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The power of “not-knowing” (*avidya*)

Make the unreal seem like the real and the real like the unreal is the great power of not knowing (*avidya*).

Those who dream can “see” jugs become pieces of fabric. What is far seems close, like a mountain reflected in a mirror. What lasts long seems to pass in a second. Impossible things occur in dreams, like for example assisting to one’s own death. The unreal becomes real like when one dreams that one is flying through the sky. What is perfectly stable, like the earth for example, seems to become unstable because of the illusion caused by vertigo. What is still seems to start moving, like the mind excited by drunkenness. When it is overwhelmed with its own latent desires, the mind doesn’t take long to perceive in the outside world what it has mentally created. These mental creations are neither real nor unreal. Once *avidya* (not knowing) operates in the mind under the shape of “I” and “you”, the mind dives in a flow of illusions without any beginning, middle nor end. That simple mental imaging is enough to put all things upside down: one second (*kshana*) expands to the dimensions of an eon (*kalpa*)...

The social activities in which men deploy great efforts add up one to the other randomly because they all derive from individual latent desires.

Thus all is possible for the “not knowing”.

T.K. Sribhashyam

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Invocation to Peace
OM
May He protect us
May He rule over us
May our work be effective
May our studies be of splendid vigour
May we not hate
OM ! Peace ! Peace ! Peace !

"The one who practices duty, interest and pleasure at a given time, and grants them their due parts, he is a king. But the one who abandons himself to pleasure, neglecting duty and interest, he, like a man sleeping on a tree top, will wake up when he falls."

Râmâyana XXXVIII

Andal's Thiruppâvai (n° 2)

Excerpts from an exclusive commentary by Sri T.Krishnamacharya

Poem 2 : You girls, privileged to enjoy the best in life on this earth, listen to the rituals we go through, as duty bound for our deity.

We chant the glory of the feet of the Supreme Lord, Nârâyana, who had reposed on the milky ocean of bliss (yoga nidra).

We bathe early in the morning, we fast and have restricted diet.

We will not relish ghee or milk nor preparations made of these.

We will not kemp our hair and adorn with beautiful flowers.

We will not grace our eyes with eyeliner.

We will not indulge in unrighteous activities, nor go around and whisper malicious gossip during this period.

We shall help the worthy and poor by gifts.

We will engross our pleasant mind with study and songs to achieve the goal of obtaining the desire of Krishna.

Listen and consider, our damsel.

Here in this poem, Ândâl reminds the code of conduct to be followed during the period of vow. The six forbidden acts are:

- taking the ghee, the milk,
- decorate the eyes,
- put the flowers on the hair,
- activities forbidden by the elders
- enter into malicious discussions.

The six acts to be followed are:

- bathe early,
- keep a pleasant mind,

- study the story of Nârâyana and his incarnations,
- help the worthy by gifts,
- help the poor by giving alms
- worship the feet of the Supreme Lord Nârâyana.

Many expressions of this poem contain hidden meanings. 'privileged to enjoy the best in life on this earth' also means 'you are fortunate to experience the experience of God.' 'will not kemp our hair....' Means that 'we would follow that course which He imposes and not necessarily that which pleases to us'. 'We will not use eyeliners' means 'we would not follow the path of Jnâna Yoga merely because it might please men. 'We will not indulge in unrighteous activities....', in fact means that 'we would not follow the methods that our great Masters had not practised. 'Nor go around and whispher...', in spite of our anguish 'we will not use harsh words or scolding remarks when we meet others'. Finally, 'we shall help the worthy...', means that we should not be contente with the meagre gift that we offer to poor and worthy.

Ândâl explains the five ways of dedicating Atma to the Supreme Lord Nârâyana. The six acts to be followed are meant to facilitate our determinaiton to reach God. The six forbidden acts are the subsidiary means to the above six. Keeping a pleasant mind is to cultivate great faith that whoever 'earns for His Feet" with a pleasant mind would not be let down. In Bhagavad Githa, Sri Krishna assures the devotees that he would not let them down, even if they call for him for material benefits. Offering gifts is like praying for protection, just as we extend our protection to the needy by offering gifts, same way the Lord protects us when we offer to the needy who are his devotees. Just as we cannot follow the path towards God without the help of our Masters, so too Atma cannot protect himself unaided. And finally, studying the life of Nârâyana and his incarnations is total submission and surrender to His Feet.

Sri T.Krishnamacharya, like his forefathers, refer these six parts to the six limbs of Bhakthi Yoga called Shadanga Yoga (*shat* = six, *anga* = limbs, *yoga* = way to God realization). These six limbs are also considered as the six parts of *dvaya mantra* (or the *Nârâyana Mantra*). This mantra runs as follows: *srîman nârâyana charanau sharanam prapadyé srîmathé nârâyanâya namaha*.

Devotion according to Anjaneya

Sri Badarinath, Chief Priest, Sri Râmânjaneya temple, Bangalore

The Lord of the Universe took many incarnations to improve mankind. Amongst them, the incarnation of Sri Râma and Sri Krishna are not only very important but also the complete. To protect the entire mankind, without going against the teachings of Veda, Sir Râma and Sri Krishna applied and preached respectively the path of work and the path of knowledge. Both of them showed and proved that man can follow these principles in spite of many difficulties that he faces in his daily life and thus they became a model to one and all both in India and across the seas.

It is fruitless to do any action without following the teaching of Path of Action and that of Knowledge. Many great scholars studied the great epic Râmâyana in

different angles and came to the conclusion that it is the most beautiful work while being highly spiritual. To the betterment of the entire mankind, the Lord (Sri Rama) showed the best way available to them, i.e., *sharanâgati* or the act of taking refuge in the Almighty.

There are two ways to know God: Bhakti Yoga and Sharanâgati Yoga. Even if there are other ways to know Him, these are the only two ways that offer to mankind the experience of Liberation. Bhakti Yoga needs plenty of conviction and steadfast courage and it is almost to those who live a saintly life. For others, taking refuge in the Supreme God is not only the most suitable way, but it also responds to his exigencies of life.

According to an epic story, when a demon king (Hiranyâkshya) stole the Veda and hid under the seabed, the Supreme Lord took the Boar Incarnation. At that time, the mother Earth told Lord Varâha (the Boar) the difficulties that her children, the mankind, face in this world: the weakness of the human mind and their lack of memory have made them the victim of the cycle of births and deaths. She asked the Lord to provide her a simple means so that she could preach her children. The Lord blessed the mother Earth with the teachings of *sharanâgati*, the act of taking refuge in God. He further said that whoever takes refuge in Him during the time man's body and mind are still in working condition what ever be his condition, even at the time of death, He will certainly provide him refuge and free him from all the miseries of this universe. Lord Varâha further said that who ever offers his entire soul to Him, and meditates on His Form, what ever be the form man chooses, he will be freed from the cycle of rebirths.

Once upon a time, a great sage Bharata was very much devoted to Lord. Till the end of his life, he was conducting all his actions with love and sincerity and was offering all his actions to the Lord. Just before his last breath, he saw a pregnant deer trying to cross a river. Sage Bharata thought over the difficulties the pregnant deer would face to cross and breathed his last. In spite of all his devotion to Lord, he was reborn as a deer.

If such were the way for a great sage like Bharata, what would be our fate, we who are slaves to the objects of experience? (to be cont.)

Birth!

European Association of students and friends of Yogakshemam

We are happy to announce the creation of the European Association of students and friends of YOGAKSHEMAM

This association is born out of the desire to create a unifying link between all European students of Yogakshemam. The seat of the Association is in Belgium. A secretariat informing about the activities of Yogakshemam will soon be effective. We will communicate the phone number, fax and an email address.

Following are the objectives of the Association:

- "- all activities directly or indirectly related to the transmission of traditional Indian teaching, yoga, philosophy, culture (music, dance, mythology), civilization, Indian medicine (Ayurveda).

- Improvement of human resources management in relations to quality of life
- Support of the transmission of the teaching of Yogakshemam school.
- Participation in all activities linked directly or indirectly with the objectives
- It can, in particular, offer its help and contribution for activities similar to its own ones.

We will inform you how to become member. We will invite you to inform us of all your activities (courses, conferences, seminars) related to the objectives of the Association. We wish to have a coordination centre for each country.

The founding members

I am very happy that this association has finally come into existence. It is through your united efforts that the principles of Yogakshemam will be kept alive in Europe. Your sincerity, respect, love and admiration for the traditional Indian philosophical, cultural and spiritual values will make it possible for your students and friends, in Europe and anywhere else, to appreciate and follow these traditional values without losing their own ones. I pray to God for a long life of this Association anchored in union and honesty. I am convinced that our rishis (Indian Sages) have already blessed you.

T.K. Srihashyam

Technical Sheet: Pathology and specific pedagogical indications for Yoga

- by Doc. Carpentier Nancy, medical doctor, in collaboration with her teacher Sri T.K.Srihashyam
- Free hand translation

Sheet No. 2: Gastroduodenal ulcer (continuation)

The asana are presented in alphabetical order:

- Apana Asana (also called Pavana Muktha Asana)
- Ardha Chandra Asana
- Ardha Sethu Bandha Asana
- Baddha Kona Asana. Particularly beneficial with Shitali Prânâyâma
- Bhagiratha Asana
- Bhujanga Asana, with movement, take position of the Asana on breathing out
- Danda Asana, with the back against the wall
- Gômukha Asana
- Maha Mudra. Introduce breath retention after breathing in. It is favourable to practice with Shitali Prânâyâma.
- Parvatha Asana
- Parigha Asana
- Shvâna Asana, with movement
- Suptha Pâda Angushta Asana, to be practiced with the stretched legs against the wall
- Tchatushpâda Pitam
- Thâda Asana

- Upavishta Kona Asana
- Vajra Asana without bending
- Sarvânga Asana
- Shîrsha asana
- In case of ulcer due to stress, start and finish the practice session by meditation or concentration Nâsâgra
- The teacher has to take into consideration the general health condition as well as the contra indications specific to the student

Recommended Prânâyâma:

- Shîтали
- Ujjâyi Prathiloma

Contra indications for yoga practice:

- Practising of Asana with a twist at the level of the epigastria
- Lateral bending with twisting
- Kapâlabhâti (also called Bhastrika)
- Uddiyâna Bandha
- Variations in Shîrsha Asana and in Sarvânga Asana with bending the flexed legs (Akunchana Asana) and with torsion (Parivrithi)
- Holding of breath for more than 5 sec. after breathing out in Asana and Prânâyâma
- Voluntary prolonging of breathing out in Asana

General indications

- Do not give more than two Asana on the stomach in one practice session
- Start the Asana on the stomach while breathing out and come back while breathing in
- The duration of breathing out should not exceed one and a half the time the duration of breathing in
- No holding of the breath in the Asana on the stomach

Diet measures and food hygiene

A lifestyle which synchronizes food intake and digestive secretion, i.e. meals should be taken at the times when gastric secretions are at their maximum: 2 hours after getting up, between 12 and 2 pm and between 6.30 and 8 pm at the latest.

Avoid icy cold, peppered and spicy food, raw vegetables; do not take ready made preparations with tomatoes, replace them with fresh, peeled and cooked tomatoes.

Reduce as much as possible, the intake of red meat, food with rich sauces heavy to digest, gratins and cooked cheese, fried food.

Avoid mustard and vinegar.

Do away with alcoholic drinks and lemonades containing a lot of citric acid.

Make sure you drink a lot of water, give preference to starchy food : pasta, rice, semolina, potatoes.

“Subtle is the duty of good people and yet, there is nothing else more important to be known, oh monkey: the Soul who resides in the heart of all beings knows what is good and what is bad.”

Râmâyana Ch. XVIII

Devotion and the Christian religion (2)

– Isabelle OTT, Pastor, President of the Synodal Council

Spirituality in the Orthodox religion

One of the characteristics of the Orthodox religion is the importance it attaches to the concept of **mystery**. Whereas the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions focus on the immanence of the Divine, that is of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ (particularly since the Second Vatican Council), the liturgical ceremonies of the Eastern Christian Church clearly convey a sense of mystery and the transcendental. This takes the form of symbolism, iconography, sounds and smells (incense) which put the believer in touch with a reality that transcends the ordinary world. Orthodox churches have developed a liturgical wealth which often fascinates many people in the West.

The **Jesus Prayer**, or prayer from the heart, is the cornerstone of Eastern Christian spirituality. *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner* – this phrase is repeated like a mantra, taking on the rhythm of and becoming one with a person's breathing, even during sleep, and leading many Christians towards contemplation of the divine. It is a question of becoming prayer, being prayer incarnate and transforming one's life into liturgy. Orthodox clergymen often cite the story of a tanner. In haste of a morning, this very simple man nevertheless took the time to recommend all the inhabitants of his town to God, saying: "Have pity on us sinners". Throughout the day, during his work, his soul was constantly aware of all his actions being like an offering: "For thee, my Lord!" And in the evening, he expressed all his joy at having survived another day by saying "Glory be to thee!" The most modest task and the creation of a genius are both accomplished as an offering to God, as an assignment from the Holy Father.

Icons play an important role in the devotion and liturgy of Eastern Christians. Icons do not represent a saint as being divine but as a participant in divine life, as somebody who has become a true icon, an image of God. The faithful kiss this image because the Holy Ghost, which inspired saints throughout their lives, lives on in their mortal remains, even after their death. From this belief stems the worship of relics, in their writings and in their holy images. Icons are the concrete expression of the faith of Eastern Christians in theosis or the process of becoming god. They believe that the very purpose and destiny of Christians is to participate in the life of God himself. Saints are seldom shown in profile but always face on, so believers can converse with them and derive hope, strength and encouragement from them. In this way, Orthodox Christians find the serenity that enables them to believe in victory over internal division and chaos, in each and every individual and in the world. These windows on the infinite convey a spiritual reality, showing us a body which perceives what normally escapes our attention: the spiritual world (to be continued).

Tulasi, Vishnu's spouse on earth

Ocimum Basilicum or Ocimum sanctum, commonly called tulsi, grows in the courtyard of all Hindu houses since it is considered the holiest and most useful plant. The Vedic name for tulasi is surasa (su = the best, rasea = juice, plant essence).

The tulasi grows everywhere, even on sandy grounds and in arid areas. There exist two types of Tulsi plants, the Râma tulasi with light green leaves and the Krishna tulasi with dark green leaves. Both types of Tulsi are necessary for the adoration of Vishnu.

Vishnu had three spouses: Sarasvathi, Lakshmi and Ganga. Once Sarasvathi and Lakshmi had a terrible quarrel and cursed each other. The curse that Sarasvathi threw onto Lakshmi transformed the latter into a tulasi plant, forced to live forever on earth. However Vishnu intervened and said: "Lakshmi, you will be the sacred tulasi in this world and when the curse will come to its end you will come back to me." That's why Vishnu is always venerated with tulasi leaves. In addition, the tulasi plant is itself venerated with an identical respect.

It is said that the roots of the tulasi contain all the pilgrimage places, its centre all the deities and its superior branches all the Vedas. Ritually, tulasi has remained integral part of hindu worship.

For daily worship, the tulasi is usually planted on a small sandy mound called brindâvanam, or on a square pillar of approx. one meter height with a hollow space on top to put earth and plant. The four (eight) sides of the pillar are facing the four (eight) cardinal points. While watering the plant one prays to the goddess Tulasi.

In the temples of Krishna, tulasi leaves are offered to the devout person as prasâda (gift from God).

Widows celebrate tulasi for salvation, young girls for finding a good husband, husbands for the well-being of their children and elderly people to obtain a place in paradise. Tulasi leaves are put on the face, the eyes, the ears and the chest of a dying person to assure his passage to paradise. To offer tulasi leaves to Vishnu pleases him more than any other offering. For Hindus the touching of tulasi is equal to meditation. The faithful of Vishnu believe that wearing a garland of tulasi grains (tulasi mâlâ) will bear the fruit of yajna (sacrifices).

Hindu medicine (Ayurveda) declares the plant having numerous medicinal properties. The leaves have a sweet aroma and are being used as a medicine against cough and cardiac tonic. To chew some leaves after a meal helps digestion. To add some leaves to water helps preventing germination and pollution. The leaves are also used as antidote for lunar and solar eclipses.

How the first man died

- a story from Mahârâshtra

In some regions of Mahârâshtra, people believe that death came to man because he humiliated Mother Earth.

Life on earth was created by Mahâdeva (the Great God) and Ganga, the original self-created couple who set about sowing seeds 'got from squirrels and ants'. After they had finished their work, life began to proliferate on earth, so much so that the horns of the cattle touched each other and the branches of trees got entangled.

The burden became unbearable for the Mother Earth. She sought the help of Pandu, one of the gods, in charge of mankind. Pandu, instead of helping her kicked her and insulted her. Enraged by this, Mahadeva allotted the Kingdom of Death to Pandu. Pandu fled from Death; the faster he ran, the sooner it caught up with him. Even at the bottom of the seven seas he could not escape it and finally, he had to die. This is how the first man died. Otherwise, human beings were like snakes – the old skin used to disappear and new skin used to come up.

Origin of logic

an Indian story

A deer ran into the shanty of a wise man accomplishing a ritual. A few minutes later, a hunter arrives and asks the wise man if he has seen his prey. As the wise man was hesitating between saving the deer and telling the truth, the hunter asked him to at least indicate him the direction in which the deer had left.

The wise man answered instantaneously: " O Great Man, which direction should I show you? Sight is the fact of eyes while it's the mouth that speaks. You are asking to speech if it has seen your prey. How could one that doesn't see answer? How could the one that cannot speak answer? Therefore I am unable to answer to you."

The hunter left the wise man not knowing where the deer was gone. A new science, that of logic, was born out of the words of the wise.

The wise man is Gothama, the author of Indian logic.

"Do not give in to discouragement : nothing is more fatal than discouragement; discouragement kills men like the irritated snake kills the child. The one who tolerates discouragement when the moment requires courage, he, deprived of energy, loses the goal of his life"

Râmâyana Ch. IXIV

The Bhagavad Guitha and yoga (2)

- T.K. Sribhashyam

In the Bhagavad Guitha, yoga activities insinuate two types of mental efforts: the efforts through which one detaches himself from the sensory attractions towards which one is spontaneously attracted, the efforts to elevate the spirit towards

transcendental aims. When doing those efforts, the *yogi* (the one that wants to know *paramathma*) progresses in four steps:

- 1° he fulfils his duties according to the instructions of the holy scriptures,
- 2° he fulfils his duties avoiding any motivation of personal interest or personal pleasure,
- 3° he dominates his inferior motivations and gets in touch with his superior self,
- 4° finally he dedicates himself to meditative concentration to get united to *paramathman*.

Contrarily to the ideal of Patanjali's yoga in which the yogi is lead to living without food and drink and to mastering all the movements of the body and the mind, the Baghavad Guitha dictates a "golden midway" of moderate food, drink, sleep, body movements and activities in general. The aim of the Guitha is to get the mind or the soul to communicate with the superior self or God.

Curiously, even-though the Guitha refers to Pranayama in the sixth chapter that is nearly entirely dedicated to the practice of yoga and the behaviour of the practising person, it doesn't say much about Pranayama.

In the fifth chapter, Sri Krishna indicates that every motion of the senses and the control of the life movements (prana karmani) are like sacrifice to the fire of self control. He defines pranayama as an offering of prana to apana and of apana to prana but doesn't indicate any precise technique.

As pranayama is associated with meditation since the times of Vedas, it is possible that Sri Krishna might not have insisted on the technique. However, in the fifth chapter he refers to prana in bhrumadhya (space between the eyebrows) or on the top of the skull.

Sri Krishna says that a yogi is united to God when he concentrates his mind on his superior self and when he is totally detached from any desire. Through his efforts to reach this union to God, he detaches his mind from any other object, and perceiving his self within himself, he remains in peace and satisfied. It is in that instant the he enjoys absolute bliss, transcending every sensory pleasure thanks to his pure mind, and fixed into God, he is never separated from God. Moreover, he would like the still flame of a lamp in a quiet place, indifferent to any attraction or passion.

The yogi who reaches this superior state of union of himself with God is said to be in contact with Brahman.

Reflections of an Indian youth

- *R.S. Girish (Systems Engineer), Bangalore*

Waking up in the morning, going to office, coming back home late in the evening, have dinner and then end the day by sleeping, most of my days seem to be monotonous. Well it's just a part of trying to be contemporary, not to be left behind in this rapidly changing world.

While in Canada for over six months, I felt that I am no longer able to follow my customs and traditions. I couldn't go to the temples often, as I used to visit in India, neither could I go to temple on very important festive days, whereas in India I would have visited temples. Belief, faith in God and devotion is still alive in me, but then not visible to others. Back home in India it used to be a bit different, our tradition

and belief in God was visible. Going to temples on auspicious days with my family, being a part of puja (ritualistic prayers), which was being performed at home by elders, seeing the rituals being performed were delights. Staying in Canada and living away from India and my family, I now realize the value of these rituals. I realized that I did not do anything out of my way and put an effort to get my tradition along with me.

This is probably what is happening to today's youth in India. They have devotion, but then that extra bit of effort to carry their tradition is lacking. Be it that they were negligent, lazy or in some cases obliged by the family to follow the tradition. The moment they leave India, tradition was no more in them. It is sometimes not easy to follow our traditions to a great extent in a country, where the culture is entirely different from ours. But there are certain aspects in our traditions, which have no barriers which could be followed.

Certainly, each individual has his own beliefs and the rights to lead his life in his own way, but he shouldn't hide himself under the umbrella of lie saying that, it's impossible to be what we were in India. He could, at least put to practice those values, which he could have carried with him or her.

It's left to today's individual who is caught in the busy world, being the slave of money and materialistic needs, to realize the true essence of life. I do not want to lie saying that I am not one of them.

To mislead to a horse is like killing one hundred parents; to mislead to a cow, like one thousand; to mislead to one's own person is like destroying oneself as well as one's family"

Râmâyana Ch. XXXIV

The page of Srimathi T. Namagiriammal

(Wife of Sri T. Krishnamacharya)

Âpam

Âpam (rice pancake) is a very well known dish and is often prepared in Tamil Nâdu.

Ingredients:

White rice	2 cups
Salt	1 teaspoon
Grated coconut	100 grams

Wash the rice and soak it for 4 hours in lukewarm water. Drain it. Crush the rice to get a fine paste. Take two spoons of this paste and add 1 cup water. Cook till it becomes thick. Let the sticky mass cool down and add the rest of the paste. Add salt and let it ferment over night. The next day, boil a cup of water and soak the grated coconut in it for one hour. Crush the coconut with the water for about 20 seconds, with short interruptions. Extract the milk and add it to the paste to thin it.

Heat a frying pan. Apply a cloth soaked in sesame or peanut oil. Add one ladle of paste and spread it to a fine layer on the circumference of the pan, leaving it spongy in the middle. Cover the pan and let it cook for one minute. Gently remove and serve with mashed potatoes or jam.