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DIFFICULTIES IN YOGA

PREFACE

IMPERIENCE is pleased to release the following booklet “Difficulties in Yoga”. This article was originally published in the “New Darsana” by Pujya Dr.K.C. Varadachari. This article presents the readers with a detailed view of the difficulties of a sadhaka with respect to the traditions and the customs that the individual is accustomed to following vis a vis Yoga. While every system of religion promises freedom in the words of Dr.K.C. Varadachari “Paradoxically, though, everyone insists on conformity or obedience to the dictates of systems of ‘freedom’. Therefore those abhyasis who are soaked in loyalty to these traditional or environmental in built complexes cannot but find themselves in difficulties. The double loyalty is a great hindrance. Therefore Gurus insist on the single devotion and request that, during the period at least of the sadhana, they may give a trial to the efficacy of the non-traditional or a single tradition.”

Also as he puts it “as against the multiple traditional conformity that makes a mockery of our devotional life our loyalty or goal must be for the Ultimate Reality. Nothing less should be aimed at”. Dr. K.C. Varadachari states further that “it has been our experience that those who seek spiritual importance or recognition and influence usually import these difficulties into their lives”.

We at IMPERIENCE do hope that sadhakas recognize the difficulties in yoga and mould themselves accordingly.

DIFFICULTIES IN YOGA

Though most writers on Yoga speak about its efficacies, not enough has been written on the difficulties and tribulations met with by the sadhakas. There are undoubtedly some lucky souls who have been able to devote themselves to one kind of Yoga, and never had the misfortune of having to grapple with problems of belief. Nothing succeeds like success.

A large number of men in the modern world are not so lucky. All of us are born into traditions built up into a kind of system, steel-frame or otherwise equally strong, and find that Yoga itself is an attempt to get out of the social systems and frames, or to use the expressive language of the vedanta, sheaths - kosas, or wealths. All religions are such kosas, treasuries, and bind man to them firmly. In this world where freedom is the one thing that matters in social and political life, it becomes doubly necessary to enlarge the freedom eternal, and to enlarge the goal of all religions and spiritual endeavour. Therefore, in the disciplines of religions, social life seem to be perplexing and self-defeating. Paradoxically, though, everyone

insists on conformity or obedience to the dictates of systems of 'freedom'.

Further, there are indeed quite a number of competitive systems, some of them promising the freedom which the traditional religion or cult seems to curtail, or does not deliver. Thus, in the context of converting religions, the conscience of man is no longer at peace with his religious heritage or tradition form. Either he is forced to question the foundations of his traditions, their whys and wherefores, and seek to verify in his own life and experience their validity or claims, or he is made to consider and discuss or have a dialogue with the other claimants to his heart and mind. Therefore with a world that has begun shrinking in size and limits, the challenges are much more than the mere exchange of information, or comparison of coherencies, or degrees of acceptabilities. A scientific decision demands the attainment of goals which man has been fixing as ultimate and necessary to his own perfection and realisation or fulfilment.

However much, then, we are free in our educational life in respect of accessibility of contemporary and ancient material from all over the world, the conflicts within the mind of man,

tethered to his past, are greatly disturbing. This is one of the main difficulties in the modern man's search for his soul, and we are finding it difficult to gauge the depths of this reaction.

The polytheistic worship was a difficult enough experience to those whose goal was the One Reality. They had either to deny the many by accepting the one, or deny the one by accepting the many. The dilemma posed by Advaita had brought out one kind of difficulty whilst solving another, namely the possibility of one pointed devotion. The dilemma posed by Dvaita had brought out another kind of difficulty, as to how one could simultaneously worship or adore many gods or manifold existence. The difficulty is similar to that which is found in polygamous existence. There is of course one way of resolving this difficulty and that is to consider that all gods are indeed the One God in His manyness, and similarly the One God it is who has become the many for the sake of His devotees who are indeed many. All this is very difficult for persons who have been shattered in their traditional faiths, though the vasanas or tendencies had been mutilated but not completely served.

Thus lovers of Siva find it difficult to shift over to the love of Vishnu, and would like to interpret all divine forces in terms of Siva. Similar is the case with the lovers of Vishnu. So too with Sakti and Brahma. We have a subtle attempt at bringing about, or building up, hierarchies with our pet idol or God as the highest. Some have sought to go behind these attempts which are so well elaborated in the different kinds of puranas - which is traditional lore - by recourse to connotative meanings of the names of Gods and established to their own inner satisfaction that all names, and therefore all works and activities and births or incarnations of Gods or the One God, refer to the One ultimate Being spoken of as the Reality - Sat: "Sat eva somya idam agra asit" - "Ekam Sat;" But all these rationalizations, or even highly sophisticated experiences, do not go far. Men have a strange but compelling pull back to their sectarianisms, even as in social life men revert back to their communalisms or casteisms to explain away their failures, or their sense of humiliation. This atavism - social or religious - is no less part and parcel of the inner life of man, as it is in biological survival or conflict complexes. This reversion is one of the most significant facts in racial and communal suspicions that, today, make religious life and

political co-existence impossible. Further, Institutions, by developing loyalties, tie up the individual ultimately to intolerance and misunderstandings.

Though we have all been striving for the abolition of these subtle though thick barriers in all our walks of life, we do not appear to have gone at all towards the goal of a barrierless social or religious existence. All remain, notwithstanding human desires. I have found that this atavism or regression to cult and sect, caste and creed, race and place and language, plays a very difficult role in Yoga as in everything else. A universal consciousness qua universal cannot recognize these difficulties as necessary for evolution and harmony. Further, whatever may be the truth of each one of these and their values divested of the five fundamentals of yama, namely adherence to truth, non-injury, non-thieving, non-robbery and chastity, or devotedness to the pursuit of the Ultimate known as Brahman, they are just hindrances and positive obstructions and sin on the cosmic consciousness and higher than the cosmic consciousness.

Therefore those abhyasis who are soaked in loyalty to these traditional or environmental built complexes cannot but find themselves in difficulties. The double loyalty is a great hindrance. Therefore Gurus insist on the single devotion and request that, during the period at least of the sadhana, they may give a trial to the efficacy of the non-traditional or a single tradition, as against the multiple traditional conformity that makes a mockery of our devotional life.

Therefore Sri Ramchandra's Rajayoga, like the earliest Vedic invocation, says that our loyalty or goal must be for the Ultimate Reality. Nothing less should be aimed at.

Further, it has been our experience that those who seek spiritual importance or recognition and influence usually import these difficulties into their lives. Thus one Mr. S who wished to appear an advanced soul when not recognized so by the Master turned against him and left the sadhana. Another Mr. G brought in his own concepts of greatness and could not accept a Master who was, regionally or by caste, different from himself and wished to set up himself as Master. Another Mr. K sought to attain the

Ultimate but was torn between the traditional method of worship of icons and the spiritual method of worship of the Supreme in the Heart, and ended up in a serious conflict with one of those many individuals, self styled saviours of dharma through lectures and orations, and other occult practices intended to enhance worldly power and so on. Still another Mr. T who deemed himself to be directly in touch with the highest powers and claimed visions and so on, found that these were not given to him by the present practice of thoughtless and egoless condition. He also had ambition to become a preceptor and when denied that, turned away from the sadhana. It is also known that many seek entrance into new societies to meet with more opportunities for their ego. Humility is the essence of spiritual evolution, and any ambition should be recognized as a hindrance to the Ultimate realisation, because these are known by seers to be obstacles and perversions of the real aspiration. This is the first difficulty.

The basic fault of most seekers seems to be this subtle obstruction proceeding from oneself entrenching itself on traditional and other conventions and complexes of worships and customs.

The second source of difficulties is the lack of siddhis (attainments) such as are exhibited by miracles. These siddhis are said, by the Yoga Sutras themselves, to be hindrances to the Ultimate realisation. The usual yoga practices sometimes lead to the awareness of one's miraculous powers, and this, in its train, brings into play more and more of egoism, concealed under the name of service to humanity and amelioration of misery of man. To be able to give man his life, his progeny, the preservation of his wealth or its acquisition, and health and so on is undoubtedly a great service. So men go to saintly men or spiritual men to gain these, as in the opinion of the ordinary man, it is one of the basic acquisitions of a spiritual man to have the miraculous power to give these necessities and needs of man.

The sadhaka therefore may find that these miraculous powers are not exhibited by Masters of the Sri Ramchandra's Rajayoga. And even those who are said to have evolved or gone up the ladder of spiritual ascent high enough do not exhibit them.

The Yoga of the Kundalini school almost affirms that for one who has awakened his

kundalini the power of omniscience and omnipotence is available. Perhaps it would be claimed that these purely Godly attributes are inevitable acquisitions. So many seek this attainment not for the sake of Realisation of the Ultimate but for the sake of enjoying sovereign power. In this sense kundalini becomes exhausted and takes its revenge on the individual, and forces him to realize that it is itself a hindrance to the Ultimate. It is the greatest force of Maya, illusion, and one should not be tempted to play the role of the individual egoist at cosmic and supracosmic levels. So true is this that the Puranas and Vedas hold that only One Person, the supreme Purusa alone, is the Master of Maya; the rest are bound by it, creatures deluded by it.

The supreme Nature is something that is beyond all Maya or its rings. It is beyond all egoisms and elements of individuation. Therefore Sri Ramchandra's Rajayoga holds that realisation comes when one passes beyond the Central Region itself, which is beyond Parabrahmanda, Brahmanda, and Pindapradesa. That is the reason why even gods, who are masters of the Brahmanda, are not said to be free individuals who have realized the Ultimate, though they are

very much higher than the ordinary man yet wallowing in the mire of the anda and pinda. Therefore also it is said that unless even the subtlest kind of egoism is surrendered, no further progress is possible, and perhaps the fall from god-state is necessary for ascent. This may be true, or else it is just possible also that one could, with the help of the Divine Master, go higher by submitting himself to the Higher Absolute. This was perhaps the meaning of the parable of the lifting of Govardhana Giri where Indra himself submitted to the power of Sri Krsna the avatar. Again and again the Gods humbled themselves before they had the Vision and access to the Absolute.

The power-seeker is unfortunately incapable of going beyond the levels of Brahmanda or cosmic consciousness, even if he is such as does not slip back into the lower level of the world. The abhyasi seeks the Ultimate Peace and Reality and as such the claims on his miraculous powers for the sake of humanity cannot be satisfied or answered. No one should attempt to answer the demand for miracles. Sri Ram Chandra states that these powers are there to be used when required, and when they are not used they are not required by the Ultimate. Though miracles

are said to qualify a person for sainthood according to some religions, yet miracles by themselves mean nothing at all, except as obstacles to spiritual ascent for the individual exercising them. To yield to popular demand in this respect is to deviate from the path of realisation.

Impatient though man is, yet it is good for him to learn to be patient and resigned to the natural development that has been initiated by the transmission of the Supreme Consciousness.

One thing seems to be axiomatic; our human consciousness is very much a limited, and spatially and temporally circumscribed, consciousness. Further what is revealed by it are related to matters of immediate concern to life and property, and is almost helpless beyond them. The cosmic consciousness is indeed different. Beyond that are levels of consciousness which might well be called by different names, for their descriptions seem to be inversions, or rather originals of our inverted consciousnesses. So much so, to speak of its powers and possibilities is beyond our consciousness itself.

As one proceeds on the path, one transcends the regions of light and heaviness, and attains regions of lightness and subtle original intuitions and insights where the light of our comprehension fades away, leaving us naked in the presence of the Supreme in all its Purity.

The abhorrence of isolation, or kaivalya, is one of the characteristics of the modern age. Man is conceived as inalienably a social being, and society is the very condition of human or of all existence. This social conception has influenced man's traditional values so much that the fact that he is an individual spirit, and that he has a trans-social function and destiny, are forgotten. Yoga has been accused of aiming at Kaivalya or isolation or freedom from all bonds, including the sangha or community. If ego is one barrier, sangha is the other. Both could be bonds for the man who seeks something more valuable than either, for example, God. The attainment of the purest state of spirituality is called kaivalya, and not what it had later on been considered to be, a kind of isolationism. It is similar to the ekantabhava or ekanti-bhava of soul and complete experience of Reality, as it is in itself, without any kind of limitation or subjectivity.

This experience, which goes beyond the levels of subjectivity - knowledge, and grants direct experience of Reality as such, is surely the most desirable. But logical thought is incapable of comprehending such an experience. It is real, but if reality is only defined as that which can be defined in logical terms of subject, object and predicate, then such an experience transcends the mental dialectic.

These are certain basic difficulties on the path of yoga, much more than what usually are considered to be obstacles of human nature, weaknesses of man.

In fact it is one of the most important features of spiritual life or search for yoga that it arises from conditions of deepest despair and depression, of weakness of heart (hrdya daurbalyam) and helplessness (akincnata). Surrender to the Highest Spirit or God (prapatti) is about the most important first step towards self-recovery and upliftment (ujjivana). It is because it is about the most important that Yoga itself insists that one must devote himself to the service or attainment of God, or Isvara, so that one may become like Him. Worshipping the eternally free Lord of all Nature, one grows to that state of being free and

lord of all Nature, or live according to that supreme Divine Being and His nature. To be in conformity with that supreme Being or Nature is to attain freedom which is easily available. And when one attains His condition or Him, one attains all that could be attained through freedom and naturalness.