

About Sri T. Krishnamacharya, My Guru

By RAMASWAMI, Trustee Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, MADRAS.

*Srimate Anantaya Nagara-
jaya Namō Namaha*

*Asmadacharyebhyas Sarvebhyo
Namō Namaha.*

Sri T. Krishnamacharya is one of India's best known living authorities of Yoga and Hindu Sastras in general. Born in the village of Muchukunte, in Karnataka State in 1892, he hails from the family of the Yogi Nathamuni, who lived during the 7th and 8th centuries of our era and is remembered for such works as *Yoga Rahasya* and *Yoga Tathva*. As a boy, Sri Krishnamacharya's teacher was his father, Srinivasa Tatacharya, a priest and a religious teacher, who gave his son a thoroughly traditional education and had begun instructing him in the elements of Yoga when his untimely passing away interrupted his deep study, unfortunately. At the age of twelve, therefore, Sri Krishna made his way to Mysore City and there joined



the Mysore Maharaja's Sanskrit College. At the same time he took up the study of Sanskrit grammar (Vyakarna) and logic (nyaya) under Krishna Brahmatantra, the Swami of Parakala Mutt and the Guru of the Maharaja.

After five years of study, he wended his way to Kashi and continued his studies under the great

scholars, Vamanacharya Bhattacharya, Ganganatha Jha, and other well known scholar-teachers of Indian philosophy in the early years of the century. In the next 15 years Krishnamacharya was awarded several degrees, including Samkhya Yoga Shikhamani Mimamsa Tirtha, Nyayacharya, Vedanta Vageesa, Nyaya ratna and Veda Kesari from universities such as Kashi Hindu University, Allahabad, Calcutta, Baroda and Darbhanga Universities.

INSEARCH OF A GURU

But ever since the death of his father he had been without a guru with whom he could continue his spiritual and Yogic studies and practice. Obviously he was not satisfied with mere Shastragnana, but yearned for the realisation as experienced by our ancient Rishis. He always hoped to find his Guru and in 1917 he felt he had succeeded. He learned of the Yogi Ramamohana Brahmachari who lived

with his family near the Manasa Sarovar in the Western Tibetan region. As soon as he found the necessary means to make the travel, he proceeded to meet Yogi Brahmachari, who accepted him as his disciple. Under his Guru's tutelage Krishnamacharya was initiated into all aspects of Yoga, including its therapeutic applications. He roamed about the vast vegetation kingdom of the mountains and learned about the extraordinary herbs and their efficacies. He learned hundreds of Asanas, varieties of Pranayamas, Bandhas and Mudras and number of variations in postures, breaths etc. and achieved a complete mastery over body and mind, to such an extent that he could control the involuntary functions as well. These siddhis, however, did not deter him from his complete devotion to his Guru and total surrender to Lord Narayana. His faith in the Sastras, even got strengthened by his actual physical, physiological, mental and spiritual experiences. At this ripe age of 85, he continues to do his Nitya, Naimithika Karmas and his daily, elaborate pooja of Lord Narayana during the three hours prior to sunrise, apart from yojic vyayayama.

He returned to South India in 1924 and, on the command of his Guru, settled down to

a married life. As he was a scholar in Sanskrit, he naturally began to receive offers from various universities to head their departments of philosophy and religion, posts for which he was so eminently qualified; but to amazement of everyone he chose to teach Yoga instead. When professional colleagues and relatives found him steadfast in his decision, their amazement turned to ridicule and even open abuse. Slowly, his firm resolve, his erudition and proficiency won some reluctant respect, and one by one, his critics grew less aggressive. Indeed, some even became his students.

FIAT YOGA CENTRE

As Krishnamacharya's reputation grew, so did the spread of classical Yoga. In 1930, the Maharaja of Mysore became his student. So much faith did he place in the former boy-scholar's masterly comprehension of Yoga, Sanskrit and a wide range of our Sastras, that he considered Krishnamacharya as his Guru. At the Maharaja's suggestion he established a school of Yoga in the palace itself—the Mysore Sri Yogashala and from this base, Krishnamacharya carried on his teachings for the next twenty-five years. From time to time, he travelled in parts of India, preaching Yoga and in this process, many of the Maharajas of those days

became his disciples. They in turn kindled in their people a renewed respect for this ancient subject.

This had repercussions in the west. Some of the Britishers and Europeans who were taking interest in Indology frequently visited him. Western scientists and doctors read with great interest about the reputed 'powers' of India's Yogis, and many came to India to verify the claims themselves. Sri Krishnamacharya submitted himself willingly to all such legitimate scientific curiosities. To people such as Professor Wenger of California and Doctor Therese Brosse of Paris, he showed that mechanical and electrical actions of the heart could be modified at will, and to other earnest professionals, he demonstrated stoppage of the pulse for over two minutes, and so on.

EVOLVED NEW SYSTEM

There are special marks of Sri Krishnamacharya's teachings, based on tradition, his own experience and innovative experimentations. Apart from his Guru, he studied various systems of Yogic practices in different parts of India, especially in the Punjab and Nepal, and researched many ancient Yoga texts in palm leaves and evolved a system which is unique. The number of asanas and their variations,

in his repertoire is enormous. For instance in Padmasana alone, or in Sarvangasana there are very many variations possible. Further the use of breath to synchronise with movements in asana, the modification of asanas and breathing pattern to suit each individual case—as if tailor made—and an appreciation of intimate relationship between body, mind and breath, which is accomplished by combining asana, breathing and dharana, as enunciated in the Sastras, the emphasis on 'imaging' a peaceful Devata (subhasraya) are some of the special marks of his methodology.

CURE FOR ASTHMA

With this Yoga, he was able to cure many functional disorders including some types of diabetes, asthma, paralysis, chronic headache, insomnia, certain sterility cases in woman, hypertension, heart ailments etc. Often his help was sought when all other medical methods had failed; indeed many of his Yoga students came to him originally for the cure of one serious ailment or other. In fact, my own study with the Acharya begun when he was consulted by my father for a family member's nervous debility. Then all the members of our family became his students. Apart from yogic therapy, he has benefited many other renowned teachers. Some of his own students like Sri

B.K.S. Iyengar and the Acharya's son Sri T. K. V. Desikachar are well known yoga exponents. Some of his long standing students have had the benefit of not only learning the practical aspects, but also the theoretical works like the Gita, Yoga Sutras, Yogarahasya and also the Yogic Upanishads like the Chandogya, Svetasvatara, et al. His lectures on our Asrama Dharma and the Brahmasutras and Yogasutras have been well appreciated. He has also written many books on Yoga as Yoga Makaranda, Yogasanas, Yoganjali, Shastriya Yoga, Anhika Bhaskara, Pranda Vivaha, and Mantra Padantah Tattva Nirnaya.

Since Yoga is known either for Asanas or for Samadhi this series was started to show the place of all Yogic practices. Samadhi or intense concentration, is possible only for a few Samahita Chithas, and who can practice vairagya. Even among those, if there is an ultimate purpose of attainment of Sidhi in Yoga, such as prince Dhruwa, such Yogis are liable for rebirth.

YOGA SADHAKAS

So Paravairagya, or practice of total renunciation, based on faith in the scriptures, enthusiasm, constant thinking, intense concentration and an awareness arising out of that only will lead to chitta Nirodha, as propounded by Patanjali. Acco-

rding to our Acharya, such Paravairagya is not possible in this kali Yuga. However aparavairagya can be practised, which is not desiring anything beyond ones own Dharmic duties.

Samadhi is also possible out of intense devotion to Iswara or the Cosmic principle. Such devotees as Thyagaraja, Prahlada and others get into Samadhi easily due to their extremely pure heart. How about the rest, Vyuthana Chittas, the Kriya Yoga is mentioned, as the stepping stone.

TAPAS

If one considers samahita chittas as fit for Samadhi and therefore Uttama adhikaris for yoga, Patanjali suggests kriya yoga for mild practitioners (Mridu) and ashtanga yoga for madhya adhikaris.

Controlled activity, study of scriptures leading to self-realisation and total dedication to the cosmic principle are the aspects of Kriya Yoga.

*Tapas Svadhyaya Ishwara-
pranidhanani*

Kriya Yogaha :

Tapa is very important for practitioners of Yoga. Vyasa points out that without Tapas, one is a non-starter in Yoga

*Na Atapasvino Yogaha
Sidhyati* ||

The impurities or the dross in the mind and body arising out of contacts with worldly objects which are inimical to yoga cannot be got rid off without the practice of tapas or austerities. Tapas literally means to 'heat up'. Patanjali mentioned the benefit of tapas as the purification of body and the senses.

Kayendra suddhihi Asuddhikshayath Tapasaha |

SVADHYAYA

However, the various pictures and stories of Tapaswis make one feel that tapas is more difficult than yoga itself. But what, in practical terms is tapas?

The first step in the practice of yoga is tapas and it is control of diet and speech.

Mithasanam Mithabhashanamcha ||

Githcharya also emphasises the importance of proper food; so also the various Hathayogis. Satwic food in limited quantities, and purposeful conversation is tapas for a yogabhyasi.

*Natyanastu Yogosthu
Yuktahara Viharasya Yogo
Bhawathi* ||

SWARAPRAMIDHANA

The yogabhyas's ultimate aim is self realization, as an experience. However, since one is constantly distracted by the bombardment of stimuli from the external world, the separate distinctive characteristics of the Purusha is lost to the mind which is the root-cause (kshetra) of all afflictions—physical and mental—as confusion (Avidya), identity with one's mental projection of self (Asmita), indiscriminate infatuation (Raaga), prejudiced aversion (Dvesha) and innumerable anxieties including the fear of losing possessions, prestige and life (Abhinivesa). Thus it is necessary for the yogabhyasi to repeatedly refresh his mind of the distinction of Prakriti and purusha by the study of Vaidic scriptures, and other Sastras.

Pranidhanaha Bhaktivishesaha.

Immense devotion or love towards the Universal Lord (Iswara) is another important factor in kriya yoga. It has already been mentioned that Iswara according to Patanjali is a special Purusha, unaffected by Klesa, Karma, result of action, or desire for activity. In him are contained all potential knowledge or Omni-

science. He is the first teacher, but unlimited by time. He is known by the repetition of His sacred word Pranava. the japa being done by contemplating on the meaning of the mystic syllable, OM.

Klesa karma vipaka Asayaihi

*Aparamsuhataha Purusha
Visheshaha Iswaraha!*

*Tatra Niatisyam Sarvaggna
Bijam!*

*Purbashamapi Guruhu kalena
Anavachedhaha!*

Tasya Va chakaha Pranavaha

Tat Japaha Tadanta Bhavanam |

Since, it may not be possible for one to contemplate on an attributeless Iswara, Vyasa in his commentary, interprets Iswarapramidhana as the surrendering of all actions to the Great Master and the abandonment of all hankering after the fruits of action.

Iswarapramidhanam, Sarvakriyanam,

Paramaguruvarpanam, Tatphalasananyasamcha !

The kriya yoga reduces the five mental afflictions such as confusion, (Avidya) and others mentioned earlier and prepares the mind for Ekagra.

*Samadhi Bhavanarthaha.
Klesatanukarananithascha*

When an abhyasi becomes established in kriya yoga, one can start on Ashtanga yoga, which is the step by step progression in Yoga enunciated by Patanjali. In the next issue, the preliminary angas namely Yama and Niyama, will be dealt with to start the chapter on the practice of asanas (Asanaprakara-
rana).



In the II article on Yoga Therapy, a mistake has crept in, on page 31, under the heading to "Calm the Mind". The reader is requested to read the fourth line from the bottom as follows :

" In this practice, the emphasis is on breath control, especially long exhalation (Pracharohana) and retention of breath after exhalation (Vidharana)".

