

Sri Hari:

Madhura Murali

Spiritual Monthly
With the Boundless Blessings of
HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji



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E-Magazine

राधे राधे राधे

Ragam: Karaharapriya
Talam: Adi

Pallavi

viNNil theriginDradhu rAdhA nAmam
maNNil maNakkinDradhu rAdhA nAmam

Charanam

kaNNanin nAvinil naDamADiDum nAmam
avanayE thandhiDum rAdhA nAmam

prEmayin uruvam rAdhA nAmam
amarargaLukku aridhAnadhu rAdhA nAmam

peN ivaLin perumai thannai
eNNilum ezhuthilum vaDikka thAn muDiyumO

kaNNilum kAdhilum nAvilum enDrum
enakku indha rAdhayin nAmamE!

Madhura Geetham

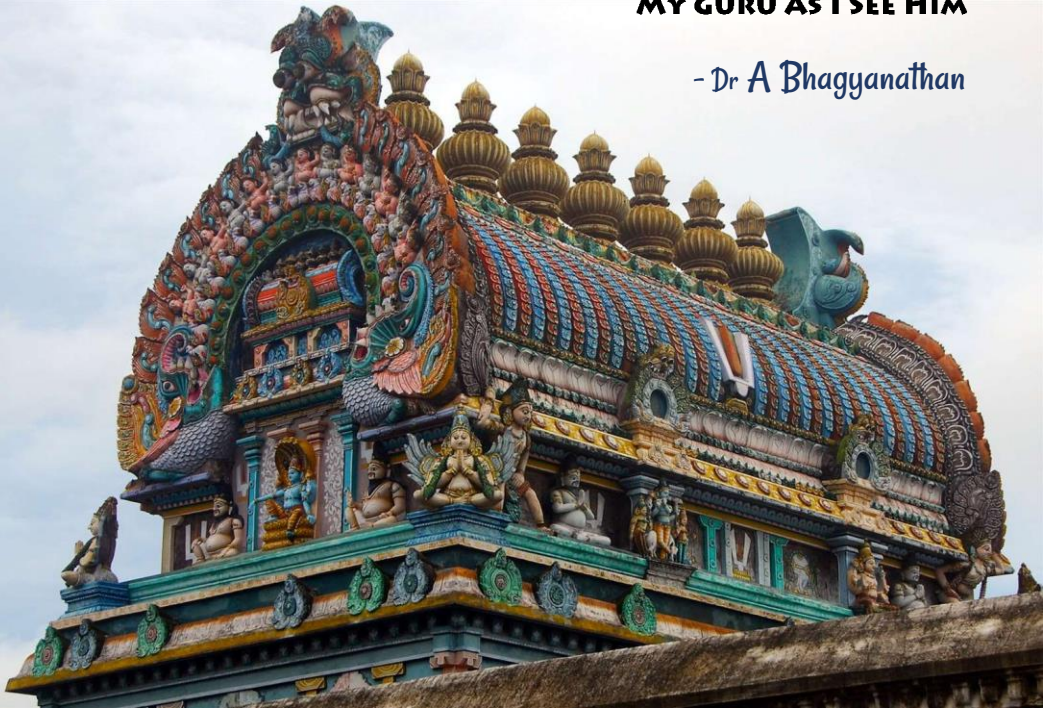
A devotee from a foreign country was talking with Sri Swamiji. Just then another devotee arrived there. He gave the Prasad of Kanchi Lord Varadaraja and His Consort Perundevi Thayar to Sri Swamiji. He also gave a beautiful picture of the Lord to Sri Swamiji. Sri Swamiji touched the picture to his eyes in all reverence and placed it on his head and felt elated. Sri Swamiji then said to the devotee who had been conversing with him, “Varada is calling me. I am going to Kanchipuram.” At once this devotee said, “I will also come with you,” and started for Kanchipuram along with Sri Swamiji.

Just as Sri Swamiji was entering the Temple Lord Varada came to the entrance in a procession! At once, Sri Swamiji said, “Just as a father comes to the door in all eagerness to meet his child Lord Varada has come to the entrance in all eagerness to meet me.” There was a big crowd in the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord’s Consort Perundevi Thayar. But someone known to Sri Swamiji came

Madhura Smaranam

MY GURU AS I SEE HIM

- Dr A Bhagyanathan



up and in spite of the huge crowd helped him have darshan of the Mother comfortably. “All are verily children of the Mother. But I am the favourite. See how the Mother called me over and blessed me,” said Sri Swamiji.

From there Sri Swamiji moved to worship Ulagalandha Perumal. It was time to close the sanctum sanctorum. Sri Swamiji rushed up and had darshan of the Lord. Even as he walked fast towards this sanctum sanctorum, he rushed us saying, “Perumal is waiting. Come fast.” When Sri Swamiji stepped in, the priest there said, “Perumal was waiting for you only. I should have closed the temple a little early but somehow it has been delayed today. The Lord has been waiting for you only.”

In every temple that Sri Swamiji visited things moved like this. To the devotee from abroad it seemed strange that in each temple something of this kind should take place and Sri Swamiji connecting and giving some divine explanation for it. He felt everything was happening by sheer coincidence but Sri Swamiji was, by his imagination, connecting and offering some divine explanation for it. But in many places things seemed to happen as Sri Swamiji predicted even before he reached the place. Therefore, this devotee, at the first opportunity, questioned Sri Swamiji in this connection.


Sri Swamiji asked him, “Do you know anything about Astrology [Jotisha shastram]?”

The devotee said, “A little.”


Sri Swamiji said, “Drawing up the horoscope of a person based on the time of a person’s birth his future can be predicted. There are many systems even in this. One has to know astronomy and Mathematics. There are people who predict through palmistry [reading the palm]. There are those who predict just through the date of birth. There are yet others who predict events just through the question one places. Prediction is also made through signs seen: for example, the eagle flying, circumambulation of the cow, the cry of the owl and such other signs.

Apart from these there is something called nimitta Shastra. When someone places a question one who knows nimitta Shastra gives the answer depending on the incidents that occur then by chance. Whatever he predicts comes to be. He has the inner consciousness to connect the incident with the question asked.

For example, the one who knows nimitta Shastra may be standing in a Railway station. A person may then come up to him and ask, "Will I get through the examination that I have written?" Just then the track signal might change from red to green. Noticing that the one who knows nimitta Shastra would say, "You will get through the examination." And, it would be so. A person would remove the picture of one of the two in a photograph and bring it to the one who knows nimitta Shastra. Looking at this the latter would say that the other one [whose picture was removed] would die soon. And, it would be so. Sri Swamiji spoke all these.



'A mere astrologer who knows nimitta Shastra predicts events that is going to happen in a person's life based on events that occur by chance. Would not then a Mahatma comprehend what a Deity speaks based on the events taking place at that time?'



The devotee from abroad thought 'Sri Swamiji is speaking of astrology that is not connected to what I asked him'.

Sri Swamiji looked at him and said, 'A mere astrologer who knows nimitta Shastra predicts events that is going to happen in a person's life based on events that occur by chance. Would not then a Mahatma comprehend what a Deity speaks based on the events taking place at that time?' One who had questioned Sri Swamiji bent his head in shame.

Apachara Sankatam

We all know what 'Dharma Sankatam' is. When there are two 'Dharma-s' or righteous acts that need to be done, and if a confusion arises as to which needs to be done, then that goes by the name 'Dharma Sankata'! In Srimad Bhagavatha, King Ambarisha undertook the Dwadashi Vrata in Mathura. Sage Durvasa arrived there as his guest at that time. Ambarisha Chakravarthy welcomed Sage Durvasa very courteously with pleasing words. He said he would come to have his lunch after a dip in the holy Yamuna river and left. According to our Dharma, one must not eat without feeding the guest who has agreed to have a meal. At the same time, Dharma also states that one must finish his 'paarana' or 'mid-day-meal' on a Dwadhasi day even when the Dwadashi thithi is there. Since both of these are Dharmas, now arose a confusion as to which one Ambarisha must follow. This is precisely what is known as 'Dharma Sankatam'. Similarly, I was recently faced with something new which I named as 'Apachaara Sankatam' (Apachaaram is an offence to god). In my pooja, along with my RadhaKrishna Yugala, my Guru's Padhuka is also present. Once when I happened to take a garland in

my hand to offer to the RadhaKrishna Yugala, it suddenly slipped and fell on the Padhuka. When I went to lift that garland and offer it again to the Yugala, a slight doubt crept in my mind if I can offer this garland to the Yugala which has slipped and fallen on the Padhuka. "I only look upon my Guru as god himself very earnestly, and also tell the same to others too. Then what is wrong in me offering this garland to the Yugala?"

- I thought. Not only that, I felt shameful about this doubt having arisen in my mind and I also detested it. My mind sneered at me saying,"

Oh! Your Guru Bhakthi is only this deep!". "Alright! Will my Guru like it if I offer this garland to Bhagawan?", this question too rose in my mind.

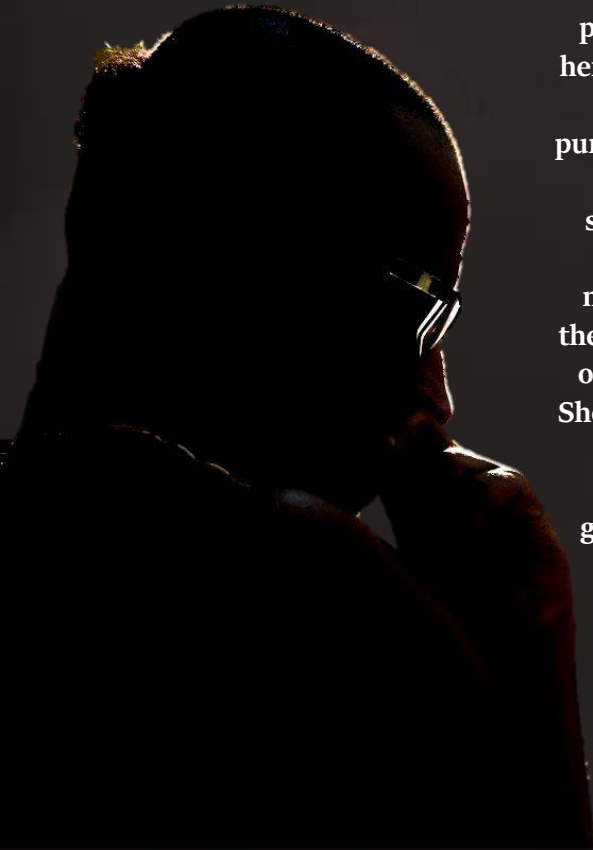
For sure, he would not accept the garland fallen on his Padhuka go be offered to the Yugala. "Will it not then become an 'Apachaara' to do something that he doesn't approve of?" - my mind reasoned. Finally I put an end to the oscillation in the mind

thus, - "It befits my Guru not to accept that, but these thought processes should not have been there in me if I had possessed strong faith!" This indeed is my 'Apachaara Sankatam'!

Touching memories

Sri Swamiji

3

A silhouette of a man with glasses, looking to the right, is visible on the left side of the page. The background is dark and textured.

Twenty five years ago, I had once been to Senganur, where Sri Sri Anna had made his divine incarnation. Sri Sri Anna's mother was alone at home. It was around 10 a.m. in the morning. I thought of offering my prayer to Lord Rama in the puja room of the house and then leave. But Sri Sri Anna's mother lovingly forbade me from leaving, without taking food. Immediately, she used the hand pump and drew water. Even at her advanced age, she didn't ask me to draw water from the pump. With two scraps of paper, she lit a fire in the old village stove ('kumutti') that she had. She brought some 'jadhi narthangai' (citron fruit) from the garden, extracted some juice out of it and mixed it with rice. She offered it to Lord Rama. She made some balls of rice and offered it to me like a mother giving a small child. It was like ambrosia. No food that I had taken in all these years could match it for taste.

Mahans and Rivers

The path shown by great sages and bhaktas like Prahlada, Narada, Parasara, Pundaleeka, Vyasa, Ambareesha, Shuka, Saunaka, Bhishma etc, is the path of Bhagavatha Dharma.

A river takes its own course as it flows towards the infinite ocean. Some people come to the river to quench their thirst. Some sit by its banks to enjoy the cool breeze, some set up their home in the banks, some use its water and current for agriculture, some play in the current and end up drowning themselves, while some take a boat and travel safely from one side to the other.

The life of a Mahatma in the path of Bhagavatha Dharma is similar to this river. Few come to them seeking a solution to their problems or questions, and thereby quench their thirst. Few come and take what they want for their personal benefits just like those who use the river for agricultural purposes. Few come and stay with the Mahatma and enjoy His Divine Company just like those who sit to enjoy the cool breeze. Some try to play with the Mahatma and meet their end just like the ones who drown in the current. Only a few follow the Mahatma everywhere till the end and reach the infinite and get liberated, just as the river reaches the ocean.

- Sri Swamiji



PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY FOR BEGINNERS

- Sri Swamiji

1. Take food properly, but take sattvic food. Unnecessary and adamant fasting will lead to many diseases.
2. Take proper sleep and rest. Otherwise you will have neurological problems.
3. Don't imitate any saints or sadhaks.
4. Don't change your path for any cause or at any cost.
5. Don't get into notions or illusions
6. Be practical. Especially in your spiritual life.
7. Don't be idle. It will bring unnecessary negative things and weaken you.
8. Don't get influenced by others and their activities.
9. Purity, renunciation, chanting – are the backbone of a sadhak.
10. Try to control your emotions
11. Instead of lamenting, chant more

12. Avoid worldly pleasures and their company
13. Be clean always and be simple.
14. Mind your words and all of your activities.
15. Try to be alone if you don't find a real sadhu
16. Realisation is possible. At the same time, put it in your mind repeatedly that it is a very very long and sincere journey.
17. Be patient and calm
18. Don't analyse your mind often
19. Life on this earth is a small stop journey like any other journey. Nothing more than that.
20. Try to do all possible good things in all possible ways
21. Faith is the major wealth.
22. Don't lose your self confidence at any time.



bhakti sugandham

Sri MK Ramanujam

...Have you heard of the man who once walked a tightrope between the twin towers in New York? It was not allowed and he did it illegally, under a lot of stress. How many people were going to watch from below! What will be the air force on that day at that altitude! Even a bird flying near him could cause him to lose balance! For the last 2-3 days before the walk, he never slept day or night. But he completed it. It was because of his drive to do it!

“If you want to do something in your life, definitely you will do it. If you don’t do it, it means your intention is not strong enough.”

If you want to see Krishna in your life, you will. How can you go without seeing him! But if you keep saying “I want to see, I want to see”, just to show off to others, it won’t work. But if your desire is firm, it has to happen. Because of the will power, because of a strong mind. Take Vishwamitra for example. How many times he fell down! Yet his will was strong. Every time when we fall down, only will power and a strong mind can make us rise again. Use your will power to chant, to stay in the path. The path itself will lead you. And the grace will take you. It will take you to the state of longing. When somebody you love is out of the house, you will think of them day and night, anxiously waiting for them to return. You will constantly think about when they will come back.

No other sadhana, not even chanting. What will be your state of mind at that time? Just longing, longing with love. For a family person – mother, father sister, kith and kin – the longing will be for one or two days. For Krishna, you should have the same longing until He comes before you. As you chant, the longing will start slowly and it will grow. It will start light; but always intensity will grow. Sometimes people will cry because of the longing. The quantum of anxiety will grow intense. And God will appear before them at that time. This is called faith. There is longing; there is craving; there is real love.

It's like the example of a chakorapakshi's longing for the chandra, the moon. The chakorapakshi (a special kind of bird which is extinct now) always waits for the moon. Its entire life, it is always craving for the moon. Like that, here, those longing for Krishna will always cry, cry, cry. This crying is not due to any pain or pity or self-sympathy; it is merely because of pure selfless love. I want to see Krishna. Why? Not because He is the highest. But because He is one I love the most! The Gopis wanted to see Krishna. They longed and craved for Him, not because He was the Supreme! They don't need bhakti for the "highest person." They simply love Krishna. He's very handsome. They would think of His curly locks, His kundala (his earrings), His lovely form; they would think of His flute, His music, His clothes, His style. All this will make them love Him and long for Him much more!

When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu visited Tamil Nadu, he went to Rameshwaram through Madurai. At Madurai, he stayed in a house. In that house lived a Rama bhakta. This devotee would always fast and never take food. He would always cry. He would never go out. What was the problem with him? He felt very bad that a rakshasa like Ravana had touched Sita mata and abducted her. He felt very bad. So he would cry, "O my Sitadevi, you were touched by that vile asura! How can I eat? How can I sleep?" Even Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself could not convince that devotee. Mahaprabhu went to Rameshwaram. There he happened to find a Ramayana, and in that book it was said that Ravana took only a 'shadow' (chhaya) Sita. Immediately Mahaprabhu made a copy of that book, gave the copy to the owner and took the original with him back to Madurai to the Rama devotee (because if he took the

handwritten copy, then that devotee would not believe it and simply say that Mahaprabhu had written it only to convince him). Mahaprabhu showed the original book to the Rama bhakta and convinced him that his Sitadevi had really not been touched by Ravana, and set him to rest. What was the purpose of that bhakta crying lifelong? Because of bhakti. What else could it be? Was he going to get any prayojanam out of it? Not at all. Something is unique about this. This is bhakti. There was a great saint called Vasudeva thatha. He had darshan of Lord Rama and Sitamata. During his last breath, he cried, “Oh Queen Sita, you walked into the forest; stones touched your feet! How is it possible for you to go to the forest from this big palace?”

It is stated in Narada bhakti sutra, that the beginning of bhakti starts with chanting Nama. After going to temples, taking bath in holy rivers and doing other similar things, after some time you come to a satsang. That satsang should be a real satsang. You should get some benefit from that satsang. Your bhakti should flourish and grow in that satsang. You should not go to a satsang where people are not focused. In the world, there are many satsangs. But does Bhagavan come to that satsang? That is the question. It is said in the scriptures that Bhagavan is going to come to satsangs. But this is not happening. Why? Because even the goal of people who participate in satsang is often not to realize God. Their goal is something else – fame, money, etc. Wherever you go, your bhakti should grow. Otherwise ‘ignorance’, the devil, will try to push you out. You should not get caught in the hands of the devil; you should stick to the divine. And try to grow devotion, bhakti, with patience. If you’re really progressing in life, not wishing for this and that in the world, the first sign is that your mind will not go to mundane matters. That is good. Slowly you are improving. That is good. You have not wasted today. That is good. Like this, you have to continue to pray. Then God will give you bhakti suddenly one day.”

The conversation also stopped suddenly. Reluctantly the devotees stood up and with mind charged with these inspiring words left for their rooms with a silent prayer to the master for blessing them with bhakthi soukyam alone.

The Professor's Son

(Contd)

A Tale for Children

The professor, who returned back home with his son, was elated on seeing the brilliance of his son. Right after their visit to the village, he was keen on teaching something more to him.

One evening, the professor came with three sets of dolls and placed them on the table. He eagerly called out to his son, who was busy setting up fruits and flowers to celebrate Vinayaka Chaturthi, the next morning. As soon as he heard the call from his father, he rushed with 'Arugampul' (Bermuda Grass) in his hands. On seeing the grass in his hands, the father picked one and said, "Observe what I'm going to do now!" First, he inserted the grass through one of the doll's ears which came out of the other ear. Then, he grabbed another grass and inserted it through the next doll's ear. This one came out of the doll's mouth.

Then he repeated the same with the third doll, but this time, the grass did not come out at all. The professor said, "Did you notice? This is about an interesting story of Akbar and Birbal. Listen carefully!" The boy became curious. "The

three dolls tell us about three types of people. The first one is of the type, who lets out all that he hears, through the other ear. There is no use of such a person. The second type is the one who lets out everything that he hears through his mouth. This type is also of not much use. But the third category is the one of great use. And, trustworthy too. Everything that is told to such a person is retained in his heart”

After hearing all this, the boy was contemplating for a while and then replied, “Father! What you said is true. But I feel this shows something else too. Just like how the food for the stomach is through the mouth, what goes through the ears becomes the food for the mind, right? We eschew bad food completely as it is unhealthy. Like wise, certain things that are heard through the ear are to be let out completely through the other ear as if it wasn't heard at all! With few other foods, we extract the essence out of it before spitting it out. Similarly certain things that we hear, are to be shared with others, as in, good values like patience and good stories. Such things are to be propagated to others. There are other foods that we eat and digest completely. This is similar to the few things which, though heard through the ears, are to be retained in the heart, practiced well and brought out in experience. Only then, it will be of use to others. So, Father! Though the story you shared is about the dolls depicting three different types of people, I would like to interpret it as three different ways of channelizing the information that is heard through the ears.

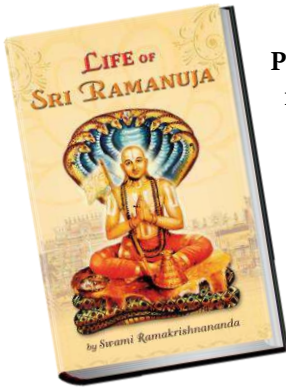
The professor was taken aback. He understood that there is nothing to be rejected from what he heard from his son, rather, everything is to be retained in his heart, practiced and then shared with others. He was filled with great joy upon realizing that there is so much more to be learnt from his son!

BIMBA

In Sanskrit, the word “Bimba” means image or shadow. In Ramayana, there is a verse, “bimbaath ivaarthithou bimbo raamadehaath thataparou”. It describes Lava and Kusha thus: “If the shadow of Raama ever comes out of His very image, that very image would resemble Lava and Kusha. In short, it says, if one looks at Lava and Kusha, it is as if Raama himself has taken another identical form. The word “Pratibimbha” means, the reflection which we see of ourselves in a mirror. That is why, there is a very famous logic in the Vedanta known as the Bimba-Pratibimbha logic (Image & Reflection). According to this logic, Brahman is the “Bimba” and reflection of Brahman is the “Jeeva” or soul. It is said that just as our image gets reflected in the mirror, the Brahman reflects in the mirror of our consciousness and appears as the “Jeeva”.

A Circle of light is also known as “Bimba” in Sanskrit. We say “Chandrabimba” or “Suryabimba” meaning, the circle of Moon’s light and circle of Sun’s light respectively. An idol or a statue is also referred to as “Bimba”. That is why in Srimad Bhagavatham, it is said, “Bimbam Bhagavatho yatra” meaning, wherever an idol is being worshipped, they are all holy places.

There is another meaning also for the word “Bimba” in Sanskrit. It is the name of a fruit. The guava fruit with a pink pulp is known as the ‘ bimba phal’. Generally, poets use this comparison to describe red lips. In Puranas one can find the words, Bimbadhara, bimboshta both meaning red lips, i.e. lips compared to the bimba fruit. Though this comparison is used by poets to describe the beautiful lips of the ladies, it is most apt for Bhagawan. That is why, we sing “komala bimbadhara gopala”. Bhagawan Krishan’s lips are soft and as red as the bimba fruit. Thus there are many meanings for the word bimba.



Publications of Sri Ramakrishna Math are one of the most divine, enlightening and enriching treasures any spiritual seeker can find. Every masterpiece takes us back to the time when Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda lived, so much so that as one reads the lines of any Divine incident or message, one can actually travel back in time and visualise the scenario when it took place. This is because of the dedication and devotion with which the author of every publication has recorded each happening, and has presented it to the reader as they were reliving those divine moments of bliss in their minds.

In the same lines, every Divine Work of Swami Ramakrishnananda, direct disciple of Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, is a jewel indeed. It is our great fortune that in this 100th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramanujacharya, the Great Vaishnava Saint, Sri Ramakrishna Math has released 'LIFE OF SRI RAMANUJA' by Swami Ramakrishnananda. This book, translated by Swami Budhananda from the original Bengali biographical classic Sri Ramuja Charitha by Swami Ramakrishnananda, takes us into a blissful journey through the life of the king of ascetics, SRI RAMUNUJACHARYA. With excellent analogies at every juncture, the book establishes with conviction the glory of Guru, the importance of satsanga, and the Greatness of the Divine Name.

LIFE OF SRI RAMANUJA, is a must read for every sincere spiritual seeker.

Inner Transformation

This world, the world of relationships, interactions, the world of mutual emotions, is like a mirror. When, for example, we have a small cut somewhere below the eye, we can't see the cut directly.

If we have to apply an antiseptic, we look at it in the mirror. Now, the cut is not visible on the face. It is visible in the image which is in the mirror. Yet, we apply the antiseptic not on the mirror where we see it, but exactly where the actual cut is, which is on my face. The same intelligence of this body, if we can apply it to the mind, we have taken a concrete step in inner transformation and which is when we see defects in others. The first possible step we may take is to see if we have this defect within us. Maybe, if we fix it within us, that defect which we see in others may go off. If not, of course, we always have an option- to go ahead and influence the change outside. But, I think the first step must be somewhere within.

Be Happy and spread the happiness around!

- MK Ramanujam



Snippets

Meditation And Yoga Can 'Reverse' DNA Reactions Which Cause Stress, New Study Suggests

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Mind-body interventions (MBIs) such as meditation, yoga and Tai Chi don't simply relax us; they can 'reverse' the molecular reactions in our DNA which cause ill-health and depression, according to a study by the universities of Coventry and Radboud.

The research, published in the journal *Frontiers in Immunology*, reviews over a decade of studies analysing how the behaviour of our genes is affected by different MBIs including mindfulness and yoga.

Experts from the universities conclude that, when examined together, the 18 studies -- featuring 846 participants over 11 years -- reveal a pattern in the molecular changes which happen to the body as a result of MBIs, and how those changes benefit our mental and physical health.

The researchers focus on how gene expression is affected; in other words the way that genes activate to produce proteins which influence the biological make-up of the body, the brain and the immune system.

When a person is exposed to a stressful event, their sympathetic nervous system (SNS) -- the system responsible for the 'fight-or-flight' response -- is triggered, in turn increasing production of a molecule called nuclear factor kappa B (NF- κ B) which regulates how our genes are expressed.

NF-kB translates stress by activating genes to produce proteins called cytokines that cause inflammation at cellular level -- a reaction that is useful as a short-lived fight-or-flight reaction, but if persistent leads to a higher risk of cancer, accelerated aging and psychiatric disorders like depression. According to the study, however, people who practise MBIs exhibit the opposite effect -- namely a decrease in production of NF-kB and cytokines, leading to a reversal of the pro-inflammatory gene expression pattern and a reduction in the risk of inflammation-related diseases and conditions.

The study's authors say the inflammatory effect of the fight-or-flight response -- which also serves to temporarily bolster the immune system -- would have played an important role in humankind's hunter-gatherer prehistory, when there was a higher risk of infection from wounds. In today's society, however, where stress is increasingly psychological and often longer-term, pro-inflammatory gene expression can be persistent and therefore more likely to cause psychiatric and medical problems.

Lead investigator Ivana Buric from the Brain, Belief and Behaviour Lab in Coventry University's Centre for Psychology, Behaviour and Achievement said: "Millions of people around the world already enjoy the health benefits of mind-body interventions like yoga or meditation, but what they perhaps don't realise is that these benefits begin at a molecular level and can change the way our genetic code goes about its business.

"These activities are leaving what we call a molecular signature in our cells, which reverses the effect that stress or anxiety would have on the body by changing how our genes are expressed. Put simply, MBIs cause the brain to steer our DNA processes along a path which improves our wellbeing.

"More needs to be done to understand these effects in greater depth, for example how they compare with other healthy interventions like exercise or nutrition. But this is an important foundation to build on to help future researchers explore the benefits of increasingly popular mind-body activities."

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