

YOGAKSHEMAM *Newsletter*

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The birth of the Yogakshemam Newsletter

Yogakshemam School, created in 1982, is represented in several European countries. You who are students of Yogakshemam, you have many things in common despite of the diversity, the specificity and the individuality of each one of you. Although you have few possibilities to meet and to get to know each other, you cultivate, develop and transmit the same values, thus forming a big united family.

Although you are all studying many similar subjects, every group, every seminar, and every course has its specificities. They do not at all affect the unity of spirit that you maintain, but sharing these specificities will reinforce your unity. Thus was born the idea of a Newsletter.

Yogakshemam is very happy to announce that **Yogakshemam Newsletter** is published in France, Germany, Italy and Greece in their respective languages. **Yogakshemam Newsletter** wishes to be a means of communication between India, your students and your friends. In order to maintain unity, the presentation as well as the contents will be as faithful as possible to the French version.

As a sign of gratitude, the first issue is entirely dedicated to Sri T. Krishnamacharya. We have collected childhood memories of people close to his family. There will be more of those in the forthcoming issues. We hope that you will support the **Yogakshemam Newsletter** in the same manner that you support the teaching of Yogakshemam and that you will give it a similarly long life.

Yogakshemam – Its meaning

T.K. Sribhashyam (5th child of Sri T. Krishnamacharya)

It was in 1982 that I had the idea of founding a Yoga training school that would highlight the importance of Indian Philosophy and the true devotion that my Father held dear. For one entire evening I thought about a name that would fulfil the objectives of this new school. The next morning I was awakened by a verse from the Bhagavad-Gita:

*Ananyâs chintayantômâm yé janâs paryupâsathé
téshâm nityâbhi yuktânama yogakshemam vahâmyaham*

When I announced to my father that this verse had awakened me, he chose the name *yogakshemam* for the school and had the kindness to bless it for an eternal and expansive life.

Thus was *Yogakshemam* born in Europe.

The word *yogakshemam* comes from two words: *yoga et kshemam*. The word *yoga* has many meanings: (1) to unite together, (2) to mix, (3) to create a relationship, (4) meditation, (5) a means, cleverness, (6) success, (7) to dress oneself, enthronement, (8) unexpected riches, new riches, (9) will, (10) medication, (11) physical force, (12) material wealth, (13) the effect of planetary alignment on human beings, (14) the planetary interrelationship in a birth chart, (15) the interaction between the day of the week, solar movement, and the birth star of an individual, (16) the inhibition of the modifications of the mind, (17) the specific power of a combination of words in a sentence, (18) pride, (19) union with God.

Kshema means (1) protection of what has been acquired, (2) happiness, good health, (3) well-being, good omen, (4) protection, (5) liberation. It is also the name of one of the sons of Yama, the god of death.

The word *yogakshemam* means the acquisition of new wealth and its protection. In the same way, having the vision of God and from it obtaining liberation is also *yogakshemam*.

This concept of acquisition, of protecting and maintaining happiness, extends, of course, to what this world offers us, as well as to the happiness of the liberated, or to the Kingdom of God. This notion can be traced to the Veda, but it comes out more directly in the *Thaithiriya Upanishad* and in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In the aforementioned, allusion is made to the supreme happiness that comes from knowing *Brahman*, whereas in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Lord Krishna declares: Those who think of me and of no other, who meditate on My absolute Form, who are constantly united with Me, to those I spontaneously bring all good things.

Sri T. Krishnamacharya, from Muchchukunte to Thirumala

T.K. Sribhashyam

Muchchukunte is a small village in Andhra Pradesh in Southern India. This village in Chitradurga district is close to the state of Karnataka. The word Muchchukunte comes from two Telugu words: "muchchu," meaning "hidden", and "kunta", "a lake". Muchchukunta is a village with a hidden lake.

Muchchukunte is the ancestral home of the family of Sri Krishnamacharya. It is around this village that my father's ancestors had very fertile lands and comfortable houses earned by hard labour and from offerings given by the kings of neighbouring states. All of the forefathers of Sri Krishnamacharya were great devotees of Lord Srinivasa of Thirumala and were so dedicated to Him that they also became the 'people of Thirumala'.

The initial "T" in my father's and all of his children's names, stands for Thirumala, one of the holiest places of India located in Andhra Pradesh, close to Tamil Nadu and about 120 kilometres from Chennai. The word Thirumala comes from "thiru", or "Sri" and "mala", or "small mountain". Thirumala, or "the holy mountain", is the sacred place dedicated to Lord Srinivasa, also called Venkateshwara, Lord of Venkata. Venkata is another name of Thirumala. Surprisingly, Thirumala is a word from the Tamil language and not a word from Telugu, which is the language of Andhra Pradesh. Telugu was the spoken language most beloved of Sri T. Krishnamacharya, next only to Sanskrit! Sri T. Krishnamacharya did not even possess a house of his own in Thirumala. He would only stay in religious monasteries or in a rented hotel room. It was his custom to visit Thirumala once a year, like millions of Hindus do.

While he is better known in the world of yoga as T. Krishnamacharya, he is known, recognized and respected in all the religious institutions and traditional Sanskrit universities as Muchchukunte Krishnamacharya.

Being the eldest son of a large and united family, Sri T. Krishnamacharya was the legal heir to the family properties. To be free of the entanglements and obligations that come with family wealth, he left Muchchukunte to be free to participate in debates, to advance his knowledge, and to teach. He loved to face intellectual and philosophical challenges all over India. He bequeathed his entire

inheritance to his brothers and sisters and cousins. In Thirumala, he “took refuge at the feet of Lord Srinivasa”. In Hindu devotion, asking for protection at the Feet of the Lord is the most important devotional act. Lord Srinivasa is the Lord of Thirumala.

As Muchchukunte Krishnamacharya, as he is still remembered, he was considered an intellectual giant, while as Thirumala Krishnamacharya he is still considered a remarkable spiritual master. In both of these realms he was extraordinary, yet as both Muchchukunte and Thirumala Krishnamacharya, he lived a very simple life, so simple that no one, not even Indians, had ever met someone of such greatness. Nowhere did he possess a house of his own.

He believed with undaunted conviction that when one “takes refuge at the Feet of God”, peace, harmony and contentment would be one’s permanent home.

Was he the ‘hidden lake’ of Muchchukunte?

About Guruji

Sri B. K. S. Iyengar

After initiating me to yoga, my Brother-in-law, Sri T. Krishnamacharya, became my Guru. Consequently, my respect for, and reverence of him render me speechless when I must speak of him.

He was a man of unsurpassed intelligence with an extraordinarily sharp memory; an orator without equal during his time, who could quote published or unpublished texts to establish his logic of the Darshana. Even learned scholars did not know his quotations, having no idea of where they had come from. He was not, however, a very gifted writer.

I have known him as a Pandita (a learned person), as a gardener, a woodcutter, a great cook, a master of astrology. I have heard him as a musician, superbly playing his Veena (a musical instrument), and as a chanter of the Veda, perfectly recited. I do not know the limits of his knowledge. Often I have seen the genius in him.

I have observed in him both the kindness of a saint and the hardness of a devil. His way of living was very simple. He was quite happy wearing a loincloth (called a langot); and I often saw him go shopping in this attire, in spite of the scolding of my Sister, his wife. One morning in the 1930’s, he was very harsh with me. He awakened me to water the plants. I got up, turned on the faucet to fill the tank. I then sat on the parapet of the reservoir. He came out, saw me sitting down, asked me to leave the house, and went back indoors. Knowing his nature, I took his words literally, and, as he went in, I went out of the garden. It was still very dark. Having no friends or relatives close by in Mysore, I decided to drown myself in the Kaveri River in Sri Rangapattana. That was around twenty kilometres from Mysore. I strolled in the palace gardens. As the sun was rising, I was walking toward the Kaveri River, desperate to end my life.

My Brother-in-law became worried when he didn’t see me return. So he took one of the King of Mysore’s uncle’s cars and started out searching for me. He must have anticipated that I would be on the road to Sri Rangapattana, for he found me halfway there, picked me up, and brought me back home.

The only question that he asked me was “Why are you here?” I answered him that I wanted to commit suicide to end my life of slavery. He didn’t speak during our trip back.

If I had committed suicide, the yoga that I had learned and practiced would be lost today.

Several days later, he asked me to accept the position of yoga teacher in Pune, near Mumbai, where I have remained ever since!

My father’s medicine

- *Srimathi T. Alamelu Sheshadri*

It was an evening in 1938. I was probably 6 years old. After school hours and playtime, father’s first three children (my eldest sister Srimathi Pundarikavalli, my younger brother Sri T. Srinivasan and I) were to listen to the Vedic recitation chanted by some of father’s students. That was

the method of training small children in those days, to make learning easy and appealing. Father was there to rectify the mistakes.

While the class was in progress, a stranger with a little boy on his shoulders came running in all of a sudden. The boy's face was pale blue and he was gasping for breath. I thought, the boy would die then and there.

He placed the young boy on my father's lap, prostrated himself before my father, and prayed my father to save his son. Father took his pulse. He told me to get some warm pepper rasam from my mother. I returned with some rasam in a glass and give it to father, who was still taking the boy's pulse. The image of this boy lying there, while my father took his pulse and recited prayers, gave me the impression that he was transferring his own life force (prâna shakthi) to the child. My father fed the boy small quantities of the rasam. I couldn't believe my eyes: The boy started breathing and his blue pallor disappeared. A few minutes later, he got up from my father's lap, managed to stand, and started walking slowly. We were all stunned. The boy's father was speechless. With tears in his eyes he bowed down before my father.

The therapeutic method used by my father to cure illness still remains a mystery to me.

Pepper rasam: An herbal tea made of pepper powder, powered cumin seeds, a small quantity of jaggery, salt, and curry leaves. This mixture is boiled in water containing diluted tamarind pulp for about five minutes.

My Childhood Memories

T.K. Desikachar (4th child of Sri T.K. Krishnamacharya)

One day in the 1940's, my Father asked me to go to Yogashâla (Yoga School) in Mysore. Because I was playing with my friends, I replied "No." He tried to catch me, but I climbed one of the eight coconut trees in our garden. He waited for a moment, then left. Later when he returned, he caught me and tied me up in the Baddha Padma Asana (the Bound Lotus position) with a fine cord. An hour later he untied me. One night after this incident he brought us all to the cinema called 'Chandralekha.' I remember this because there were many circus acts. It was difficult to believe that my Father had brought us to the cinema.

One day my Father and I were walking in the street. Brahmans were walking towards us from the opposite direction. The minute that they saw my Father, they ran away. I asked my Father why they had run away. He replied that they were afraid of him because he had corrected their Veda recitation during a religious ceremony that had been held recently. Later I learned that they were Ghanapâtis (Masters of Vedic chanting).

Once, as a game, we were throwing stones at passers-by. We saw a man coming in our direction who was balancing a bale of hay on his head. We thought that he was a farmer. In fact, when he had come sufficiently close to see him, we recognized my Father, who was carrying the hay for his cow. We ran off!

A Day in the Life of My Father-in-law, Sri T. Krishnamacharya

Claire Sribhashyam

When I began visiting my parents-in-law, my Father-in-law was already quite old and living according to his own rhythm: he woke at 4 am and went to bed around 7 pm.

One of my most beautiful memories is of being awakened every morning near 4 am by the sound of a bell announcing the beginning of his prayers. This daily morning ritual that went on for an hour and a half was like a great festival for me. Sometimes I woke a bit earlier and waited for the bell to sound.

A little later in the morning, my Mother-in-law got up to go open the door for the milkman, who brought us milk every morning, shouting 'Pâl, pâl' under our windows ('pâl' means milk in Tamil). Then she prepared coffee for all and, one by one, we got up.

At the end of his long prayers, my Father-in-law would prepare his own breakfast: grilled wheat semolina cooked in water with spices. He would share this preparation with the children before being seated on the veranda to eat. He then spent some time reading the newspapers of the day while

waiting for his students. Sometimes he would go to his room to read or give lessons. From time to time he came to see me, to talk with me, to play with my daughter, Sumitra, or to give me advice about young children.

In the afternoon, he liked to sit under the veranda to eat a piece of fruit, often an orange or some grapes. He never ate without first giving some to the children, young or old.

At the end of the afternoon, around 6 pm, he would sit on the garden swing to observe the world. Then he would go to bed around 7 pm after having drunk a glass of milk with saffron. Everyone was careful not to make too much noise so as not to disturb him. And, at 4 am the next day, it was he who started the new day by ringing his bell.

From the beginning of my travels to India, he always had the same precise schedule. If at 4 am I did not hear him, then a small worry would take hold of me! I got out of bed to see what he was doing. Smiling broadly like he knew that I was worried, he told me that on that particular day he was late.

My Father's Cleverness

Mrs. Shubha Mohan Kumar.

I consider this opportunity to recall my childhood memories of my parents as blessings showered upon me. I am the last born (6th) of my parents, Prof. T.Krishnamacharya and Srimathi . Namagiriammal. I was born 11 years after my brother, T.K. Sribhashyam. So you can well imagine how I was pampered and loved by all in our family; I was treated as a VIP. That was my childhood, with very affectionate parents and adorable siblings. My life spent with my parents is only composed of unforgettable memories which I cherish above all.

I would like to share with you one of my favourite childhood memories concerning my father. It happened in 1959-60, while I was in 2nd or 3rd year of school. Very often I enjoyed sitting next to my father while he taught his classes. In those days he would go to Triplicane (an old quarter of Madras) to give yoga lessons to a family. He would call me to accompany him. Initially I would refuse, so as not to deprive myself of playtime with my girlfriends in the neighbourhood. So he bought me a magnificent kurtha and pyjama (traditional costumes of Northern India) in red satin to encourage me to accompany him. Like any child, I stopped answering his call after several days. He then promised to buy me new clothes if I would accompany him again. To give his lessons at his students homes, he would very often take a rickshaw (a type of carriage with a front like a bicycle), a popular means of transportation at that time. The rickshaw ride took roughly 30 to 40 minutes, and during the entire trip my father and the rickshaw driver would discuss Indian politics which didn't interest me. I spent my time wondering what article of clothing I would buy to show my girlfriends. My father's lesson lasted for an hour or more. He would ask me to demonstrate different Asanas. I was impatient for the class to end. Finally, as promised, my father would take me to the novelty store or the clothing shop. He would reward me with a bead necklace, or rubber/plastic bangles. Like any little girl, I liked these things mainly because they were so colourful and attractive. Every time I was reluctant to go because I was busy playing with my friends in the neighbourhood, he would lure me, so to speak, by saying "...you can have the gift of your choice". He was never displeased, nor angry, and he never refused my choice! In time, it became routine for me to accompany my father in the rickshaw (with or without a gift), to demonstrate Asanas, listen to the tales he narrated, and visit the shops; all unforgettable moments in my life.

Because I was too young, I did not realise why my father insisted so much that I accompany him. Now I see that he wanted his children to be near him, not only during our family life, but during his lessons or conferences, as well. He was a father who never refused my requests, as nonsensical as some of them may have been. My happiness was of the utmost importance to him. As you know, Sri T. Krishnamacharya was a very well-known man; nevertheless, he was a simple father, loving and affectionate.

A Memorable Event With My Grandparents - Navarâtri Festival

- *Srimathi Sribhagyam Srinivasan (grand-daughter of Sri T. Krishnamacharya)*

For a child, any festival presents vivid images of splendour and grandeur, of fun and frolic. For a small girl, the festival of Navarâtri, also called the Autumn Festival of Nine Nights, was the most endearing one. It was especially full of gaiety and piety, because I would celebrate it with my grandparents in Madras.

Navarâtri is celebrated to mark the victory of Lord Sri Râma, hero of the epic Râmâyana, over Râvana, the terrible demon king. In summary, it is a victory of good over evil.

The house was finely decorated during this festival. The major attraction for me was the exhibition of dolls of all types; with the king and queen given the place of honour, arranged on well-decorated shelves where small fountains, plants, and flowers were esthetically placed. A sacred silver pot, called Kalasha, accompanying a coconut surrounded by mango leaves, is placed in the centre of the top shelf. This represents the Goddess of Victory. I can never forget the whole-hearted involvement of my Uncle Sribhashyam. He would often come up with new ideas to make the decorations more artistic.

The delicious lunches prepared by Grandmother for everyone, including Grandfather's students, were simply superb! The offerings to the Goddess of Victory were very special for me, as I used to be with her during her prayers.

For my Grandfather, these nine days were days of severe austerity, special prayers, and of reading the epic Râmâyana for six to eight hours per day, with explanations of each chapter for all who came to listen. The fact that he could do so much at his age, without modifying his daily routine, shows his perseverance, dedication and will-power!

The culmination of this nine-day-long festival of Navarâtri was held on the tenth day, with the celebration of the coronation of Lord Sri Râma. The prayers of my Grandfather created a divine atmosphere, and I felt the presence of God in the whole house.

These precious moments spent with my Grandparents when I was six years old (1965), still resonate in me to this day.

Cooking Recipe

The Daily Drink of Sri T. Krishnamacharya

Almond Milk

Ingredients:

25 centilitres of milk
2 green cardamom pods
2 spoonfuls of powdered almonds
2 filaments of saffron
Sugar to taste

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

- Soak the saffron filaments in a small quantity of warm water for 20 minutes
- Crush the two green cardamom pods
- Add the crushed cardamom pods and the saffron water to the milk
- Bring the milk to a boil
- Add the almond powder and the sugar
- Boil for 5 minutes while stirring the mixture
- Let the milk cool a bit
- Drink warm