

and object to be meditated) is still maintained, however, prolonged and intense *dhyāna* ultimately leads to the state of *samādhi* wherein the object only shines as if meditator and the process of meditation have been dropped. Thus, the *sādhaka* regains the true awareness of that oneness with the infinite and attains peace, perfection and tranquility.

A person who has achieved this stage of *samādhi* lives his life as a spontaneous expression of the unhindered flow of supreme consciousness and transcends all divisions of culture, caste, creed and color. When one becomes aware of the infinite consciousness then the whole life is transformed. This is the purpose of classical *yoga* understood in both senses- Unification or Integration. The true import of meditation in classical terms is unfortunately, missing in contemporary times and in so called meditational workshops.

What we need today is to incorporate a few practices of classical *yoga* which can help us in re-channelizing our nature from passion to purity, from untruth to truth, from hardness to kindness and shedding of our ego etc. These are the primary acts which are missing today in our practice but these virtues can be cultivated through various disciplinary methods and systematic recourse of the yogic way of life- consisting of wholesome food habits, wholesome activities, purity in thought etc. (*gītā* 6.17). We can achieve contentment and a serene state of mind that can help us to perform our life's duties with utmost love and dedication.

In short, the group of people who have reduced *yoga* to physical exercises should know that *Yoga* deals with body, breath and mind but is aimed at that which is beyond mind. *Asana* and *prāṇāyāma* are part of the whole (*Yoga*) and that whole is considered to be the science of achieving the true purpose of life and realizing our Divine nature.

This seminar, it is hoped, will provide a befitting platform to *yoga* researchers, *sādhakas* and *yoga* lovers for contemplating on subtler aspects of *yoga* and for preparing the ground leading to a synthesis of classical and contemporary aspects of *Yoga*.

## Dimensions of Yoga - Contributions of Yogi T Krishnamacharya S Sridharan<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

गुरुं प्रकाशयेत् धीमान् मन्त्रं यत्नेन गोपयेत्।<sup>2</sup>

This is a old saying. The import of this saying is that it is the duty of a student to bring out the glory and teachings of the teacher, but keep the *mantra* initiated a secret. This is particularly relevant in a context where one is initiated into a *vedic mantra*. However, this saying has usage in *yoga* as well. *Yoga* education has two facets. One is the teaching of classical and ancient *yoga* texts which will be done in a group situation. Second is the personal *yoga* practice for the student which will be given on a one-to-one basis only.

*Yoga* is seeing a vast expansion in growth today. It has become popular with more and more people taking to its practice. But there is an imminent danger of *yoga* losing the 'personal touch', its most important and contributing factor, in these present times of e-learning. *Yoga* being an *anūsāsana-sāstra*, i.e. a discipline 'to be practiced' and not just 'enquired into', the teacher-student relationship is very important. This paves the way to establish a '*paramparā*' which will in a 'linear' manner lead to the 'foremost' among the teachers, i.e. "*īśvara*". One such teaching lineage in the world of *yoga* traces its origin to *yogi* Tirumala Krishnamacharya.

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<sup>2</sup> *guruṁ prakāśayet dhīmān mantraṁ yatnena gopayet* (Quoted in *rahasya-traya-sāra* 1st *adhikaraṇa*)

### Unique and Outstanding Yoga Personality

Yogi Tirumala Krishnamacharya was born (1888) in a family which traces its spiritual lineage to the South Indian *vaiṣṇavaite* saint *nāthamuni*. His father ran a *vedic Gurukula*.

Śrī Krishnamacharya's studies were fully in the *vedic* tradition. He had thoroughly mastered all important segments of *vedic* education in the traditional style. Giving up the opportunity to be an *acārya* in *vedic* education, he trekked long distances in the Himalayas to learn *yoga* under a great master, Śrī Rama Mohana Brahmachari in the vicinity of the Kailash Manasarovar, the abode of *yogins*.

His scholarly disposition in Sanskrit, in which he had the fluency to talk, compose poems, hymns, commentaries, etc., gave him the unique advantage of studying all the classical original texts of *yoga*. Coupled with this, his dedicated and vigorous personal practices lead him to find the inner meanings of all the ancient teachings, particularly in *yoga*. He is also believed to have received the teachings of *nāthamuni's yoga-rahasya* in a meditative state

Though he could have stayed back in the Himalayas to lead the life of a secluded *yogin*, he came down the plains to get married and took to family life, to obey the orders of his *yoga* guru. He continued to spread the message of *yoga* to all as per his *guru's* command till his last breath.

### Yogic World Scenario Then

When Śrī Krishnamacharya became active in the world of *yoga*, authentic *gurus* were not many in the plains of the country. He established a *yoga-śālā* in Mysore under the patronage of the then King. This place drew a number of enthusiastic and serious students from India and abroad. He commanded great respect for his meticulous approach which was coupled with strict discipline as a pre-requisite. He never compromised on any of the dictums laid down by the ancient masters.

### T Krishnamacharya's Contributions to Multivariate Dimensions of Yoga

The dimensions of *yoga* can be understood

- on the basis of the tools used,
- the functions of the tools
- the results obtained and
- the users

Śrī Krishnamacharya has specially contributed in all these areas, bringing out the depth of *yoga* and the need to individualise the practice and teaching of *yoga*.

#### a) T Krishnamacharya's Presentation of the Tools of Yoga

आत्मिक-दैहिक-मानस-भेदात् त्रिविधं विहितं योगाभ्यसनम् ।  
सकलं यच्छति वाञ्छित-सुफलं नहि नहि योगाभ्यसनं विफलम् ॥<sup>3</sup>

There is the practice of *Yoga* of the Self, body and mind. Always fruitful, never a waste, it gives to each, through practice what he seeks.

#### b) The Practice of Yoga Based on its Functions

Is there a differentiation in the teaching of *yoga* according to the purpose for which it is used? *Yoga* can be practiced by children for developing flexibility, stamina and concentration, and thereby resilience at all dimensions of the body. It may be used by adults (middle-aged) for maintenance of health and prevention of illness/deterioration of body, and also as a means for alleviating stress. The tools of *yoga* may also be applied as a complementary therapeutic intervention to enable healing.

<sup>3</sup> *ātmika-daihika-mānasa-bhedāt trividhaṁ vihitam yogābhy āsanam ।  
sakalam yacchati vāñchita-suphalam nahi nahi yogābhy āsanam viphalam ।*

Thus, we see that *śrī* Krishnamacharya divided yoga practices into three basic segments based on the functions of Yoga. They are *śikṣaṇākrama*, *rakṣaṇa-krama*, *cikitsākrama*.

In *śikṣaṇa-krama*, the focus is on doing *āsana*s in the classical manner without adaptations, with the goal of perfection of form. In the other two cases, there will adaptations and modifications of the tools of yoga, applied in an individual-centric manner, to suit the current needs of the individuals concerned.

### c) The Practice of Yoga based on Results Obtained

Why must *āsana*s, *prāṇāyāma* and *dhyāna* be practiced together and what are the independent and collective use of these three tools?

Krishnamacharya explains:

आसनकरणात्तरसं सरसं प्राणायामात् प्रबलं प्राणम् ।

धारणशुद्धं कुरु मस्तिष्कं ध्यानात् शुद्धं चित्तं नित्यम् ॥<sup>4</sup>

Practice *āsana*, make the body light, practice *prāṇāyāma*, strengthen the *prāṇa*. Practice *dharanā* strengthen the memory, practice *dhyāna* purify the mind.

### d) Individualising the Practice of Yoga based on the user

Can everyone practice any form of Yoga? Should there be a differentiation? These questions get answered by the following piece of advice given by T Krishnamacharya.

त्रिधा योगक्रमः प्रोक्तः सृष्टिस्थित्यन्तभेदतः ।

अष्टस्वपि तु योगाङ्गेष्ववधेयो बुधैस्सदा ॥<sup>5</sup>

The learned after much reflection have proclaimed that the yoga which has eight *aṅga*s can be divided into three types of practice – *sṛṣṭi-karma*, *sthiti-karma* and *antya-krama*.

<sup>4</sup> *āsanakaraṇāttarasam sarasam prāṇāyāmāt prabalam prāṇam | dhāraṇasuddham kuru mastiṣkam dhyānāt śuddham cittam nityam |* (yogāñjali-sāram 27)

<sup>5</sup> *tridhā yogakramah proktaḥ sṛṣṭisthityāntabhedataḥ | aṣṭasvapitu yogāṅgeṣva-vadheyā budhaissadā ||* (yoga-rahasya 2.2)

Krishnamacharya classified the practice of yoga as '*sṛṣṭi-krama*' for the young, '*sthiti-krama*' for the middle aged and '*antya-karma* (*laya-karma*)' for the elderly.

This division is based on the time to be spent in the practice of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and *dhyāna* and not on one's capability. Children, especially as students have a lot of physical energy to channel and are not yet under the stress of day-to-day living. Hence, for them he advises an *āsana*-intensive practice integrating static and dynamic elements in a structured manner (*vinyāsa*s).

Adults are burdened with professional stress and the personal stress of providing for family members/dependents.

In their case, while some amount of postures may be used to improve general fitness levels, Krishnamacharya advises a greater proportion of *prāṇāyāma* practices, in order to help them cope with and manage stress effectively. It is T Krishnamacharya's belief that as one goes through the travails of life, the process of aging brings with a certain emotional and spiritual maturity which can be fruitfully channelized into meditation. Thus, in the latter part of one's life, T Krishnamacharya advocates prolonged practices of meditation to stimulate inner reflection and clarity, with shorter practices of *prāṇāyāma* to prepare the mind and just adequate *āsana* to ensue maintenance of health status.

### Dynamics of Yoga, in the perspective of T Krishnamacharya

The dynamics of yoga are essentially about the prevailing situations and changes that are happening in the world which affect the practice and applications of Yoga.

The question that is facing yoga practitioners today is, "What is the real purpose of yoga?" or "What should be the goal of yoga?"

### A) Purpose of Yoga

*Śrī* Krishnamacharya was very emphatic that the goal of yoga should be '*mukti* (freedom)' and insisted that one should orient one's practice towards this enlightened state.

भुक्ति-मुक्ति-फले तत्र योगानुष्ठानतो ध्रुवम् ।  
भवतो भगवद्भक्तो मुक्त्यर्थं भजते हरिम् ।  
अन्यस्तु भुक्तिमात्रे तु न तत् शास्त्रेषु सम्मतम् ॥<sup>6</sup>

The fruits of yoga practice can be material or freedom. Those who are devotees praise Lord hari for attaining freedom. Others seek material benefits which are not approved by *śāstra-s*.

#### A) Importance of a teacher

The role of a teacher in *Yoga* has become a matter for compromise today. For various reasons people seek to learn *yoga* through studying books or watching DVDs, by registering for online tutorials etc.

Śrī Krishnamacharya was very clear that *Yoga* must be learned only from a teacher.

गुरुप्रसादनादवे द्वौ योगौ फलदौ स्मृतौ ।  
अन्यथा पतनायालं निग्रहात् श्रीपतेः पदात् ॥<sup>7</sup>

It has been proclaimed that the desired benefits of *bhakti yoga* and *prapatti yoga* can be attained only if the student has the blessings of the guru. Otherwise these practices would incur the displeasure of Lord Śrīpati and would therefore lead the person to a downslide.

#### B) Yoga for women

Should women practice yoga? Today this question is not under much debate. But, during the time of śrī Krishnamacharya, the role of yoga in women's health was not properly understood. He validated the need for women to practice yoga, emphasizing that they possessed a special eligibility for practicing yoga.

<sup>6</sup> bhukti-mukti-phale tatra yogānuṣṭhānato dhruvam ।  
bhavato bhagavadbhakto muktyartham bhajate harim ।

<sup>7</sup> guruprasādanādeva dvau yogau phaladau smṛtau ।  
anyathā patanāyālaṁ nigrahāt śrīpateḥ padāt ॥ (yoga-rahasya 1-7)

अधिकारो विशेषेण स्त्रीणां पुंभ्यो निगद्यते  
सन्तानतरु-विस्तारे स्त्रीशरीरं हि कारणम् ॥<sup>8</sup>

Women, when compared to men, have a special right to practice *Yoga*. This is because it is women who are responsible for the continuity of the humanity.

#### C) Viniyoga (Individualization)

Changes in life style and preferences have brought changes in the world of *Yoga*. Often the general preference today is to sign up for group *Yoga* classes. While, clearly a popular trend, it nevertheless has its disadvantages and risks. Śrī Krishnamacharya was very clear that *Yoga* should be taught on a one-to-one basis only

देहभेदात् देशभेदात् वृत्तिभेदाच्च नैकया ।  
ऋतुभेदाच्च जायन्ते योगास्सङ्गेन सर्वदा ॥<sup>9</sup>

Due to differences in body structure, place of residence, avocations and changing season, diseases arise in human as a result of association (*saṅga*).

Further, Krishnamacharya adds the following in this regard

कालदेशवयोवृत्तिशक्तीर्वीक्ष्य विचाराणात् ।  
योगप्रयोगं कुर्वीत ज्ञानी मौनीजितात्मवान् ॥<sup>10</sup>  
स्थूलः कृशः तथा शुष्कः वक्रः पङ्गुः शरीरतः ।  
अतस्तेषां न सर्वाणि विहितान्यासनानि वै ॥<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> adhikāro viśeṣeṇa strīṇāṁ pumbhyo nigadyate ।

santānataru vistāre strīśarīram hi kāraṇam ॥ (yoga- rahasya 1-14)

<sup>9</sup> dehabhedāt deśabhedāt vṛttibhedācca naikadhā ।

ṛtubhedācca jāyante yogāssaṅgena sarvadā ॥ (yoga-rahasya 1.24)

<sup>10</sup> kāladeśavayovṛttīśaktīrviṅśya vicāraṇāt ।

yogaprayogaṁ kurvīta jñānī maunī jītātmaṁ ॥ (yoga- rahasya 1.30)

<sup>11</sup> sthūlaḥ kṛśaḥ tathā śuṣkaḥ vakraḥ paṅguḥ śarīrataḥ ।

atasteṣāṁ na sarvāṇi vihitānyāsanaṇi vai ॥ (yoga- rahasya 1.31)

He advocated that *yoga* should be tailor-made to suit the individual and not the other way round, as individuals differ in body structure and all *āsanas* are not suitable to everyone.

#### D) Use of Breath in Postures

Many *yoga* practitioners around the world are adept at achieving the target postures, but often do so without integrating the breath. This may cause damage to the body, as the breath is the vital indicator of stability and comfort when doing a posture. Further, breath-movement coordination brings enhanced mindfulness to the practice.

आसनाभ्यसकालेषु निग्राह्याः प्राणवृत्तयः ॥<sup>12</sup>

He very clearly insisted on the use of breath in postures, particularly the 'ujjāyi' technique (throat control), however, at the current capacity of the practitioner.

#### E) Qualification for a True Yoga Teacher

Another important happening in the world of *yoga* today is to take to teaching without proper initiation or practice. This will surely undermine the scientific precision of *yoga* which can only be understood through proper training and practice.

Śrī Krishnamacharya very aptly brings to light the importance of personal practice of a *yoga* teacher.

इत्येवमादिभिः पुंसां योगासननियोजनम् ।

ज्ञात्वा शिक्षेत् गुरुशस्त्रं स्वयमभ्यस्य नित्यदा ॥<sup>13</sup>

The teacher, having understood the *śāstrās* must practice regularly for himself and then teach the prescribed *Yoga* to others.

<sup>12</sup> āsanabhyasakāleṣu nigrāhyāḥ prāṇavṛttayaḥ (*yoga-rahasya* 1.55)

<sup>13</sup> ityevamādibhiḥ puṁsāṁ yogāsananiyojanam

jñātvā śikṣet guruḥ śāstram svayamabhyasya nityadā || (*yoga-rahasya* 2.25)

#### A True Ācārya

Śrī Krishnamacharya left behind a priceless legacy in that he was committed to practicing what he taught, without compromise. Significantly, although he was deeply committed to his personal spiritual lineage, and integrated it in his personal practice of *yoga*, he was equally broad-minded and compassionate to permit his student's ample space to seek and find their own personal spiritual anchors. This is the mark of a true and complete teacher – a *pūrṇācārya*.

#### Conclusion

The true value of *yoga* can be understood and experienced only when it results in a transformation for good at the level of the practitioner. Inappropriate practice of *yoga* can also cause harm.

In the current *yoga* scenario, there are a number of changes taking place in the way that *yoga* is learnt, practiced and taught. It is important that while one respects the broad scope of the dimensions of *yoga* and its dynamics, we also ensure that the true spirit of *yoga* is retained.

It was Krishnamacharya's dream and vision that *yoga* is made accessible to all irrespective of gender or economic status and it is heartening that his dream is fast becoming a reality with a large number of people learning and practicing *yoga* and with many philanthropic institutions also offering free training in *yoga*. It is also significant that nearly 4 decades since its inception, the KYM continues to uphold and put into practice all the aspects of T Krishnamacharya's teachings.