

YOGAKSHEMAM *Newsletter*

Bulletin of Yogakshemam (association law 1901)

September 2004

Edition : English website

N° 15

Sri T. Krishnamacharya's informal talks

Characteristics of a true devotee

Hindus call this Era, which started about 7000 years ago, the Era of Kali (Kali Yoga). The beginning of this Era marked the Disappearance of Sri Krishna from this world and the appearance of the Master of the Kali Yuga, Kali Purusha.

According to Kali Purusha himself, under his sway the four noble principles of austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness would gradually vanish to give place to greed, deceit, falsehood, robbery, incivility, treachery, cheating, quarrel, deceit and vanity, and people instead of directing their mind and life towards God and Truth would tend them towards gambling, drinking, lust, intoxication and unreasonable sexual activities.

Kali Purusha hints that in spite of his influence on men, He would not come in the way of any one who develops the following characteristics, because such a person is a true devotee of the Almighty. Truthfulness, cleanliness, intolerance of another's unhappiness, the power to control anger, self-satisfaction, straightforwardness, steadiness of mind, control of sense organs, responsibility, equality, tolerance, equanimity, faithfulness, right knowledge, serenity, kindheartedness, courtesy, magnanimity, joyfulness, fidelity, worship, pridelessness etc.

Hence, one who wants to know Truth or God should not be afraid of developing the above qualities.

(Excerpts from my notes, T.K. Sribhashyam)

The sages have found the Real to be eternal
and the ephemeral to be illusion
and this after their respective study

Bhagavad Gīta II, 16



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Ândâl's Thiruppâvai

Excerpts from an exclusive commentary by Sri T. Krishnamacharya

*Thiruppâvai, in Tamil, the language of Tamil Nadu, is a poetic composition that has the power to lead to devotion.
Thiruppâvai is a call for women to dedicate themselves to devotion*

Poem 11: *You are the daughter of a cowherd, who milks many a milk-cow, subdues and stupefies the arrogant opponents at their boundary, all without a single guilt.*

Your waist is as tiny as that part of the snake adapting to enter into the mouth of a narrow pit. You are as graceful as a wild jungle peacock, dancing in its habitat with spotted wings spread. Start! All neighbour mates have arrived, entered into your courtyard and are singing gracefully in melodious chorus the name of the cloud coloured Krishna.

Yet, you as beautiful as gold, and tender as a creeping plant, beloved bride of our Master and our pet, appear undisturbed and speechless. For what purpose you are sleeping? Listen and consider our damsel.

Andâl recalls that the cows are being milked and the duty of their clan is properly performed. This indicates that a person should not deviate from duties which are prescribed to him according to the rules of his family. Normally one is expected to perform one's duties which are appreciated. Abdication of one's duties is not suggested except when one is performing the most intimate service to the Lord, the regular duties or the duties which are peculiar to the one's family status withers off. It is pertinent to note that the duty is not abdicated by the person who is involved in the service of the Lord but these duties withers off like objects gradually falling from the hand of a sleeping person.

In this poem, a cowherd girl reputed for her exquisite beauty like a golden creeper and born of a very noble family, is woken up. Her father and kinsmen are known for discharging the duties pertaining to their cowherd caste, which entails milking an endless number of cows. So Andal seems to say that performance of one's duty as enjoined in the Scriptures is calculated to bring happiness to the Lord and thereby falls into the category of His Service. One should hence never discard one's duty.

Sri T. Krishnamacharya's commentary:

The analogy of snake and peacock in this poem has three meanings: The snake represents the enemies of God. That is, those who intend to harm His name or His existence are the real enemies of a devotee. As the snake withdraws on the approach of a peacock, so too those who criticise the existence of God wither on the approach of a real Spiritual Master. The second meaning is more

romantic: just as a peacock on opening its feathers and dancing with joy becomes careless of the surroundings, so too, the cowherd girl, as beautiful as a peacock, immersed in the joy of God's vision, is as careless of her position as the peacock. The serpent enjoying the comforts of the freshness of its pit comes out once in a while to feel the heat of the sun and seeing the peacock draws back out of fear, so too, in the beginning of our Divine experience or vision, we draw back, out of fear, into our material comforts.

They are those who even after performing all kinds of services to the Lord, do not expect anything in return except His Supreme Satisfaction and Happiness. Our life will be worth while only if we please the Lord.

This poem of hidden significances can be read as:

O beautiful, who is convinced that Lord Krishna is both the means and the end! Please awake! O Master! Who instil knowledge to good disciples according to their needs and who wash off selfishness and old sins of others by good preaching! O one who is deeply steeped in Bhakti towards the Supreme Soul residing in the midst of this vast Âkâsha! You must come out and join our company. Moreover, those who are servants only to Lord Vishnu, are standing in front of your house, calling forth for your company, at the same time singing the glories of Krishna. O great one! Who possesses the wealth of meditation! For what purpose are you keeping quiet, neither moving a bit nor speaking a word. Please come out and join us so that our vow to be one with the Lord is fulfilled successfully.

Overcoming anger

The normal propensity of the angry man is to injure the victim of his anger with his body, tongue and mind. But the fact remains that the mind is the central agency for setting anger in action through other limbs of the body. Hence it is important to cultivate such a state of consciousness which would not allow the anger to get settled in the mind. Anger activates our body, tongue and mind and in fact hurts the author himself more than the others. To overcome anger, it is necessary to disable the physical anger by controlling the body, calm the verbal anger by thoughtful speech and control the mental anger by controlling the mind. One must also renounce pride, the inclination to social or professional titles, replace the anger with kindness, wickedness with goodness, greed with generosity, and falsehood with truth. In addition, we must accept the criticism of others as an advice.

Food of abuse

A householder refused alms to a mendicant with abusive words. The mendicant asked the householder: 'Sir, if a householder sets food before a beggar, but the beggar refuses to accept the food, to whom does the food then belong?'

The householder replied, 'Why, to the householder of course.'

The mendicant then asked the householder: 'Then if I refuse to accept your abuse and ill-will, it returns to you, does it not?'

The tribulations of a modern man

Modern man lives in a world of over choice. He has a plethora of choices in all possible fields before him. He has advanced in all fields of human activity but is still a baby in the world of spirit. He is confounded by the wide range of experiences in the outer world available to him but what disappoints him is that all of them are short-lived. Even life itself is short. What is required and needed urgently is the recognition of man's inherent goal. There can be no choice in this matter. He must seek his inherent core. Life is not meaningless and purposeless. It is not at the mercy of external forces; it has an inherent, definite goal. And to reach it, is man's birthright. It is only then that there would be a dignity of taking birth as a human being.

The purpose of Life

The purpose of our life is both intrinsic and extrinsic. An extrinsic purpose is what is thought to be so, decided by an external authority. Take for example a fully blossomed flower. It can be used in many ways: as part of a garland for the newly-wed, as a bouquet to greet a visitor or as an offering at the altar of a temple, and many more. All these are not decided by the flower but by the needs and desires of the user. A flower in itself is unconcerned about how it should be used; its blooming is just one of the several stages in its life cycle. To bloom, and aid the plant give more flowers in continuing its life is the intrinsic purpose of a flower. Its extrinsic purpose lies in others' hands. Extrinsic purpose is decided by an external agency; intrinsic purpose is decided by the very nature of a thing.

So too man has two kinds of purposes: extrinsic and intrinsic. Man generally begins his life with the pursuit of an extrinsic purpose. He aims at what others think and guide him as a worthy aim of life. They set the goal for him. Their approval or disapproval sets the tone of his life. He considers the attainment of those objects as the purpose of life. In short, he pursues an extrinsic purpose of life.

The intrinsic purpose of life, however, is revealed to him only when his faculty of thinking becomes keener and he is able to map out the total picture of human life. He, then, realizes the changing nature of life.

In this inner journey of search for truth about life and its purpose, what astonishes man is the fact of true nature of man. Divinity is man's real nature. This divinity is of the nature of complete fulfilment, happiness, peace, and security. It is beyond all frustration, misery, discord and fear. And man's divine nature is the intrinsic purpose of his life. When he realises and lives on the intrinsic purpose of his life, he would be free from fear and death.

What is an outcaste?

An outcaste is the man who is angry and bears hatred, the man who is wicked and hypocritical, one who embraces error, and is full of deceit. Whoever is an instigator, has evil desires, is envious, avaricious, wicked, shameless, and unafraid of wrong doing. Not by birth does one become an outcaste, not by birth does one become a Brahmana, by deeds one becomes an outcaste, by deeds one becomes a Brahmana.

To cultivate faith

If faith is a seed to sow in the field of the soul, the selfless acts are the rain that causes it to germinate. Modesty is plowing. The mind is the bridle of the Cosmic Law. The fervor is the sting, and efforts are buffaloes. Tillage is the herbicide of illusion. The harvest will be the immortal fruit of liberation.

What should one do to prepare for a pleasant death?

In the Maha Bharatha, Bhishma, before his voluntary departure, instructs Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava on how to prepare for a pleasant death:

- One should avoid the three acts that are done with the body:

destruction of life of other creatures, theft and appropriation of what belongs to others.

- One should avoid the four acts that are done with the speech:

Evil conversation, harsh words, talking of other people's faults and falsehood.

- One should avoid the three acts done with the mind:

Coveting the knowledge of others, causing mental injury to others and disbelieving the teaching of the sacred writings or sayings.

The page of Srimathi T. Namagiriammal
(Wife of Sri T. Krishnamacharya)

Ginger

Variety : Fresh ginger and dry ginger.

Habitat and culture : Asia and Southern Europe.

Parts used: Rhizomes.

Preparation method: Fresh peeled ginger, dry ginger powder, dry ginger powder in sesame oil, paste prepared in water or milk, fresh ginger juice, fresh ginger bits boiled in milk and dried, Charcoal-broiled peeled ginger, ground to powder, mixed with honey. Many ayurvedic preparations are triturated in fresh ginger juice.

Ayurvedic properties : Fresh ginger : *Ruksha* (dry, hard, stiff), *Tikshna* (rapid, penetrating, sharp, brisk) and *Guru* (heavy, non digestive). Dry ginger : *Laghu* (light, digestive), *Snigdha* (moistening greasy, viscous, sticky)

Actions : Fresh ginger : Reduces the disorders of Kapha and Pitha. Dry ginger : Reduces the disorders of Vâtha.

External use : Anti-inflammatory and analgesic. Cataplasm of dry ginger powder locally applied relieves swollen joints and rheumatoid arthritis. Mixture of dry ginger powder and sesame oil is used for massage to warm up the body. Paste prepared in water or milk applied on front and abdomen relieves cold and inflammation. Dry ginger powder is slightly rubbed on the skin in excessive swelling and hypothermia. Not to be applied in or around the eyes.

Internal use : Dosage : 1 dose of juice : 2 to 4 cc. ; 1 dose of powder: 0,75 to 1,0 gm.

Digestive system : Appetizer, digestive, antifatulent, anti-hemorrhoidal and antispasmodic. Five or six grated fresh ginger pieces along with pinch of salt is to be taken before meals.

Cardio-vascular system : relieves cardiac debility, cardiac pain, oedema, arthritis. Infusion of five or six pieces of grated fresh ginger.

Geriatrics : Improves memory. Stimulates nervous system. Infusion of five or six pieces of freshly grated ginger with five or six drops of honey.

Respiratory system : Expectorant. Pharyngitis is relieved by chewing ginger. Charcoaled ginger, ground to powder, mixed with honey is effective in asthmatic bronchitis. Licking ginger juice with honey relives cough.

Contra-indications : Dysuria, bleeding disorders, ulcer, pyrexia.

Fresh ginger is used as a condiment in Indian recipes.