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Reflection on God

God is the Independent Being possessed of all adequate and unrestricted powers in regard to the Chit and Achit (sentient and insentient reals) and who is all-knowing. He is the One who controls the Chit and Achit which are of a different nature from Him. God is infinite in Its attributes.

Reason will not be able to prove the existence of God. It can always be countered by other reasons. If one should prove God to be all-knowing, another could as well reason that He must be of limited knowledge, like any other individual. A creator-God need not necessarily be knowing each and every creature; just as a gardener does not know all about the trees and plants in his garden. So all theistic proofs would be inconclusive and fruitless. Reasoning cannot give us fullness of details about the nature of God, and His infinite attributes and powers.

No conception of God, in any religious or philosophical theory, would be complete without a definite statement of the exact sense in which He is to be viewed as its 'cause', a cause which might not bring out the proof of His existence. Only meditation provides the proof because it provides a direct vision of God.

God is to be meditated upon as all-pervasive, or in one's own heart, or externally in images or in rituals. The image of God can be realised through meditation inside one's own heart, through invocation outside one's own self or as incarnation.

Reaching the Supreme Being, one emerges into one's true selfhood.

"Where there is joy, bliss, delight and pleasure of inexpressible variety, where all wishes are fulfilled, there make me immortal." - Rig Veda.

T.K. Sribhashyam

We just turned one! To celebrate our second year, we are bringing in some novelties: first of all, we offer you one additional page; furthermore we will present a "pathology sheet" with indications for yoga teachers. Also, we will publish the so far unpublished lecture of Sri T. Krishnamacharya on the devotion of Andâl, the only female saint of Vaishnavism. We will treat of the concept of devotion in Christian religion.

We hope that these novelties will bring you satisfaction and that there will be an increasing number of subscriptions.

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“Patience, for the ones being themselves patient, is the most difficult thing. Forbearance is a gift itself; forbearance is the real; forbearance is sacrifice”. - Râmâyana

Svastika – An auspicious symbol

Sri T.K. Sribhasyam

Since Vedic times, Indians worship two symbols : the Om and the Svastika. What Om is to the voice and hearing the Svastika is to the eyes. If Om is the first sound emitted before any Mantra, Svastika is the first gestual symbol before any ritual.

Svastika is a Sanskrit word derived from *su* (good), from *Asti* (it is) and from *ka* (the ending of a word). It means « What leads to well being» and therefore means happiness, pleasure and good luck. It points out a cross with equal arms bending at right angles and all turned clockwise, also called the right handed Svastika. It is a symbol or a mystical device of prosperity and happiness. This Svastika is the male, representing the vernal sun and the day. It is associated to Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and Adishesha, the primal snake. The right handed Svastika is an auspicious symbol that Indians use to mark pages in account books, on their thresholds, their doors and their offerings. It is also employed in all ceremonies.

Through the rotation of its arms, it imitates the apparent daily movement of the sun. It also indicates the cosmic evolution around a fixed center. It also represents the principle of life, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, as well as the rhythmic movement named *rkvam*, because sound, time and space are born from this rhythmic movement.

On the contrary, the cross with equal arms bending at right angles and all turned anticlockwise is female, the left handed Svastika. It represents the autumnal sun, the night and the goddess Kali. It is frequently employed in black magic. In Buddhism, the Svastika is a symbol associated with Sakyamuni Buddha. Sanchi's Stupa represents the Svastika. In Jainism, it represents man, God, animal and insect.

“Sky, wealth, a bountiful harvest, sciences, children, success, there is nothing that you cannot obtain, if you are full of respect for your Master”. - Râmâyana

Goda or Andâl, her life and her works

Srimathi T. Alamelu and Sri T. K.Sribhashyam

Sri Andâl is one of the twelve Vaishnava Alvars (saints of the Vishnu cult) and the only Saint of the beginning of the 8th century. She was found as a baby in the Tulasi (basilica indica) garden of a temple in Srivaliiputhur, near Madurai in South India. Perialwâr, or “the older Saint”, who found her, considered her as a gift from the earth and named her Goda (fruit of the earth). Goda grew up in a saintly environment, worshipping God and listening to religious speeches: the Veda, the epics, the Bhagavad Gita. She helped her father to tie the flower garlands which daily decorate the Divinity of the temple.

One day her father noticed that Goda admired herself in a mirror, wearing around her neck the garlands prepared for the divinity. He considered this a sacrilegious act and did not bring these flowers to the temple. The same night, the God appeared in a dream to Goda’s father and declared that He liked a lot the flower garlands worn by Goda and that in future only those should be offered to Him. Perialwar realized that the child Goda had a profound divinity and he therefore named her Andâl (the one with whom God rules). It became a habit for Andâl to carry the flower garland that was to be offered to the God.

With Andâl growing up, her love for the Lord Krishna also grew. She decided to marry Him. Later she concluded that Lord Krishna was none else than Lord Ranganâtha of Sri Rangam (near Tiruchirapalli in South India) and she chose him as husband.

In order to “obtain” her husband, she decided to follow the ritual of the “Margali Baths”. It is young girls custom, in South India, to take a bath in the river before dawn during the month of Margali (November – December) while singing the praises of Lord Krishna; this in order to obtain the husband of their choice.

The God appeared again in a dream of Andâl’s father and explained him that he should bring Andâl, dressed up for marriage, to Sri Rangam. The God also appeared in a dream to the King Vallabha Deva, instructing him to decorate the route from Andâl’s house all the way to the temple of Sri Rangam. Lord Ranganatha also appeared in a dream to the priest of the temple of Sri Rangam, asking him to prepare His marriage with Andâl. The King Vallabha arranged all preparations for the celebration, he sent a decorated palanquin, himself accompanying it to Sri Rangam. In the temple of Sri Ranganâtha, Andâl prayed in front of the Lotus Feet of the Lord, and to the astonishment of all the people present, the physical body of Andâl got absorbed into the one of Lord Ranganâtha!

The devotional works of Andâl:

“Tiruppâvai” comprising of 30 hymns, “Nâchiâr Tirumoli”, consisting of 143 hymns. Both are poetical compositions of Andâl. Turuppâvai is considered as “song of songs”. Thiru means Lord or Sri, pâvai means title. Thiruppâvai speaks of a religious rite observed by a bride during the month of Marga Shîrsha (Dec – Jan) to secure a person of one’s choice as husband.

Both compositions speak about the nature of ultimate Reality and the means of attaining the supreme goal. Thiruppâvai is considered as the quintessence of the Upanishads because of the philosophical significance in it. It is sung in all Vaishnava temples and houses to conclude the religious ritual. Since 15th century Andâls compositions are sung in temples, not only in India, but also in Thailand, Siam and Cambodia.

Nachiyâr Tirumoli contains the mystic outpourings of Andâl's intense love for Lord Krishna seeking union with the beloved Lord. The various aspects of the mystic experience of God-intoxicated woman in different emotions are depicted in these beautiful poems. Some of these hymns are also of theological significance as they focus on the concept of absolute surrender of the soul to God to earn His grace.

In the 16th century, Lord Vishnu appeared in a dream to King Krishna Devaraya, an erudite in Sanskrit and a great king of the Vijayanagara dynasty, asking him to write down the life and the works of Andâl in Telugu (the language of Andhra Pradesh). Once he had finished his work, the king offered it to the Lord Venkateshvara of Thirupathi.

The pilgrimage to Tirupathi

- T.K.Sribhashyam -

In 1956-57, I was living with my father in Madras in Southern India. Every two months, my father took me to Tirupathi (the most important pilgrimage center, located 100 kilometers from Madras). We took the train to Renugunta, 10 kilometers from Tirupathi. Although there was a connecting train, we went on foot. Each time, along this route my father spoke to me about devotion, in particular, the devotional poems of Andâl. Arriving in Tirupathi, in the evening, after a bath in the Govindaraja's (lord Krishna) temple baths, we went to the temple to receive Govindaraja's blessings and then sitting in a corner, my father would recite Andâl's poems to me. In the beginning I was surprised because he had never spoken about Andâl during the regular lessons he gave me in Madras.

A surprising thing, though he recited these poems in his daily prayers, he never gave any lesson or explanation regarding Andâl's works, as if these works were really intended for spiritual teachers !

A Yogakshemam Newsletter's page will be dedicated to this unpublished teaching.

The work chosen will be « Thiruppâvai », a garland of 30 poems to the glory of Lord Krishna, that reflects at the same time some of the Vishishta Advaita concepts.

Draining out the sea by drops

Indian tale

The lord of Sea had a great liking for bird's eggs. Every time the birds laid eggs on the sea shore, he would carry off with his waves. The parent birds had no or very few off springs. All the birds were sad but helpless. One day the sea carried off with

its waves the eggs of a bird which were lain on the beach. The bird got angry and determined to dry it up. He began to take out the water drop by drop with the tip of his beak. All the other birds asked him why he was taking out the sea water. The bird explained his situation and told all the other birds that if they all help him carry the sea water, the sea would be dried and their eggs would be saved. All the other birds tried to dissuade him from the impossible task. But, no one could persuade him and he continued to take out the sea water by drops. The divine sage Nârada, a messenger of Lord Vishnu used to pass by. He saw that a bird was carrying sea water in his beak. So he stopped by and asked why the bird is carrying sea water. When Nârada learnt the reason, he too tried to persuade the bird from undertaking such a huge and impossible task. The bird, continuing his work of draining the sea, told Nârada that he would dry up the sea either in this or in the future life. Nârada felt compassionate and went to Garuda, the Divine Eagle and prayed to help the poor bird. Being the Lord of birds, Garuda accepted the prayer and came to the sea producing heavy wind by flapping his wings. The sea began to dry up and the Lord of the Sea got frightened. He agreed to give back the eggs to the bird. The Divine Eagle stopped flapping his wings. He advised all the birds to lay eggs on the tree to be free from the greediness of the sea.

“The forgiveness of insults is glory, it is a duty ”. - Râmâyana

Specification sheet: Pathology and specific pedagogical indications for Yoga

Written by Doc. CARPENTIER Nancy, medical doctor, in collaboration with her teacher Sri T.K.Sribhashyam

Hiatus Hernia

Definition: upward displacement of the upper part of the stomach through the esophagus opening of the diaphragm.

Physiopathology:

This pathology generally starts with the reflux of the stomach secretion into the esophagus. The chronic reflux of this secretion is being accompanied by an inflammation of the lower part of the esophagus (esophagitis) and a gap of the cardia. The cardia (= sphincter between the lower end of the esophagus and the beginning of the stomach) does not close efficiently anymore after swallowing saliva or food. With time, this gap becomes permanent and the slipping of the mucus of the stomach through the esophagus opening of the diaphragm starts. Once this process has started, the spontaneous evolution of this pathology consists in an ever growing displacement of the stomach into the mediastinum.

Principal symptoms:

Pyrosis or “burning” retro sternum sensation which is moving upwards in the esophagus towards the back of the throat, typical for gastro esophagious reflux. This sensation starts when finished digesting. It diminishes with the intake of starchy food.

The reflux might not manifest itself by a burning sensation, but by a feeling of having an empty stomach, wrongly interpreted as a feeling of hunger.

Difficulties in digesting, with frequent risings

Swallowing of air after meals

Two positions favor the gastro esophagious reflux: lying flat on the back and complete forward flexion of the trunk with the head down (example: tie shoe laces).

Etiology: Without trying to replace the doctor, we will only name those causes the knowledge of which will enable the yoga teacher to give useful advices to the students.

Overweight, mainly abdominal, obesity

Chronic constipation, even if there is daily bowel movement

Excessive fermenting nutrition with acidic taste and dry qualities

Treatment

Diet prescription and nutritional hygiene

Prescription of medication aiming at neutralizing or inhibiting the acidic secretion of the stomach

Gastric surgery for extreme cases

Favorable Asanas

Apâna Asana (1 leg)

Urdhva Mukha Shvâna Asana

Danda Asana

Baddha Kona Asana

Parvatha Asana

Suptha Parvatha Asana

Counter indications for yoga practice

Standing Asanas with a complete forward flexion

Standing Asanas with torsion and flexion

Asanas on the knees with complete forward flexion

Seated Asanas with torsion

Asanas on the back with torsion

Reduce the number of Asanas on the belly in a session and start them by exhaling

Prolonged breath retention after inhaling

With the exception of Asanas with strong extension and complete backward flexion, there are no more counter indications once the student is under treatment or has been operated and shows no more symptoms.

Seminary held by Sri T.K. Sribhashyam in Genoa

Aurélia Debenedetti

December 16 and 17, 2000, Sri T.K. Sribhashyam conducted a seminary in Genoa on "The role of Prânâyâma in Traditional Yoga". The seminary was organized by Stefania Redini, who is in charge of the school "Yoga Genoa". It was mainly aimed at

Yoga teachers. The numerous participants, approx. 50, appreciated the setting and environment chosen by Stefania Redini for this seminary: the luminous and sunny room facing the seaside offered a particularly warm and cordial atmosphere.

Sri T.K. Sribhashyam introduced the theme of the seminary by expounding the origin of Prânâyâma in its historical context. He explained the role of Prânâyâma according to the Veda, and underlined its connection with the rites, which constitute an essential element of Indian culture. Furthermore, he explained the reasons why the Asanas superceded the Prânâyâma when Yoga was introduced in the West at the end of this century: if the Prânâyâma have often been presented in a somewhat mysterious way, this is due to insufficient knowledge of its deeper values. The Master then introduced some fundamental Prânâyâma, while insisting on the necessity of maintaining the appropriate concentration points in the mental field. Actually, if the mind is appropriately controlled, the Prânâyâma will prevent the sensorial activities and emotional values to become obstacles. Thus, the individual goes beyond sensorial experiences to take the path of the spiritual experience.

The students responded very well to the teaching and their practice was of high standard. The radiance and ability to communicate of Sri T. K. Sribhashyam created a climate of spontaneity leading to very stimulating questions asked by the students.

The seminary ended with enthusiastic applause.

“The father gives with measure, so does the brother and so the son, but the husband who gives without measure, which woman would not adore him?”. - Râmâyana

Bhakti as the means to Moksha (3)

- Sri S.S.Chari, Mysore

Bhagavad Gita as well as Upanishads declare that Upâsana frees jîva from all Karma. The expression ‘all Karma’ includes punya karma also. More over, for an aspirant to Moksha even punya has the same effect as papa as punya can stand in the way of liberation.

Râmânûja, while commenting Brahma Sutra, says that when an *upâsaka* casts off his mortal remains, his merit goes to his friends and his sins go to his enemies. Vedanta Desika explains that the ‘transfer of punya and papa’ is not in contradiction with the law of karma since the transfer is only towards those who did good or bad actions during the life of a bhakta from the time he started upâsana.

Karma as the cause of bondage is of two kinds: one which is accumulated prior to the commencement of upâsana and the second which arises after the upâsana started. The first one is of two types: that which has already begun to give result and that which is yet to ripen and give its effect. The former is endured by experiencing it till the end of one’s life. The latter is eradicated by *upâsana*. The karma which is acquired after the commencement of *upâsana* is of two types: the first is that which is caused by the deeds done intentionally and the second is that which arises as a result of acts done unintentionally. An *upâsaka* does not create good or bad deeds

intentionally. His actions would arise out of the good or bad actions committed on him during his *upâsana*. At the death of the *upâsaka*, the results of these deeds go to his friends and foes who were the cause of the *upâsaka*'s good or bad actions. Vedanta Desika argues that there is in fact no transfer of karma. Simply the friends and foes of the *upâsaka* bear the fruits of their own actions towards a bhakta.

In the state of moksha, *jîva* becomes totally free from the shackles of karma and as such its *jnâna* manifests itself in its fullness. *Jîva* becomes omniscient and is thus capable of comprehending Brahman in all its splendour. Yet the *jîva* is not equal to *Ishvara* (the God) in every respect. It does not have the function of creation and dissolution of the universe, since this is unique to Brahman only. The equality between the two is only in respect of the enjoyment of bliss. At the same time, *jîva* is not entirely independent of *Ishvara*. This dependence of *jîva* is different from that of subordination to karma which is a source of suffering. It is bondage in the form of *punya* and *papa* that cause the suffering of the *jîva*. Râmânûja referring to Chandogya Upanishad says that *paramâthman* is full of love and compassion for the *jîva*. God will never let the *jîva* return to the state of bondage once the latter has attained moksha. The *jîva* in the state of moksha has the possibility to be associated with a physical body out of its own will without being a bondage for the purpose of enjoying bliss or for movement. Such a body assumed by the *jîva* is not a karmic body and as such no bondage is caused to it. The *jîva* could also remain without a body if it so desires. The body which the *jîva* sheds for attaining release is the one caused by karma while the body assumed by it in its state of *mukthi* is of its own creation and totally free from karma.

Feminine craftiness

Indian tale

Three men were ploughing at the edge of a forest. At the same time, thieves robbed people in the forest and then fled. These people, in vain looking for the thieves, arrived at the place where the men were ploughing and told them: "It is you who have robbed us in the woods, and now you are pretending to be ploughmen!" They arrested them and brought them to the king.

A woman arrived unexpectedly and cried, while weeping and incessantly turning around the palace: "Give me something to put on, give me something to put on".

The king, upon hearing her cries, ordered: "Give her something to put on". And they brought her a dress. Seeing the dress, the woman cried: "This is not what I meant".

The king was informed: "It is not this protection she is asking for, but the one provided by a husband". The king sent for the woman to question her: "You are asking for the protection that a husband gives?"

"Yes, Sir, a husband is for his wife a protecting shelter. When she does not have a husband, a woman is naked, even though she might wear a dress worth a thousand coins". Amused, the king asked: "What is your link with these three men?"

"Sir, one of them is my husband, the other one is my brother and the third one is my son".

The king spoke again: "I am pleased with you and I will give you one of the three; which one would you choose?"

The woman answered: "I have sons in my belly, and men I can meet on the way. But I do not know where to find a brother again."

The king started laughing and said: "You are speaking the truth", and he rendered back her men.

A Matter of time

DR Nancy CARPENTIER

To adapt ourselves to the daily changes of the environment imposed by the rotation of the earth, we have developed an internal time structure. This structure allows our cellular and organic activities to fluctuate on a rhythmic mode along the 24 hours periods. These 24 hours period constitute the circadian cycles. They are generated by our internal biological clock located in the hypothalamus.

The alternation of hours waken up and hours of sleep, the modifications of body temperature, the timing and the composition of endocrine secretions, the timing of digestive secretions, the electrolytic excrement of kidneys, the psychomotor and cognitive performances...are just a few of the activities the rhythm of which is regulated by that internal biological clock.

That biological clock is made up of a set of specific neurons in the hypothalamus which receive light sense information necessary to coordinate their activities with the outside world. The epiphysis also receives information from the internal clock to adapt its production of melatonin which is necessary for the regulation of the circadian rhythm and the various sleep phases. Without any input from the outside world, our internal rhythm lasts for slightly more than 24 hours. Experiments on volunteers put in a life situation without any external synchronizing signals have confirmed the endogenous nature of the circadian rhythm (according to the experimental results of the Center for Studies of the Biological Rhythm and the center for Sleep and Wake Medicine of the Université Libre de Bruxelles).

The organization of our live along the 24 hours of the day allows for the adaptation and the synchronization of our neuronal activities to the periodical fluctuations of the environment. We keep our internal clock on time and in phase with the outside world using signals from the environment: artificial light, working hours schedules, activities alternating with rest...When, for thousands of years, we woke up and went to sleep with the sun, we were in perfect harmony with our biological clock. However the artificial lengthening of the duration of the day and the explosion of new technologies have disrupted the time organization of our industrialized societies. When we take the opportunity to be active at night and sleep during the day, we put ourselves in conflict against our biological clock.

With time, these repeated conflicts are the source of dysfunction of the rhythmic body activities, of the quality of our sleep and are even sources of anticipated aging of an organ or even of the whole body. Experience demonstrates that an individual who does not benefit of a circadian stability "runs after" his biological clock. The resulting lack of sleep and disruption between the internal clock and the environment are responsible for disturbances in vigilance, diminishing intellectual performances and productivity at work. If this disequilibrium gets chronic, it affects primarily:

- the cardiovascular system (e.g. heart rhythm and artery tension diseases,....)
- the digestive system (e.g. diarrhea, constipation,...)
- the genital system (e.g. sterility,...)
- the immune system (e.g. allergies, auto-immune diseases,...)

- the nervous system (e.g. depression, temper disturbances, addiction to alcohol, tobacco, drugs,...)

This explains why in ancient traditions life schedule discipline was the foundation of life hygiene. Health was not contemplated without such life rules like: getting up every day early at the same time, going to sleep before 10 pm, having midday and evening meals at regular hours, balanced schedule of work, rest and physical activities, respecting the timing of the natural needs of the body,...

It is thus necessary for the rhythm of our daily life to adapt to the natural rhythm of our environment to harmoniously synchronize our biological clock. When our biological clock is not in conflict with the outside world, the rhythm of cellular metabolism are physiological. The rhythm of cell growth, renovation and repair are harmonious and allow for an optimal and sane functioning of the organs.

The chronobiologist make the hypothesis that these perfect rhythm would give man a chance to live for a 100 years in good health.

“Youth is always ephemeral, mainly with human beings”. - Râmâyana

The page of Srimathi T. Namagiriammal

(Wife of Sri T. Krishnamacharya)

Ayurvedic Recipe: Pancha amrutha Rasâyana

(prepared according to Sri T. Krishnamacharaya)

Ingredients:

100g almonds, 50 g cashew nuts, 50 g hazel nuts, 25g walnuts, 25g pistachios, 5g cardamom, 5g grated nutmeg, 5 saffron strings, 100 g raisins or 50 g jaggery (unrefined sugar cane) or brown sugar (use non-salted and non-grilled nuts).

Preparation:

Roast all nuts till golden brown, preferably in an iron pan. Let cool. In a coffee grinder grind cardamom, nutmeg and saffron. Add the nuts to grind them as finely as possible. Finally, add the raisins or the sugar and continue grinding, using the pulse setting to avoid the mixture sticking to the grinder. Store in a closed glass jar.

Method: This mix (one tea spoon) always has to be followed by a glass of lukewarm water or a glass of milk.

It is called Rasâyana when cooked on a low heat in 50 ml of cow milk (for 25 g of nut mix), until semi solid. When cooked in milk, it is preferable to use jaggery (or brown sugar) rather than raisins.

Benefits:

For young children with growth difficulties: one tea spoon in a glass of lukewarm cow milk, or mixed with half a spoon of honey, to be taken mornings and evenings.

For students with difficulties in concentrating or memorizing: one tea spoon, followed by a glass of cow milk or mixed with fruit salad.

During convalescence: mix one tea spoon of the nut mix with a soup spoon full of honey, to be taken after lunch.

For difficulties in conception: one tea spoon full mixed with half a spoon full of honey, to be taken after every meal.

As an additional nutriment: one tea spoon, after lunch, followed by a fresh mint tea.

For young girls: one tea spoon of this Rasâyana mixed with a sesame ball.