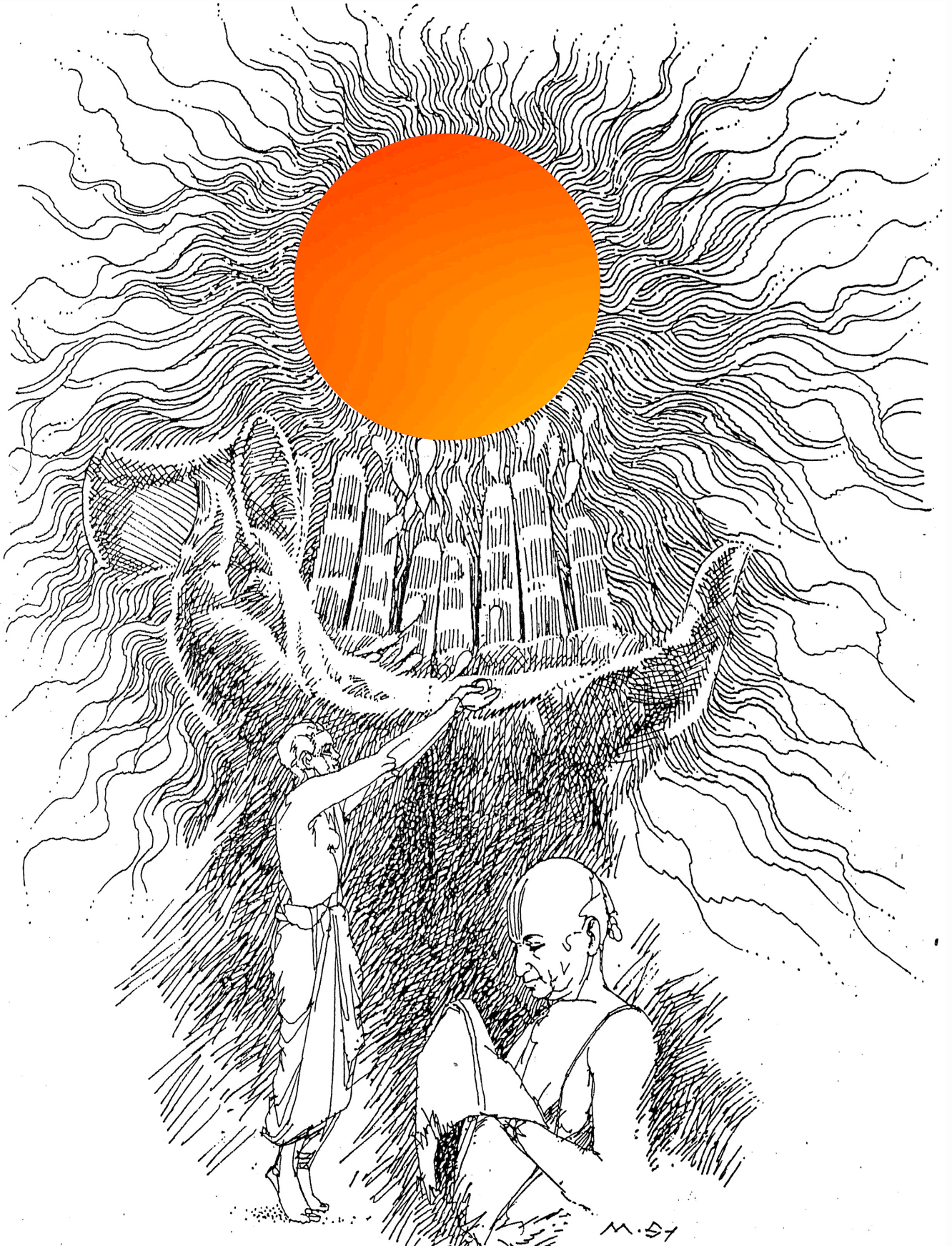


SŪRYA ĀTMA

DARŚANAM | A QUARTERLY JOURNAL ON YOGA & YOGA-CIKITSĀ

MARCH 2020 | VOL.3 NO.1

A KRISHNAMACHARYA YOGA MANDIRAM PUBLICATION





(estd. in 1976)

Sūrya Ātma

Our Sun, Our Lifeline

Darśanam* | A Quarterly Journal on *Yoga* and *Yoga-cikitsā

March 2020 | Vol.3 No.1

A Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram Publication

KYM-*Darśanam* was a quarterly journal of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, devoted to *Yōga* and related aspects of Indian culture, as taught by Śrī T Krishnamacharya. Twenty one editions of the journal were published between February 1991 and February 1996. KYM-*Darśanam* was very well received by readers across the world and was valued for the authenticity of its contents and its adherence to the tradition of Śrī T Krishnamacharya.

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram is very happy to revive KYM-*Darśanam* and offer the eighth issue in a digitised and downloadable format, on the theme, “*Sūrya Ātma* | Our Sun, Our Lifeline.”

KYM-*Darśanam* offers serious students of *Yōga*, articles and content of value with regard to the philosophy, practice and application of *Yōga* in every edition. We also commit to upholding the authenticity of the legacy of our Founder, Śrī TKV Desikachar.

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Cover Illustration (From KYM Archives)

Maniam Selvan

Layout Design

Karthikeyan Premkumar

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

“The sun indeed, is the nectar of the Gods, suspended on the cross beam of the heavens, the sky itself being the honeycomb, the drops of moisture held within the rays of the sun are the eggs of the bees, the *Mantra-s* of the *Vēda-s* are the bees that hover around the flowers, the Vedic rites and the resonance of the *Pranava*, that represents *Brahman* are the flowers, and as the bees press the flowers, they yield the nectar of health and splendour in all abundance, the nectar that flows forth as the waters that nourish us and all life on earth...”

What stunning and evocative imagery these verses of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (3.1.1 to 3.5.5) create in our mind's eye, verses offered in grateful ode to the star that sustains this planet and all life on earth! This, our very own sun, is truly our lifeline and mankind has, for millennia, rejoiced in and celebrated the sun.

At the heart of *Yōgic* symbolism also lies a very deep and profound awareness of the unparalleled role that the sun plays in our lives, maintaining and sustaining entire ecosystems while also anchoring the hydrological cycle that make our earth the unique place it is. At the heart of *Yōgic* practice is a movement to kindle the light of clarity within, so that we as humans, can be the very best we can, living in cooperation with all of nature, rather than being in competition with nature, with other humans and the elements that support our existence.



While planning for the theme for this issue of *Darśanam*, we decided to explore the various facets of the sun and how the traditional adoration of the sun translated into the philosophy, lives, work, health and aesthetics of mankind since time immemorial, for the simple reason that the issue release date, March 21st, coincided with the vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere and the autumnal equinox in the southern hemisphere.

Little did we realise then, that at the time when this issue of *Darśanam* came out, the world and

our lives would be transformed unrecognisably by fear, uncertainty, despair, death and a fast spreading global pandemic that has brought the world's super powers to their knees.

And as we recede into our homes in fear, nature reasserts

herself in all her glory, as we see around the world, with skies turning brighter and aquatic creatures returning to habitats that were once theirs.

Now more than ever, we need the light and the warmth of the sun. Now, more than ever, we need this nectar of the Gods, the divine *Amṛta* that bestows longevity and wellbeing. The *Vēda-s* and all allied teachings, including *Yōga*, tell us that the light we seek is within us.

As the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* proclaims,

sa yaścāyam puruṣe | yaścāsāvāditye | sa ekaḥ |



The effulgence of the sun is verily the light within. And it is towards this light that we must turn, for only the sun can dispel the darkness of our ignorance and pacify the seething agitations of our minds. And so, we were taught in the days of yore to meditate on the sun, invoking the sun through the powerful *Gāyatrī Mantra*, drawing this sun to the inner recesses of our heart space, to illumine the immense power that lies within, if we only learn to still the mind, if we only learn to slow down and observe, if we only learn to live and let live in a spirit of unity.

So many lessons that we learnt from our ancestors who honoured these traditions, are now forgotten, and worse, ridiculed. Now is the time to renew our traditional practices of honouring and celebrating nature in her myriad forms, accepting her bounty with deep gratitude, holding her precious abundance with deep reverence, and striving consciously to do everything we can, so that we safely pass on this world of wonder to

the generations to come. For only then, will this magnificent sun shine down on our children, and theirs for millennia more.

Let us join together, at this time of global crisis and send forth our strong prayers to the sun, for light, love and healing to encompass our earth and all her creatures. For these *Mantra-s* and prayers, that transcend the man-made barriers of religion can penetrate beyond closed borders and locked-down nations, bringing every citizen of the world, the peace that we seek so desperately.

*Om bhūrbhuvasswah | tat saviturvareṇīyam | bhargo
devasya dhīmahi | dhiyo yo nah̄ pracodayat*

With heartfelt prayers for the health and wellbeing of our planet and all of us,

Nrithya Jagannathan

Yan Deretsky (a.k.a. Yan Dhyansky) has been interested in *Yoga* since his early teens. He began studying *Yoga* while living in the former Soviet Union in 1969. From 1969 to 1976, Yan read and practiced *Yoga* from books that he and his friends translated and self-published since these books were prohibited in the Soviet Union. In 1979, Yan fulfilled his dream and went to Madras, India to study *Yoga* with Śrī TKV Desikachar.

From 1982 through 1992, Yan taught *Yoga*, provided *Yoga* therapy and teacher training at Pine Street Clinic in San Anselmo, California. During that time, Yan gave thousands of private lessons to individuals from all ethnic groups, backgrounds and health conditions.

In 1992, Yan moved to Seattle where he started working as a job placement specialist, single-handedly finding jobs for more than 1200 refugees from all over the world. At that time, Yan saw the need to serve the community by using his *Yoga* studies to help others find a productive way to earn a living and start fresh in a new country. Thanks to Śrī Desikachar's teachings, Yan knew at that moment in time, his purpose was to make a difference in someone's life as a job placement specialist.

Yan managed a mental health and home care agency; he continues to help refugees, immigrants and other newcomers learn how to access social services, as well as how to defend their rights if needed.

Yan's *Yoga* studies - using therapy as a modality have successfully helped him overcome personal health issues. Thanks to his own life experiences, he has a deeper understanding for the kinds of problems, issues and challenges individuals face on a daily basis. And, therefore, now provides *Yoga* therapy as a way to help those in need.



MY TEACHER - ŚRĪ TKV DESIKACHAR

YAN Y DERETSKY

I am both honored and humbled to share my experiences with my teacher and friend, TKV Desikachar. He used to call his students – “friends.” My impression is that with each of his students, he had personal relationship. Also what and how he taught his students was unique and

specific to each of them. This description of my personal experiences with him during the twenty-three years of my association with Desikachar is just a small glimpse of his personality and what he had to offer as a *Yoga* Teacher. I have very little knowledge of how he worked with other students or what he taught them. He had a highly individualised and personal approach to how he taught and related differently to each of his students. I remember, one day in July of 2002, he told my wife and me that what he taught us and how he worked with us was different from his approach with others.

HOW I GOT INTERESTED IN YOGA IN FORMER SOVIET UNION

I was born and grew up in Leningrad, Soviet Union, which is now Saint Petersburg, Russia. My first experience with *Yoga* was when I was only seven years old. One dark winter night, my elder brother, Zach, came home from school and told me a story of some strange people who lived in India and who practiced something called, “*Yoga*.” I do not remember anything else he told me, except that when he said word “*Yoga*” I became very emotional and my heart started beating fast! Ten years later, after finishing high school and getting into Leningrad State University, I became dissatisfied with the Marxist ideology that denied the existence of God and any spiritual approach to life. I wanted to know, “Why I am here?”, “Who am I?”, “What is this all about?” “How can I find the meaning of life?”

Accidentally, I came across a Buddhist text, the Dhammapada and was deeply moved by it. However, a highly educated professor and a friend of my brother’s explained to me what was taught by Buddha was only possible two thousand years ago and now it is no longer possible. I got very sad on hearing this. Then, a few months later, my classmate Misha gave me a Russian translation of ‘Commentaries on Living’ by J. Krishnamurti. It was an “illegal” translation

as the Soviet Government did not approve of such writings. I was deeply moved by that book and spontaneously became a vegetarian. Some time later, Misha (the same classmate) gave me a hand-written translation of the book entitled “*Hatha Yoga*” by Theos Bernard. In this book he describes his year long study of *Yoga* in India in the 1930s. He also quotes various passages from *Hatha-yoga-pradīpikā*. Immediately, my friend and I began to practice some of those *Āsana-s* and *Kriyā-s* described in that book. I never liked team sports as they were all quite rough in the Soviet Union. My first experience doing some *Yoga* postures was very positive. From my memory, for the first time in my life, I felt some sense of comfort. I remember staying in *Bhujāṅgāsana* for a few minutes and having a sense of peace. At that time, we had no idea that *Āsana-s* could be practiced dynamically. *Hatha-yoga-pradīpikā* states that one should master an *Āsana* for one *Yāma* which is about 3.5 hours. I was able to find a few translations of *Hatha-yoga-pradīpikā*, *Śiva Saṁhitā* and *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā*, that were published before the Russian revolution of 1917. However, I never heard about *Yogasūtra-s* until I came to India.

INDIA CALLING!

After a few years of reading underground translations of various *Yoga* books including ‘Autobiography of *Yogi*’ by Yogananda, books by Shivananda, Iyengar and others, I tried to practice *Yoga* by using those books, but often I felt lost and confused. I wanted to have a real teacher! I often dreamed of going to India in search of a teacher; however, at that time in Soviet Union it was impossible to go to a foreign country for somebody like me who was not a member of a communist party. Borders of the former Soviet Union were called, “Iron Curtain,” not by accident. I myself saw that border. It was protected by two rows of barbed wire, German Shephard dogs and guards with Kalashnikovs. I was only able to come as a refugee to the United States in 1976 after the death of my parents.

FINDING MY TEACHER

After coming to the United States, I settled in San Diego. I had neither money to go to India nor any idea of how to find a *Yōga* teacher even if I got there.

I was brainwashed by stories from books like 'Autobiography of *Yōgi*' by Yogananda where he describes how he met his teacher, Yuktेश्वar one day on a street. As soon as they saw each other, they were instantly connected! I looked around to see what was available in the United States in terms of *Yōga* studios and *Yōga* teachers. What I saw was deeply disappointing. One day, I bought a copy of the *Yōga Journal*. Looking through its pages I was repulsed. For me, *Yōga* was always a spiritual discipline and practice. I saw nothing spiritual in that *Yōga Journal*.

While living in San Diego, I was corresponding with Krishnamurti Foundation in Ojai and expressed my desire to resettle there in order to meet Krishnamurti. After some time, I got an invitation from Krishnamurti Foundation to come to Ojai. I was offered a chance to stay with Alan and Helen Hooker, who owed a famous Ranch House restaurant in Ojai and who were friends with Krishnamurti. When I came to Ojai in the fall of 1977, I was told by Krishnamurti Foundation that Mr. and Mrs. Hooker had other visitors and that instead of staying with them, I was to stay with Sonia Nelson. Sonia, at that time, was a music teacher at the Krishnamurti school. Now, Sonia is renowned teacher of *Vedic* chanting.

At Sonia's house I saw a picture of a handsome man wearing Indian garments. Sonia told me that this man was her husband, Neil Nelson who was studying *Yōga* with Desikachar in Madras. This was the very first time I heard Sir's name. After a while, I was able to have a few private meetings with Krishnamurti. From Krishnamurti, I found out that TKV Desikachar had been teaching *Yōga* to him. At that time, I told myself that this was the teacher I want to study from. A few months



later, Sonia's husband Neil Nelson returned from Madras, and I began taking lessons from him. Initially, I was quite resistant, because what he taught me was very different from what I learned from books in Russia. In addition to being a *Yōga* teacher, Neil was a great cook and after eating a few of his South Indian meals I began to trust him. I also wanted to go to Madras to study directly with Sir; however, I did not have money for airplane tickets and living expenses in India.

SMALL MIRACLE

Life was not easy for me in the United States. It was during the recession in the United States. I was unemployed for some time and I finally I found a job as a cabinet maker. My salary was barely enough to pay for my living expenses. I did not have any extra money to fund my trip to India. All that changed one night. That late night, I was driving home and it was raining heavily, which is a rare occurrence in Southern California. Suddenly, an old pickup truck appeared in front of me. It lost control and crossed into my lane. I hit the windshield with my head. I did not lose consciousness but I was bleeding profusely. I was injured badly, but was lucky not to lose my left eye. After a few weeks of recovery, I got a small financial settlement from my insurance company. Now, I had enough money to go to India. Immediately, I quit my job. My coworkers and supervisors were shocked that I was going to India to study *Yōga*! I wrote a letter to Desikachar and he replied that I could come.

MEETING ŚRĪ TKV DESIKACHAR AT KYM IN MADRAS

I came to Madras in November of 1979 and after settling in Theosophical Society in Adyar, I went to meet Desikachar at KYM, that was then located on Saint Mary's Road. In my mind, I was dreaming of meeting somebody like *Babaji*, with long flowing hair who would tell me, "My son where have you been these last few lives? I've been waiting for you!" Instead, I met a man wearing western clothes, who looked more like an engineer than a *Yoga* teacher. I was slightly disappointed but was quickly impressed by his wit and jokes. I told him that while living in the Soviet Union, I had dreamt about finding a *Yoga* teacher in India. I also told him about my studies and practices based on *Hatha-yoga-pradīpikā*. "Now I am here and I want to practice *Yoga* eight hours a day," I proudly declared. After hearing this, Desikachar got up, picked up a piece of chalk, came to a chalk board and drew a rough map of India. Then, he pointed to an upper right corner of the map and said, "If you like, I can write a letter to a *Svāmi* in Rishikesh and you can go there to do your eight hours; however, here (he pointed to Madras on the map) we do 45 minutes!" I was disappointed to hear this but nevertheless made an appointment to see him next week.

HOW ŚRĪ TKV DESIKACHAR BECAME MY TEACHER

What follows is a highly personal account. I share this with you only to show how *Yoga* with proper guidance can help in some very troubling times. After meeting Desikachar for the first time, I had to fly to Delhi to meet my wife who was arriving from the US. After I met her, we went back to Madras and there, we had a very painful breakup. Soon after that, I went to Kotagiri, Nilgris. In Kotagiri I spent every single day walking among tea plantations and practicing self-inquiry according to what I'd learned from reading Krishnamurti and Ramana Maharshi. As the result of doing

what I thought was a spiritual practice, I came to realisation that there was nothing in me that I could call "I." That realisation produced pretty strong anxiety. I lost a lot of weight and was not eating at all. I felt so bad that I thought I needed medical treatment and was going to fly back to US to be hospitalised because I was so distraught. In addition to that, I was terribly embarrassed and thought that I could never show my face to Desikachar again. Look! I had told him that for many years I had wanted to study *Yoga*. I risked my life leaving the Soviet Union and going to the United States and now I had come all the way to Madras; then, after saying all of those things I disappeared and never showed up for my lesson! That was totally embarrassing! Fortunately for me, in Theosophical Society where I stayed, I met a young German doctor who told me his story, which was even worse than mine. He was totally burned out from his job as a medical doctor in Germany and had tried to commit suicide. He was in a hospital for a long time and now he had come to India to continue with his recovery. He encouraged me to call Desikachar. Finally, with great reservation and embarrassment, I called Sir and he agreed to see me.

I met him and told him what happened to me, how terribly I felt and that I experienced a lot of anxiety. Desikachar smiled and said, "I am happy that this happened to you! Now, you are ready to learn!" He was right! I was open and ready! Then, he arranged for me to see Prabhakar at KYM and to see him twice a week at his home. That is how my studies or rather my therapy began. I continued to lose weight. I was down from 100 kg to 75 kg and my anxiety levels were still high. All I wanted was to walk or talk. Desikachar was kind to listen to me attentively; then one day he said that we could talk or we could do some practice. Just after a few weeks of doing daily *Āsana* practice and seeing Desikachar and Prabhakar my mind began to calm down and gradually, in a few months, I got to a point that I felt fine enough to engage in a serious study of *Yoga*. In addition to having lessons with Prabhakar and Desikachar, I spent a lot of time readings books on *Yoga* at Adyar



library at Theosophical Society and volunteering at OM Morya Poor clinic in Adyar. It was very healing to bandage the wounds of poor people.

23 YEARS OF STUDIES WITH ŚRĪ TKV DESIKACHAR FROM 1979 UNTIL 2003

My first visit to Madras lasted eighteen months. Gradually, Sir gave me more and more of his valuable time, especially in the spring and summer, when the weather got hot and most of his western students went back home. At one point, Desikachar told me that he would continue teaching me only if I was going to become a *Yoga* teacher. Prior to that, I never thought of becoming a *Yoga* teacher. For me, it was always about my personal spiritual practice. I agreed and under his directions, I began teaching a few private students at KYM. It was very rewarding. I also used to sit in with him few evenings a week at KYM, where Desikachar saw people who sought help for various chronic health problems. It was a great learning experience for me to see how Desikachar was able to charm them and test them at the same time. Then, he would introduce a teacher to that new student/patient. He was able to not just come up with the right prescription but to match them with the most suitable teacher.

While waiting for my lesson with Sir, I often sat in a chair on the second floor verandah of his house. Quite often, I heard Desikachar and his father (Krishnamacharya) chanting together and that was a special treat. I felt I was being sent back to ancient times. Gradually, I became more aware that apart from *Āsana*, *Yogasūtra* and other lessons, every single interaction with Desikachar was a learning experience. He always strived to make me aware of my own self-limiting *Samskāra*-s. For example, one I became impatient while waiting for a long time for my lesson with him. It was getting so hot! Finally, he came out and took one look at me and said, "Hey man, you look angry! I

do not think you are ready to study today. Come tomorrow!" Another time, I confronted him by saying, "Desikachar, you promised me to give me one more extra lesson per week." Hearing this, Sir picked up a pair of scissors, put them in my hand, and at the same time he opened his mouth and stuck his tongue out! Then he said, "Cut!" I didn't know what to do - cry or laugh. One day, he asked me to go with him to an area close to Mylapore temple to get some vegetables. At that time, he was driving a Maruti - a small Indian car. I tried to use this valuable time to ask him a few questions about *Yogasūtra*. As I began asking him my question, he told me, "Yan push the cow." I thought he was joking and said, "Please don't joke Sir. I am very serious Sir." Once again, he said, "Push the cow." Then, I looked to my left side and found that the whole backside of a cow was inside our car, next to my face!

I often noticed that his presence was enough to make people around him be more productive and more joyful at the same time. In the beginning, I was a little bit afraid of Desikachar; however, gradually I realised that he always wanted the very best for me and while he could be strict, he was never mean. One time, he told me pointing to his watch, "I do not work by the clock." That is why my lesson could last more than one hour or could last only twenty minutes.

On my first visit, my *Āsana* practice was taught to me by Prabhakar who was always careful and diligent in his teaching. He strictly followed Desikachar's instructions on how and what to teach me. One day, Desikachar entered the room where Prabhakar was teaching and said, "Prabhakar, teach him *Ūrdhva Dhanūrāsana*!" Prabhakar protested, "But Sir, he is not ready. He is quite stiff and he has some shoulder stiffness." Without replying to Prabhakar, Desikachar quickly told me loudly, "Yan get into *Ūrdhva Dhanūrāsana*!" Immediately, to the utter amazement of Prabhakar I just got into *Ūrdhva Dhanūrāsana* and was even able to stay there for a few minutes.



Desikachar did not separate *Yoga* teaching from his family life. He could play with his daughter while giving me a lesson and I was fortunate to observe how he interacted with his children. He was a great father. He was always keenly aware of what was going around him.

On my first visit to India, I was able to meet some of the great spiritual teachers like J. Krishnamurti, U.G. Krishnamurti, Nisargadatta Maharaj in Bombay, Shankaracharya, Pupul Jayakar and few others. Desikachar never pretended to be a saint or a *Guru*. He used to call himself, “A small master.” Nevertheless, for me he was the only true teacher that I had then and still have, even though he is no longer physically here with me. I was and still am impressed with the quality of Desikachar’s students from all over the world. Somehow, he was able to attract serious *Yoga* students and most importantly just good kind people. Desikachar frequently called himself “a postman” whose main mission was to deliver his father’s teachings. At the same time, he was deeply committed to promoting personal transformation and spiritual growth in his students. That was my impression.

This was also my experience. For example, when I would visit him in Madras he would always ask me to write down what I wanted to learn during that visit. Then, he would still teach me what he thought was good for me and most of the time it was nothing to do with what I had listed in my note. Each time I came, I never got what I wanted but instead I would get what I needed at that time! Desikachar was always able to see what I truly needed at any given time.

In all of my interactions with him, Desikachar never used any *Vikalpa* or imagination in what he taught. He wanted me to experience what I got or felt from my *Yoga* practice. He never told me things like, “Feel the *Prāṇa* going up your spine, etc.” Instead, he frequently told me, “Don’t bluff!”

LESSON WITH ŚRĪ T KRISHNAMACHARYA

In Summer of 1986, I graduated with BA in Sanskrit from University of California, Berkeley

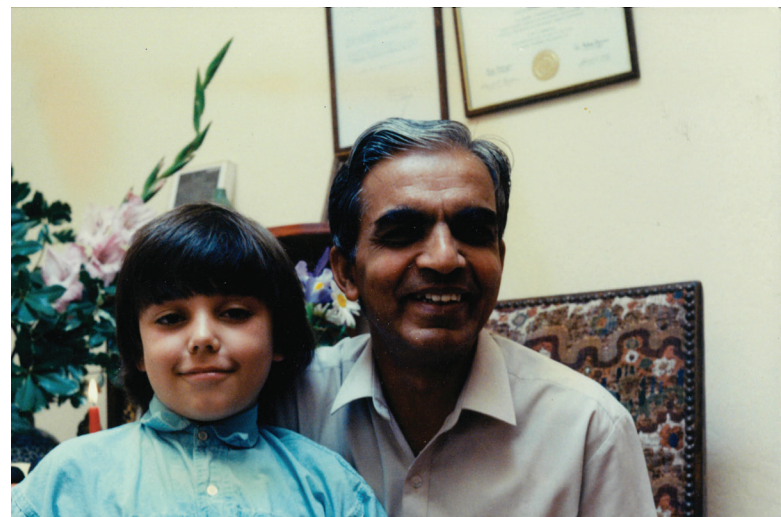


and soon after that, I flew to Madras to resume my studies with Desikachar. Prior to that, I had been aware of the presence of Śrī T Krishnamacharya, and I attended his presentations at KYM and one time in Mylapore, where he introduced his other student, BKS Iyengar. Also, I saw him numerous times at Desikachar's house while waiting for my lessons. One day, during that 1986 visit Desikachar told me jokingly, "Let us go and have a lesson with my father. Then you can say that you've studied with Krishnamacharya." It was actually Desikachar's own lesson and I just sat there to observe it. In the beginning, Desikachar prostrated a few times in front of Krishnamacharya. Then Krishnamacharya, while keeping his eyes half-closed began reciting some passages from *Brahma Sūtra* in *Saṁskṛta* and then explained their meaning. Desikachar was barely able to keep up with his father, writing in his notebook all that was being quoted in *Saṁskṛta* and explained to him. Later, after the lesson Desikachar and I returned to his room upstairs where I studied with him. Desikachar brought an original *Brahma Sūtra* text in *Saṁskṛta*

and we checked all quotes that Krishnamacharya had recited from his memory. There were no mistakes! It was 100% correct! Desikachar told me that his father had an immense memory and he was able to memorise thousands of pages from various texts including the whole *Rāmāyaṇa*. Now, let us go back to that lesson with Krishnamacharya that I observed. At the end of the lesson, Desikachar introduced me to his father and told me that I could ask him any questions. I asked him the same question that I previously asked Śaṅkarācārya and few other great spiritual teachers. It went something like this, "Is it possible for me in this life to find God or enlightenment?" Krishnamacharya remained silent for a minute, then he said in English, "When you feel it here (he pointed to his chest) you will feel completely satisfied; you don't want anything; it is so cool." "Is it cool like ice-cream?" asked Desikachar. "It is not ice-cream," replied Krishnamacharya! That was the end of my interview.

INDUS VALLEY ORIGINS OF A YOGA PRACTICE

While working on my BA in Sanskrit at UC Berkeley I studied and researched history and most recent developments in archeology of the Indus Valley civilization. I was doing my research under the guidance of Professor Dales. I discovered that some of the seals discovered in





Mohenjo Daro depicted *Yōga* postures. Desikachar encouraged me to proceed with my research and allowed me to use his father's photos. The results of my research were published in *Artibus Asiae Journal* in 1988. Currently, my paper is on the reading list of major universities and it has been quoted in many publications. I am grateful to Desikachar because he inspired and encouraged me to complete this academic endeavor.

VINIYOGA AMERICA

Desikachar always wanted his American students to organise and find a way to work together in order to present *Yōga* to people in the United States. That is why we created *Viniyoga America* as a non-profit organisation. Mrs. Mary Lou Skelton became its president and I was one of the five founding board members. I think that it was in summer of 1987 that Desikachar came to Colgate University where his most devoted students in North America met with him to do

some studies and to work on developing this new organisation - *Viniyoga America*. Unfortunately, with so many different personalities, some time later this organisation ceased to exist without accomplishing much. Desikachar wanted us to work together and gave hard time to most of us during that visit to Colgate University. Although, he was never directly tough on me, I felt a little bit lonely since he did not spend much time with me. As he was about to leave, he walked by me and softly whispered directly into my ear: "Love!"

HOSTING ŚRĪ TKV DESIKACHAR

In 1988, Desikachar conducted a seminar in San Rafael, California. He stayed in my house, which was just a short distance from the seminar location. It was a great honor to be his host. It was so much joy and pleasure to be with him every day. He had very simple tastes. He ate mostly fruits, nuts and some simple vegetable soup with butter. He even prepared special almond milk



with saffron for himself and me every morning. He also took walks with me and he walked quite fast. I remember one specific experience quite vividly. Desikachar always travelled lightly. He never had any checked luggage but just a small briefcase. Every place he visited, either had some of his clothes or they were purchased for him. That is why, one day I had to take him shopping to buy some clothes. I took him to a local department store. What happened next was a lot of fun. We were greeted by an elderly salesman and I explained to him that we needed to get a few shirts, a few slacks and a couple of sweaters for my friend. Desikachar went inside a changing room. During the next few minutes, the salesman and I were running around, and throwing various slacks, shirts and sweaters into that room while Desikachar was throwing some of them back to me. After about ten minutes, it was all done. Smiling, Desikachar emerged with a few items he had chosen. I was happy but also a little bit embarrassed because I thought we gave a hard time to that elderly salesman, who was running all over the place and was out of breath. I was wrong. That salesman shook Desikachar's hand, gave a big smile and said, "Sir I thoroughly enjoyed it." I have been able to observe these kinds of interactions on many occasions. Desikachar had a unique ability to make people around him

aware and happy at the same time. His enthusiasm and joy were infectious. Even today when I look at old photos of him standing next to his western students or his students from KYM, I see that they look so happy and standing, next to Sir.

HUMILITY

Desikachar never ceased to amaze me with his incredible ability to tackle all kinds of difficult situations and challenges in the most simple and efficient way. His presence commanded respect and he brought out the best in his students, associates and other people who came in contact with him. He had clear perception of what was going on and was able to communicate it in straightforward manner. I told him several times that he could have been the CEO of a major corporation because of his leadership and communication skills. However, he was also quite humble, and I was able to witness his humility on many occasions. One day, I came to have my lesson with Desikachar. I was quite disturbed because I had just had a fight with my rickshaw driver who had cheated me. I told Sir about what had happened to me and how angry I was. Desikachar smiled and told me that the previous day, one of his students had spat on him because he did not like how he was driving through an intersection. When that student realised on whom he had spat, he almost lost his mind and was sure that Desikachar would terminate him as a student. But, Desikachar did not even react with anger. I also remember how I took Desikachar to San Francisco International airport. He was going to fly back to Madras by Singapore Airlines. I have a tendency to be late and this time we were late and traffic was also very bad. We barely made it. I was extremely worried and upset with myself. Desikachar was sitting next to me with his briefcase on his lap. He was absolutely peaceful and relaxed. Moreover,



he never expressed any displeasure with me or said anything about us running out of time.

INTEGRITY

In my life, I've observed that famous people like politicians, actors and even *Yōga* teachers become easily corrupted by money and power. I remember that when I first began studying with Desikachar, I was told that he accepted donations but did not demand a specific fee. I did not know what an appropriate donation would be. One day I asked him, "Sir how much should I pay you for my lessons?" "If you are millionaire, pay me a million, if you are poor, pay me nothing," he replied. I ended up paying him 25 rupees per lesson because I did not have much money at that time. I had no idea how much other students paid him. I do not believe that the quality of his teaching was influenced in any way by how much money he was paid. Desikachar was not an austere monk who took up a vow of poverty. He told me one time that he has been taken good care of by his students. He enjoyed good fruits, comfortable places to stay and sensible travel arrangements. However, he was very clear on what was the appropriate use of money. He had numerous

opportunities to become very rich. However, Desikachar never looked at his teaching as a business and instead, mostly focused on one to one teaching and charitable work. In my life, I have witnessed that power often corrupts people, even more than money. These days, we are learning of many instances of all kinds of abuse by powerful people including some famous *Yōga* teachers. In my personal experience

and in my observation of how he treated other people, I have never seen Desikachar being mean or abusive in any way. Yes, he could be strict, and he would often challenge me, but he was never mean. The longer I knew him, the more I realised how kind he was. He had a lot of power, but he used it only to challenge his students and bring out the best in them, and to encourage them to change. I also witnessed that on a few occasions he gave a hard time to some of his old students. He acted out of kindness because he cared deeply for each of his students. He did not care for people with big egos.

COMPASSION

I would like to add one more quality to Desikachar's humility and integrity – his compassion. It was not obvious to me at first. Initially, I had an impression that Desikachar was quite strict and aloof. I remember how one time he said, "The best help is not to help." This was said about one person who did not show up for her appointment. Gradually, as I got to know him, I recognised that Sir cared deeply about his family, his students, all KYM visitors and other people

who came into his life. I remember that during my lessons with him, one of his children could pop in and Desikachar would listen and interact with them. Those interactions did not diminish his teaching but actually enhanced it because it was also “*Yōga*.” *Yōga* of family relations. In 1991, I came to see Desikachar with two of my students for a brief visit. At that time, I was under a lot of stress. He showed me so much kindness and care during that visit. He drove me around, took me out to Woodlands for dinner and even drove me to the airport when I was leaving. One day, he had to attend a wedding of his relative. He left me sitting in his car and told me, “I’ll go to show my face, do my “*Vīnyāsa*” and will be back in twenty minutes.” He did get back in twenty minutes. I’d witnessed on many occasions that children were naturally drawn to him and he was great with them. During our visit in 2002, my daughter Natasha was only 5 years old. Sir taught her *Laghunyāsa*, and just after two lessons, she was able to memorise it and recite it to a group of teachers at KYM.

APPLICATION OF *YOGA* IN THE REAL WORLD

Desikachar told me on many occasions that the real test of our *Yōga* practice and learning is how we apply it to our relationships, our work and all other aspects of our life. In 1992, I moved to Seattle and I was hired as a job developer at a non-profit agency that served refugees. My job was to find jobs and place refugees from Eastern Europe and South-east Asia with various local employers. In the beginning, I found it to be impossible because when I found a job for a refugee, either he/she did not like that job, or a prospective employer did not like him/her. Then, I took a few days off to reflect on how I could succeed and suddenly, I had an insight, “I needed to match jobs to individuals, the same way as I adapt *Āsana* practice to each individual student.” Soon after that I created a generic job application that had very specific questions like,

“What shift can you work?, Can you drive on a freeway?, What jobs would you not do?” and so on. In addition, I visited many local employers in order to understand their needs. That is why, during my second month at that agency, I was able to place twenty-two refugees with most suitable employers. As a result of my work, I was promoted to a supervisor position so I could train other job developers to perform better.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

To me, the most important quality of a *Yōga* teacher is his/her ability to understand his/her student and to promote deep spiritual transformation. In other words, a *Yōga* teacher should be able to help his students to recognise and overcome deep-rooted *Samskāra-s* and to move towards *Yōga* state as it defined in *Yōgasūtra* I-2.

From the very beginning, that was Sir’s work with me. He was not afraid to engage in a deeply personal relationship. It is because of his humility, integrity and compassion, that there were never any negative “side effects” that often happen in friendships or teacher-student relationships. Desikachar had a unique ability to be a teacher and a friend at the same time. He always challenged me to learn, to question and to be aware. Some of his students called him “Mr. *Parīṇāma*” because he was never interested in just giving “information” but in the true transformation of his student. It is because of his unique observation skills that he was able to see where his student was. He would cancel my lesson if he saw that I was bored or not interested. I always got from each lesson with him as much as I was willing to put in. My lessons with him are imprinted in my memory forever. He would sit on the other side of table facing me directly. There was nothing on the table except paper, pencils and a glass of water. He liked to draw on a paper as he talked. At the end of each lesson, he would walk me outside and warmly wish me good bye. When I got back to the US, he would write to me once in a while. His letters were brief but incredibly meaningful. Whenever



Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram

13, FOURTH CROSS St., RAMAKRISHNA NAGAR,
MADRAS-600 028. INDIA. TEL: 417998

REF. NO. 10H/2043.

22nd Feb. 1988

Dear Yan Dhyansky

Hearty congratulations on the brilliant article about the Yoga practice in the ancient Indian civilisation. It is a great event for you and to all of us.

MR YAN Y DHYANSKY
YOGA THERAPY CENTRE
124 PINE STREET
SAN ANSELMO
CALIFORNIA 94960, USA

REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST

I got a letter from him, I would not open it for a few days, but just carry it with me and look at it before finally opening and reading it. It was such a treat. The biggest regret of my life is that I've not finished my studies with him. The last time I saw Desikachar was for a very brief time while he was waiting for a flight in Vancouver, Canada. I thought that he would live for a very long time

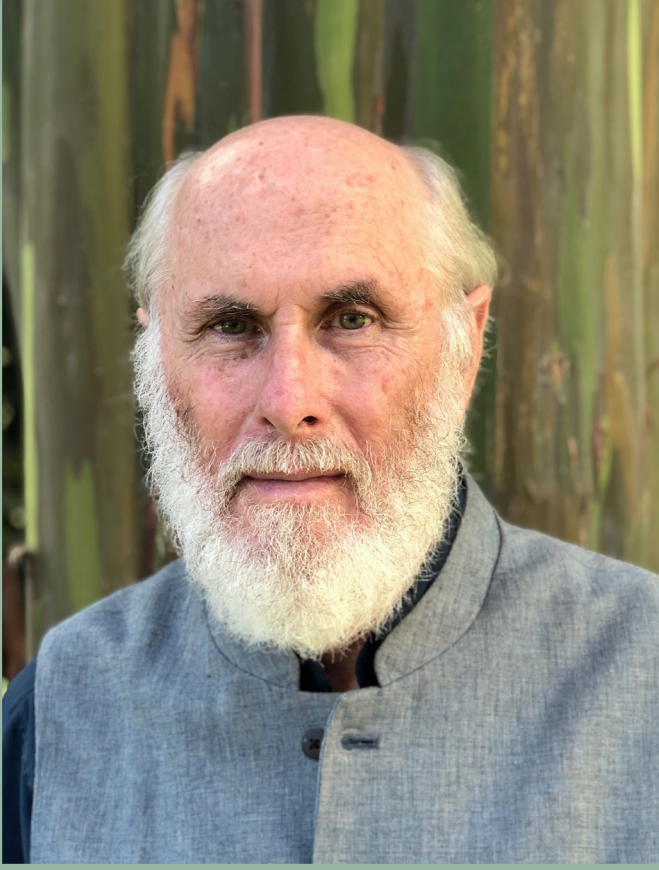
and I would be able to come back to complete my study of *Yogasūtra* and to improve my personal practice. I had no idea that he was ill. I always thought that I would die before him because of my medical history. I even asked him on one occasion if he could perform some kind of ritual and dispose my ashes after my death, if my wife brought them to India. With a smile and a sparkle

in his eye he said, “Don’t worry we’ll throw them in the ocean. In the meantime, go back home and do some good work.”

Here, I am able to share only a few of my experiences with Śrī Desikachar. There were so many more. One of them stands out. In the Spring of 1992, I was living and teaching *Yōga* in Marin County, California. It was a time in my life when I needed desperately to move to another city/state. I called Desikachar and related to him what was going on with me. Then I asked him, “Sir, please advise me where I should move?” “Seattle!” he replied. There was not even a second’s pause before he answered. He responded immediately. Then I asked again, “How about Atlanta? That is

another possibility.” “No, that is not my idea. Go to Seattle,” he replied. I did follow his direction. I’ve been living here in Seattle for the last 28 years. My daughter was born here, and many good things happened here. It was the right place for me to move and to settle here.

I remember that when I saw Desikachar in 2002 in Madras, I asked him if he missed his father. To this, he replied, “When my father was alive, I was not always with him. Now after his death he is always with me.” That is what I am trying to cultivate in myself by paying attention and going deep inside to hear my teacher’s voice. I do hear his voice or at least what he frequently used to tell me, “Don’t bluff and do good to people.”



YOGA AND THE SUN THE ANCIENT SOLAR YOGA

DR. DAVID FRAWLEY

Dr. David Frawley (*Pandit Vāmadeva Śāstri*) is a *Vedācārya*, and works in the fields of *Yoga*, *Āyurveda*, *Vedānta* and *Jyotiṣ*. He has a D.Litt from S-VYASA and a Padma Bhushan from the Government of India (2015). He is the author of more than forty books and is Director of the American Institute of *Vedic Studies*.

Dr. David Frawley founded the ‘*Vedic Research Center*’ in 1980 for his work on the *Veda-s* that he had been pursuing since 1970. This early work focused on research into the *Ṛgveda*, the oldest *Vedic* text. In 1988, *Vāmadeva* expanded the center into the ‘*American Institute of Vedic Studies*’ to promote *Yoga*, *Vedānta*, *Āyurveda* and *Vedic Astrology* as *Vedic* knowledge systems.

The Sun, properly understood, is not merely an outer but an inner energy source, reflecting the supreme light of Consciousness within and around us. In the following article, we will examine how *Yōga* is connected to the Sun through *Yoga Śāstra-s*, *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Upaniṣad-s* to the *Vedic Mantra-s* of the *Ṛṣi-s*.

The Sun is the ruler of our solar system and all that occurs within it, including life on earth. Yet though we may welcome the sunlight every day, we seldom consider the spiritual reality of the Sun and the sacred presence behind it.

However, if we look at traditional cultures throughout the world, we discover an awareness of the Sun as a spiritual force, a secret doorway to a higher reality. We note extensive religious, *Yōgic*, astrological, and shamanic traditions that revere the Sun and the inner essence of light behind its outer form. In this regard, the ancient *Vedic Yōga* is a “*Yōga* of light,” a “*Solar Yōga*” or “*Yōga* of the Sun.” *Vedic Dharma* is probably our best preserved

ancient system of the original religion of light through the Sun.

The Sun is the visible representation of the deity, the veritable face of the Gods - the great symbol of the Self, spirit or Divine presence in the world (*Ātman*).

The bright face of the Gods has arisen, the eye of Mitra, Varuṇa, and Agni. He has filled heaven, earth, and the atmosphere, the Sun, the Self (*Ātman*) of all that is stable and moving.

Kutsa Aṅgīrasa, R̥gveda I.115.1

The Sun is no mere luminous material globe, but the source of life, intelligence, love, and consciousness – light in the inner sense. We are all rays of the central Sun of consciousness that illumines the entire universe. Throughout the ancient world, we find a worship of the Sun as part of a greater spiritual path of light, enlightenment, and Self-realisation. This “solar religion” or “solar *Dharma*” occurs along with an honoring of the sacred Fire, the mystic Moon, and other aspects of light - as part of a worship of nature as a whole and the Cosmic Spirit behind it.

The Sun is the One God, the Light of lights, the God of gods. This religion of the Sun is found among the Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, and Scythians, to name but a few, extending to the Aztecs, Mayas, Incas, and Pueblo Indians of the New World. Pre-Christian European traditions of the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans and Slavs, contain strong solar symbolisms. There is a solar symbolism in Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Shinto, and many other traditions. Such spiritual teachings of light link the human being to the Sun and regard us as “children of the Sun,” forms of light on earth taking birth to fulfill the solar will towards greater life and consciousness. We could say that the natural religion of our species is the religion of the Sun. *Yōga* is first taught to humanity by the Sun God in various forms as

Vivasvān, Hiranyagarbha, or Savita with which the origins of *Yōga* is connected.

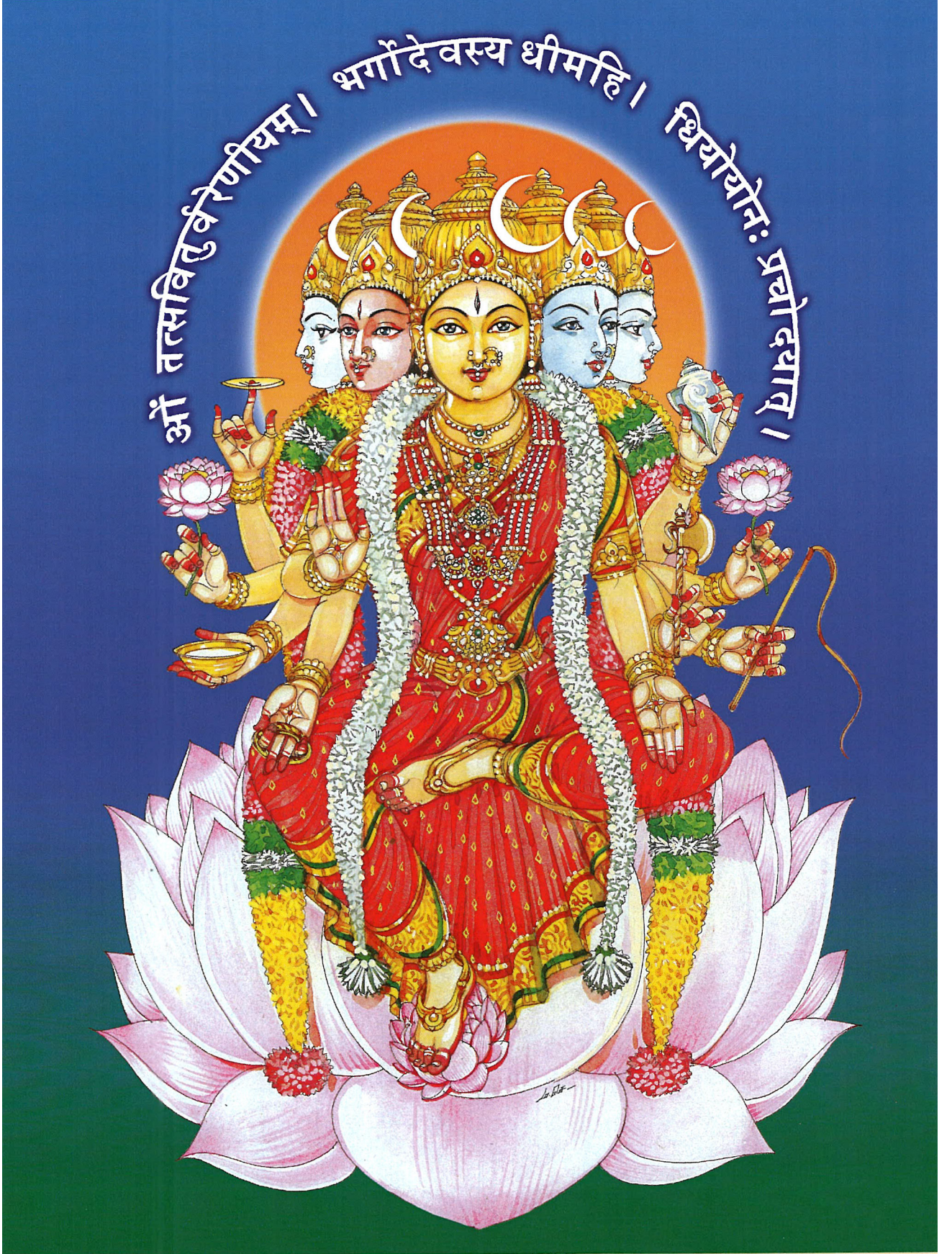
The ancient solar religion of humanity reflects its original *Yōga* tradition. This ancient path of light beckons us both from the future as well as the past, as the ecological age dawning today requires that we once more honor the sacred and Divine presence in nature, especially in the Sun.

THE *VEDIC* RELIGION OF THE SUN

The Sun is the supreme deity of the *Veda-s*, the Divine power in heaven, which functions in the atmosphere as Lightning, and on earth as Fire, which are the three main manifestations of light in our visible world. The *Vedic* ritual involves offerings to a sacred fire in order to connect with the beneficent powers of the solar deity.

The *Vedic Yōga*, the ancient basis of India’s *Yōga* tradition according to great *Guru-s* like Paramahansa Yogananda and Śrī Aurobindo, involves resurrecting the Sun out of darkness, which means returning to the Sun of our true Self that is hidden in the darkness of the material world and the ego-mind. Each one of us is a Sun, a universal light of consciousness, but this solar aspect of our being must be regained through the process of *Yōga Sādhana*, which is a cultivation of the solar light within us.

Chanting *Mantra-s* in the sunlight, particularly standing in water and offering the *Mantra-s* to the solar deity, is one of the most powerful *Mantra Yōga* practices. It works particularly well with solar *Mantra-s* like *Om, Hrīm,* or the *Gāyatrī Mantra*. Sound is also light and we can use the Sun to energise all *Mantra-s*. *Hrīm* is the most important of the *Bīja Mantra-s* said to carry the power of the Sun. But, the solar energy is the root of all *Mantra-s*. The *Vedic Mantra-s* are said to dwell in the rays of the Sun. They number 4,32,000, which is 360 X 1200, reflecting a solar mathematics of the zodiac.



Śri Gāyatrī

Illustration by Maniam Selvan

THE *GĀYATRĪ MANTRA*

The *Gāyatrī Mantra* or *Savita*, a powerful form of the Sun God, is the most important of all *Vedic Mantra-s*, and one of the most commonly used *Mantra-s* in *Yōga* practices. The *Gāyatrī Mantra* is an important tool for drawing the spiritual energy of the Sun into our minds, hearts and bodies, serving like a solar panel drawing in energy for our inner life.

We meditate upon the supreme light of the Divine transforming Sun (*Savita*) that he may stimulate our intelligence.

Gathina Viśvāmitra, Ṛgveda III.62.10

Savita represents the Divine light of awareness hidden within us that *Yōga* serves to activate, to bring about the evolution of our consciousness beyond time and mortality. Here, we see the seeds of *Yōga* explained in terms of a solar symbolism.

Vedic rituals, like *Agnihotra*, are performed at sunrise, noon and sunset, the main points of solar transformation during the day. The deity of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, *Savita*, represents the transformational power inherent in the Sun, not only to change night into day, but also to take us beyond the darkness of the ego into the infinite light of the higher Self. *Savita* is the deity of *Yōga* and meditation, who sets the *Yōgic* process in motion within us as a manifestation of the Divine Will. Yet, we should remember that this *Gāyatrī* is only one of many *Vedic* verses to the Sun that can be used in a similar manner.

THE *PURUṢA* OR HIGHER SELF AS THE BEING IN THE SUN

Yōga and the *Veda-s* are linked together by the common conception of the *Puruṣa* or *Ātman*, the Supreme or Universal Self, the Seer of all, which is the goal of classical *Yōga* in the *Yōgasūtra-s* and the main subject of the *Upaniṣadic* teachings. The

Puruṣa or *Ātman* is identified with the Sun both in *Vedic* and *Yōgic* thought. The idea of union with the Sun occurs in several *Vedic* verses, to quote a few examples below.

I have known that Supreme Person, of the lustre of the Sun beyond darkness. Only knowing him can one go beyond death. There is no other path for transformation.

Śukla Yajurveda XXXI.18, Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad III.8

While the solar *Puruṣa* is mentioned specifically in the *Yajurveda*, in the *Ṛgveda* it is lauded through the *Vedic* Sun God.

Arising from the surrounding darkness, seeing the higher light, we have reached the Godhead, the Divine Sun, the supreme light.

Praskanva Kanva, Ṛgveda I.50.10

From my father, I have received the wisdom of truth. I was born even as the Sun.

Vatsa Kanva, Ṛgveda VIII.6.10

The great *Upaniṣadic* prayer is to merge into the Solar Self. The famous *Īśa Upaniṣad* ends with a chant to merge in the solar Self, which also contains the oldest reference to the *So'ham Mantra*. In fact, the great *Haṁsa* or Swan of *Yōgic* thought is originally a *Vedic* Sunbird.

Sun, O nourisher, single seer, controller, power of the Lord of creation, remove your rays and gather up your heat that I may see your most auspicious form. The *Puruṣa* (Person) that is within the Sun beyond, He am I am!

Īśa Upaniṣad 16

The *Upaniṣad-s* tell us that the Sun chants, “*Om*” as it moves in the sky. The Sun is not only the source of light, but also that of sound and *Mantra*. *Mantra Yōga* is rooted in the worship of the Sun as in the inner light.

Thus, indeed that which is the upward chant (*Udgītha*), that is the primal sound (*Pranava*). That which is the primal sound that is the upward chant. That which is the Sun beyond is the upward chant. He is primal sound. He chants *Om* as it moves.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad I.5.1

THE SUN AND THE BRANCHES OF YOGA

Relative to the *Yōga* of Knowledge, the inner Self or *Ātman* is symbolised as the Sun, ever shining in the hearts of all. After introducing the famous *Mantra*, “I am *Brahman*” (*Aham Brahmāsmi*) or “I am *Brahman*,” the *Upaniṣad-s* quote a verse from the *Ṛṣi Vāmadeva* in the *Rgveda* that states, “I was *Manu* and the Sun.”



Relative to the *Yōga* of Devotion or *Bhakti Yōga*, the first and main images used in worship were that of the deity in the Sun disc, *Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa*. This is the background of the ancient *Vaikhānasa* tradition of India, which is still followed in the famous temple of Tirupati in South India, the largest and wealthiest shrine in the country.

A solar symbolism enters into the great trinity of Hindu deities. *Brahma*, the Creator, has a solar aspect. *Viṣṇu*, the preserver, is worshipped as the Sun, particularly as *Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa*, the Sun as the cosmic person who enters into the hearts of all beings. *Śiva*, the transformer, is honored as the supreme deity behind the Sun, particularly as *Rudra*, who represents the highest light and color of the Sun. *Brahma*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Śiva* are identified with the three aspects of solar energy as creating, sustaining, and transforming the universe.

SOLAR YOGA AND SOLAR YOGI-S

Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā* states that he taught the original *Yōga* first to *Vivasvān*, the Sun God, who passed it on to *Manu*, the primal human sage, who is called the son of the Sun and to *Ikṣvāku*, the founder of the solar dynasty of *Vedic* kings. *Kṛṣṇa* is regarded as the *Yogāvatāra* or “incarnation of *Yōga*,” a status not afforded to any other human personage. This statement of *Kṛṣṇa* refers to the *Vedic* teaching that we as human beings are descendants of the Sun.

The traditional founder of *Yōga Darśana* or the “*Yōga* system of philosophy” – which the *Yogasūtra-s* of *Patañjali* represents – is *Hiranyagarbha*, which means the “Golden Embryo,” and is identified with the Sun. *Kapila*, the founder of the *Sāṃkhya* system, is similarly identified with the Sun. In the *Mahābhārata*, *Kṛṣṇa* states, “As my form, carrying the knowledge, eternal and dwelling in the Sun, the teachers of *Sāṃkhya*, who have discerned

what is important, call me *Kapila*. As the brilliant *Hiranyagarbha*, who is lauded in the verses of the *Veda-s*, ever worshipped by *Yoga*, so I am also remembered in the world.”

Yajñavalkya is the most famous of the *Upaniṣadic* sages. He received his *Vedic Mantra-s* directly from the Sun God as *Āditya*. The *Yoga Yajñavalkya*, an ancient *Yoga* text, reflects a strong solar symbolism with extensive teachings on *Om* and the *Gāyatrī Mantra*. It states, “The Sun, the Self of the world, is the *Prāṇa* placed in the heart.”

THE SUN AND *PRĀṆA*

The Sun as *Prāṇa* is a key to many *Prāṇāyāma* practices. In the *Upanishads*, the Sun is identified with *Prāṇa*:

The Self bears himself in two ways, as *Prāṇa* and as the Sun. Such are his two paths, outer and inner, which revolve by day and by night. The Sun is the outer Self and *Prāṇa* is the inner Self. The movements of the inner Self (*Prāṇa*) are measured by those of the outer Self (the Sun).

Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad VI.1-3

Our *Prāṇa* is our inner Sun that marks our inner days and nights that follow a similar course as the outer days and nights.

This *Upaniṣadic* idea reflects older *Vedic* views. *Yajñavalkya's Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that we have 10,800 breaths by day and night. This equals 720 breaths every 48 minutes (1/30 of a day). It amounts to one breath every four seconds.

In the *Yōgic* view of the subtle body, the right or solar (*Piṅgala*) *Nāḍī* governs fire, heat, and activity at a physiological level. The Sun is present physically as the solar plexus fire in *Hatha-yoga*, and as the *Ātman* in *Rāja Yoga*. The key to *Prāṇāyāma*

is to draw in the *Prāṇa* of both the inner and the outer Suns.

THE SUN AND MEDITATION

One of the simplest and most important meditation techniques is to meditate upon the Supreme Self or Divine presence as the Sun within the heart, of which the mind and brain is but an outer reflection, like the Moon.

Relative to modern *Yoga* masters from India, *Śrī Aurobindo* taught an integral *Yoga* of Self transformation through the Supramental light and *Śakti*, which he lauds under the symbolism of the Sun. *Ramana Maharshi*, the greatest of the sages or *Jñāna Yōgi-s*, speaks of the heart and the Self as the inner Sun.

In *Tantric Yoga* as in the *Upaniṣad-s*, the Sun at a deeper level, is identified with the heart. The spiritual fire force of *Śakti* in the root *Cakra* and the lunar or water force (*Soma*) of *Śiva* in the crown *Cakra* unite in order to create it.

NAMES OF THE SUN GOD

The Sun God has a large number of names. These reflect different aspects or powers of light, transformation, or *Dharma* for which the Sun is the prime motivating power.

- *Sūrya* - the one who sets everything in motion; the most common name for the Sun.
- *Savita* - the power of inspiration, motivation, and higher evolution, *Yoga* and meditation.
- *Āditya* - the unbounded light and primal intelligence.
- *Mitra* - the Divine friend and lord of compassion.

- *Varuṇa* - the Divine lord, giver of wideness.
- *Aryamān* - the Divine companion, friend, and helper is the third after *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, and they together rule the three higher heavens or *Rocana-s* beyond the ordinary three realms of earth, atmosphere, and heaven.
- *Bhaga* - the blissful lord, *Bhagavān*.
- *Pūṣan* - the nourisher, the seer, the guide of the soul beyond death and darkness.
- *Viṣṇu* - the pervader, ruler of the highest heaven.
- *Tvaṣṭar* - the maker of forms, associated with the great Goddesses.
- *Hiranyagarbha* - the golden seed or foetus; the causal body.
- *Indra* - *Indra* as the Supreme Lord is often a name for the Sun or higher light, though more commonly he relates to the atmosphere.
- *Vivasvān* - the radiant one, associated with the dawn.
- *Prajāpati* - the lord of creatures, more common in later *Vedic* texts.

SŪRYA YOGA

Sūrya Yōga is the illuminating power of our higher intelligence that reveals all things like the Sun. *Sūrya Yōga* culminates with the union with our higher Self that, like the Sun, is pure light.

**Seers of the vast illumined seer yoke
(Yogically control) their mind and
intelligence. The one knower of the ways
of wisdom ordains the invocation of the
Gods. Great is the glory of the Divine
creative Sun.**

*Śyavaśva Ātreya, Ṛgveda V.81.1,
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad II.4, Śukla
Yajurveda XI.4*



This traditional *Yoga* of controlling the mind and *Buddhi* is well evidenced here.

That Lord the ruler of the stable and moving world, who stimulates our intelligence (*Dhīyam Jinvan*), we invoke for grace. So that nourishing Sun will give growth to our knowledge, our protector and inviolable guardian for well-being.

Gotama Rahūgaṇa, Ṛgveda I.89.5

This Sun God is the One Creator and Lord of all the worlds, the Sun of suns, the God of Gods, the Light of lights. The *Veda* invokes him in various forms, here as the provider of nourishment, *Pūṣan*, to stimulate our intelligence and guard over the unfolding of the treasures of the spiritual life.

The Sun Gods uphold the stable and moving world. They are the guardians of all the universe. With a profound intelligence (*Dīrghā Dhiyo*), guarding their celestial powers, the carriers of truth, they note our debts.

Gr̥tsamada Śaunaka, Ṛgveda II.27.4

The very rising of the Sun every day indicates our own deeper light, purity and Self-realisation as the *Ṛṣi Vaśiṣṭha* lauds:

When rising today, you declare the truth to *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* that we are sinless, may we abide in the unbounded Godhead, O *Aryamān*, your beloved singers!

Maitrāvāruṇi Vaśiṣṭha, Ṛgveda VII.60.1

CONCLUSION

Yoga arises from an ancient solar symbolism as a cultivation of the universal light that is the basis of life, mind and consciousness. All of *Yoga* has roots in this solar symbolism.

In this regard, one could say that ***Āsana-s*** are means of expressing the movement of the solar light in the physical body. ***Prāṇāyāma*** spreads the solar ***Prāṇa*** and turns it within. ***Dhāraṇā*** opens the inner solar vision or third eye. ***Dhyāna*** develops the solar light of knowledge. ***Samādhi*** is merge into the solar Self.

The Sun Salutation is but an aspect of this broader solar symbolism. Honoring the Sun, it is looking to the origin of *Yoga* in the Supreme Light of Consciousness. Unless we look upon the Sun as the Self of all beings, we will not know the inner meaning of these *Yoga* practices or be able to access their full energy, though the light is shining upon us and within us. Let us once more honor that supreme light.

Dr. Prasan Shankar is an *Āyurveda* Physician working in the Geriatric unit at the Institute of *Āyurveda* and Integrative medicine-TDU. He treats various neurological and neurodegenerative disorders like strokes and parkinsonism, arthritis spectrum disorders, supportive and complementary cancer care, supportive cardiac care and other age related problems. He is currently involved in research related to *Āyurvedic* management of Parkinsonism and cancer. He has an M.D in *Pañcakarma* and is currently the Medical Director at the Institute of *Āyurveda* and Integrative Medicine Bangalore.



Dr. Venugopalan Nair is a Senior Scientist F and an *Āyurveda* Physician at Trans Disciplinary Unit. Over the last 20 years, he has pioneered the database development in Traditional Knowledge of Indian Medicinal Plants, and created a methodology for solving controversial identity of medicinal plants mentioned in *Āyurveda* and, developed by *Rasāyana* Informatics and Systems approaches to *Rasāyana* in *Āyurveda*. He has also developed educational material on medicinal plants for students. He is currently working on developing drug discovery platforms and is also engaged in deciphering medical manuscripts. He heads the Center for Traditional Knowledge and Informatics at TDU.



ĀROGYAṀ BHĀSKARAT ICCHET

DR. PRASAN SHANKAR & DR. VENUGOPALAN NAIR

INTRODUCTION

The earth is the only planet that can sustain life due to its perfect position from the sun. The sun has therefore, been rightly revered and worshiped for centuries because its energy is essential for life. The Greeks referred to the sun god as ‘Helios,’ while the Egyptians referred to the Sun as ‘Ra,’ the Mayans as ‘Kinich Ahau,’ and the Indians as ‘Sūrya Deva’ or ‘Āditya Deva.’

The sun influences agricultural practices, and architecture, and is directly used as a source of energy and healing.

Vedic texts have highlighted the importance of the sun in health and hence, we see a number of *Mantra-s* chanted every morning in salutation to the sun. *Gāyatrī Mantra*, is one such example.

Sūrya Namaskār or sun salutations are health enhancing movements sequences traditionally done at sunrise.

The Greeks coined a term called ‘Heliotherapy,’ which means, ‘using sunlight as medicine,’ and created sun therapy hospitals for treating children with rickets, people suffering from sores, wounds, arthritis, lupus, smallpox and tuberculosis. In fact, Dr Niels Ryberg Finsen (Danish physician, founder of modern phototherapy) won the Nobel prize in 1903 for showing how solar radiation was useful in treating lupus.

During World War I, exposure to the sun was a method used to heal war wounds and gunshot wounds. The craze for sun therapy gradually died down with the discovery of antibiotics.

The relationship between exposure to the sun and ‘moods’ is well known. Depression has been linked to dark environments and lack of exposure to the sunlight. It has been seen that patients do better in hospital rooms with good sunlight exposure as compared to dark, dingy rooms.

ĀYURVEDA

- One of the basic principles of *Āyurveda* is the theory of *Pañcabhūta*.
- The five *Tattva-s* include *Ākaśa*, *Vāyu*, *Teja*, *Jala* and *Ṗṛthvī*. *Teja* or *Agni Tattva* represents the sun, expressed through light and heat in the cosmos.
- The function of heat in the physiological system is represented as the *Jāṭhara Agni* or the digestive fire in the human body. This fire is essential for ensuring bioavailability and assimilation. There are 13 metabolic processes called *Dhātu Agni* for complete metabolism.
- The sun, thus, has a definite influence on health and disease.

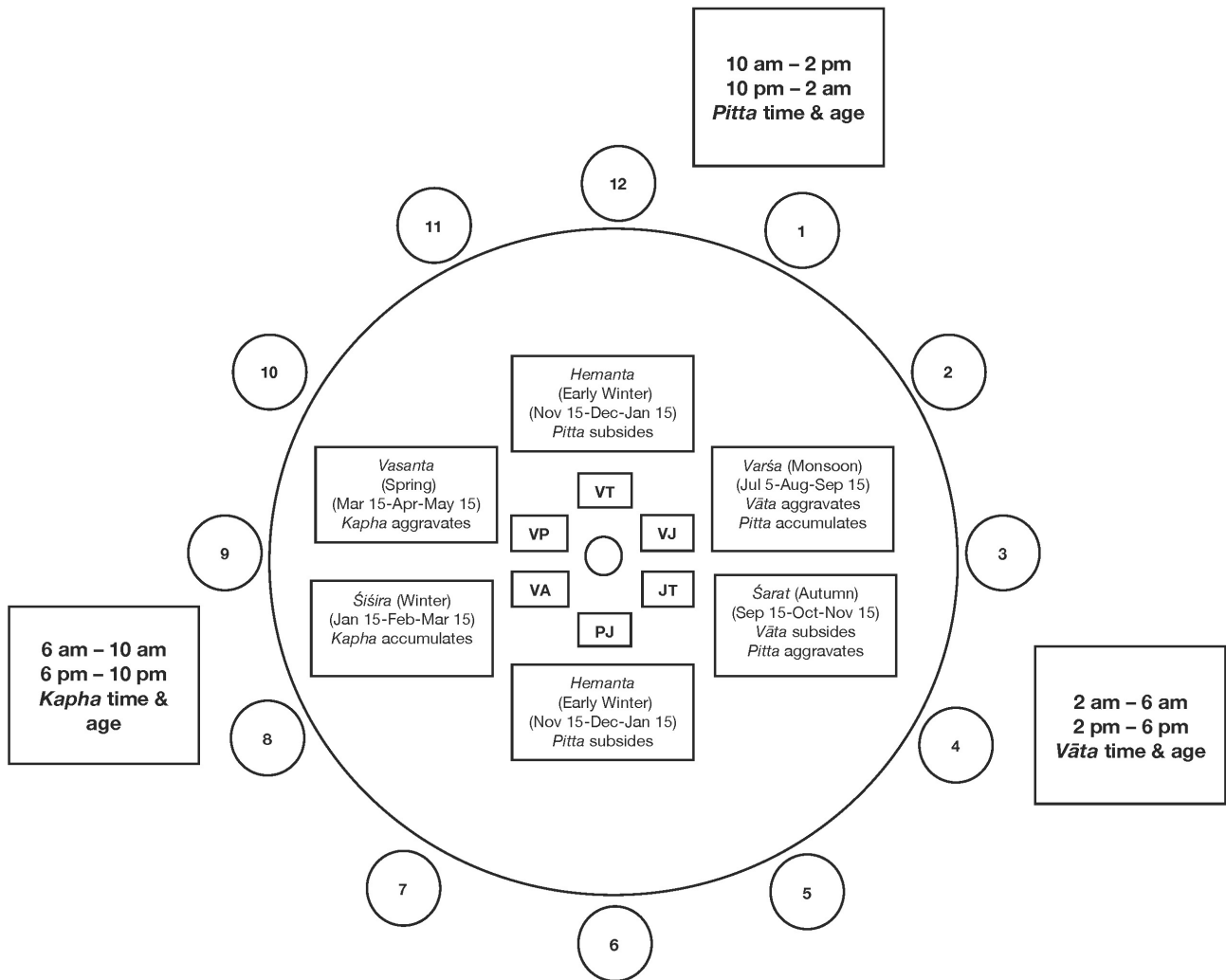
SUN, TIME, PHYSIOLOGY AND DAILY ROUTINE

The *Dinacarya* or daily routine practices are based on the sunrise and sunset. Waking up in the *Brahma Muhurta* which is about 45 minutes before sunrise is the first and foremost health promotive advice.

The activities of the day start with the rising sun. The sun determines the changes in the cycle of physiological functions of the body.

Figure No 1 (on the right side): *Pañca Mahābhūta* (P = *Ṗṛthvī*, A = *Ap*, T = *Teja*, V = *Vāyu* and A = *Ākaśa*). VT in the above *Āyurvedic* biological clock represents predominance of *Vāyu* and *Teja* in the summer season. Time range is approximate in relation to *Doṣa* vitiation in a day and night.

This indicates a comprehensive understanding of chronobiology in *Āyurveda*; the distribution of systemic activities in different stages of aging, during day and night, and in different phases



of metabolism. In other words, it implies the importance of the biological rhythm.

A biological rhythm is an adaptive phenomenon of both individuals and species relating to predictable changes in environmental factors linked to the rotation of the earth around its axis in 24 hours, as well as around the sun in 365 days. More precisely, *Āyurveda* has again divided this rhythm under each 12 hour period. The distribution of various activities like ideal time of waking up, exercise regimen, time of food intake, regimen to be followed after the sun sets in the evening or *Rātrīcārya* have been explained in great detail. In disease, the concept of Chronopharmaceutics or description of timing of therapies or intake of medications based on the pattern of the position of the sun have been elaborated in detail. This phenomenon of adaptive change deserves serious

research and can deepen the understanding of the Circadian Rhythm.

Chronobiology is a field of biology that examines periodic (cyclic) phenomena in living organisms and their adaptation to solar and lunar-related rhythms. These cycles are known as biological rhythms. Chronobiology comes from the ancient Greek, ‘chrónos,’ meaning “time”, and ‘biology,’ which pertains to the study, or science, of life.

The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine - 2017 was awarded jointly to Jeffrey C. Hall, Michael Rosbash and Michael W. Young for their “discoveries of molecular mechanisms controlling the circadian rhythm.”

The last 400 years of medical works on biological rhythms have been reviewed brilliantly by Bjorn



Lemmer. However, he has probably not looked into Ayurvedic understanding, due to lack of significant study materials from India.

During the early part of the day, the systemic functions of *Kapha* gradually wax and wane approximately from 6 am to 10 am. During the night, systemic functions of *Kapha* gradually wax and wane from 6 pm to 10 pm.

During the day, systemic functions of *Pitta* gradually wax and wane after the period of *Kapha*, approximately from 10 am to 2 pm. During the night, systemic functions of *Pitta* gradually wax and wane, approximately from 10 pm to 2 am. As the sun peaks, the digestion peaks.

During the day, systemic functions of *Vāta* gradually wax and wane after the period of *Pitta*, approximately from 2 pm to 6 pm. During the night, systemic functions of *Vāta* gradually wax and wane, approximately from 2 am to 6 am.

The above division of time may change according to the time of sunrise.

Based on this unique understanding, an intelligent routine can be designed. For example, exercises would be better practiced early in the morning which is the *Kapha Kāla*. The same practice in *Pitta Kāla* would not be beneficial in the long run. Generally, food should be consumed during the *Pitta Kāla* (when the digestive fire is strongest). Erratic food patterns would harm rather than help the individual. It is a known fact that long term effects of disrespecting the day night cycles have definite adverse effects on physiology.

SEASONAL PHYSIOLOGY

Seasons manifest as a result of the rotation of the earth around the sun. The predominance of the properties of the five *Mahābhūta* are seen in the respective seasons in living beings which has been summarised in the table below

Seasons and *Pañca Mahābhūta-s* /*Doṣa* Predominance

| Seasons & <i>Pañca Mahābhūta-s</i> | <i>Caya</i> Accumulates | <i>Prakopa</i> Accumulates | <i>Praśama</i> Subsides |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Predominance of the properties of <i>Vāyu</i> & <i>Ākaśa</i> in <i>Śiśira</i> (winter) season | K | | |
| Predominance of the properties of <i>Vāyu</i> & <i>Pṛthwī</i> in <i>Vasanta</i> (spring) season: | | K | |
| Predominance of the properties of <i>Vāyu</i> & <i>Teja</i> in <i>Grīṣma</i> (summer) season: | V | | K |
| Predominance of the properties of <i>Pṛthwī</i> & <i>Teja</i> in <i>Varṣa</i> (rainy) season: | | P | V |
| Predominance of the properties of <i>Jala</i> & <i>Teja</i> in <i>Śarat</i> (Autumn) season: | | P | V |
| Predominance of the properties of <i>Pṛthwī</i> & <i>Teja</i> in <i>Hemanta</i> (early winter) season: | | | P |

Natural State of *Doṣa-s* are represented in accordance with seasons.

caya prakopa praśamaḥ

vāyor grīṣmādiṣu triṣu

varṣādiṣu tu pittasya

śleṣmaṇaḥ śiśirādiṣu

Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya – 12.24

Accumulation (*Caya*) of *Vāta* happens in summer, vitiation (*Prakopa*) of *Vāta* in monsoon and pacification or reduction/subsidence (*Praśama*) of *Vāta* in autumn respectively.

This phenomenon of *Caya Prakopa Praśama* (CPP) starts from monsoon for *Pitta* and CPP starts

from winter for *Kapha*. This has an internal link with six progressive stages (*Ṣat Kriyākāla-s*) of disease pathogenesis and prognosis. For example, “*Atulya Doṣa, Deśa, Rtu, Prakṛti, Pāda, Sampādi.*” It is difficult to treat a *Pitta* predominant disease in *Śarat* season due to its homogeneity.

With the changing seasons, a specific regimen has been designed called *Rtucarya* to ensure that the body adapts to the changing physiology. One can take preventive measures by appropriate treatment protocols and lifestyle management in each season to take control of the influencing factors.

Hot summers and cold winters have different seasonal regimens. Appetite improves in the winters and it is considered the healthiest season. Physical exertion is better tolerated in winters and avoided in summers.



Timings of *Pañcakarma* or the five therapies are based on the seasonal changes and position of the sun. For example, *Snehapāna* or therapeutic intake of ghee is administered as the sun rises.

Anuvāsana vasti (therapeutic enema) is administered during the day in the cold seasons, while in the hot season it is administered at night. Strong fomentation therapy (Sauna) is recommended in the winters and avoided in the summers.

Amongst the *Pañcakarma* or five major therapies, *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis) is indicated in *Vasanta Rtu* (spring) as there is an increase of *Kapha* during this season. Further, *Vamana* is always conducted in the early morning, while there is dominance of *Kapha* as described earlier. Similarly, *Virecana* (therapeutic purgation) is indicated during *Śarat Rtu* (Autumn) as there is an increase of *Pitta* during this season. *Durdine* i.e on cloudy days, it is advised to avoid certain types of *Pañcakarma-s*.

ROLE OF SUN IN TREATMENT

Exposure to the sun is one amongst the many methods of energising the body and improving the *Agni* or metabolic status of an individual (one amongst the 10 *Laiṅghana Karma-s*). This is similar to the modern day practice of sunbathing.

Further, heat or *Sveda Cikitsā* is employed as a means of treatment. There are more than 13 types of fomentation methods. Therapeutically fomentation, or heat treatments are used for a wide range of problems ranging from musculoskeletal problems, skin problems, neurological complaints and so on.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLANTS AND AGNI TATVA

All Plants have effects on one of the three *Doṣa-s*. Those plants which increase *Pitta Doṣa*



are considered to be *Agni Mahābhūta* dominant, drawing a relationship with the sun. For example, *Plumbago zeylanica* (*Chitraka*) is a plant having properties similar to *Agni* or the sun and is therefore used for improving metabolism. Similarly, Marking Nut Tree i.e *Semicarpus anacardium* (*Bhallataka*), despite its wide canopy, should never be used to sleep under, as the heat it radiates is known to cause spontaneous rashes, especially in *Pitta Prakṛti* individuals.

CONCLUSION

Health and wellness cannot be disregarded in this era of changing lifestyle and emerging disorders pertaining to changes in the biological clock aberrations. The importance of timely food and medicine, timely sleep and exercise is part of the

daily regimen mentioned in *Āyurveda* and needs to be understood in the light of biological rhythms of an individual.

With the increasing burden of lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiac disease and so

on, a simple change in lifestyle such as respecting nature's rhythm and following practices of *Dinacarya* (daily regimen) as described earlier can aid in bringing back balance and greatly improve overall health.

Prathik is a public speaker who lectures on various topics of history, heritage, epigraphy and arts of India. His NGO helps further the cause of Indian heritage. He articulates his knowledge through various articles and is currently penning his book on some select rare temples. He also works with Doordarshan and some conservation architecture firms on these topics. He wishes that the glories of Indian heritage travel beyond academia to every person.



INVOKING THE SUN IN STONE

PRATHIK SUDHA MURALI

LITERARY EVIDENCES OF SUN WORSHIP

“When *Sūrya*, we address our prayers to thee today, may the Gods favour this, our purpose and desire.”

It is through this verse that the ancient *Ṛg Veda* addresses the sun. The *Vedic* seers request their prayers to be answered by the various gods through their appeal to sun. *Sūrya*, the sun god to the *Vedic* seers was Helios to the Greeks while the Egyptians revered him as Aton and the Mesopotamians as the Shamash.

The *Vedic* pantheon ascribes 12 names for the sun. These are *Dhātṛ*, *Mitra*, *Aryaman*, *Rudra*,

Varuṇa, *Sūrya*, *Bhaga*, *Vivasvān*, *Puśan*, *Savitṛ*, *Tvaṣṭṛ* and *Viṣṇu*.

References to sun worship are also found in Buddhist texts such as Anguttara Nikaya, Digha Nikaya and some of the Jataka tales such as the Mayura Jataka. Therefore, it is evident that by a few centuries before the Common era, sun worship was common among different Indian faiths.

The Greek account, ‘Indica’ of Megasthenes refers to the sun-worshippers as ‘Surae,’ which is a Greek version of the word, ‘*Śaura*’ meaning, ‘followers of the sun.’

The great twin epics of India, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* provide ample references to Sun

worship. While the former details a prayer with 108 names of *Sūrya*, the latter contains the famous ‘*Āditya Hṛdayam*’ hymn, in which the sun is described as the Trinity – *Brahma*, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC DEVELOPMENT

Sun worship acquired its distinct iconography in combination with indigenous literature and with the influence of the Iranian tradition of sun worship. The Iranian sun worshippers were called Magas and are believed to have made India their home by around 5th century BCE. However, the influence of Iranian sun worship did not have its effect in the southern regions of India. The pantheon of Sun worship grew to include his wives – *Uṣa* and *Pratyūṣa* (metaphorically dawn and dusk respectively). Other names attributed to his wives are *Tvaṣṭri*, *Saranyu*, *Suvarcala*, *Chāyā* etc. His charioteer is *Aruṇa* and attendants are *Mathara* and *Daṇḍa* respectively. The earliest image of Sun is datable to circa 2nd Century BCE. Hence it can be said that the Sun was anthropomorphised around the *Puraṇic* period.

SUN TEMPLES OF INDIA

The vast *Vedic* literature is silent on temple/idol worship apart from very rare, stray, interpretative instances. Though the *Smṛti* Age – the period of the ‘*Gṛhya Sūtra-s* (3rd to 1st Century BCE) give ample references to temples, we do not find evidences to sun temples upto around 5th Century CE.

There are many mentions about sun temples in the epigraphs of many early rulers. However, these temples have not survived the test of time, and hence, we can only infer their existence from inscriptional evidences. For example, the Mandasore inscription of Kumaragupta-1 (6th Century CE) mentions the construction of a sun temple at Dasapur in Madhya Pradesh and the

Gwalior inscription of Mihirakula (6th Century CE) refers to the erection of a sun temple at Gopadri near Gwalior.

The Gwalior inscription is interesting and begins with a *Saṃskṛta* verse praising the sun. It begins as a prayer for the sun to protect the people and goes onto describe *Sūrya’s* icon. The sun is praised as the ever victorious god who dispels the darkness of the banks of clouds with the masses and multitude of his rays that light up the sky. He is said to decorate the top of the mountain of dawn with his horses. The horses’ gait and the effect of their movement on their manes are very poetically described.

In the medieval times (7th – 12th Century CE), numerous sun temples were built across the landscape of India. Some prominent temples were those of Osian, Dholpur, Modhera, Sirohi in western India, Martand in North India, Khiching and Konark in East India respectively. South India has a lone temple exclusively dedicated to Sun worship, called the ‘Kulottunga Chola Martandalaya,’ built in the 12th Century CE. This temple is today known as the ‘Suriyanar Koyil’ and is situated in Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu.

SŪRYA IN ODISHA

Various *Pūrāṇa-s* and local mythologies identify Odisha as a seat of Sun worship. Many sculptures of Sun god can be seen in temples dedicated to other gods and goddesses in Odisha. *Sūrya* is represented as a guardian deity or an ornamental depiction on the east direction or as one among the nine planets adorning the lintel of the temple or otherwise as a mere decorative art work adorning one side of the temple.

The temple of Lakshmaneshvara in Bhubhaneshwar has an image of *Sūrya* seated while holding two lotuses in his hands. This belongs to 6-7th Century CE. The Parashurameshvara temple’s (7th Century CE) Jagamohana (Hall in-



Door Jamb

front of the sanctum) houses an image of the sun in all opulence.

The 8th Century image of *Sūrya* from the Vaital Deul at Bhubhaneshwar is striking. He stands on his chariot which hides his lower torso. His eye is down cast and his curly hair hangs down on his shoulders. He is flanked by *Uṣa* and *Pratyuṣa*, his consorts. Being symbolic representations of dawn and dusk respectively, they are seen dispensing arrows from a bow in opposite directions, dispelling darkness.

Many such icons of *Sūrya* are available from all over Odisha. Apart from such stand alone icons, several sun temples also exist in the state. However, nothing stands close to the grandeur and artistic merit of the Konark Sun Temple.

KONARK – LEGENDS AND ETYMOLOGY

‘*Arka*’ in *Saṁskṛta* means the sun, while ‘*Koṇa*’ means corner. Therefore, the word ‘*Koṇārka*’ means, ‘The corner of Sun.’

Some other names are attributed to the village of Konark by mythical stories. For example, the mythology of *Brahma Purāna* mentions ‘*Koṇāditya*’ as the most sacred place for the worship of sun in the country of Utkala (Orissa).

There are interesting narratives in these mythologies that form the basis of worship and the reason for the building of a grand temple for the sun god at Konark. The *Bhaviṣya Purāna* and *Sāmba Purāna* connect the village to the life of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*.

Sāmba was the son of Lord *Kṛṣṇa* and his wife *Jāmbavati*. He misguided sage *Nārada* and brought him to the inner rooms of *Kṛṣṇa*’s palace, which were the reserved quarters of the many wives of *Kṛṣṇa*.

Kṛṣṇa, angered by his son’s improper actions, cursed him to be smitten by leprosy. To mitigate the effects of his father’s curse, he was directed to worship *Sūrya*. *Sūrya* is considered in the Indian medical system as the healer of skin diseases. A sacred place was chosen for *Sāmba* to conduct worship, which was at the forest of



Gargoyle Spout

Mitravana near Chandrabhaga (present-day Konark).

Sāmba performed an austere penance for 12 years, after which *Sūrya* was pleased and cured his disease. As a testimonial to this feat, *Sāmba* consecrated an icon of *Sūrya* and constructed a temple for him. The story according to *Bhavisya Purāna*, does not end at this. It is said that the local *Brahmins* did not consent to perform the rituals at the temple as it was built by a leper. Hence, *Sāmba* had brought in families of sun worshippers called the ‘Magas’ from a different continent called the ‘Sakadvipa’ to perform the rituals. Some features in the iconography of Konark temple, such as the adorning of boots of the deities might be a reminiscent feature of some central Asian art, influencing the regional style. Such alien features give some authenticity to these claims made by mythologies.

A sacred tank in the name of Chandrabhaga exists near the sea at Konark, where pilgrims take a holy dip. These are continuing traditions of the mythologies relating to the Sun and the Konark temple.

HISTORY OF THE SUN TEMPLE

The chronicles of the Jagannatha temple of Puri are called ‘Madala Panji.’ These are records of palm leaf manuscripts and contain references to the Konark temple. It claims that King Purandarakesari of the Kesari dynasty built the temple. The Kesaris were ousted by the Ganga dynasty. The King Narasimhadeva of the Ganga dynasty whose rule of the region was between 1238-1264 CE built another shrine at the same place where the earlier shrine of the Kesaris stood and consecrated the old image of Sun in the new temple.

After the rule of Mukundaraja in the late 16th Century, the temple was under the attack of invaders. It is said that they failed in their mission to desecrate the grand temple in its entirety. The

copper *Kalāṣa* (pot) which was placed on top of the tower of the temple was stolen during this period.

The copper plates of Ganga dynasty mention that one of the greatest achievements of King Narasimhadeva was the building of a ‘*Mahat-Kuṭīra*’ (the grand cottage) for *Sūrya* at the site of Konark. The place must have enjoyed a steady inflow of royal patronage, funds and pilgrim influx during the bygone-eras.

It is also speculated by some, that the king or his son might have suffered from a disease, and out of a sense of gratitude for having recovered, had built the shrine.

The king was a devout Sun devotee. This is evident from the fact that his son was named ‘*Bhānudeva*.’ ‘*Bhānu*’ in *Saṃskṛta* is another name ascribed to the Sun god.

THE TEMPLE OF KONARK

It is not an exaggeration to remark that the temple of Konark is the pinnacle of Kalingan art and architecture. Its remarkable proportion, execution both in terms of architectural planning and scale and its quality of sculptures, of both miniature and colossal proportions make it a regal splendor from the past. The growth of temple building activity with a distinct identity of Odisha which started around 7th Century CE reached its zenith with the temple of Konark in the 13th Century CE.

The temple’s main shrine is conceived as a huge chariot, driven by 7 bejeweled horses and 12 colossal wheels. The temple is built on a high raised platform, whose outer surface is intricately carved with many motifs, both religious and secular in nature. This high wall/platform contains 12 pairs of ornate wheels sculpted against it. The intricately jeweled horses are seen sculpted near the stairways leading to the main shrine.



Jagamohana at Konark



Konark Wheel

The main shrine above the platform is a traditional Odisha style temple, which once would have consisted of an elongated main tower called the 'Rekha Deul' and a pyramidal sub-tower called the 'Pidha Deul.' While the Rekha deul is lost today, the loss of may be attributed to many factors, the Pidha deul is still intact narrating its past glories.

It is unique to Odisha style of architecture that the elongated, straight 'Rekha Deul' is considered as the symbolisation of the 'masculine' and the sub-tower called the 'Pidha Deul' is considered a representation of the feminine, thus making the temple a symbol of procreation and functioning of the world. The Pidha Deul is otherwise known as the Jagamohana.

The Jagamohana of Konark stands as an example to the mastery of craftsmanship of Indian artists. The upper portions of the Jagamohana once contained niches which housed the sculptures of the 8 guardian deities appropriately in their directions. *Indra* to the east, *Agni* to the south-east, *Yama* to the south, *Nirṛti* to the south-west, *Varuṇa* to the west, *Vāyu* to the north-west, *Kubera* to the North and *Īśāna* to the north-west respectively.

The eastern door jamb of the Jagamohana is the most ornate door jamb in the region. It is divided into 8 parts of decreasing sizes. Each of them bears reliefs of scrolls of leaves, flowers, snakes, amorous couples, women and many other secular sculptures. The central figure on the door jamb is that of *Lakṣmī*, the goddess of abundance, being bathed by elephants.

The plan of the temple is that of 'Pañca Ratha,' i.e. 4 other structures apart from the main structure in the 4 corners of the complex. There are other structures that are in the temple complex. Once a visitor enters the temple, he is welcomed by two great colossal lions, which stand stout on elephants. These colossal lions guard the staircase to the *Bhoga-Manṭapa*. Alternatively called the *Naṭa-Manṭapa* or the dance hall because of its

usage to hold music and dance performances in the yester-years, it is one of the most imposing and intricate structures of the Konark temple. It contains various sculptures portraying dance, music, women, animals etc.

Damsels with their raised arms, ladies holding a branch of a tree (*Salabhañjika*), petting animals, drying their hair while a goose waits to drink the water droplets from it etc. are some of the finest of the sculptures available in the *Nātya Manṭapa*. It also contains a row of geese and another row portraying war scenes with infantry, cavalry and palanquins.

There are other structures surrounding the main temple. To the west of the main shrine lies the remains of a temple that is today called the *Māyādevī* temple. *Māyādevī* is believed to be one of the wives of *Sūrya*.

However, it is highly probable that this temple is also that of the Sun god's. This is evident from the deities placed in the niches of the shrine. Some historians claim that this shrine was built earlier than the larger one, considered as the main temple in the complex today.

Many erotic images, amorous women and animals are depicted in the walls of the temple. The 'Pranala' or the spout through which water receded from the inner chamber is very interesting as it contains a gargoyle motif, from whose mouth the water would recede.

There are many other small structures, pillars and sculptures that have been discovered in the premises.

THE ART AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

A broad categorisation of the sculptures at Konark temple can be made as follows:



Marthanda Bhairava

1. *Devata Mūrti-s* – deities
2. *Gandharva-s/Yakṣa-s* – celestial dancers, musicians
3. Secular sculptures – erotic sculptures, dancing humans etc.
4. Animals – actual and mythical
5. Architectural elements – niches, pilasters, lintels etc.
6. Decorative elements – scrolls, flowers etc.

Many deities, especially sculptures of the sun are uniquely crafted. The larger than life size image of *Sūrya* in the southern side is of high artistic merit. He is seen standing on a chariot drawn by 7 horses tied together with a rope. The portion between the horses and his feet are ornately decorated with many dancing women motifs. He wears long boots upto his knees and a short drape of *Dhoti*. He sports a girdle and is ornately decorated with many jewels. He wears a bejeweled crown and ornaments.

Above his head is carved a '*Kṛti-mukha*'- an ornate face, beside which are two figures playing the conch. Four ladies are depicted with flowers in their hands. Near the right foot of the god is a person in prayer, probably the patron king and to his left is probably the priest and his family.



Natya Mandapa

Secular sculptures include various erotic images and royal conquests. There is a heavy element of eroticism and sensuousness to the sculptures of Konark temple.

Many royal hunts, wars and court scenes are seen depicted in the motifs of the temple. Some rare portrayals of animals like the giraffe in an Indian temple are very interesting. Rare icons such as *Mārtāṇḍa Bhairava* – the form of *Śiva* as the sun god are also found in the roof portion of the Jagamohana.

The conceptualisation of the temple as a chariot has deep significance. It takes into account the belief of the sun's chariot and his 7 horses, which are iconographic prescriptions for a standalone image. This has been developed symbolically into a structure of huge proportions. Thus, it can be said that the temple itself is a representation of the image of *Sūrya*. Some modern interpretations also suggest that the seven horses represent the seven colour components of sunlight.

The 12 pairs of intricate wheels of the chariot stand for the 12 months of the year, which is represented by the 12 forms of *Sūrya*.



Natya Mandapa

SUN WORSHIP IN TAMIL NADU

The early epic of the Tamil language, the grand poetry of Silappadhikaram, starts with a salutation to natural forces. The introductory verse salutes the sun god with the epithet “Nyayiru Potrudhum” – meaning, ‘May you worship the sun.’ It further says that the sun deserves to be worshipped as it resembles the imperial orders of the Chola king. Just like the orders of the Cholan monarch travels around the world within a day’s time, the sun also travels around the globe within the exact time frame.

Though it is evident that the worship of *Sūrya* was prevalent in the Tamil country, only one, lone temple is available as a reminiscence of sun worship today. It is that of the Suriyanar Koyil in Tanjore district.

We learn from earlier inscriptions of Parantaka-1st (10th Century) that there existed a temple for

Sūrya in Tamil Nadu, however there are no other details available on the same.

Many images of *Sūrya* from the earlier Pallava period and the Chola era have been found in Tamil Nadu. Right from the early Cholas, the dynasty had produced icons of the Sun god in various sizes. Some beautiful sun icons in larger sizes are found in early Chola temples in Nageshvaran Kovil in Kumbakonam, while miniature images of the sun god in his chariot along with his two consorts are found in temples like Ponsei in Mayiladuthurai district of the state.

Many inscriptions of the Cholas help us understand that the consecration of an image of Sun in the premises of other temples was a common affair. For example, during the time of Rajaraja-I (10th Century), an inscription from the temple of Thirukodikka narrates that a person by name Ilayan Aditta Pidaran set up an image of *Sūrya* in the temple.



Palanquin

Kulottunga-1st, the patron of the sun temple, which is the subject matter of this article, has presented various grants to other *Sūrya* subshrines in Tamil Nadu, for example at the Thirumanikkuli temple of Arcot District.

However, the only available temple solely dedicated to Surya as its presiding deity, is that of Suriyanar Kovil.

SURIYANAR KOYIL

This temple belongs to the period of the Chola monarch Kulottunga-I who ruled from 1070 CE. In the Cholan times, the temple was known as the ‘Kulottunga Chola Martanda Alayam,’ which translates to the Sun temple of Kulottunga Chola.

There are inscriptions in the premises of the temple that were set in stone during his rule itself. An inscription belonging to the 44th ruling year is a royal decree to grant the accountant position of some of the villages that are the property of the Sun temple to the highest bidder in the tender for accountant position.

Another inscription belonging to his 48th ruling year also pertains to the villages that were tax exempt and were the property of the sun temple.

Another important inscription is from the reign



Vaital Deul - Surya

of the Vijayanagara king Krishnadevaraya. The inscription from 16th century records the gift on behalf of the emperor to the temple. Therefore, it is clear that the temple had been important enough to receive direct donations from the royalty of various dynasties for many centuries continuously.

Kulottunga’s reign was characterised by his friendship with the Gahadavala rulers of Kannauj in the North of India. Their inscriptions are also found in Chola temples like Gangai Konda Cholapuram. Some historians speculate that the inspiration to build a separate shrine for *Sūrya* could be an influence of the Gahadavalas.

INVOKING THE EVER OPULENT

Sūrya, the god of light and health has maintained socio-cultural relevance in the sub-continent for millennia. Literary references in their chronological order reveal a gradual progress and addition to the pantheon of Sun and his worship. In the *Vedic* tradition, he was represented as the remover of evil and as a moral force in addition to being the curer of diseases. The later sources attributed various aspects to his worship and developed the iconography.

With such foundations, elaborate temples dedicated to his cult developed, whose grandeur and widespread nature cannot be understated.



*“rasmimantam samudyantam devāsuranamaskṛtam
pūjayasva vivasvantam bhāskaram bhuvaneśvaram”*

“Salutations to him, who filled with rays, rises

equally for all, by spreading his illumination. He is revered by the gods and demons alike. He creates his own light and is the lord of the universe.” - *Āditya Hṛdayam (Rāmāyaṇa)*.

R Gopu, obtained his Masters in Computer Science from the Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, USA. He then worked in the US, as a software engineer mostly at Microsoft in Seattle; Bored of his profession, he returned to India and eventually started his research and study on economics, evolution, linguistics, art, history and astronomy. He has lectured on some of these subjects in the last few years. He wrote an essay on Aryabhata for The Week magazine, on Mamallapuram, Amaravati sculptures for Swarajya magazine; a series of essays on scientists for the New Indian Express; and recently a series on Indian astronomy and mathematics, for Swarajya. He blogs on these subjects at <http://VarahaMihiraGopu.BlogSpot.in>

As part of the Tamil Heritage Trust he has attended Site Seminars at Mamallapuram, Ajanta & Ellora, Pudukottai, Srirangam, Gujarat, Tirunelveli, Badami-Pattadakal, Orissa, Kanchipuram and Madhya Pradesh. He has participated in the Adyar and Coom Cultural Mapping groups.

He has conducted tours of Mamallapuram, Orissa, Kanchipuram, and the Madras Egmore Museum for several groups including schools and colleges. In 2016, 'Ramu Endowments' bestowed on him, the Vedavalli Memorial Heritage Award for services to Culture.

In August 2017, he was part of a group that founded the VarahaMihira Science Forum. The forum conducts monthly lectures on science and scientists. He delivered the forum's first lecture, on French chemist Antoine Lavoisier and the Origin of Modern Chemistry.



UTTARĀYAṆA AND DAKṢIṆĀYANA RANGARATHNAM GOPU

Ayana' means travel. Hence *Rāmāyana*, the travels of *Rāma*. '*Uttara*' means north, '*Dakṣiṇa*' means south; *Uttarāyana* and *Dakṣiṇāyana* refer to the travels of the sun towards the north and south, respectively.

When the sun is directly over the equator, the day and night are of equal duration in the regions of the equator, and this is called the equinox day. This happens twice a year, in spring (March) and autumn (September). When the sun is over the Tropic of Cancer, the latitude of Ujjain, the day of the year is longest in that region. When it is over Tropic of Capricorn, the day of the year is shortest in Ujjain and the night is the

longest. The opposite is true for the southern hemisphere.

The *Ayana* is one of the oldest elements of the Indian calendrical year, along with the day (*Dina*), the month (*Māsa*), and the season (*Rtu*). *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa*, the oldest text of Indian astronomy, estimated by some historians as a composition of the fourteenth century BC, says these are the limbs (*Aṅga*) of *Prajāpati* himself (*Dina-Rtu-Āyana-Māsa-Aṅgam Prajāpatim*).

The earth's rotation about its axis causes day and night. It is the *Ayana* that causes the *Rtu* or the seasons, because earth's axis is tilted at an angle of about 23 degrees to the orbital plane. As the sun travels in each direction, it heats regions in different latitudes. Regions where the sun is not directly overhead in these months, become colder. The evaporation of water from lakes rivers and seas during the hottest periods, causes massive clouds to form, and move overland when the sun goes further away. The geography of the earth is highly uneven. Half the planet from the east of Japan to the west of the two Americas is covered by the Pacific Ocean. Also, the northern hemisphere has far more land than the southern hemisphere. Some regions like India and Arabia are peninsulas, some like Indonesia and Madagascar are islands. Places also vary in altitude, from very tall mountains, to large plateaus and flat plains. Some continents like Asia and Europe are broader east to west, others like Africa and South America are broader north to south. Australia and Antarctica each have their own peculiarities. These factors cause the climate and the weather to vary dramatically from region to region, at different times of the year. Since the sun's north-south path is annually repetitive, the seasons also occur in repetitive cycles.

Since not just days and months, but also seasons follow a cyclical pattern over years and centuries, several ancient cultures, including India, philosophised a circular pattern of time – *Kāla Cakra*.

ṚTU IN LITERATURE

The Indian tradition, speaks of six *Rtu* – *Vasanta*, *Grīṣma*, *Varṣa*, *Śarat*, *Hemanta*, and *Śiśira*. This is a contrast to the European division of the year into four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The difference is because northern India is mostly in the lower temperate zone, closer to the Tropics, and Europe is partly in the upper temperate zone and partly in the Arctic zone. Regions south of the Tropic of Cancer experience the seasons somewhat differently from those north of that latitude. We joke that Tamil Nadu has only three seasons - hot summer, warm summer and wet summer. This is quite common among all regions close to the equator – South-east Asia, Sri Lanka, Central Africa and Central America.

The burst of rains following a torrid summer has always been eagerly awaited, welcomed and celebrated in India. Several centuries of literature in every language reflect this. Kalidasa's *Megha Sandeśa* (Cloud Messenger) is most famous. A lovelorn *Yakṣa* tells a rain bearing cloud what it will see as it travels north across the plains to the Himalayas, where his beloved wife pines for him. *Nedunalvaadai* (Long Cold Northwind) a Sangam Tamil epic poem, composed by the poet *Nakkeerar*, is the lament of a Pandyan queen separated from her king *Nedunchezhiyan*, who is away at war. She suffers the pangs of separation, which the poet compares to the cold north wind after the rains. There are also astronomical references in this poem, to the wandering of the sun among the stars of the Zodiac, and the longing of the star *Rohini*, separated from the moon.

ĀYANA-S IN JYOTIṢA

Indian scientific literature, the *Jyotiṣa Siddhānta-s*, show a development of the understanding of celestial geometry, its changes over time, and the small alterations year after year in the paths and positions of the planets with respect to the stars. The development of sophisticated mathematics

in India, especially algebra (*Bīja Gaṇita*), trigonometry of sines and cosines (*Jyā* and *Kotijyā*), velocity (*Gati*), orbit (*Kakṣyā*), epicycles (*Mandavṛttā*) were born out of centuries of intensive studies and analyses of these celestial movements. Over time the mathematician-astronomers (*Gaṇaka-s/ Jyotiṣa-s*), developed more and more sophisticated models of the celestial sphere.

An ancient discovery, during the *Vedic* period itself was that the solar year or a set of *Ayana-s* (from one *Uttarāyana* to the next *Uttarāyana*) was slightly longer than twelve lunar months (*Māsa-s*). A mathematical and calendrical correction was then applied – the concept of the *Adhika-māsa*. A *Yuga* of five years was used as attested in the *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa*. A couple of *Adhika-māsa-s* over the *Yuga* synchronised the solar year and lunar months. The *Yuga* morphed into a much longer period of 4,32,000 years. But a vast amount of literature of that era is lost, so we have no idea when this change occurred. All *Siddhāntic* literature uses this much longer *Yuga* period.

Another discovery was that the *Ayana-s* themselves slowly move backward in time. This is called the precession of the equinoxes (and solstices). Yet another was the observation that the axis of the earth itself rotates very slowly over a very long time, and thus, pointed away from the pole star (*Dhruva*) after several centuries. These two phenomena are related, as cause and effect. The rotation of the axis causes the precession of the solstices.

India, and South-east Asia, use different calendars, with strong similarities. Some follow solar, some lunar calendars. Different regions and nations start the year at different times.

MERU AND VADAVĀMUKHA

In Indian mythology, the mountain, *Meru* is considered the abode of the *Deva-s*, and *Vadavāmukha* the abode of the *Asura-s*. Humans, or the *Manuja-s*, dwell in the region between

these two abodes. In astronomical terms, *Meru* is the north pole, and *Vadavāmukha* the south pole. The northward *Ayana*, when the sun heads towards the abode of the *Deva-s* was therefore, considered auspicious, and the southward *Ayana* (in the direction of the abode of the *Asura-s*), inauspicious.

The most famous such incident involved *Pitāmaha Bhīṣma*, when he was felled by the arrows of *Śikhaṇḍi* and *Arjuna* during the *Mahābhārata* war. *Bhīṣma* had the power to choose the time of his death. Since the war happened during *Dakṣiṇāyana*, he decided to wait until the start of the auspicious *Uttarāyana*, to depart this world.

One version of the *Mahābhārata* says this happened in the *Māgha* month, called *Maasi* in Tamil. *Uttarāyana* now starts in the month *Margaśīrṣa* (Tamil: *Maargazhi*), December 22 to be precise. The change is because of the precession of the solstices. Around 3000 BC, the winter solstice coincided with *Mahaśivarātri* – which is still celebrated in the *Māgha* month. *Aryabhata* and succeeding astronomers from the fifth century AD mostly mention the *Kaliyuga* calendar – which began on Feb 17, 3102BC. Our current Gregorian year 2020 is Kali year 5121. These astronomers considered the end of the *Mahābhārata* war as the beginning of the *Kaliyuga*. The *Uttarāyana* of *Bhīṣma* and this date seem to tally.

Another interesting episode involves *Agastya* and the *Vindhya* mountain. The *Vindhya* mountain, jealous of the *Meru*, decided to grow so tall that he would block the path of the sun. The Gods decided to send the Sage *Agastya* to stop him from growing. *Vindhya* allowed the *Ṛṣi* to pass, and told the *Ṛṣi* he would stop growing, until the *Ṛṣi* returned north again. *Agastya* remained in the south, and *Vindhya* kept his promise.

The fascinating aspect of this legend that most of us don't know of, is that there is a star (*Nakṣatra*) called *Agastya* in the southern hemisphere, at a latitude of about 57 degrees south. It is the

second brightest star behind Sirius and is called Canopus in European nomenclature. *Agastya* was not visible in the region north of the *Vindhya* until around 4000BC by some estimates, when a change in the tilt of the earth's axis made it visible. In a chapter on *Agastya*, in his magnum opus *Brhat Samhitā*, *Varahamihira* waxes eloquent in ten beautiful stanzas, the glory of *Agastya* both as *Rṣi* and star. For example, he describes the star as *Yāmya dik bhūṣaṇa* - the Gem of the Southern direction, and the *Rṣi* as the *Tapobunidhi* (Ocean of Penance) who drank the *Ambunidhi* (ocean).

TEMPERATE AND POLAR REGIONS

The sun is always to the south of the temperate and polar regions in the northern hemisphere and to the north of the equivalent regions in the southern hemisphere.

In these regions, the *Ayana* has the effect of no sunrise or no sunset for months together. While the Europeans who lived in these regions experienced these phenomena, this was conceptually well known to Indian *Jyotiṣa-s*, who made these observations in their *Siddhānta-s*. In chapter 15 of *Pañca Siddhāntika*, *Varahamihira* says that there is no distinction of direction at the north pole; the sun goes round and round like a beautiful damsel.

Another interesting aspect is the *Ayana* based customs in some temples. The *Sarṅgapāṇi* and *Cakrapāṇi* temples in Kumbakonam, for example, each have two different entrances from two sides of the sanctum. One of these entrances is open during *Uttarāyana*, and the other closed for six months and vice versa for *Dakṣiṇāyana*.

Shrilekha is a naturalist and ornithologist with a passion for observing animal and bird behaviour. She runs an initiative called, 'The Wild Walk' focusing on wildlife literacy and conservation. She has reached out to several young adults to spread awareness on the subject of wildlife conservation.

Shrilekha has also done her *Yoga* Teacher Training Programme (YTTP) at the KYM and is now attempting to integrate the learning from *Yoga* philosophy, other classical literature and the field notes from her forest visits.



RAYS OF LIGHT | THREADS OF LIFE

SHRILEKHA IN CONVERSATION WITH WILDLIFE CONSERVATIONISTS

In the ever expanding cosmic universe, a birth happened. The eye of the universe opened in the emission of nebula-interstellar clouds which affixed and gave us space and time, creating life and death, thereby setting in motion the laws of nature. This grandeur was largely facilitated by the presence of the sun, a star that sustains all life on planet earth and on realms that are unknown to us.

As a wildlife conservationist, I have always felt a strong visceral connection between every single creature and the sun. For the humans, firstly, the break of dawn signifies safety, because one has

the visibility to comprehend what is ahead and more so what is behind. Secondly, it brings in a sense of humility, for there is no 'I-ness' without the support system around us. The 'I-ness,' you realise is no longer the isolated self, but a collective consciousness that determines and defines our very existence.

I vividly remember one my first trips to the core forest of the Western Ghats. It was a large lake called the 'Game Hut' and on one side of the lake was a carefully constructed camouflaged watch tower from where you could observe the area around. My father and I settled in the watch



tower quite early in the morning and around 6.30 am, the first rays of the sun began to show themselves on the dewy carpet in front of us. The rays of the sun mixed with the heavy mist, created quite a melodrama and a plethora of activity unfolded just in a matter of minutes. A pair of stags were fighting over the right to mate a female Chital (spotted deer), while the rest of the herd fixed their gaze on a pack of wild dogs that were quenching their thirst before they could begin their hunt. Within a matter of 15-30 minutes, I had made a note of 25 bird species and around 5 kinds of butterflies. The show stoppers, were of course, the elephants - a herd of five with two calves that played joyfully in the water. For a 6 year old, this scene became permanently etched in memory. This paved the way for a lot of introspection, and of course, enabled many future trips to the forests.

The sun gives character to a forest and this largely depends on the season of the year and the type of forest too. For example, in a deciduous forest (where the trees are large with broad leaves), the trees shed their leaves in autumn, allowing for great visibility, for one can literally observe straight across the forest and between the trees. Summer, however, can be quite excruciating, for the forest is already nude, and it allows the sun's rays to hit the dry earth and reflect more heat. Monsoon is always welcomed for it facilitates the growth of fresh pasture and sustenance of life.

Spring is when the forest looks her best. Every leaf looks even greener and every species enjoys the abundance of food and water around. On the contrary, it is also interesting to observe the role of the sun in a Shola forest (tropical rain forest). These forests typically have stout trees, with thick canopies allowing for very little sun to penetrate through the forest floor. Life thrives even here, but in a different way and the ecosystem is entirely different from that of any other kind of forest.

For animals and birds, the rise/set of sun could signify either safety or danger. Diurnal creatures find safety in the rising of sun, where grazing or foraging and drinking water is made less stressful. The sun signifies life for diurnal creatures. For the more elusive nocturnal creatures, the setting of the sun largely signifies safety, for they cannot be spotted with ease. To summarise, for wildlife, life revolves around the sun.

If one were to look at the whole scheme of life in the jungle at a micro level, sunlight facilitates the growth of plants, which in turn, produces flowers, fruits and seeds. If we were to deprive a plant of the natural light that it ought to receive, it is quite difficult or even impossible for the plant to grow to its full potential. When we see a flower on a plant, it signifies that a portion of the sunlight has been converted to another form of energy, which in turn, sustains the bees, butterflies and certain birds that feed on the nectar of the flower.



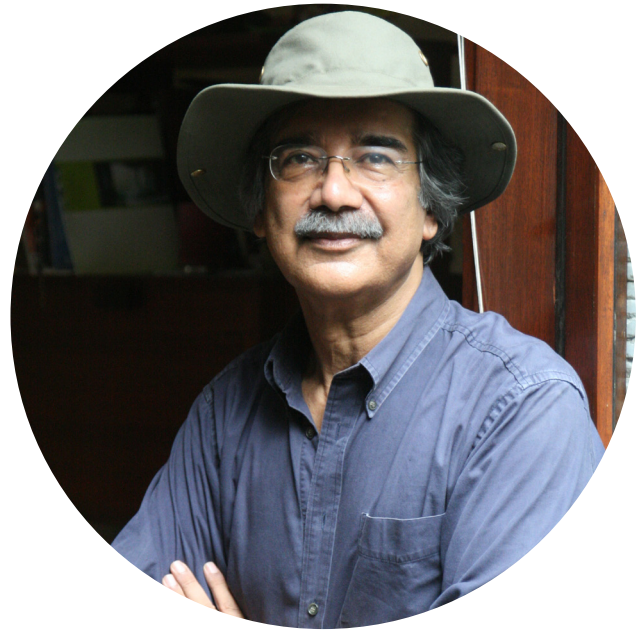
The sun's energy which is now part of these creatures is then consumed by their prey, viz., reptiles and larger birds which in turn, become the food for another. What starts with a ray of light, becomes a chain reaction, creating multiple loops of ecosystems arrayed around the sun and sunlight.

Wildlife researchers, conservationists, nature enthusiasts, filmmakers and photographers, are very active in the wild, mostly during dawn and dusk. The movement of sun and the natural alignment of the wild with the sun has also paved way for remarkable research findings, documentaries and stunning photographs. For this article in *Darśanam*, we approached some renowned wildlife conservationists and photographers to understand what the sun signifies to them.



Photo Courtesy | Shrilekha

Dr. Mike H Pandey is a world-renowned environmentalist, naturalist, wildlife conservationist and communicator. He has been working for over 35 years to protect wildlife and the environment of India. Through his powerful films, five legislative changes have been brought in India. He was awarded the Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Conservation Award for outstanding work to protect Indian wildlife and heritage. The Time Magazine USA, declared Mike a “Global Hero of the Environment 2009” in the “Visionaries and Leader” categories. Mike is a three-time recipient of the Green Oscar, the world’s most prestigious award for his contribution to the conservation of wildlife. He is the Chairman of Earth Watch Institute India and Earth Matters Foundation and is the Brand Ambassador for the UP Government from 2018 for Wildlife and Environment and Heritage Tourism.



MIKE PANDEY

The sun is the most powerful, vibrant source of multi-layered energy that not only enables life to proliferate on our planet but it is the pivot which brings order to the universe around us.

I believe that the first rays of sunrise flooding across the skies, wake up our world. It’s magical, all you have to do is observe. Nature waking up... the light and warmth pouring life into our forests, rivers, oceans and all life forms...you hear birds begin to call and feed...fine vapour and mist begin to waft up from water bodies and the vegetation all around you, across the land in seconds..

Photographing or filming in the evenings as the sun begins to drop lower towards the horizon is the “magic hour.” Almost everything is bathed in diffused warm golden light and the light turns golden by the seconds. This soft contrast cross light and warm saturation of colours is any

photographer’s prime moment, an opportunity to capture those very special moments.

Solar radiation is a mixture of electromagnetic waves from infrared to ultraviolet rays, visible light, X-rays, gamma rays and radio waves and many still being discovered. Sunlight falling on a woodland bathes the foliage and all plants with life giving light, energy and warmth. This triggers the process of photosynthesis and chlorophyll production, which gives leaves and plants their green colour. Each leaf turns into a miniature factory, its millions of cells using the sun’s energy not only to make food but to absorb and consume the most poisonous gas - carbon dioxide and give off a waste called oxygen - so crucial for human survival.

Thanks to the sun’s energy, all the greens on the planet proliferate and flourish, and this feeds the



animals like deer and elephants, the fruits feed the birds and other animals including primates who are actually helping the plants as seed dispersal agents.

I remember a moment when we were at an altitude of 18,600 feet, tracking the most exotic and beautiful creation of nature - Snow leopards. Grey and desolate most of the time, it is when the sun rises that you experience the sheer





beauty and starkness of these altitudes. One ray of light, and everything changes - the light and shade of the shadows cleaving the sheet of white, enhancing the beauty of the peaks, giving depth and character to the terrains by highlighting the peaks and valleys apart from giving warmth for us mortals (The UV rays here are intense and burn exposed skin in minutes). The landscape is spectacular and the terrain like you have never imagined. You have to see it to believe that such areas exist in real life, for words fail you and all you can do is go on your knees and take in the

Photo Courtesy | Riverbank Studios

magnificence of such a beautiful place. And, if you are lucky, in this remote region, all alone, suddenly a snow leopard cub and its mother appear and frolic around for a good ten minutes display, sniffing around before melting away into the white frozen wilderness where temperatures can run to minus 40 degree celcius.

Life thrives even in the most hostile of terrains and the mother's love for their little ones send you on your knees again, emotionally charged, humbled and filled with reverence for nature's amazing designs.

Simultaneously, another phenomenon invisible to our eyes, also takes place. The sun's warm radiations filter through, fall on the swirling mist and fine vapours that envelope our forests and most of the earth, transforming them into tiny molecules and fine particles of moisture. These, you can see, settle down to form a fine film on the leaves of trees and grass, giving birth to what we call dew. This condensation process results in more layers, forming more moisture collecting enough to form droplets of water. Trillions

of drops drip down and gather together on the forest floor to form little streams and rivulets that rush to meet and form rivers and pools of water, nurturing the forest trees and energising the earth's amazing hydrological cycle, thereby rejuvenating the planet's living forms, millions of species and quintillions of life forms on the planet.

Water is the life force that keeps our planet alive and vibrant...and the sun is the catalyst.

Jerry Downs is a professional photographer, writer and artist whose work has appeared in publications, galleries and museums around the world. He lives just north of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. His book, 'The Present- Finding Myself in the middle of NowHere,' is about using photography as a medium for self-discovery. His book, 'Why You Were Born,' is about remembering the wonder we knew as children.



JERRY DOWNS

For me, as a photographer, the sun is my life blood. “Photography” literally means “to write with light.” For me, as a human being, the sun is the source of all life on this particular planet. It is, of course, also a metaphor for the Divine. The sun, just like the Divine, is so pervasive that it is almost invisible.

I love the light that happens before and after dawn and dusk. When I take my photo road trips I often leave in the dark so that I can enjoy the light coming into being.

I enjoy sunsets and twilight as well for similar reasons. And, (and) this is a big “and,” I also love the light and shadows that appear every minute of the rest of the day.

A funny thing happens when you make one thing more important than something else. As soon as it becomes sacred, it also become separate. I don’t particularly have a favourite subject matter. Being on a path in a giant redwood forest and walking city streets, I find equally fascinating. I enjoy and celebrate finding the Divine in it all.

Whenever I give a talk or a photo walk I usually begin by saying, “Whenever I go out to take pictures, I no longer look for pictures. I simply enjoy the act of looking. Not everything makes a good picture but everything is worthy of appreciation. If you can find yourself in a state of appreciation, pictures are everywhere.”

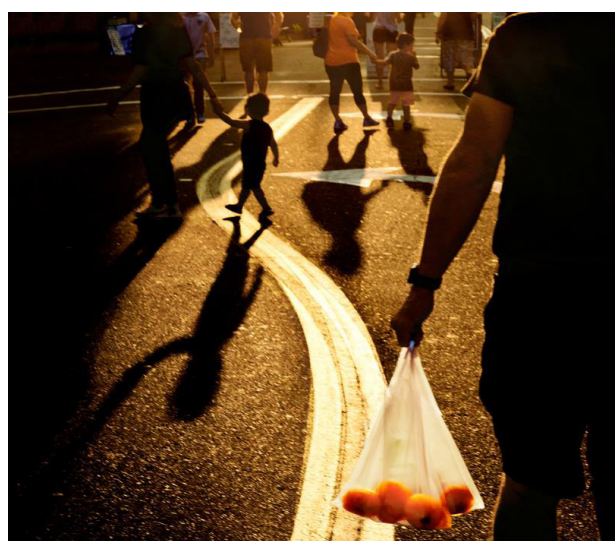
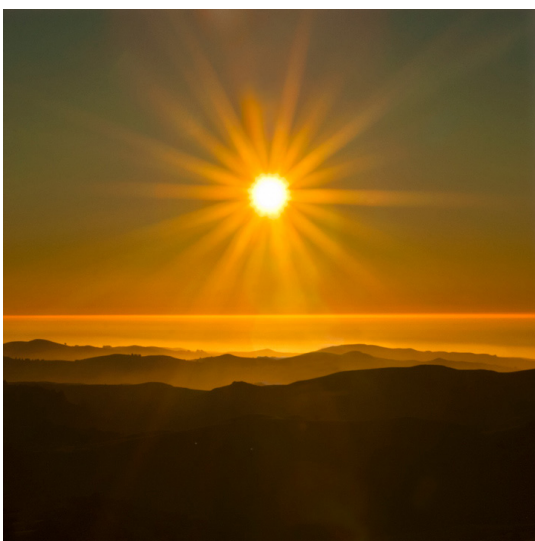
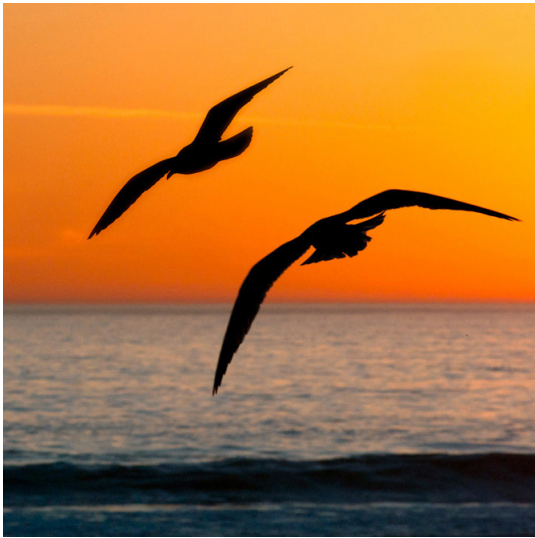


Photo Courtesy | Jerry Downs

Mark Tennant has been involved in the wildlife and tourism industries since the mid-eighties when he became a volunteer for a Vulture Study Group. As he watched the vultures, and learnt about them, he became more and more fascinated by this bird and its habitat. Soon his part-time ventures into the wilds of Africa became fulltime. Mark was actively involved in several interesting projects like the early development and establishment of luxury game lodges, to the reintroduction of wildlife, international marketing trips, lecturing on animal behaviour at Oxford University, and doing the first live radio interview from his 4x4 in the bush.

He spent six months tracking and filming one leopard, and more than six years closely following a pack of wild dogs in Northern Botswana. He enjoys photography and has won innumerable local and international photography awards over the years. Mark was also featured in the TV series, "Mad Mike and Mark," which was screened internationally on Animal Planet.

Currently, Mark focuses on many spectra of the wildlife field - private guiding, photography, tourism marketing and conservation. He also offers privately guided safaris in some of the most pristine and remote wilderness areas in Africa.



MARK TENNANT

In Africa, animals are active in the early morning as they can use their energy more efficiently in the cool of the morning. It is for this reason that we usually drive around to try and capture great photographs in soft light before the sun heats up the land and the wildlife rest in the shade of the large thorn trees.

So, every morning that I get to see the sun rise, I like to watch the sun rise for a few minutes and appreciate life, not only mine but all life. Without the sun, the leaves and grass would not grow, and there would be no animals to eat the grass. There would be no food for the big cats that I spend so much time with. Take a moment to appreciate the sun rise, you never know which one is your last.



Early morning is a time where the light is soft and the temperature cool, the animals are walking about, young ones are often playing and running around as their moms are feeding and watching

for danger. This is my favourite time of the day, because it offers action photography - sometimes a young Impala stretching its legs or sometimes a tree silhouette with the sun behind the tree.

I always get up early and my vehicle is moving when the first rays of light touch the earth. In the cool morning light, the animals have started to feed and now that the light is right, I look for an animal or tree to set up the composition of my picture. This is the time when I generally take the most photographs, because with this soft lighting, it is hard to go wrong.

When taking a photograph of the sunrise, I sometimes speed up my camera shutter and this will darken my image and make the reds richer. I do this when the sun is getting too bright or if I want to darken my foreground to use it as a silhouette, when I have found a tree that I like.

One of my favourite photographs is of a vulture sitting on a tree at sunset. The sun's brightness softens as it reaches the horizon and allows me a small window of opportunity to capture the whole sun without burning out my picture. Photography is a hands on experience of nature and the greatness and enjoyment is very personal.



Photo Courtesy |Mark Tennant

K. Ramnath Chandrasekhar is a conservation educator and filmmaker from India. He uses the visual medium and activity based learning to build empathy and participation among youth and children for our planet's natural heritage.

Ramnath was shortlisted for the Rolex Young Laureates Programme, recognised by the Tamil Nadu State Department and awarded an international scholarship to pursue the Asia Pacific Leadership Program (APLP) Fellowship at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

He has travelled across India to capture inspirational stories that facilitate people's understanding of its rich natural and cultural heritage. He has co-authored a coffee table book 'Ganga – More than a river,' about the journey of River Ganges from its source to sea. He has edited many conservation documentaries like, 'The Race to Save the Amur Falcon,' and 'India's Disappearing Beaches.' Fuji Film shortlisted him as one of six photographers from India for their 'Fuji Super Six' exhibition, which gave him an opportunity to showcase his work in major cities across India. Many of his photographs have been published in various newspapers and magazines, such as Sanctuary Asia, Hornbill, Better Photography, Smart Photography, Times Of India, The Hindu, Indian Express and Deccan Chronicle.

Ramnath has worked as an Executive Director at Youth for Conservation (YFC), a non-profit initiative founded by acclaimed wildlife and conservation filmmaker, Shekar Dattatri. Through YFC, he has conducted nature awareness programs for over 50,000 students across Tami Nadu, and has mentored 45 children to write storybooks and become published authors on the environment.



RAMNATH CHANDRASEKHAR

The sun signifies the circle of life to me. It is everything. The way the sun rises and sets, determines the way all life forms function. The crests and troughs are determined by the sun.

Dawn and dusk are the most magical times that I look forward to in life. I vividly remember the moments when I was 13, walking during dawn inside a rainforest, feeling awed when the sun's rays penetrated through the canopy. They were magical. In recent years, I've loved capturing the calls of the forest during dawn - the bird calls along with the symphony of crickets; the occasional calls of langurs. The light is tender inside a forest during the time of dawn, and it is golden and warm just before dusk. I love the way flora and fauna glow in this light. It helps me create the mood that I want to convey in a picture. It is also a time when birds go to roost. It's



Photo Courtesy | Ramnath Chandrasekhar



the time of ‘pack up,’ and a beginning for many other nocturnal creatures. It is around this time, that I saw my first tiger in a south Indian forest; glowing in the fading light, behind a log. I love to capture nature during dawn and dusk, because there is always something that’s happening.

The play of dawn and dusk, and how all lifeforms revolve around them, creating a unique symbiotic equilibrium, intrigues me immensely. Many of us talk about resetting the clock these days to overcome our busy lives. If only we observe the circle of dawn and dusk, and watch animals around that time, we would be able to learn so much from nature, for our own lives.

I feel that nature is a colour palette in itself. It is endless. There is no horizon to it. The play of colours varies depending on where I shoot, and the time of the day. In places like deserts, the colours seem like they are uniformly toned. Different shades of brown and occasional patches of green, and then you see a little black eye in species like ants. In places like the evergreen forests, it’s a riot of colours. Many shades of green ranging from the bushes to the canopy. And in these bushes, you see frogs in different colours, including some orange ones with blue eyes. There are damselflies of different colours, some red and, some in

turquoise blue colours. There are various shades of water. And through the water, you see fishes swim. To me, it’s about being in the moment, soaked in the colours, and capturing the emotions of the moment.

The Shola forest (tropical rain forest) is a mysterious place. Light plays a major role here. There are plants of all kinds from the shortest to the tallest, and that is determined by the sun. I am always reminded of adaptation when I see plants compete for sunlight in a Shola forest. It’s amazing how certain species live around

certain kinds of plants. For example, the lion tailed macaques, an endangered species, are up in the canopy. Whereas, smaller species like the bush frogs choose to live in the bushes.

I vividly remember the very first moment when I was humbled by a scene. It was when I was in middle school. I used to go to a scrub jungle near my hometown of Pudukkottai. At that time, this place called Sittanavsal, which was known for its Jaina paintings, was quaint. Not many used to come. So, I used to walk on a dirt road, up and down looking to capture lifeforms.

One evening, when the sun was about to fade, I had packed my telephoto lens. That’s when I noticed a peafowl on a rock against the evening sky. The scene was so simple, and I wanted to capture it. Unfortunately, the peafowl went down the hillock. But, I decided to get my camera out and wait for it. The peafowl came back and stood there for a few seconds before going back down the hillock. Within sometime, the sun had set too. This was the first moment when I witnessed the connect between the sun and other lifeforms. And from that day onwards, I never pack my camera on a shoot, until I go to sleep!



The second instance was in Shola forest near a stream. I witnessed a damselfly perched on a leaf in a bush. The leaf was a light green colour. I visualised a scene where the shadow of the damselfly fell on the leaf. But, there were some clouds above, and the sun's rays weren't penetrating through the canopy for me to 'see' this. However, I started to slowly inch closer to the damselfly. It would fly, and come back and sit

on the same leaf. This gave me confidence. When I was quite close with a macro lens, the clouds opened. The light penetrated through the canopy and the shadow effect was created, and I got the shot I visualised. This taught me the delicate balance of all living things. What a magical world nature offers us, a world created, fashioned and illumined by the play of sun's light.

Photo Courtesy | Ramnath Chandrasekhar

Jayaraman Mahadevan is the Director, Research Department, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai, India. He holds a Ph.D for his research dissertation on “The Doctrine of *Tantrayukti*” from University of Madras. His area of work at KYM includes critical edition and translation of hitherto unpublished works of Yoga that are inscribed in palm leaf and other such traditional material. He has to his credit, ten books and an equal number of papers in peer reviewed journals. He has participated and presented papers in national and international academic conferences and workshops in India and in countries like USA, Canada, Thailand and China. He is on the review board of the International Journal of *Yoga: Philosophy, Psychology and Parapsychology*. Apart from this, he is a faculty member in the KYM Institute of Yoga Studies and in the Department of Healing Chants programmes of KYM.



ṚGVEDIC SŪRYA-NAMASKĀRA OR ROGA-GHNA-UPANIṢAD¹ AN ANCIENT HEALING HYMN ADDRESSED TO SŪRYA

DR. JAYARAMAN MAHADEVAN

In this land of *Yoga*, the worship of the sun is evidenced by the oldest available literature, the *Veda-s*. The hymn that has been taken up for discussion here is found in *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, which

is considered as the oldest even among the *Vedic* lore. This hymn on sun Sslutation is from the first *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*. It is part of a 50th *Sūkta* (collection of *Mantra-s*). The *Mantra-s* of the

¹ Set of *Mantra-s* that removes illness



entire *Sūkta* are used in a ritual for sun worship called *Sūryakratu*. It is to be noted that this *Vedic* hymn is also found in the *Yajurvedic* format in the *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa* 3.7.6.

Traditionally, the last three *Mantra-s* of this *Sūkta* (that in total contain 13 *Mantra-s*), in the *Ṛgvedic* version, in itself is considered a separate hymn. It is these three *Mantra-s*, which form the focus of this write up.

To indicate the specialty of the last three *Mantra-s* of the 50th *Sūkta*, *Sāyaṇācārya*, the traditional *Vedic* commentator of 14th century, has penned a special introduction to only these three *Mantra-s*. There he states that, “**These three *Mantra-s* are for the removal of diseases (*Roga-sāntyarthah*). This *Mantra* is also referred to as *Rogaghna-upaniṣad* - an *Upaniṣad* (a sacred teaching) that destroys diseases. Using these *Mantra-s* *Ṛṣi Praskaṇva* praised *Sūrya* (Sun God) to overcome skin disease. *Sūrya* being saluted by *Ṛṣi Praskaṇva* through these *Mantra-s*, relived the *Ṛṣi* from the disease. Hence, to**

overcome disease, even now, *Sūrya* has to be worshipped with these *Mantra-s*.”

Sāyaṇācārya, the commentator, also quotes Sage *Śaunaka* (from the text *Bṛhaddevatā* (placed between 5 BCE – 5 CE) in introducing these *Mantra-s*. The quotation is as follows:

udyannadyeti mantro'yaṁ sauraḥ pāpaprāṇāśanaḥ |
rogaghnaśca viṣaghnaśca bhuktimuktaphalapradaḥ ||

This *Mantra*, “*Udyannadya*” is addressed to *Sūrya*. It destroys sins, diseases and poisons. It also grants worldly and spiritual well-being.

To consolidate the above points based on the traditional commentary, it can be stated that, this is a healing hymn addressed to the sun God, to overcome skin diseases, diseases in general, effect of poison and (thereby) to attain material and spiritual well-being.

THE *MANTRA-S* AND THEIR MEANINGS

The exposition of the *Mantra* is based on the commentary to the *Rgvedic* version of the *Mantra* by *Sāyaṇācārya*. But, if there are significant inputs from the commentary to the *Yajurvedic* version (also attributed to *Sāyaṇācārya*), they will also be presented alongside.

MANTRA - 1

उद्यन्नन्द्य मतिरमहः आरोहन्नुत्तरां दविम्।

हृद्रोगं मम सूर्य हरमिणां च नाशय॥

udyannadya mitramahaḥ ārohanuttarām divam।

hṛdrogam mama sūrya harimāṇām ca nāśaya॥

COMMENTARY TO THE *RGVEDIC* VERSION

O, the inspirer of one and all (*Sūrya*) - endowed with a beneficial glow of light for all (*Mitramahaḥ*) today (*Adya*) rising (*Udyan*) and ascending the sky in front (of us) (*Ārohanuttarām Divam* or *Divam Uttarām Ārohan* - ascending the sky majestically).

Having such a nature (O *Sūrya!*) My (*Mama*) internal disease (*Hṛd-rogam*), external disease that takes away the glow/brightness of the body (*Harimāṇām* or *Harimāṇām* - the greenishness in the body – which means discoloration due to disease) - destroy both.

Protect me (the devotee) – the one who utters this salutation, from these two kinds of diseases.

VARIANT INTERPRETATION IN THE COMMENTARY TO THE *YAJURVEDIC* VERSION

Hṛdrogam - mental afflictions (*Mānasīm Pṛdām*)
Harimāṇām - greenish colour – discoloration/paleness due to sorrow and disfiguration due to illness/disease (*Śoka-prabhavaṁ vaivarnyam vyādhi-prabhavaṁ virūpatām ca*).

COMMENTS

It is a prayer to the rising Sun God who is a glowing friend of all. He is a symbol of hope, whose rising indicates the start of another new day, pushing away the sufferings, worries, and sorrows of the day that is past. We praise him – the source of light and energy, to overcome internal and external illnesses, mental afflictions, sorrow and the resultant lack of sheen. This prayer, recited every morning when the sun rises, instills hope and positive energy to face life.

MANTRA - 2

शुकेषु मे हरमिणां रोपणाकासु दध्मसि।

अथो हारद्वेषु मे हरमिणां नदिद्ध्मसि॥

śukeṣu me harimāṇām ropaṇākāsu dadhmasi।

atho hāridraveṣu me harimāṇām nidaddhmasi॥

COMMENTARY TO THE *RGVEDIC* VERSION

My (me) bodily green colour (*Harimāṇām*) in the parrots (*Śukeṣu*) and (green pale?) thrushes (birds) (*Ropaṇākāsu*) let us put/transfer (*Dadhmasi*). Also (*Atho*), in *Haritāla*² trees (*Hāridraveṣu*) and those

² It is difficult to exactly pin-point to the tree indicated by the term *Haritāla* by *Sāyaṇācārya*. But Meulenbeld Sanskrit Names of Plants identifies the *Vedic* term *Hāridrava/Haridru* as - *Pinus deodora* – a kind of (Himalayan) deodar trees.

(trees) that have similar colour, my green colour (me *Harimāṇam*) Let us place (*Nīdaddhmasi*).

Let the green colour stay there comfortably and let it not (come) and afflict us.

VARIANT INTERPRETATION IN THE COMMENTARY TO THE YAJURVEDIC VERSION

Ropāṇākā is considered to be a female parrot. The commentary also adds that – They (parrots) indeed pray for green colour (*Tē hi harimāṇam prārthayante*) (Implying - the greener they are, the more beautiful they look – unlike human beings, in whom greenishness/paleness is an indication of ill-health).

COMMENTS

This *Mantra* is interesting. It seeks to transfer out the green colour (indication of discolouration due to disease) as it were, to those that look beautiful in green colour - like the parrots, thrushes and the deodar trees. It is not to be understood that the prayer is to remove illness and put it into those innocent birds and trees. It is just a curious poetic imagination and an expression of fervent desire to overcome illness.

Mantra - 3

उदगादयमादित्यः वशि्वेन सहसा सहा।

द्वषिन्तं मह्यं (मम) रन्धयन् मो अहं द्वषिते (द्वषितो)
रधम्॥

udagādayamādityaḥ viśvena sahasā saha।

*dviṣantam mahyam³ randhayan mo aham dviṣate⁴
radham॥*

Commentary to the *Rgvedic* Version

This (Sun) that I see before me (*Ayam*), (is the) son of *Aditi*⁵ (*Ādityaḥ*), with all his might (*Viśvena sahasā saha*), has arisen (*Udagād*). How has he arisen? He has arisen, tormenting the one who is troubling me (*Mahyam dviṣantam randhayan*) and also, I will not worry about the disease that is troubling me (*Mo aham dviṣate radham*). Let *Sūrya* himself destroy the disease that torments me. This indicates complete surrender to *Sūrya* - let him take care of me.⁶

COMMENTS

The last *Mantra* indicates the power of *Sūrya*. Also, interestingly, disease is described as *Dviṣan*. *Sāyaṇācārya* explains this term as, *Upadrava-kāri* - the one who torments. Interestingly the term *Upadrava* used by *Sāyaṇācārya* has an *Āyurvedic* connotation which is:

Upadrava - a supervenient disease or one brought on whilst a person labours under another (*Vyādherupari yo vyādhiḥ upadrava udāhytaḥ - hārītasamhitā* quoted in *Śabdakalpadruma*).

Though in *Āyurvedic* texts, *Upadrava* is another disease emerging from an existing disease, in the context of *Yōga*, the mental fluctuations/afflictions/anxiety, caused by physical ailments can be considered *Upadrava*. Such *Upadrava-s* are sought to be dispelled through the inspiration of the *Sūrya* and meditations through this *Mantra*.

3 *Mama* (meaning me)– according to *Yajurvedic* Version.

4 *Dviṣato* (of the one who troubles me) - according to *Yajurvedic* Version

5 According to *Vācaspatyam* - *Aditi* is Earth, mother of Gods, wife of *Dakṣha*.

6 This *Mantra* does not have any significant variant interpretation from the *Yajurvedic* version.



Finally, as could be observed from the commentary, the third *Mantra* also indicates the *Bhāva* of surrender (*Pranidhāna/ Śaraṇāgati*) to *Sūrya*.

CONCLUSION

It is interesting to note that the sun here is addressed as *Sūrya*. As seen in the commentary, *Sūrya* means the one who inspires/motivates. In the context of maintaining good health and overcoming any illness, an important factor is motivation and inspiration in the one who seeks wellbeing or healing.

This is required more in healing practices like *Yoga*. *Yoga* is a healing process which needs a lot of active involvement on the part of the practitioner, which in turn requires adequate motivation.

The Yoga Rahasya (4.31) states - *Śarīra-vyādhi-hānāya śarīram upayojayet* - to overcome the illness of the body, use the body.

This is true in the case of mental wellbeing as well.

To employ the body to heal the body and maintain its well-being, we need an enduring symbol of motivation. What better symbol can there be than the sun/*Sūrya*, who unfailingly and untiringly every morning, floods our living spaces with light and motivates us to shake off the *Tamas* from the previous night.

Hence, this ancient *Rgvedic* everyday prayer, uttered with such a spirit, is certain to motivate us to work towards our health and wellbeing.

P.S: This *Mantra* is used in the practice of *Sūrya Nāmaskara* in the Krishnamacharya tradition.

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Śrī S Sridharan is a former Managing Trustee of KYM. He continues to be an active member on the Board of Trustees of KYM and senior mentor to the teachers as well. He is a Member of the Governing Council of the MDNIY (Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga), Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India, and New Delhi, an apex body for Yoga in India. He is also one of the members of the Indian Yoga Association. A senior banker by profession, Mr. Sridharan held senior executive positions in a public sector bank before opting for voluntary retirement in 1997. He has been a student of Śrī TKV Desikachar since 1981 and has over thirty years of experience in teaching Yoga in this tradition both as a Yoga teacher trainer and a Yoga therapy consultant.



YOGA IN SANDHYĀVANDANAM

S SRIDHARAN

“Sandhyāvandanam” also known as “Sandhyopāsana” is an ancient Vedic ritual which traces its origin to the Veda-s. It is based on an incidence quoted in the Taittirīya-āranyaka, Second Praśna, Second Anuvāka. The Sun, whose lustre, which is the object of meditation, is surrounded by darkness (ignorance). Water purified with the recitation of Gāyatrī is offered facing the Sun (called ‘Argyam’) acts like a thunderbolt to throw away the cause of the darkness. This is done thrice daily; during the twilight (morning and evening) and mid-day. Though this activity forms the main base, the Sandhyāvandana as a ‘ritual’ has a well laid out set of numerous steps. The centre part of this ritual (Pradhānāṅga) is the ‘Japa’ (mental recitation) of the Gāyatrī Mantra. The glory of Sandhyāvandanam is widely talked about in the Vedic texts.

However, it is Yōgācārya T Krishnamacharya who elaborated the Yōga aspects of Sandhyāvandanam through his work ‘Sandhyāsāram.’ The arrangement of the steps in the Sandhyāvandanam makes it an exemplary model of meditation. Meditation (Dhyāna) is considered as the most important and prime Aṅga (limb) of the Aṣṭāṅga Yōga. The others being Yāma, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā and Samādhi. Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi are always taken together in practice. In fact, the application of the three together is called “Samyama.” This is in the form of Gāyatrī Mantra Japa and forms the main part of the Sandhyāvandana. The practitioner faces the sun and uses the sun as the object of meditation. Around this is built all other steps. There are Āsana-s such as Kukkūṭāsana, Tādāsana, Padmāsana, etc. Prāṇāyāma comes in several places. The Nyāsa-s and Mudra-s take care of the Pratyāhāra. Niyama, particularly Śauca (cleanliness) is a pre-requisite for practice of Sandhyāvandana. The practice of Sandhyāvandana, itself, confers on the practitioner the benefit of adherence to the Yama-s (specifically Aparigraha).

There are a number of models of meditation which have been developed over the years and are continuing to be developed. But all have ‘Sandhyāvandana’ as the basic template.

WHY *SANDHYĀVANDANAM*?

AN ESSAY WRITTEN BY

ŚRĪ T KRISHNAMACHARYA ON
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All the *Śāstra-s* proclaim that everyone must practice *Sandhyāvandanam* regularly so as to derive the following benefits:

- Physical and mental health
- Long life
- To have a glimpse of the *Ātman* in the heart (*Ātma Darśanam*)

This is a matter of experience. Even though there are many methods that lead to benefits such as health, not one comes close to *Sandhyāvandanam*. With very little expense of time and resources, it provides immeasurable benefit. In *Sandhyāvandanam*, for the health of the body there are different movements of the body.

For the health of the senses, there is the recitation of *Mantra-s* while gazing at a fixed point, listening to one's own recitation and touching different parts of the body in *Nyāsa*).

For long life, *Prāṇāyāma* is included. For the vision of the light in the heart meditations are suitably placed. For the understanding of the nature of *Jīva* and *Paramātma*, the *Japa* with *Bhāvana* is proposed. To contain false ego and to remind us of our own lineage, *Abhivādanam* and *Praṇāma* with *Sāṣṭāṅga Namaskāram* are performed.

Because of changing times, many of the *Samskāra-s* that the scriptures insist on, are no longer followed properly. This, in fact, is the cause of the various physical, mental and emotional problems we

are going through. Therefore, *Sandhyāvandanam*, which reduces these defects, becomes more important than ever.

(Translated from Kannada by Śrī TKV Desikachar)

THE *ĀVĀHANAM MANTRA*

Divine Goddess, the giver of the precious, as vast as *Brahman*, do enter my heart. Mother of all the compositions, receive our prayer. You are the Highest Glow, the patience, the strength
You are the revelation, the light of Gods
You are the created world and the life of the created world
You are indeed everything
Remove all our evils
I now receive you into my Heart.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *GĀYATRĪ*

This story from *Taittirīya Āranyaka*, illustrates the significance of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.

Deva-s (Gods) and *Asura-s* (demons) were both created by God and there was an eternal conflict between them. *Deva-s* were always victorious, as they had the power of the good, the *Veda-s*, on their side. They were daily recharged with this power by the sun.

The *Asura-s*, then performed a severe penance. Pleased with their austerity, the Lord appeared before them and granted a boon. They asked for the destruction of the sun. The Lord consented and vanished.

Overjoyed, the *Asura-s* climbed the mountains and began their battle. The battle lasted a day and a night. As a consequence of the boon, the sun did not rise and did not dispel the darkness. Without the power of the *Veda-s*, given to them each day



by the sun, the *Deva-s* were soon vanquished by the *Asura-s*.

The *Deva-s*, in turn, meditated and appealed to the highest God. He gave to them the *Gāyatrī Mantra* and the manner of its recitation. During the recitation, the power of the *Mantra* was transferred to water and this was sent in a particular manner to the sun. The water, transformed into a force as hard as a diamond, broke through the darkness and revealed the sun. This power rendered the *Asura-s* weak and the *Deva-s* once again gained ascendancy.

The *Asura-s* who were destroyed had acquired *Brahmatejas* from their penance. To kill such people was a sin. To atone for this sin, learned men, when praying to the sun were required to turn around themselves reciting “*Om.*”

Since then, it is believed that whoever prays to the sun will receive the best in everything. He will experience the highest and will not fall.

The *Asura-s* represent our improper actions, performed consciously or unconsciously. Improper actions refer to doing what should not be done and not doing what should be done. The *Asura-s* are within and not outside.

A.V. Balasubramanian studied with Mr. R. Prabhakar and Śrī TKV Desikachar in the early 80s. He was also a teacher at the KYM for a short period, and continued to be involved with the work of KYM as Editor for the journal, *Darśanam* for the first two year period. He is a member of the Board of Studies of KYM. He is a Biologist by training and has been involved in many institutions, projects and efforts related to various aspects of Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly Traditional Indian Sciences and Technologies. Currently, he is the Director of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (www.ciks.org) which was founded by him in 1995 – an institution devoted to exploring and developing the current relevance and applications of Traditional Indian Knowledge Systems with specific focus on sustainable agriculture.



THE GLORY OF THE GĀYATRĪ

A.V. BALASUBRAMANIAN

The *Gāyatrī* is the most respected amongst *Mantra*-s. The power of its twenty-four syllables is immense. Enhanced through the ages by the penance of the *R̥ṣi*-s who recited it, the *Gāyatrī Mantra* blesses the one who recites it with shining intellect, protects him from all evil and washes away the effect of wrong actions. One who recites it regularly and with devotion, grows steadily in purity and reaches the highest.

The *Gāyatrī Mantra* is one of the oldest of the divine hymns. It is referred to as the mother of the *Veda*-s.

The *Gāyatrī Mantra* is:

Om bhūrbhuvassvaḥ | Tat saviturvareṇīyam | Bhargo devasya dhīmahi | Dhiyo yo naḥ Pracodayat

We meditate upon the adorable light of the shining creator who incites our *Buddhi*.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* comprises 24000 stanzas. Every thousandth stanza commences with one of the 24 syllables of the *Gāyatrī*.

The *Gāyatrī Mantra* forms the core of the *Sandhyā* ritual which all the *Dvija*-s (twice born) are enjoined to perform thrice a day. The *Gāyatrī*

Mantra is meditated upon thrice a day; at dawn, at noon and at dusk. The form meditated upon is of *Gāyatrī*, *Sāvitrī* and *Sarasvatī* respectively on these three occasions.

Gāyatrī Japam, the chanting of the *Mantra*, is preceded by meditation on the form of the Goddess *Gāyatrī*.

The following verse is recited in adoration as a *Dhyānaśloka* (invocatory meditational verse):

*Muktā-vidruma-hema-nīla-dhavalā-cchāyair-mukhais-
trīakṣanaiḥ*

*Yuktām indu-nibaddha-ratna-mukutām tattvārtha
varnātmikam*

*Gāyatrīm varadābhayankuśa-kaṣām śubhram-kaṭālam-
gadam*

*Śankham-cakram athāravinda-yugalam
hastair-vahantīm bhaje*

I adore the Goddess *Gāyatrī*, the embodiment of the *Varṇa-s* (letters of the alphabet) signifying the Supreme Truth, with Her five benign faces reflecting the hues of pearls, corals, gold, sapphire and snow - each face studded with three eyes (denoting omniscience), whose head is adorned with a jewelled crown crested with the crescent-moon, whose two hands (out of ten, representing omnipotence) are in the pose of bestowing boons and fearlessness, and who in her other hands holds the goad, the whip, the bowl, the mace, the conch, and the discus (as symbols of terror to the evil forces), a brace and a lotus (as a symbol of purity, love, devotion and detachment).

THE EFFICACY OF *GĀYATRĪ* *MANTRA*

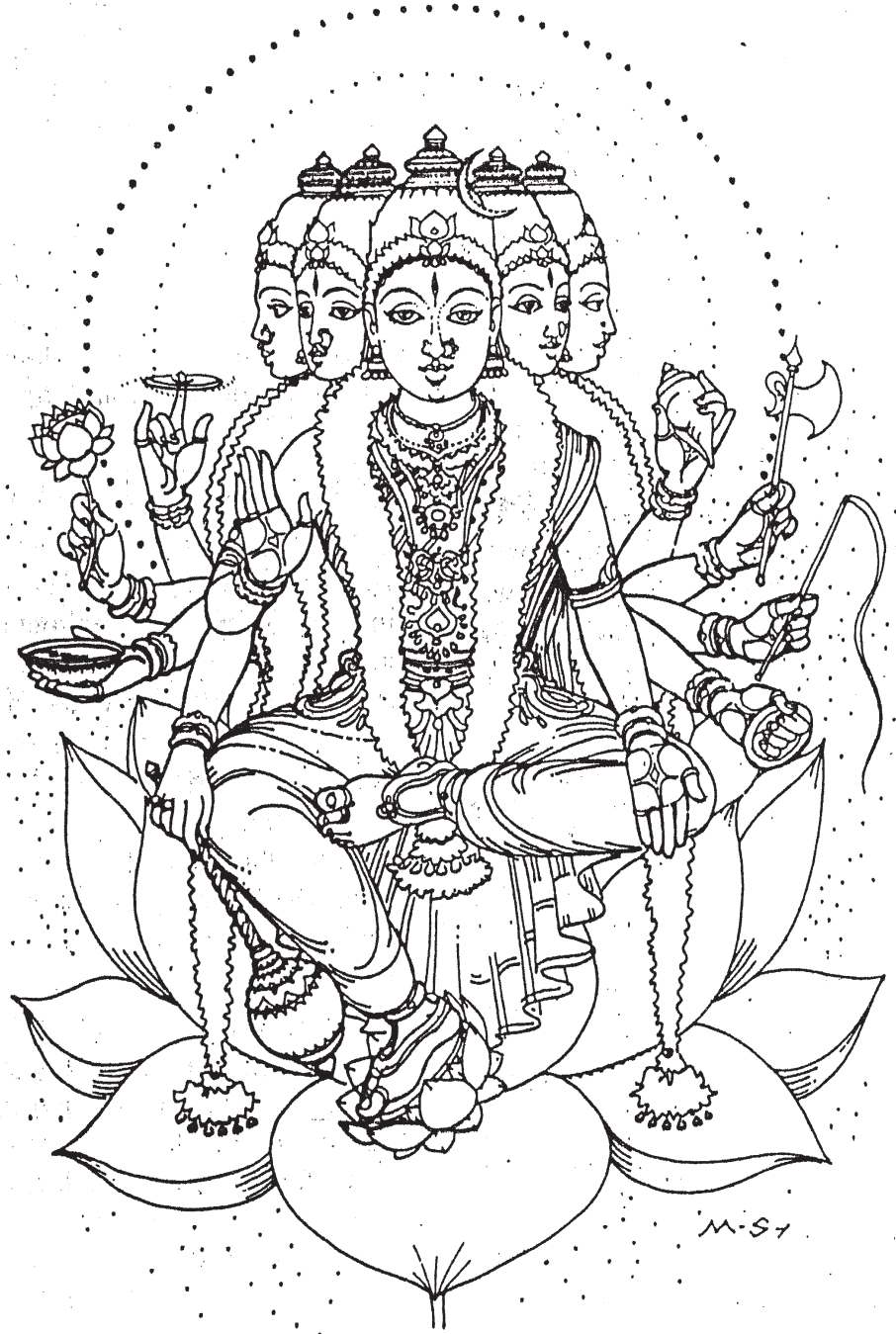
Some centuries back, at Tirunelveli, a Pandian king was suffering from excruciating stomach pain. In spite of treatment by physicians belonging to

all parts of India, the ailment persisted and even grew to an alarming degree. A wise man took pity on him and tendered his advice. He asked the king to stop all external treatment and make a proper gift to a worthy person to obliterate the evil effects of his past *Karma*. The king agreed to do so and requested the wise man to carry this out according to the rules laid down in the scriptures.

A separate room was allotted for the purpose. A buffalo made of iron, containing very costly precious stones was installed there with an iron image of *Yama*, the God of death. Gold coins and precious stones were heaped in all parts of the room. Notices were widely circulated that the heaps of wealth in the room could be taken by a worthy person. Several persons came and *Yama*, with his terrifying red eyes and black body, threatened them with death by showing three fingers. All those men were terror-stricken and took to their heels. The gift could not be given and the agony of the king was growing day by day.

After a few days, a Kannada-speaking *Brāhmin* belonging to Pattiswaram offered to receive the gift. He was not a great scholar, but he was extremely careful in performing *Sandhyā* rites and *Gāyatrī Japa* every day at sunrise, noon and sunset. He entered the room. *Yama* showed three fingers as usual. The man shook his head to indicate his negative reply. Then *Yama* showed two fingers. The man again shook his head. Finally, *Yama* showed only one finger (his middle finger) and the man showed a sign of acceptance. Thereupon, the man was allowed to take the heaps of wealth as the gift promised by the king. The king was cured of his ailment. The man replied that the God of death had showed three fingers signifying that he should give away the benefits of the *Gāyatrī Japa* performed by him at all the three *Sandhi-s viz.*, sunrise, noon and sunset, in exchange for the wealth. On declining to do so, the God wanted to have the benefits of the *Japa* performed at noon. He agreed to this and so, he was allowed to take the gift.

The *Brāhmin* later brought into existence a stream for irrigating thousands of acres of land. The



'The Goddess Gāyatrī'

stream is even now called “*Kannadian Kalvi*” in Tirunelveli District in memory of the *Kannadiga Brāhmin of Pattiswaram*. From this, it is evident that the benefits of *Sandhyā* and *Gāyatrī puja* are immeasurable.

Reproduced from KYM-*Darśanam* archives – November 1993 | Vol.3 No.4

SANDHYĀSĀRAM

Composed by Śrī T Krishnamacharya

Reproduced from KYM-*Darśanam* Archives
- November 1993 | Vol.3 No.4

We present here in this edition only the translation of Śrī T Krishnamacharya's *Sandhyāsāram*.

On the eightieth birthday of Śrī Chandrasekarendra Saraswati, *Paramācārya* of Kanchi, Śrī T Krishnamacharya composed this work on *Sandhyāvandanam* and called it the *Sandhyāsāram*. He went to the *Paramācārya* who was camping near Kanchipuram and submitted this work. Sitting on the bank of a temple tank, the *Paramācārya* spoke at length to Śrī T Krishnamacharya and blessed him.

Sandhyāvandanam is one of the oldest daily practices of the *Veda* and a prerequisite for every other *Karma*. In this work, Śrī T Krishnamacharya has also highlighted the place of *Yoga* in *Sandhyā*.

Let that Lord *Hayagrīva* appear to us, who represents the three *Veda-s*, who has the head of a horse and hearing whose roar the opponents run away.

I surrender to this *Hayagrīva*, whose kick is enough to destroy the enemies of the *Veda-s*.

Without the discipline of body and breath through *Āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma*, no *Karma* will succeed. Thus is the importance of *Āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma* in *Śāstra-s* dealing with *Karma*.

Karma-s are of three types, *Vaidika*, *Tāntrika* and *Vaidika Tāntrika*. *Sandhyā* is no exception.

All *Karma-s* fall within one of these three types according to the *Varṇa* of the person performing them. However, all *Karma-s* must be done as a *Pūja* to Lord *Hari*.

All actions must be dedicated to the Lord whose consort is Śrī (*Lakṣmī*). He is full of auspicious qualities and free from all defects. He is all-pervading

All *Vedic* authorities proclaim that a person is not fit for other *Karma-s*, if he has not done his daily *Sandhyā*.

All *Dvija-s* (twice born) must practice *Sandhyā* three times a day; first at sunrise, then at midday and finally at sunset.

The steps in *Sandhyāvandanam*

Ācamanam: This consists of squatting in *Kukutāsana* and sipping a few drops of water. *Ācamanam* is done at the beginning and at the end of every ritual and also at important moments in the ritual.

Prāṇāyāma: Along with the mental recitation of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, *Nāḍī Śodhana Prāṇāyāma* is done, with retention after inhalation. *Prāṇāyāma* is done wearing a ring on the ring finger of the right hand called *Pavitram*. This is to be made of the *Darbha* grass or of gold. This ring, if made of *Darbha*, is not worn when doing *Ācamanam*.

Saṅkalpa: To visualise the activity before it is actually performed, is *Saṅkalpa*. In *Saṅkalpa*, the activity to be done is mentally dedicated to a particular purpose or to God.

Mārjanam: Water is sanctified by the recitation of certain *Mantra-s* and this water is sprinkled on oneself while reciting the appropriate *Mantra*-praising the water. It is like *Māntrika Snāna*.

Prāśanam: A few drops of water are sipped facing the sun and reciting a *Mantra* which praises the sun. The sun is asked to forgive our mistakes committed during the preceding period of day or night.

Prokṣanam: After doing *Ācamanam*, water is again sprinkled on the head, the feet and around

oneself while reciting the *Mantra-s* that describe the divine qualities of water.

Ācamanam, Prāṇāyāma and Sankalpa: These actions described earlier are performed once again to prepare for *Arghyam*.

Arghyam: Now, one rises from *Kuṭāsana* to face east and offer water in a particular manner to the rising sun, respecting and welcoming it. This is done with the recitation of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*. The convention is to do *Arghyam* three times in the morning and evening and twice at midday.

Turīya Arghyam: When one is a little late in doing the *Sandhyā*, *Turīya Arghyam* is done to compensate for the error, by reciting the *Gāyatrī Mantra* with *Sapta Vyāhrti*, *Śiras* and *Om*.

Ātma Pradakṣiṇa: To go around oneself, clockwise and then look at the rising sun, reciting *Om*.

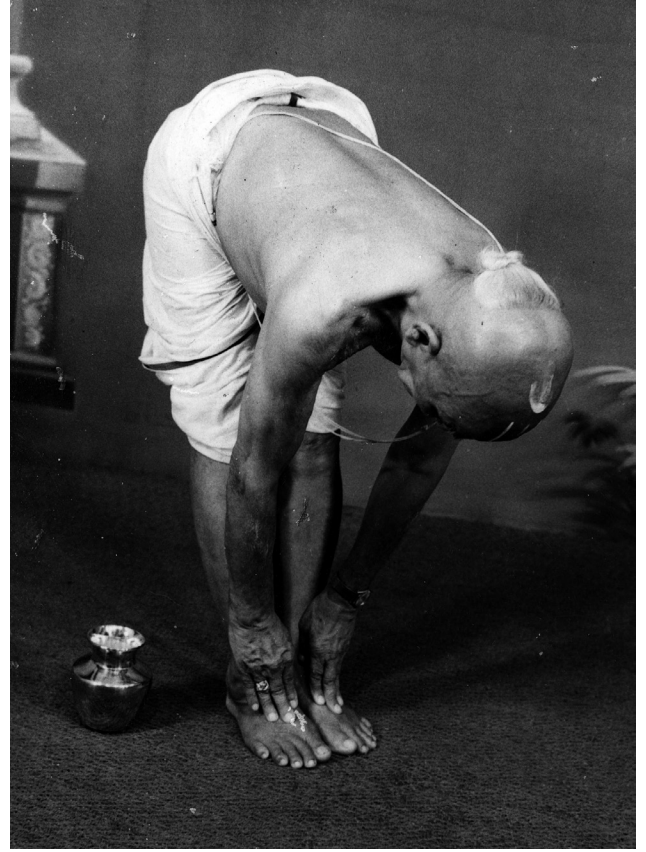
Aṅkuśa Mudrā: To crook the finger in the shape of a hook. With this hook, the sun is drawn into our hearts reciting “*Asāvādītyo Brahma*,” “there, in the sun exists *Brahman*.”

Tarṇa: To do *Ācamanam* and then offer water twelve times, reciting the twelve names of God. *Tarṇa* is followed by *Ācamanam*.

Āsana Parikalpana: To sit or stand on a seat of *Darbha* grass and to sprinkle water while reciting “*Bhūrbhuvasswarūm*.”

Nyāsa: While reciting the *Gāyatrī Mantra* with the *Saptavyāhrti-s*, *Śiras* and *Om* certain parts of the body are touched and the *Mantra* is mentally placed there. With the completion of *Nyāsa*, the whole person becomes *Mantra Pūta*, the embodiment of the *Mantra*.

Prāṇāyāma after Gāyatrī Dhyānam: *Gāyatrī Dhyānam* is to praise the form and attributes of *Gāyatrī*. This is followed by *Nāḍī Śodhana Prāṇāyāma* with retention after inhalation and with recitation



of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* with the *Sapta Vyāhrti*, *Śiras* and *Om*. This is done for three rounds of breath. Alternatively, the whole passage is recited mentally, ten times.

Āvāhanam: *Gāyatrī* is invoked and received in our heart.

Gāyatrī Japam: This is a very important part of the *Sandhyāvandanam*. After invoking *Gāyatrī* and completing the *Nyāsa-s*, the *Gāyatrī Mantra* is recited at least ten times while visualising the meaning and performing *Nyāsa*. *Gāyatrī* is the form invoked in the morning. At midday, the form invoked is of *Sāvitrī* and in the evening, *Saravatī* is invoked.

Ācamanam, Prāṇāyāma and Sankalpa: These steps described earlier, are done again to prepare for the conclusion of the ritual.

Upasthānam: *Upasthānam* is to get up and stand facing the sun. This symbolises the conclusion of the ritual. It is to request *Gāyatrī*, who has been invoked, to return from our heart, to her rightful



place for the benefit and welfare of the universe. This is performed facing, east in the morning and at midday and facing west in the evening.

Dik Namaskāram: To prostrate in all directions acknowledging the sun's presence all around. This is done while meditating on the glorious form of the sun.

Abhivādanam: Introducing oneself and invoking God for the welfare of not just oneself, but the universe.

Aṣṭāṅga Namaskāram: To prostrate and offer the eight parts of the body to the lord. The eight parts are, two arms, two legs, head, *Buddhi*, *Ahaṅkāra* and *Manas*. This is done facing east in the morning and at midday and facing west in the evening.

Sāttvika Tyāgam: To offer to Lord *Nārāyaṇa* whatever has been done, using the body, mind speech and senses.

Sandhyāvandanam concludes with *Ācamanam*.

YOGA IN SANDHYĀ

The following *Āsana-s* are to be properly used in *Sandhyā*: *Padmāsana*, *Gomukhāsana*, *Tāḍāsana* and *Kukkuṭāsana*

The eyes must be fixed in *Nāsāgra* or in *Bhrū Madhya* in *Upasthānam*, *Prāthana*, *Āvāhanam* and *Dhyānam*.

Baddhāñjali with both hands and *Ankuśa Mudra* while drawing in the Sun.

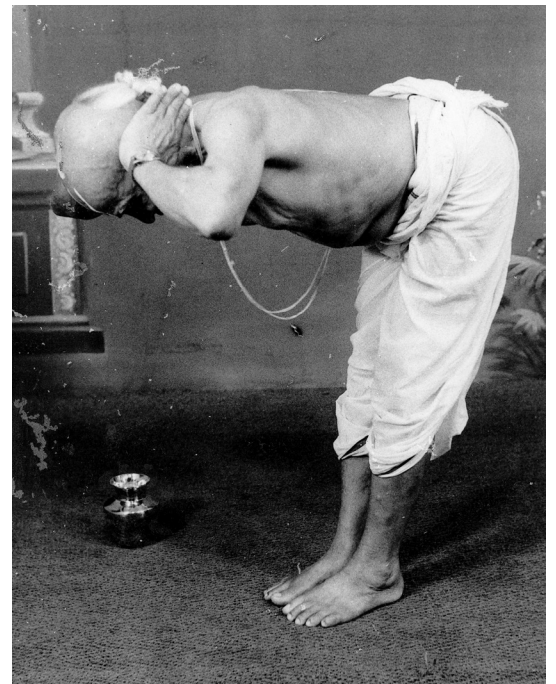
Japa must be in *Padmāsana*, *Arghya* in *Tāḍāsana*, *Kukkuṭāsana* for *Ācamanam*, *Prokṣaṇam*, *Māṛjana* and *Tarṇanam*.

In *Japa*, follow *Nāsāgra* and in *Dhyāna*, *Bhrūmadhya*.

From the beginning, this *Sandhyā* has been insisted upon to reduce the defects of the *Kaliyuga* and to give us *Śobhanam*, auspicious qualities.

In this world, there are many persons who appreciate good qualities. It is my belief that they are experts in *Vedic* practice. I am offering this composition at their feet.

(Translated by Śrī TKV Desikachar)



QUESTIONS ON THE **SANDHYĀVANDANAM** ANSWERED BY ŚRĪ TKV DESIKACHAR

REPRODUCED FROM KYM-**DARŚANAM**

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Śrī TKV Desikachar had, over the years, studied the *Sandhyāvandanam* many times with his father. The significance of the ritual, the correct manner of its performance, the *Mantra-s* and their meanings; have all been studied in detail. Here, he answers some questions of the students of the Mandiram on different aspects of the *Sandhyāvandanam*.

What does the word **Sandhyāvandanam** mean?

‘*Vandanam*’ is to praise. ‘*Sandhyā*’ refers to the driving force at the transition, “*Sandhi*.” The most apparent manifestation of this transition, evident to every person on this earth, every day, is the transition from night to day, day to evening and evening to night. The force responsible for this transition is the Sun God – *Sūrya*, which can be seen by all (*Pratyakṣadaivam*). The word, ‘*Sūrya*’ means, “that which is responsible for creation, promotion and protection.” So, in *Sandhyāvandanam*, we pray to and praise that divine force, *Sūrya*, which governs all life, for the well-being of the world.

The most important parts of *Sandhyāvandanam* are:

1. *Arghyam* and
2. *Gāyatrī Japa*

Arghyam is the offering of sanctified water to the rising Sun with the recitation of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, welcoming the sun with respect, asking him to dispell the evil forces that block his benevolence to the world.

Gāyatrī Japa is the recitation of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* while meditating on the form of *Gāyatrī*, who has been invoked into our heart.

The **Vedic** authorities proclaim that a person is not fit for other **Karma-s** if he has not done his daily **Sandhyā**. What are the **Karma-s** referred to here?

Karma, here, refers to certain rituals which invoke a higher force. *Karma* can be:

1. *Nitya Karma* – those rituals that are performed every day (e.g. *Sandhyāvandanam*)
2. *Naimittika Karma* – those performed on special occasions, e.g. marriage.

Sandhyāvandanam is a *Nitya Karma* which is a prerequisite for all other *Karma-s*. It is also a model for many other *Karma-s*.

What are **Vaidika, Tāntrika** and **Vaidika Tāntrika Karma-s**?

This is another classification of *Karma-s*. *Vaidika Karma* are rituals performed with *Vedic Mantra-s*. *Tāntrika Karma* are rituals performed without *Vedic Mantra-s*. *Vaidika Tāntrika Karma* is a combination of the two. *Sandhyāvandanam* can be performed in any one of the three ways.

What is the significance of squatting and sipping water when doing **Ācamanam**?

Ācamanam is a purifying action and so all rituals begin with *Ācamanam*. Squatting signifies humility. Sipping water, wets the throat and facilitates the *Prāṇāyāma* that follows. But, the significance of the action lies more in following the established tradition.

Among the **Prāṇāyāma-s**, why is **Nādī Sোধana Prāṇāyāma** used in **Sandhyāvandanam**?

Prāṇāyāma is defined in the *Manu Smṛti* as the recitation of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* with the seven *Vyāhṛti*, *Śīras* and *Om* three times, once each on inhalation, on retention after inhalation on exhalation.

Nāḍī Śodhana Prāṇāyāma is to:

Breathe in through the left nostril,
breathe out through the right nostril,
breathe in through the right nostril,
breathe out through the left nostril.

This constitutes one cycle of breathing in *Prāṇāyāma*. The purpose of *Prāṇāyāma* is also to “cleanse” the inner parts of the body. *Nāḍī Śodhana* is believed to achieve this. This is done remembering the *Guru* who initiated the person into the *Mantra*. In the Indian tradition, it is the father who initiates his son into the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.

Wherever *Prāṇāyāma* is done in the *Sandhyāvandanam*, it is done in the above manner.

What is the significance of the ring worn during *Prāṇāyāma*? Why is it not worn during *Ācamanam*?

The ring made of *Darbha* (a certain kind of grass) is called *Pavitram* (that which purifies). By wearing the *Pavitram*, we bring purity to the *Prāṇāyāma* which itself has a purifying action on the body breath and mind. Where the *Pavitram* made of the *Darbha* grass is not available, a gold ring can be worn in this place. This gold ring must have the design of the *Pavitram* on it.

The sipping of water is considered an impure act. The *Pavitram*, when it comes into contact with this water which has made contact with the mouth, will also become impure, especially as it is made of grass and will therefore, absorb water. It is for this reason that the *Pavitram* is removed while doing *Ācamanam*.

What is *Māntrika Snāna*?

Snānam, purification, is of many types. *Snānam* generally refers to a bath. However, different types of *Snānam* can be undergone.

Snānam can involve bathing in the rays of the sun, in the heat and smoke of the sacrificial fires, bathing with water and bathing by the recitation of *Mantra-s*.

Māntrika Snānam is to have a bath while reciting *Mantra-s* which purify one internally.

In what manner is the water praised during *Prokṣanam*?

A translation of the *Prokṣanam Mantra* would read as follows:

“You are the basis for my happiness,
You remain in the food that will lead us to *Brahman*,
You are also the support for our senses,
Make us worthy of the essence of life.
You are like the Mother who provides,
What the child loves.
You created us. Give us the strength,
That will send us to the Highest.”

Why is *Arghyam* done three times in the morning and evening and twice at midday?

It is done following the established tradition. The reasons for it are not known. *Arghyam* is a very significant step in the *Sandhyāvandanam* sequence. *Arghyam*, as seen in the story of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, is to break through the darkness and reveal the light.

What is the *Gāyatrī* with the seven *Vyāhṛti-s* and *Śiras* recited during *Turiya Arghyam*? How does this compensate for the exact time of sunrise being missed?

The seven *Vyāhṛti-s* are first recited, then the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, then the *Śiras* and finally, *Om*. The seven *Vyāhṛti-s* are first:

*Om bhūh | Om bhuvah | Ognī suvah | Om mahah |
Om janah | Om tapah | Ognī satyam*

The *Gāyatrī Mantra* is:

*Om tatsaviturvarenyam |
bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyoyonah pracodayat |*

The *Śīras* is:

Om āpo jyotī raso amṛtam brahma bhūrbhuvasuvar om.

The *Saptavyāhrti-s* describe evolution, the way God created the seven worlds. We are describing *Om*, its power of creation. *Om* represents God.

The *Gāyatrī Mantra* is a praise of God whom we visualise *Gāyatrī*, *Sāvitrī* or *Sarasvatī*.

Śīras is also a praise of God by a description of His qualities.

Having made a mistake, we are appealing to God for forgiveness by praising his creations and His qualities.

What is the significance of going around oneself clockwise in *Ātma Pradakṣiṇā*?

As seen in the story of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, to bring back the power of the sun to the earth, the demons had to be killed. Even though they misused their powers, these demons were learned persons who had done great penance. To kill a learned person is a sin and to protect ourselves against the consequence of this sin, we are to turn around oneself reciting *Om*.” This circle of *Om* around us will protect us.

What are the twelve great forces to whom water is offered during *Tarpana*?

The twelve great forces occupy the twelve different regions. These regions are:

The eight directions-North, South, East and West and their medians.

The space above, the space below, the space in between and all around.

Each of these twelve is associated with a name of presiding deity.

In *Āsana parikalpana*, the seat is made of *Darbha* grass. Earlier we saw that the *Pavitram* (ring) is also made of *Darbha*. Why is the *Darbha* considered auspicious?

The *Darbha* is auspicious because the *Mantra* says ‘*Pavitram vai darbha.*’ It is a grass with some very special properties (*Kuśa*, grass with long pointed stalk, *poa cynosuroides*) and is used on all occasions on account of its purity. It plays a very important role in all rituals.

Does one adopt an *Āsana* in *Āsana Parikalpana* or is it only the visualisation of *Ananta*?

In *Āsana Parikalpana*, the person adopts a posture, preferably *Padmāsana* but it could even be a standing posture. Once adopted, he must stay with it till the *Gāyatrī Japam* is completed. *Ananta*, the embodiment of *Āsana* and the seat of *Viṣṇu* is visualised and our prayer is that our posture be like His. The earth which is our support, is visualised and *Mantra-s* are recited. These *Mantra-s* narrate the story of how *Viṣṇu* lifted the earth and sanctified it. The earth is asked to, in turn, sanctify us and support us.

When doing *Āvāhanam*, does the form invoked change according to the time of the day?

Yes. In the morning *Gāyatrī* is invoked, at midday *Sāvitrī* is invoked and in the evening, *Sarasvatī* is invoked. The *Gāyatrī Mantra* does not refer to any specific form of God, but to the one who protects.

So, the *Mantra* is recited all three times with the invoking of *Gāyatrī*, *Sāvitrī* and *Sarasvatī*.

In *Gāyatrī Japam*, why does the form visualised (*Gāyatrī*, *Sāvitrī* and *Sarasvatī*) vary at different times of the day?

It is important to note that the sun is visualised in a feminine form at each of these times. In the first part of the day, the sun is visualised as *Gāyatrī* who represents the *R̥g Veda*. From midday, the sun is

visualised as *Sāvitrī*, who represents the *Yajur Veda*. In the evening, the sun is visualised as *Sarasvatī* who represents the *Sāma Veda*. All that is good in this world is sustained by this daily showering of the *Veda*-s by the sun and this is visualised in these three forms during *Sandhyāvandanam*. Śrī T Krishnamacharya used to often say,

apratigraha pratigraha prāyascittam gāyatrī

“*Gāyatrī* is the means to atone for receiving more than what is due to oneself.”

Ruxandra CRUCEANA PASSIEUX, a binational Romanian and French, has lived and worked in several countries. Deeply passionate to Indian culture, Ruxandra spent three years in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. She is currently living and working as a Yoga teacher and therapist in Tokyo (Japan).

An engineer with 12 years of experience in the industrial field, Ruxandra is completing her studies in Psychology at the University Paris 8 (France) and aims to integrate *Yoga* therapy with a psycho-somatic approach of psychotherapies in her future practice as a psychologist.

A devoted *Yoga* practitioner and *Yoga* teacher trained in the KYM tradition, Ruxandra will soon be completing her *Yoga* Therapist Training certification at KYM.



A THERAPEUTIC APPROACH BASED ON *YOGA* PRINCIPLES FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

RUXANDRA CRUCEANA PASSIEUX

INTRODUCTION

In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), Seasonal Affective Disorder

(SAD), also known as “seasonal depression” or “winter depression” is not considered apart from the severe depression. People suffering from seasonal depression have symptoms similar to

depression. The symptoms start appearing during fall, when the days get shorter and the daylight less. The symptoms decrease during spring to completely disappear by the end of spring/early summer.

The two cases below retrace my experience as a *Yoga* therapist in France with students suffering from SAD. The names of the students have been modified to respect their privacy.

CASE STUDY – 1 | ALICE, 32 YEARS OLD

I first met Alice in October 2018. She came for individual *Yoga* therapy classes to find a remedy for her seasonal depression. In 8 months, I saw Alice 12 times.

Alice was born in Greece, and at the time of meeting me, was living and working in Paris as an interior designer. Alice was single, without children. She moved to Paris from Athens in May 2017. The first 5 months in Paris went well. She appreciated the food and lifestyle, felt “adapted,” had made new friends and was exercising regularly. Although challenging, her job offered her the possibility to express her creativity. She was appreciated both by her managers and colleagues. She remembered saying to her family that she felt “integrated,” and felt at “home” in Paris.

SAD may begin at any age, but for the major part of the cases, it starts when a person is between the ages of 18 and 30. Seasonal depression is more common in women than in men.

After the summer holidays, by the end of September 2017, as the days started to diminish, Alice felt her energy level going down. She had less and less energy to exercise or to buy vegetables and cook balanced meals. She felt tired and spent her time at home, sleeping or watching television,

eating pasta or ordering food. By November, she felt depressed almost every day, losing her interest in seeing friends. She stopped exercising and gained weight. This state lasted until March. In spring, as the days got longer, the symptoms started reducing. By April 2018, all the symptoms of depression completely disappeared. She felt as if she “had come back to life.”

During the next 6 months, Alice did not experience depression. This depressive episode seemed to be over.

In October 2018, as the days were getting shorter, Alice felt sadness overwhelming her. Her mood changed, she was not able to concentrate, she felt depressed, lost interest in seeing friends or getting out of the house.

Wishing to break the pattern, Alice came to me for individual *Yoga* therapy. I remember she said that she needed a practice that would allow her to “survive over the winter.” When asked to rephrase her objective in a different, positive way, she expressed her requirement for a practice that would allow her “to cope with the winter blues without medication.”

Wishing to understand the pattern of her depression, I asked Alice if at any moment after the first episode, she had experienced excitement, if she had felt more energetic than usual. In some cases, she observed that before the onset of depression and after the end of a depressed phase, she did experience some euphoric episodes.

Alice confirmed that mid-September 2018, she recalled having danced all night during a party at a friend’s house, feeling energetic and ecstatic. The next morning, after a few hours of sleep, she had driven for 6 hours to reach the ocean. Although the weather was rather cold, she plunged into the ocean, swam for about one hour and afterwards drove back to Paris for another 6 or 7 hours. She remembered telling her colleagues at work that she felt ‘alive’ the next morning.

CASE STUDY - DORA, 26 YEARS OLD

Dora joined one of my group *Yoga* classes during the winter of 2017-2018. She came with the objective of losing weight. After a few group classes, she wished to take some individual classes. I met Dora for individual classes 3 times over 3 months.

Dora was born in Mauritius. She left her country for the first time when she was 21 and came to Paris to study Business Administration. She had extended her stay in France as she had a job after her graduation. I met Dora during her 4th year in France. Although she enjoyed her studies and her first work experience, Dora confessed that she didn't feel at "home" in France. Food and weather were different from her native country, but what bothered her the most, was the lack of sunlight that she described as "very difficult to bear, especially during winter." During the first two years, she managed to return to Mauritius for at least two weeks during autumn or winter. In her third year, her studies and work commitments didn't allow her to return to Mauritius. Dora experienced her first depressive episode. She says that there was no concrete reason for the depression to occur. Everything was going well. In November, she started feeling unhappy, suffered from the cold weather and the lack of sunlight. She felt sad, without energy, felt lethargic, felt difficulties in getting up in the morning, lost interest in her studies and in seeing her friends. She found comfort in food, mainly chocolate, pastries and carbohydrates. She gained weight. With the arrival of spring, her mood changed. She felt energetic again. By March, all her symptoms drastically ameliorated and by May, all her symptoms disappeared.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION AND WHY DO PEOPLE DEVELOP DEPRESSION?

According to the American (DSM-5) or European (CIM-10) classifications, depression is classified as a major mood disorder. Basically, depression is a process of protection, a defensive reaction of the living organism. The main role of depression is to make someone stop his actions in order to allow him to recover from excessive stress, from a very demanding effort or cognitive task.

Unfortunately, if the defensive reaction is not adapted to the situation, the result can lead to a pathological state. Ordinary life can include phases of psychological "breaks" needed for a profound reorganisation of the psyche. These phases are not pathological states.

When depression sets in, the protection offered by the psychomotor inhibition is a trap that is difficult to escape from. People experiencing depression will often employ the metaphor of being trapped in a deep well. Every attempt to escape will reactivate their anxiety and fears that will trigger the psychomotor inhibitions that will in turn, make them relapse.

THE ROLE OF NEUROTRANSMITTERS

We recognise depression upon the moral pain experienced by the individual, the general psychomotor response slowing, upon the loss of desires and of the capacity of feeling pleasure, upon the loss of self-esteem and feeling useless.

We can correlate those signs and symptoms of depression with the roles of the main neurotransmitters:

- Dopamine for the ability to experience desire;



- Noradrenaline for the ability to experience pleasure;
- Acetylcholine for cognitive functions regulation, ability to be focused;
- Serotonin for emotional stability and control;
- Melatonin for general psychomotor slowing, being present, attentive to others.

Further to the disbalance of one or several axes, we can imagine that there is not one type of depression, but several.

Under the classification of “depression,” several types of depression have been placed together. Even if the manifestations are similar, the causes can be different.

Depression is a mood disorder affecting all brain process performances. Understanding the

mechanism behind each type of depression, could help the therapist better address the deficiencies in order to balance them.

WHAT IS SAD?

Although the root causes of SAD are unknown, research shows that people with SAD have a biochemical imbalance triggered by the shorter daylight period during winter.

- The serotonin (mood regulator) quantity is reduced in their neuronal synapses due to the lack of daylight;
- The melatonin (feeling sleepy and lethargic) quantity is increased as a result of the long hours of darkness;
- People with SAD produce less vitamin D.

YOGA THERAPY PRINCIPLES USED FOR PEOPLE WITH SAD

Here, I share the principles that guided my work with students experiencing SAD. This approach is based on my experience with depressed students.

My approach for my work with Alice and Dora was based on *Patañjali's Yogasūtra-s* and more specifically, the *Aṣṭāṅga Yōga*, the eight limb path, as understood by me during my training at the KYM, Chennai.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE STUDENTS

Both Alice and Dora expressed depression symptoms - feeling hopeless or worthless, feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day, having low energy, losing interest in activities they once enjoyed, having difficulty concentrating.

The specific SAD symptoms experienced by the two students during the winter episodes included hypersomnia, craving for carbohydrates, overeating, weight gain and social withdrawal.

The sensations expressed during the individual classes included oppression, restriction or pain in the chest area, headaches, feeling heavy and lethargic, exhaustion, pessimism and sadness.

YAMA AND NIYAMA

When working with depressed students we have to keep in mind that simple tasks such as getting up in the morning, getting dressed, taking a shower or cooking a meal demand a considerable effort. Connecting them to the practice and convincing them to practice regularly is of main importance in breaking the pattern of depression.

Practicing *Yama* and *Niyama* helps them take commitments seriously and honour their

responsibilities towards the community and towards themselves.

TAPAS

I usually connect practicing *Tapas* to the regularity of *Yōga* practice. For depressed students, practicing regularly (daily) is of major importance. The *Yōga* practice will introduce a daily ritual that will eventually break the pattern of depression.

THE INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE JOURNAL FOR A REGULAR PRACTICE

Alice was not able to discipline herself to practice. She was practicing daily for one week after the individual class, then her practice was less and less regular (2 or 3 times per week maximum). In order to bring regularity to her practice, I gave her an individual practice journal and asked her to write down the date of the practice and her comments/observations every time she practiced. The practice journal helped her to regularise her practice.

SAMKALPA TO HELP FINISHING THE PRACTICE

Dora was able to get on the mat and start practicing almost every morning. Her difficulty was in finishing the practice, as she would get distracted during the practice, by thoughts linked to her job. Anxious thoughts like, "You are late for your work," "You should check your email," "You are wasting precious time," didn't allow her to finish the *Yōga* practice.

I asked Dora to practice *Samkalpa* at the beginning of every practice. I often ask my students with depression to practice *Samkalpa*, a symbolic gesture

representing a commitment, at the beginning of their practice. It can be a gesture of the hand or any other gesture chosen by the student. *Samkalpa* is a promise made to ourselves. In Dora's case it was a promise to finish her practice. Dora adopted the concept of *Samkalpa* and applied it to other difficult life situations as well.

ĀSANA

Depressed students tend to adopt protective postures. Their back is curved and they often protect their chest with their arms and tend to prefer forward bending *Āsana-s*.

When working with those who are depressed, I often start with mild forward bends. The *Āsana-s* should not require an excess effort.

Chest opening postures are introduced progressively. These *Āsana-s* help them feel less oppressed and can act on the obstructions that depressed students often feel in the chest area.

Balancing postures may allow the students to better concentrate and to increase gradually self-confidence.

PRĀṆĀYĀMA

Coordinating breathing and movement is the first work a *Yōga* teacher must accomplish with a beginner student. Increasing the span of the inhales and exhales is the second one.

With Alice and Dora, I started to work on the breath with the goal of lengthening the exhalation and the inhalation span. Gradually *Recaka Kum̄bhaka* and *Pūraka Kum̄bhaka* were introduced in the *Prāṇāyāma* practice to increase lung capacity.

Nāḍī Śodhana Prāṇāyāma practiced with or without *Kum̄bhaka* can help increase the lung capacity, build steadiness, and firmly anchor the student in

the present moment, and thus helping him/her fight anxiety.

In Alice and Dora's individual practices, I introduced visualisation together with the practice of *Sūrya Bhedana Prāṇāyāma* during the winter period. I suggested that they visualise the sun and to imagine that they are standing on a mountain under a hot sun during a bright summer day. The visualisation together with the practice of *Sūrya Bhedana Prāṇāyāma* was introduced at the end of their morning practice.

PRATYĀHĀRA, DHĀRAṆĀ AND DHYĀNA

Observing the thoughts

A short meditative practice was introduced at the end of the practices given to them.

The students were asked to observe their thoughts consciously, to observe without judgment the mental "chatter" and to take note of negative and positive thoughts.

They were guided afterwards to retain a few of the positive thoughts they observed and then to develop one single positive thought, and visualise images linked to this joyful thought.

The image of the bright sun was suggested again at the end of the practice during the guided relaxation.

CONCLUSIONS

Both Alice and Dora reported an improvement of their general state together with a reduction of the SAD symptoms after one month of *Yōga* practice. A direct correlation was observed between the regularity of the individual *Yōga* practice and the alleviation of the symptoms.



The main difficulty I have faced in my work with depressed students (SAD students are included in this category) is that their commitment to the practice will constantly be subverted by the defensive mechanism of depression, that will slow them down and pull them away from the *Yoga* mat.

My assumption is that one of the most important things a *Yoga* teacher could do for these students, is to support and encourage them to keep practicing in a regular manner.

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Hellfried Krusche is a psychotherapist and psychoanalyst. He is a training analyst and supervisor for the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) in Germany and lectures widely in Europe and Britain on *Yoga* and psychoanalysis. Hellfried was also a long-standing student of ŚrīTKVDesikachar with whom he co-wrote 'Freud and *Yoga*.'

Born in Aachen, he lives in Cologne, where he has a private practice.

SOME EXPERIENCES WITH *YOGA* AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

DR. HELLFRIED KRUSCHE

INTRODUCTION

The therapeutic application of *Yōga* has been developed and spread, especially by our teacher Śrī TKV Desikachar. I was lucky to be allowed to be with him during some of his evening consultations at the KYM. He talked with his students in their

language, made them laugh, observed them very closely, without being strict or pushy. He took their pulse without them even noticing, and then wrote down a practice or recommendation. His students trusted him because they felt that he could perceive and understand them correctly.

When I once asked him, what was the most important aspect to him in his treatments, he told me, "My being able to form a good rapport and relationship is most important. Everything else only comes after that." For him, the effect on the psyche was the most important agent for change. Once, he told me

that the physical exercises like *Āsana-s* often were an approach to gain a connection to his students. While the student is doing the *Āsana-s*, he connects to the teacher. In this connection, an inner psychic relationship, a bond develops which also creates an inner space in which the inner world of the student can develop.

Yōga, I understood, for Śrī TKV Desikachar, was the art of establishing this kind of relationship and to let this relationship become fruitful for the student. This experience can then be transferred to other objects. In this way, for instance, a relationship with the sun can be established through the *Gāyatrī Mantra*, which then unfolds within the person.

In recent years, *Yōga* has become more popular as a therapeutic method. However, modern *Yōga* techniques often lose sight of the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship.

As a psychoanalyst, I see that it is important to understand the dynamics of the relationship that develops with the care-seeker, through frequent conversations. My aim is to understand the patient in his inner world and to help him to better understand himself and to become able to solve inner hidden problems and conflicts, which he has not understood until then.

Now, however, there are

situations in which the classical psychoanalytical technique is not sufficient to provide the patient the necessary help.

In the case of obsessive-compulsive disorders for instance, the psychoanalytic method quickly reaches its limits.

Or when a patient is under so much tension and stress that he experiences everything around him as a burden and as an attack, the psychotherapeutic work can also be experienced more as a burden than a help.

In such cases it can be very helpful if the therapeutic work is supported by *Yōga*.

I share here one such experience when I used the *Gāyatrī Mantra* for a patient with cancer and psychosomatic effects.

“The only thing that helps me is to realise that I’m breathing, that this is my breath, that I am alive.”

A patient who suffered from unbearable fears until she discovered *Yōga*.

Yōga helped her to free herself from her inner confinement.

The patient came to me because of her cancer. She was in the middle of a medical treatment program: Chemotherapy, radiation etc. Her inner world was marked by fear and anxiety. At home, she had no

place to retreat to. She had not learned to talk to her husband. They both went side by side for so many years without talking about themselves or their relationship. In our conversation, it became clear to me that she immediately attuned herself completely to me and looked at me waiting and waiting, as if she expected questions from me, which she wanted to answer immediately. It was as if she had no inner retreat. The lack of space in her apartment and the lack of communication with her husband were only the effects of the missing inner space, which she let me feel in my conversation with her. It was always the case for her that she had to be there for others, that she had to react without waiting and trusting that the conversation would develop. She had to be present, and completely focused on the other person. She couldn’t separate herself from her environment well. This pattern led her to experience her workplace as a constant battle zone, as if she were under constant fire from her colleagues. The years of stress that went along with it exhausted her and contributed to the weakening of her immune system and her mental defenses.

At the same time, it struck me in conversation that her relationship with her mother was not loving and trusting. She felt criticized and not understood by her.

She lacked a feeling for something good in herself. She lacked an inner situation in which she could feel good and held by herself. She was unable to be with herself. Social contacts on the other hand were experienced by her as attacks and as threatening. In her inner world, she did not have a secure foundation for her emotional world. Therefore, she did not have a stable inner source where she could recharge her batteries when she felt exhausted.

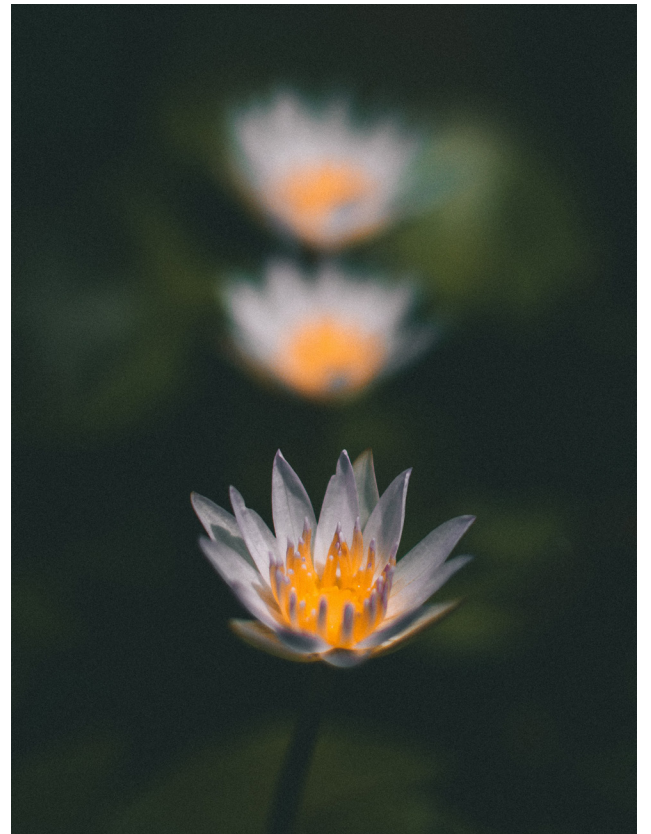
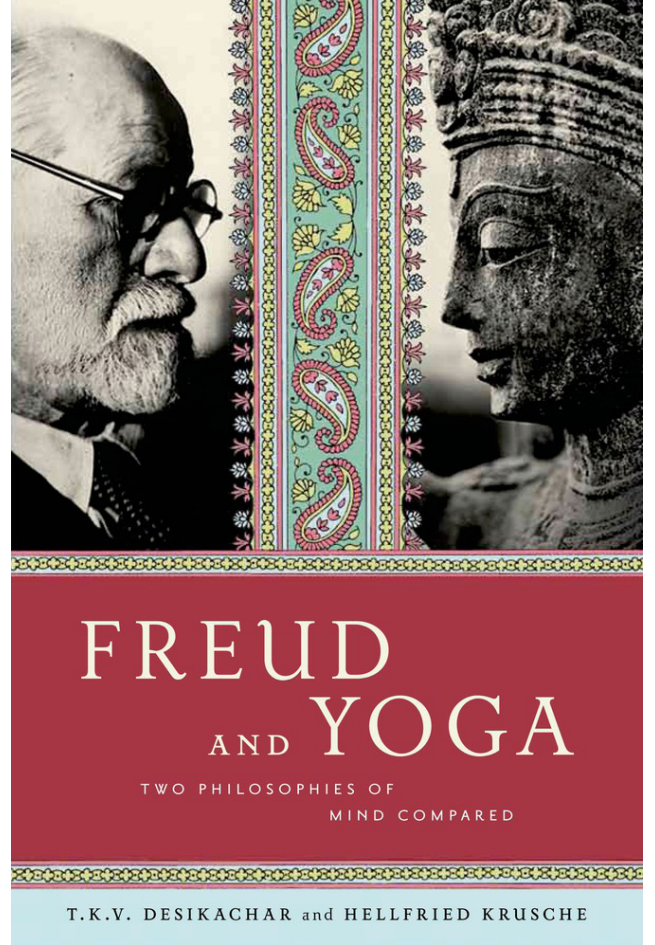
I discussed with her that she needed to turn to her inner world and that she had to also learn to experience the outer world as less threatening. It was clear, however, that she could not immediately change her decades-long behavior. She understood that she lacked a good supporting inner object to which she could turn when she felt alone or threatened. So, we started searching for something that could relieve her.

She already had experiences with *Yoga*, but was unable to practice because of her physically challenged condition.

My plan was to help this patient to be able to feel herself without feeling threatened or in pain. I wanted to help her develop and discover a good inner object that would give her the strength and confidence she urgently needed at that the moment.

In doing so, I was able to fall back on what I had learnt from Śrī Desikachar many years ago, which helped me a lot - a *Gāyatrī* meditation with simple gestures and breathing exercises.

I first talked to her about the power of the sun and its immeasurable energy. Then, we focused on the sun and did simple movements with *Prāṇāyāma* and the recitation of *Gāyatrī* inviting *Gāyatrī* to enter her body. Concentrating on the sun and the breath in the process helped her to feel alive again and to be in contact with a powerful object. In doing so, she was able to take control over basic functions of the body. She was able to develop the idea that she could also take in this object,



“sun” with her breath. In doing so, she developed a feeling for an inner space.

The breath is the first object of the outside world with which we make contact immediately after birth. To establish a secure and repeated contact and connection with it also meant a shift of her concentration to a vital basis of her existence. This helped her to detach herself from the circling thoughts in her head and to get in contact with her vital functions. Chanting the *Gāyatrī Mantra* and concentrating on the sun, combined with inhalation and exhalation, led to a connection between her body and the external object, the sun. I asked her to combine the *Mantra* with gestures of invitation, so that the power

of the sun would enter her being in order to illuminate an inner space that would give her energy.

She subsequently learned that she also needed a space in her external environment in order to make this inner opening possible.

So, she took the time to take small breaks. This required that she had to explain to her husband that she needed a room for herself into which she could retreat for meditation.

For the first time, she was able to communicate with her husband about herself and her needs. She was able to create a space in her flat to which she could withdraw when she breathed and chanted.

Recently, she was able to finish her medical treatment with a positive result.

Subsequently, she developed a new relationship with her husband. Both started to talk to each other. Then, both discovered the beneficial effects of massage and rituals, which they began to practice together.

The patient, after discovering her inner space, is now considering how she can protect and maintain her newly gained mental freedom by changing her approach to her working environment and thus, protect herself at work from the attacks she experienced before.

Breathing and *Gāyatrī* meditation have given her a basis on which she can now develop further on.

VYUTPATTI – THE ETYMOLOGY OF YOGA

DR. JAYARAMAN MAHADEVAN

In this issue of *Darśanam*, *Vyutpatti* is presented in two parts hereunder.

Part - 1 | presents the etymological derivations of the twelve names of the sun used as part of *Sūrya-namaskāra*.

Part 2 | presents the names of the sun used in *Yōga* literature (in principal texts - *Bhagavadgītā*, *Yōgasūtra* and *Hatha-yoga-pradīpikā*).

PART - 1

The Twelve Names of the Sun

Meanings based on etymological derivations

1. *Mitraḥ*

Medyati snihyati iti mitraḥ - the one who is affectionate is *Mitra*.

2. *Raviḥ*

Rūyate stūyate iti - the one who is praised.

3. *Sūryaḥ*

Sarati - that which (constantly) moves or *Suwati karmaṇi lokam prerayati* - the one who inspires people into action.

4. *Bhānuḥ*

Bhāti caturdaśabhuvaneṣu svaprabhayā dīpyate iti - the one who shines forth among all the 14 worlds with his own brilliant radiance.

5. *Khagaḥ*

Khe ākāśe gacchati - the one who moves about in the sky.

6. *Pūṣā*

Pūṣati vardhate iti - the one who grows (in light and heat as the day progresses? or as a star which grows?).

7. *Hiranyagarbhaḥ*

Hiranyam hemamayāṇḍam garbha utpattisthānamasya - the one who has emerged from a gold like luminous (supreme being) source.

8. *Marīciḥ*

Mriyate pāparāśiḥ yasminniti - the one in whose presence all sins/negative tendencies die away.

9. *Ādityaḥ*

Aditeḥ apatyam - the son of *Aditi* (*Aditi* is the mother of the gods. *Aditi* is also mother earth; *Aditi* also indicates the endless - all pervasive source).

10. *Savitā*

Sūte lokādīnīti - the one who creates the worlds etc (and the beings that exist there in).

11. *Arkaḥ*

Arcyate iti arkaḥ - the one who is worshiped or
Arkyate iti arkaḥ - the one who is praised.

12. *Bhāskaraḥ*

Bhāḥ/bhāsam karotīti - the one creates/generates light - the one who enlightens.

PART - 2

Names of the Sun in *Yoga* literature

(*Yogasūtra*, *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā*)

All the occurrences, as available, of the twelve terms above in the sense of the sun will be presented below. Terms like *Mitra* can also simply mean a friend. Those entries are not presented considering the lack of relevance to the context.

1. *Ravi*

Bhagavadgītā – two occurrences - 10.21, 13.33.

2. *Sūrya*

Bhagavadgītā – Four occurrences - 7.8, 11.12, 11.19, 15.6

Yogasūtra – one occurrence - 3.26

Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā - thirteen occurrences, in different relevant meanings. Given below:

- *Sūrya* - 2.7, 2.8, 2.10, 2.63, 3.28, 3.112, 4.17, 4.45 (meaning the right *Nādī*, *Piṅgala*)
- *Sūrya* – 3.77, 3.78 (the digestive fire in the navel region)

- *Sūrya-bhedana* - 2.44, 2.50 (as part of the compound, *Sūrya-bhedana* refers to a *Prāṇāyāma*)

- *Sūryāṅga* – 3.15 (the right-limb)

3. *Bhānu*

Haṭhayogapradīpikā – one occurrence 3.79 – the digestive fire

4. *Marīci*

Bhagavadgītā - one occurrence - 10.21

5. *Āditya*

Bhagavadgītā - six occurrences - 5.16, 8.9, 10.21, 11.6, 11.22, 15.12

6. *Arka*

Bhagavadgītā - One occurrence 11.17

The other six terms, namely *Khaga*, *Pūṣan*, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, *Savitṛ*, *Arka* and *Bhāskara* are not found to be used in the principal *Yoga* texts.

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2. The derivations of all the above terms on the sun can also be found in *Vācaspatya* volumes 1-6, Compiled by *Tārānatha Tarka Vācaspati*, Kavya Prakasha Press, Calcutta, 1873.
3. Source of reference for *Yoga* texts: <https://kymyogavaisharadi.org/>

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KYM Mandaveli | No. 13, 4th Cross Street, RK Nagar, Chennai 600 028

**KYM Kilpauk | No. 25, Thiru Narayanan Avenue, Off New Avadi Road,
Chennai 600 010**

Phone | 044-24937998/24933092/24952900

Website | www.kym.org, www.kymyogavaisharadi.org

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