then find that it is becoming easier and easier to induce ourselves to rise at dawn or to apply ourselves to the utmost in competition.

It is just this type of transfer of what are basically local effects that forms the basis of the whole Yoga methodology. In particular, the role of Pranayama (breathing exercises) extends far beyond the limits of traditional endurance training.

Physiological functions are linked together to a varying extent. For example, the propulsive strength the left leg is only very weakly associated with the strength of the gaze or the development of the intellect. But there are functions that are linked extremely closely. They are so closely linked that when, more than half a century ago, I discovered this linkage, and tried it for myself, and experienced it in all its fullness and sweetness, I was so stunned that I began to believe uncritically in other things in which it is impossible and senseless to believe, things from which even an observant Christian would disdainfully turn away, all kinds of absurdities and lies – I, who was a materialist, an atheist, a physician, and an athlete.

What I am talking about is the linkage between state of mind, between the psyche, intensity of attention, and other such characteristics of our inner selves, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an ordinary physiological function – breathing. I repeat: this is an extremely powerful and unequivocal association. It is much more stable and unequivocal than the association between heart rate or motor activity and the state of the brain. There is a school of Yoga where the stu-

dents are taught to do exercises while they are walking. And the adherents of this school sometimes do achieve results. But no one has ever attained any success whatever, even if he sat properly in the correct position, ate the appropriate diet, and all his actions were guided only by goodness and love, if he, nevertheless, breathed improperly. What is proper breathing? I will cover this issue in detail, in great detail, later. Now I will merely warn you away from the most common errors. Proper breathing never involves holding the breath by force of will. Not does it ever involve using this same force of will to alter the rhythm of respiration that is natural at the given moment in order to make it faster or slower, nor by compelling your breathing to become shallower or deeper. In other words you never allow the will to directly interfere in the act of breathing, not under any circumstances. Here I have confined myself to what you must not do, but we will leave what you may and should do for the chapter entitled Pranayama and talk about it later.

## **Lecture 2**

After the last lecture, someone asked to comment on something that time did not permit me to discuss in detail, i.e., that "there are surprising analogies that can be drawn between schizophrenia and hallucinations and the clairvoyance of yogis, their of God and their teacher, etc.

Yes, indeed, there are very many similar traits, but this, if you will, is merely the inevitable resemblance...between polar opposites. A teacher of Yoga has never accepted a single schizophrenic as a pupil. An experienced psychiatrist has never diagnosed a yogi as mentally ill. On second thought, this latter statement is a bit too strong. Yogis, of course, can become mentally, as well as physically ill, it simply happens much more rarely.

The seeming correspondence among individual symptoms of schizophrenia and the phenomena of Yoga does not provide a basis for drawing any sort of parallel. However, the highly developed autism of an uncontrolled yogi may, indeed, although extremely rarely, prove to be the weak link in the chain that causes it to break.

In addition, those with fully developed schizophrenia may turn to Yoga for confirmation of their wild insane ideas or for justification of their autism.

For the practice of Yoga one needs a clear, keen, unclouded mind and an extremely healthy body. This means of course that schizophrenics can not practice Yoga. But the methods of the yogis may be used to treat various diseases, including schizophrenia. Anyone acquainted with Yoga knows how difficult it is, even for those with clear minds under the tireless control of an experienced teacher, to attain their goals. The majority of highly competent students thus fail to achieve any success for one reason or another. It is particularly difficult to treat a person with mental problems. If this is to be attempted, insulin or some other means must be used to attain a stable remission, and only after this happens can an experienced teacher of Yoga attempt to continue the treatment. Furthermore likelihood of success here depends, to a significant extent, more on the competence of the teacher than on how severely ill the patient is.

## **The Techniques of Yoga**

The problem with all books on the techniques of Yoga written for Europeans is that they formulate the goal of these techniques in an incomprehensible way. Techniques for the sake of techniques cannot exist. Before performing a ritual technique, you have to understand clearly within the context of your existing world-view, whether this goal is acceptable to you. There are very many self-improvement techniques. Each of them serves its own goals; if you attended a school or an institute, studied one or another science, then you have already performed some technique that had the goal of enriching you with knowledge, which made you a useful member of society at that time. Society trains useful and necessary members for itself. It trains more technicians than physicists, more physicists than linguists – because society has the greatest need for technicians at the present time. But what society needs most are those individuals who are in the shortest supply. There is virtually always a deficit of people in one or another profession, and the severity of society's need for this profession is determined by the number of already people work-

ing in that area multiplied<sup>1</sup> by the size of the deficit. For example, relatively few people are needed to manage and control industrial production, but there are even fewer good administrators with high levels of managerial skills. Thus a severe deficit has developed so it may be said that currently the state needs people with managerial skills more than anyone else. This makes techniques for developing these managerial skills the most valuable at this stage of social development. Of course, such techniques must always and in all respects help to attain this goal. If the goal is separate from the technique, then this is a false technique, and cannot find adherents among normal people. All techniques have the perfection of human beings as their goals. But in what direction? It is not possible to be perfect in all respects. There is no medicine for all diseases or panacea for all evils.

What are the goals of Yoga?

Let us consider the fate of a boy who is psychologically healthy but physically weak who lives in a neighborhood where the winning argument in any dispute is the fist. He will either begin to do strengthening exercises in order to make his fist an even stronger argument (take up boxing, wrestling etc.) or he will develop his own inner world in which good, intelligent people who do not fight and curse each other live, and where physical strength is not the main thing, but something secondary, and the main thing is the high self-worth of humanity as a whole. And a tireless instinct for self-improvement or change will cause this child to think up a self-improvement technique, a technique whose practice would not require anything external to himself, and which could be practiced at any moment, without requiring a book, or athletic gear, or other people to help, or profound preliminary knowledge, or any other particular conditions, since the boy could not be sure of having anything else available at all times. After all, he would need to be able to perform the technique at any time, to give himself over to his task with complete absorption, to assuage his boundless temperament, which has been driven into the bottle of autism by adverse circumstances. It is just such children who grow up to be yogis. They find in Yoga precisely what they have been looking for – a technique that does not depend on anything external, an exalted goal, the idea of love for humanity and, particularly, indifference to and disdain for violence. The child has been given a weapon that he can use to protect himself against violence. But he doesn't even notice. His interests and goals have little to do with the body, which is subject to violence. At the same time Yoga brings such a child closer to other people, rescuing him from the vise of autism.

In essence the goal of Yoga is to create an island for oneself: the island of one's own physical safety, to save one from the fear of death and various adverse changes. In addition, the goal is to be physically healthy, with a stable mind and highly developed intuition. Intuition frequently helps people avoid danger in cases where logic is powerless. Furthermore all this must be done with the simplest of means: eschewing special tools, and if possible, in a way that is not even noticed by those around us.

The techniques of Yoga grew out of these goals and requirements.

In the first part of this course I will just present the ideas underlying these techniques. In the second part I will consider certain questions of technique, the simplest of them, so that they might be used, with care, by those who sense in themselves the strong desire and capacity to do so.

## Lecture 3

I will now present the ideas underlying the so-called KRIYA technique. The Kriya technique consists of three main components: position, breathing and concentration. These components may be used either independently of each other or in any combination. Let us start with position.

ASANA is an uncomfortable position of the body that induces static stress on various, carefully chosen muscles and is maintained without moving for a long period of time. Very nervous and highly developed children frequently think up such positions for themselves as a way of calming themselves down. Such rigid poses are encountered as a symptom of one of the forms of schizophrenia – catatonia. However, the positions assumed in schizophrenia are typically simpler. When Asana is performed correctly, there is no need for it to be accompanied by performance of

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<sup>1</sup> Multiplied is incorrect in the context, it would be correct to simply say and (*translator's note*).

any breathing or concentration exercises. When it is performed incorrectly, even combining it with breathing and concentration will not help. What does this correct performance consist of? The exercise is being performed correctly when it is accompanied by an unusually pleasant sensation—the bliss of muscle happiness—and for a long period of time one does not want to stop the exercise. However it should be stopped at the first signs of fatigue. After a single correct performance of such an exercise one retains a feeling of optimism, equilibrium, and an elevated, happy mood for 2-3 days. But learning to perform it correctly requires a great deal of work. And all you have to do is top practicing Yoga for a significant period and you will lose the knack of performing Asanas. Then you must spend a great deal of time “learning” how to perform them once again. It is best to perform only one carefully selected Asana. You can learn to do a single Asana more rapidly. Virtually any of the complex Asanas may take the place of doing the whole set and this Asana will become your faithful assistant and life’s companion, if, of course, you are not intending to devote your life to the study and development of Hatha Yoga. To perform Asanas you nevertheless need some degree of talent. Only one in five children and one in twenty adults succeeds in learning to perform Asanas correctly. But the programmatic statement for Yoga claims that anyone can learn -- if they devote enough effort and time to it. I never had a great deal of time or energy and so I only taught those who were most capable. All this also applies to respiration and concentration. People who are capable of performing Asanas are far from always able to learn concentration and how to breathe. But if a person is not capable of doing Asanas, it would be better if he never even tried to master breathing and concentration. After all, there are a great many safer and more appealing activities in the world: motorcycle racing, mountain climbing, skiing, etc.

Mastery of Asanas is not only conducive to an elevated mood and psychological and physical health, but also prepares the practitioner to ascend further up the ladder of Yoga. Having mastered any Asana to perfection, you can try concentration. However, you do not need to be in an Asana to concentrate. You can concentrate in any comfortable position, for example, lying down. The goal of concentration is to achieve a state of deep self-hypnosis. The techniques for inducing hypnosis and self-hypnosis are well known and I will not discuss them in detail here. Verbal auto-suggestion is a possible route. You can fix your eyes on a bright point, you can look at your own navel or at a point 10 cm above your navel. You can listen to the sound of silence, you can picture clear images of warmth and heaviness, clearly image a color, or you can imagine God, you can repeat the syllable “OM” or any other word, you can imagine the touch of water or fire ascending the column of your spine. you can image the alternation of a rippled and smooth water surface, you can image any dynamic process. You can do all this at one time, or in turn. I recommend choosing a particular concentration technique and never straying from it. It is better to learn everything by heart, to automatize the prayer or standard text for hypnotic induction that can be found in any hypnosis textbook: “Your eyelids are closing, you are getting sleepy...” (Except, instead of “your,” you should say “my.”)

Only after you have learned to plunge yourself into deep hypnosis and have learned how, automatically without conscious control, to follow the suggestions in the self hypnosis formula (for example, if the formula includes the suggestion that you draw a lotus flower on a piece of paper, and after you are awakened by the memorized, unconscious self-suggestion at the end of the text to “wake up,” you will have absolutely no idea how a drawing of a lotus got into your hand), only then will you be entitled to consider that you have mastered concentration and thus will be able to move on to breathing. Of course you can use a tape recorder for self-hypnosis. Although that would be a violation of the tradition of Yoga, it makes the task much easier. Unlike concentration, which, in principle can be performed without first learning to do Asanas, breathing exercises must not be performed until you have perfectly mastered self-hypnosis (concentration).

There are only scattered instances of breathing exercises being successfully performed in a wakeful, active state. Indeed, the technique for breathing becomes dramatically more difficult to implement under such conditions. It becomes so complicated that describing it in comprehensible words becomes impossible. Nevertheless, I will say a few words about this later.

The normal practice is to first immerse yourself in a state of deep hypnosis, let us say, using a tape recorder, and then to induce one or another breathing rhythm in yourself. Induce is the right word. When, a companion or your teacher has confirmed that the rhythm given by the tape recorder (one can simply count with the recording) is being followed, then you can move on to Pranayama, that is very slow, maximally deep breathing with maximal holding of breath on inhalation.

tion and exhalation. Here duration of breathholding must be increased very slowly and gradually. You must achieve a rhythm of 1-minute inhalation 1-minute holding of the breath, 1-minute exhalation, and 1-minute holding of the breath, etc.

You must breath in accordance with the rules of complete breathing (first the diaphragm, then the ribs, then the apex of the lungs). After you achieve a breathing rhythm of 1:1:1:1 with each phase lasting 1 minute, you can train yourself to master other types of breathing one by one (the "cleansing" breath of the yogis, etc.).

If you train your breathing before working on concentration (the so-called short-cut route), then you should start with rhythmic breathing and work on it for a very long period and then begin to work on superficial breathing. But while it is easy to say – train yourself on rhythmic and superficial breathing, it is a great deal more difficult to do these properly. When you perform rhythmic breathing properly, your whole body begins to vibrate, then is covered with a light film of perspiration, then for a long time afterwards you feel renewed, cleansed, clear and light, even if you do not continue to train for as long as two weeks. And when you do superficial breathing properly you acquire a remarkable ability to concentrate, strength of gaze, and strength and power in every movement. And only after breathing practice in superficial breathing can you move on to Pranayama – that is very deep breathing with very long periods of breathholding.

I have a few more words to say about superficial breathing. This type of breathing is very important. It occurs while the lungs are almost empty. The major task is to reduce depth of inhalation and exhalation virtually to zero. And yet it is very rhythmic and smooth, without holding of the breath. The type of breathing under no circumstances should be performed in jerks nor involve breathholding. In general this is a very difficult, maybe the most difficult type of breathing. I will not undertake to describe in detail the technique for performing it. I will merely say that the pharynx is tensed in a particular way (and even in this tightening conscious effort plays virtually no part), and the bronchi produce certain rhythmic movements (smooth muscles of the bronchi), which is remarkably pleasant so that you don't feel like stopping. When you perform this exercise you must never feel as if you are not getting enough air – not even to the slightest extent. This is the grossest error. You must not strain your will to perform this exercise. A feeling of serenity, freedom and happiness permeates you with great strength when you perform superficial breathing exercises correctly. Furthermore the emotional lift is remarkably enduring. After performing these breathing exercises a single time, the effects endure for many months if you live a very moderate life and eat temperately.

The most powerful Yoga exercise is Pranayama. The effect of this type of breathing is the most long lasting and powerful. It far surpasses the effects of other breathing exercises. Pranayama leads to an awakening of still unstudied human capacities. Pranayama, in combination with deep concentration, leads to the state known as SAMADHI.

A person who is able intentionally to immerse himself in controlled Samadhi at any moment has reached the highest lifetime Yoga level. He obtains the right to be a teacher.

If a yogi achieves a somewhat higher level of progress, which can be attained through constant "practice of Samadhi," he becomes able to control his body and all his capacities (including the ordinary and extraordinary, little known capacities) almost completely.. He is able to read the feelings of any other person at any distance like a book. He is able to do many other things. But there is no degree of progress that makes a yogi omnipotent or omniscient, as is often stated in poor books. All yogis are just as mortal as ordinary people. They generally do not even live much longer. They even get sick, sometimes incurably sick. And in such cases they are unable to, rather than do not wish to, help themselves. But yogis always die with their heads held high. They do not know the fear of death. This is not achieved through any other philosophy or psychophysiology.

And I wanted to mention several other programmatic statements made by yogis. For example, that if you perform the simplest exercises (Asanas, concentration, simple breathing exercise) correctly or are merely a very honorable, decent person and do a good job on the work you have been assigned in a government institution, then this is enough to allow you to become a real yogi and achieve Samadhi, as is written in certain books, especially poor books about Sufism (one of the simplified versions of Yoga, a kind of Yoga for everyone). As programmatic statements these may be justified, but I myself know nothing about such simple ways of achieving Samadhi.

Yoga is, first and foremost, hard, exhausting work. And all the lightning quick methods are either deceptions, or self-deceptions. In any event, they are methods for the most talented individuals. These methods are poorly developed and presuppose very solid preparation, which must be obtained using another technique.

I first entered deep Samadhi a half century ago, in other words I have had a rather solid foundation of experience, but when I read various books about Yoga and attempt to follow the techniques described there exactly (in the very few cases where they are not obviously nonsensical), I generally achieve nothing. Only 2-3% of the books contain a reference to a technique that can actually be used. If you knew the idea and the final result, it would actually be easier to think up your own technique. It is true that recently I came upon a very good book by Zakharov in German, with the help of which I followed Zakharov's path in about 3 hours and achieved not merely the results described but actually somewhat more. This is a very simple but insufficiently rapid and effective technique. A person with good capacities who used it would need 20 years to attain deep Samadhi. Other books are even worse. Furthermore, training using Zakharov's method is quite dangerous. You must have an experienced teacher.

With this I will close the first half of the course. The second half will consider in detail the technique for Asanas, one method of concentration and Pranayama, minor and major, with the help of deep concentration. In addition, I will describe in detail one safe and somewhat more efficient version of Zakharov's method, and say a very small amount about the techniques of Sufism, and propose one simpler and safer method, analogous to Sufism. In conclusion, I will present a complete bibliography of books on Yoga and will speak briefly about several unwritten laws concerning the relationships between teachers and pupils.