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 prānāyāma 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

Introduction

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 anuṣṭāna-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. “īsvara”. One such teaching lineage in the world of yoga traces its origin to yogi Tirumala Krishnamacharya.

1 Trustee, Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Member, Governing Body of Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, Government of India
Email: laxmidharkan@gmail.com
2 Gurūnī prakāśayet dhitmān mantrartha 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 vaisnavaite saint nāthamuni. His father ran a vedic Gurukula.

Śri 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, śri 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 śri Krishnamacharya became active in the world of yoga, authentic gurus were not many in the plains of the country. He established a yoga-śāla 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 understood

a) on the basis of the tools used,

b) the functions of the tools

c) the results obtained and

d) the users

Śri 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-दृष्टिक-मानस-मैत्रिक विविधं विविधं योगाभ्यासम्।

सकलं कल्याणं वासिष्ठिक-सुखसंपत्तं नि:हि नि:हि योगाभ्याससं विश्वस्य॥

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.

3 ात्मिक-दृष्टिक-मानस-मैत्रिक विविधं विविधं योगाभ्यासम्।

sakalam yacchāti vātikhta-suphalam nahi nahi yogāhāṃ asānāṃ viphalām ।

(yogānihal-sāram 11)
Dimensions of Yoga

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

In śīkṣaṇa-krama, the focus is on doing āsanas 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 āsanas, prāṇāyāma and dhyāna be practiced together and what are the independent and collective use of these three tools? Krishnamacharya explains:

आनन्दकरणातन्त्रं सरसं प्राणायामातः प्रकरं प्राणम्।
धारणांवृत्तं कक्ष मुद्दतं ध्यानं चतुर्दशैं स्थितम्॥४

Practice āsana, make the body light, practice prāṇāyāma, strengthen the prāṇā Practice dharaṇā 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.

गोविण्योगक्रमं प्रेक्ष: स्वतिष्ठत्वमस्वमेव:।
आसनान्तस्य योगस्याशयं कथे भूक्तस्तः॥

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

Krishnamacharya classified the practice of yoga as 'śṛṣṭi-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 (vinyāsas).

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 ensure 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 practicetowards this enlightened state.
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.

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 incure 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.

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6 bhakti-mukti-phale tatra yogānūṣṭhamato dhruvam ānurūtavan buddhato bhagavatābhakti mukṣyartham bhajate harim
7 guruprasādanādeca dvau yogau phalādu smṛtu ānathā patanāyālam nigrāhāt śrīpatēḥ padāt (yoga-rahasya 1-7)

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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 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 it disadvantages and risks. Śrī Krishnamacharya was very clear that yoga should be taught on a one-to-one basis only.

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:

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8 adhikāro viśeṣena striṇāṁ punbhayo nigadyate
9 dehabhedat desahbadheta vrttibhedācca naikadhat
10 tātibhedācca jītyante yogāsāngena sarvadā (yoga-rahasya 1.24)
11 kaladeśavayottīṣaktivikṣya vicātratāt
12 yogaprayoṣam kartāna jānti maunī jātāmavrātānā (yoga-rahasya 1.30)
13 sthulāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ tathā śukṣmaḥ vākraḥ pānguḥ saṁratāḥ
14 atasteṣāṁ na sarvāṇi vihitāṁ yāsamāni vāt (yoga-rahasya 1.31)
Dimensions of Yoga

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.

आत्मन्यस्फलेऽवि निमायाःः प्राणन्तुयः ||

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.

इत्येकदिवम् पुनसं योगाः नमन्येयेनम्।
हात्तर्थिषिं गुरुदासां व्यक्तमात्वय नित्येदा।

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

A True Ācarya
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 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.