

Yoga and Buddhism in the life of a contemporary person



KVĚTOSLAV
MINAŘÍK

Yoga and Buddhism in the life of a contemporary person

Editorial series THE DIRECT PATH
Volume 1

CANOPUS



KVETOSLAV MINARIK

**Yoga and Buddhism
in the life
of a contemporary person**

Collection of short texts

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Foreword to the English translation

The work of a great Czech mystic Kvetoslav Minarik (1908 – 1974) has been, until now, unknown to English-speaking readers. In this book, we present several of his short writings, which Kvetoslav Minarik had, in the year 1973, before his death, chosen for translation. He could not publish them in his own country. During most of his life, Czechoslovakia was a prey of totalitarian regimes: 1939 – 1945 of Nazi Germany, 1948 – 1989 of Communist Soviet Union. For those who have lived and grown up in democracy, it is impossible to imagine the oppression, to which free thinking of any kind was exposed. The turbulent destinies of Czechoslovakia at that time were reflected not only in the content of his books, but, first and foremost, in his personal destiny and the destiny of his work.

Kvetoslav Minarik is an extraordinary figure among the authors of spiritual writings. His writings are founded solely on his own experience gained on his path to perfection. They are not based on the knowledge from Buddhist or Christian literature. Only after he had already enunciated his first book, he encountered the Mahayana Buddhism of a Tibetan school and concluded that his own knowledge corresponded to it. In his autobiography, he characterises himself in this way:

I am the one, who has obtained initiation into Mahayana, which I have, afterwards, transferred to Europe in order to pass it, as a fruit of favourable karma, to people who are at the end of the dark night of ignorance.

Kvetoslav Minarik's work is based on the psychology and the way of thinking of a contemporary person. He perfects their being as a whole in a way that he harmoniously develops, at the same time, its physical, inner as well as mental component. He leads the one who seeks to independently discover the laws of the spiritual life and cautiously choose the means on their path of spiritual development.

From the time when he attained enlightenment, Kvetoslav Minarik lived mostly in a totalitarian regime, where it was dangerous even to keep spiritual literature other than Christian. Therefore, he could not publicly establish a spiritual school. He led his disciples individually and had to meet them secretly. He reacted to their development also individually in dozens of short writings, and by a gradually growing number of book manuscripts. Out of them, he managed to, during his life, publish the first (*The Direct Path*, 1939) and second (*The Inner meaning of the New Testament*, 1945) out of the intended book series and from among the short texts gradually four (*On Yoga in general*, 1968 – 1969). However, he completed the intended main book series and entitled it "The Direct Path". Besides the two already mentioned, it is composed of these books: *The Path to perfection*, *The Light of geniuses*, *A Discussion of gods*, *The Salvation*, *A Small mystic encyclopaedia*, autobiography *Kechara* and four books, in which he has commented on the writings of other authors, who wrote on Tibetan Buddhism (W. Y. Evans-Wentz, H. P. Blawacki). Detailed comments explain these writings to the contemporary reader.

In spite of all the oppression, Kvetoslav Minarik was writing his texts with a hope that someday they would, after all, serve people who seek on the path to perfection. He prepared them for publication and also trained his disciples who were supposed to fulfil this task. Since the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia (1989), all books of the above-mentioned main book series were published in the Czech language. Moreover, several collections of short writings, all short commentaries (on *Nyanatiloka*, A. David-Neel, Patanjali

and Lao-Tzu) and three collections of selected correspondence were also published.

The short writings in this book are ordered in a certain way; however, the book is not meant for a systematic reading. We are publishing it as the first one, because the author himself was of an opinion that, in these short writings, the reader can find more simply formulated answers to the problems which they encounter in their life – in the external world as well as in themselves. This is also true in case of those, who were not interested in yoga or Buddhism before.

From his entrustment, we are trying to realise that from which he was prevented, and we are fulfilling his wish for his teaching to also be made available to readers in English.

We wish the readers of this first book to find in it clues which will help them to solve questions and problems on their path to perfect themselves.

Prague, June 2010

Zora Subrtova

Introductory note

This translation adopted some specific approaches.

Double versus single quotation marks: Double quotation marks were preserved in all places where they were originally used by the author. Single quotation marks were used in places where their use was required by the English language, however, they do not occur there in the original.

“Singular they” grammatical form was used in the text to preserve the gender-neutrality employed by the author within the limits of the Czech language.

The term “sensory desire”. In many other writings, the reader can find a term “sensual desire”. However, due to sexual connotation in modern English, the translator avoided both terms “sensual” and “sensuous”, and chose a more neutral term “sensory” to express that it is “relating to the senses” in general.

For the purpose of clarity, the word “nature” was used with a capital “N”, where it means “all the things in the world which exist naturally and were not created by people”*. In its other meanings, lower case was used.

* Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2008.

On Yoga in general

1. Yoga

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

Those, who are prompted by their desire to live happily or to obtain knowledge to seek by the means of yoga, often use inappropriate yogic means. Almost always, they let themselves be lured into the last one of the three parts of yogic training – into concentration, regardless of its levels. Yet the first part of yogic training is the moral self-training, which in fact solves the problem of an unhappy emotional life in its full extent. Concentration either doesn't solve it at all, or does so only in some more or less abstract outline of this problem.

You can concentrate with a clear and pure mind, as well as with a dull, furious and biased mind, and the results then look accordingly.

The problem of a happy or unhappy life is an emotional problem. Because, from the point of view of yoga, this problem has to be

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

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

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

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

The second step is **niyama**. It is concerned with physical, as well as inner, hygiene. A person should be particular about their personal appearance, attentive in contact with people, to not appear extravagant, should educate themselves, train themselves in conscious thinking (as opposed to reflexive thinking), follow the social etiquette as well as the religious one (or, alternatively, lay morality), keep restraint in judgments, i.e. not to react to any behaviour or events spontaneously, occupy their mind by reading of religious books and seek the company of those engaged in noble actions and teachings.

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

As a rule, most of those interested in yoga aren't longing for anything higher and if they take up further instructions of the yo-

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

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

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

When a person is potentially happy and their bliss is only disturbed by a desire for knowledge, they can enter the path of the

discipline of mind. This is because in such a case the mind is well prepared for it as the person doesn't desire sensory pleasures. Under these circumstances, the mind is supposed to be gradually fastened on one object and stabilised. This fastening and gradual stabilisation is called **pratyahara**.

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

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

Samadhi thus means realisation of the state of mind, which arose in concentration: that is awareness of emptiness, limitless space and inner relaxation. When these qualities develop in such a way that they become the dominant states for consciousness, when they control the whole psyche of a person and present to them the emptiness of the universe as a living reality, as the absolute, which, although it isn't the direct originator of creation, is still in contact with it, then

the person has reached the **nirvikalpasamadhi**. This state crushes the phenomena of the universe into nothingness and by this the mind is redeemed from the samsaric state, from the state of being a slave to the nature. The mind can then realise the state of absolute and, by this, eliminate every predisposition of an individual to be entangled – in the form of a self-aware unit – into overwhelming impulses. At death this kind of person extinguishes themselves without the desire to continue to live or to be.

By this, a tragedy of the ceasing of the conscious being is erased.

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

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

Then there is niyama. It means purification of the body by water as well as by a pure mind. A person is supposed to have high standards of cleanliness and should not neglect their personal appearance.

In the same way they have regard for their exterior, when they, so-called, 'fall in love', they should have regard for it with respect to their ideal, which can be God as well as an all-embracing, i.e. spiritual, intellectual and mental perfection. A requirement to dress and behave in a way which doesn't raise aversion in others, or as a person who belongs to a higher social class, is associated with this.

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

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

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

Enlightenment and a perfect self-knowledge raise a person to the level of a sage, whilst the preparatory yogic self-discipline rises them to the level of a *totally* happy person. That is, however, one thing. Another is the fact that a yogi who attained perfection cannot be *absolutely* happy, because this depends on a continuous influence of the environment in which they are living, on their being.

Therefore they still have to break the shell of the subtle selfishness and begin to base their perfection and happiness on the actions of virtue which belong to their level and their perfected state. These actions are described by an esoteric teaching, known in the exoteric conception as Mahayana, as well as magic. Also in *Buddhism*, we can encounter teachings on these actions, even though they are incorporated in another level. We can define them as follows:

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

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

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

An opposite of this path is the path of hinayana; it is a path of an absolute renunciation. However, here renunciation means also the loss of interest in attaining the personal perfection. But, aban-

donment of the idea of personal perfection must not lead to the abandonment of the path of renunciation. For, a person here, so to say, “hits the target” directly. Besides that I can add to it: what kind of sense does a personal or spiritual perfection have for the one who has renounced everything and absolutely? Thus: values have no meaning on this path. Therefore, a person usually doesn’t want to walk this path and decides on the previous one, which, on its high levels, becomes the path of Brahmas. This path has its rules and these are described by all that was said above.

2. Yogic practice

Yoga is a two-stage discipline. Its first stage is a preparatory yogic moral self-training, which is, firstly, supposed to turn the student of yoga into a happy and socially flawlessly behaved person. Only then is it possible to start with yoga as a system leading to the knowledge of forces moving the human being, as well as the human society as a whole, the forces controlling their whole life.

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

This difficulty is avoided in yoga by mental training. The mental training begins with a systematic exclusion of impressions originat-

ing in the daily life and continues with a gradual relaxation of the mind for so long until the mind finally becomes able to stay focused on one object.

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

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

Then the yogi changes their concentration into the so-called 'analytical concentration'. The mind is able to become analytical, if it is controlled and set to a total standstill. However, for that, both, its

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

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

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

A common person is a being who cannot disentangle themselves from the creation, whether we think of creation in the cosmic dimensions or only as of a human society. Besides that, a human being does not want to disentangle themselves from this society anyway. They constantly have some desires, sometimes completely earthly, at other times superworldly ones, but these desires always form them into someone in the middle of something. This is a factor, or a law, which always limits the person. If the redemption according to the Buddhist conception really exists, it always relates to the realisation of a state of eradication of selfness – every trace of differentiation in the yogi themselves. However, this is an infinitely distant prospect for everyone who is just beginning with yoga. Therefore they have to think in a human way and have only goals which are understandable

from the human perspective. They have to make do with a promise that if they control themselves well, observe and concentrate, they will become a knowing person, a person who will understand the meaning of destinies of the human world and later also the path which leads above the level of these destinies.

However, let us return to the concentrating yogi again. Concentration becomes, to a yogi, means of disentangling from the net of innumerable moments of differentiation, i.e. individualisation and differentiation, which are the moments of inner slavery. However, here we are already on the borderline of the possibility to understand states which can be reached by a yogi, because, as soon as these moments of differentiation are overcome, the yogi finds himself or herself in the undifferentiated world, a world not differentiated in the amount of particularities. On the first levels of this world, the yogi's ability of understanding is developed to such an extent, that they understand not only the meaning of coarse 'stiffenings' or inner 'rigidifyings' which determine the process of the differentiated living with all its difficulties, limitations and irresistible drives and pressures of the circumstances, but also the fine 'stiffenings' and 'rigidifyings'. The latter mean that the mind, because it understands and perceives in certain concepts, is already becoming dull and becomes the bridle of a slave – the bearer of this mind. The yogis' plan is to overcome every manifestation of imperfection. Their ideal is freedom, which is being realised only above the state of the differentiated thinking. Over there, where the truths of individuals are no longer valid, the only valid thing is the stream of cognition which is a permanent factor, constantly breaking down the moments of differentiation and in this way protecting the state known as nirvana, redemption from delusions, ill will and hatred.

What do these prospects mean for a modern person? They mean the person's strength, the person's knowledge, their overcoming of every smallness of spirit and development of their abilities to learn and understand. Moreover, later they mean the reaching of a state in which they evidently detect that they have stopped the process

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KVĚTOSLAV MINAŘÍK (1908–1974)

Czech yogi and mystic, who, in his youth, learned in the deepest detail and in himself realised, the highest spiritual and mystic ideals of the East, without losing contact with the social and the working life. Later, he has formulated his experience into an original, authentic experience based spiritual teaching, based on the ways of thinking and psychology of a contemporary Westerner. The teaching

leads him or her through life, and perfects their being as a whole; he does not only deal with the physical, moral or mental component, he develops all three in harmony. Out of the great spiritual teachings of the world, his teaching is closest to the Mahayana Buddhism.

The theme of this book is Yoga and Buddhism as a way of life. It is a small selection of texts that Květoslav Minařík wrote during three decades as answers to questions and problems of those interested in the spiritual life and spiritual teachings.