Margazhi, A Season Of Stability

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It's that time of the year which is considered significant for those on the spiritual path. The Tamil month of Margazhi begins today. At this time of the year Planet Earth is closest to the sun. In the northern hemisphere this should have been the warmest month, but it is the coolest because the northern part of the planet is facing away from the sun, but since it is close to the sun, it so happens that sun rays are diffused as they hit the planet and so do not warm the earth as they would have otherwise. But in terms of the sun's gravity effect on the planet, it is highest, now. January 3, 2014 is when the planet is closest to the sun, so the maximum pull of the sun's gravity happens at this time. That is the effect the Margazhi month has on the human system - it pulls you up from the base.

Margazhi brings balance and stability to the system. Yogic practices have been transmitted into the culture in many different ways. Often, conventional gender roles are switched. In Tamil Nadu, men will go on nagarasankeertan; they will sing and practise devotion - which is largely considered a feminine inclination. Geometry and masculinity are directly connected. The feminine always pays maximum significance to an object's colour and outer form. The masculine always sees the geometric base first. In this month, women practise geometry - not on paper, but in front of their homes, drawing elaborate and beautiful kolams or geometrical patterns on the floor.

Because of a general pull downward, the muladhara, the foundation chakra, and thus the nurturing nature of life, become dominant. All life in the northern hemisphere is at its minimum potential right now. If you plant a seed, the growth will be slowest at this time, and they do not sprout well. Since growth is held back by inertia in the life force, this is when the body can recoup and preserve itself well. Recognising this, traditionally, marriages are never conducted in Tamil Nadu during Margazhi. This is not a time for conception. Even householders practise brahmacharya during this period.

The Margazhi season is also a good time for those suffering psychological imbalances because the sun's energy is pulling downward, and they can stabilise themselves. In the yogic system, if there is a psychological imbalance, it is always seen as the water element going out of control. If you have a tank full of water and shake it, it will slosh. The water element causes various levels of imbalance in a person if the body is not treated right. Traditionally, in this month, there are various practices to be in touch with water. Generally, people don't want to miss the brahma muhurtam (3.40 am), a time that is suitable for spiritual sadhana. People take dips in temple ponds at dawn.

Andal, the southern mystic seeker who yearned for union with Vishnu, composed the Thiruppavai, 30 devotional and inspirational verses that are popular across Tamil Nadu, especially during Margazhi.

Margazhi brings a natural sense of stability into the system. There are any number of spiritual seekers who are constantly one step forward, one step backward. This is happening to too many people because there is not enough sadhana towards stabilising themselves. If you are pulled upward and you are not stable within yourself, it will lead to imbalances. This month is used for stability and the next month, called 'Thai', is used for mobility. If you have created enough stability within you, only then would you dare to be mobile. This is a time to create balance and stability.