



Obituary

Obituary of Professor Trichur Subramaniam Rukmani June 29, 1930 – November 24, 2024

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Image: Author's Collection

An extraordinary soul, Trichur Subramaniam Rukmani has passed on after an equally extraordinary journey at the age of 94. Born in a small village in the Palakkad district of Kerala called Nemmara Old Village on the 29th of June, 1930, T.S. Rukmani pursued an intellectual life beginning her studies in Sanskrit, Mathematics and Economics. This constituted a breakthrough at the time, as these disciplines were traditionally considered the domain of men, wielded in a manner that was patriarchal.

T.S. Rukmani received a gold medal for her B.A. at the University of Delhi in 1952, and the award was presented by none other than S. Radhakrishnan, the then Vice President of a newly independent India. She thereafter continued to pursue her advanced studies in the field of Sanskrit and received an M.A. in 1954, a Ph.D in 1958,

and a D.Litt in 1991 from the University of Delhi. Hers was the first D.Litt that was awarded by the Department of Sanskrit.

She began her academic career at the Indraprastha College, Delhi (1964-81), and became the Principal of Miranda College, her *alma mater*, staying in that position between 1982 and 93. After retiring from there, she moved to the University of Durban-Westville, South Africa, where she served as the Head of the Department of Hindu Studies and Indian Philosophy (1993-95). She later became the Chair of Hindu Studies at the Department of Religion in Concordia University, Montreal, Canada (1996-2012).

During a period of more than 60 years of intense intellectual work, T.S. Rukmani produced voluminous scholarly works, apart from reading stimulating academic papers at scores of national and international conferences. She served in many honorary capacities, held prestigious fellowships and guest lectureships at various distinguished academic institutions around the world, such as the Oxford University. For her scholarship, she was rightfully honoured with numerous awards in the field of Sanskrit studies, such as DANAM/ Taksha Institute Abhinavagupta Award for Sustained Achievement in Indic Philosophy (2009), Hind Rattan Award by NRI organizations in India, (2009), the Shivadasani Fellowship of the Oxford

Centre for Hindu Studies, UK (2006), and a Concordia University Certificate in recognition of contributions to Concordia University (2003). She was awarded an honorary doctorate (D.Litt/ Vidyavacaspati) by the Silpakorn University of Thailand in 2015 at the 16th World Sanskrit Conference. T.S. Rukmani was a prolific author, who produced a number of monographs and edited volumes in addition to a number of scholarly articles published in reputed international journals.

Of significance in her academic work is her outstanding contribution to Yoga studies. Her scholarly works, *Yogasutrabhashyavivarana*, published in two volumes (2001), *Yogasutras of Patanjali with The Commentary of Vyasa* (2001), and *Yogavarttika of Vijnanabhikshu* in four volumes (1981-1989), make her a leading exponent of Yoga philosophy. Her scholarship on the Bhagavata Purana, and the Advaita Vedanta of Adi Shankaracharya certainly illustrates her broader understanding of Hindu theology and philosophy.

In the midst of such a busy scholarly life, Prof. T.S. Rukmani was a generous, gentle and caring human being, who nurtured a host of students from around the world who to this day look up to her as an example and role model for their life and work. Her academic colleagues around the world consider her one of the greatest minds who inspired generations of scholars and researchers. Her academic life was fruitfully complemented by her broader interests in Indian classical dance, music and other fine arts. She was a loving wife, caring mother, and grandmother. She leaves behind her beloved soulmate, S. Rajamani (Retd. Wing Commander in the Indian Air Force), whom she always fondly called 'Kanna' (dear), her son, Ravi (an aerospace engineer), a daughter-in-law, Meera (author), a daughter Parvati (psychiatrist), two granddaughters, Jaya and Abhaya, as well as her many devoted students, intellectuals and scholars around the world.

Despite all her achievements, she remained a humble human being, conducted herself with dignity, integrity, and grace, always infusing those she met with confidence, courage and candour. Though she blended with those considered high and mighty in society, she also remained connected to the less fortunate. She debated and argued with her colleagues in every scholarly meeting with grace and courtesy and had an uncanny gentleness to her when offering criticism and appreciation to a colleague's point of view. She moved among scholars of great repute with ease, dignity and confidence. Whether she spoke or sat quietly, her presence in a conference was always keenly felt.

For all these great qualities and contributions to human society, Professor Rukmani, we owe you a great debt of gratitude. The time for you to leave us has come. Your departure has made us poorer and rendered us devoid of a matriarch. Have you become a brilliant star somewhere in the universe? Have you returned to our world in another incarnation? Or, have you become one with the Universal Soul? We may never know where you have gone! But wherever you are, whatever you have become, we offer you with gratitude our most sincere appreciation for sharing your life with us and enriching us that much more.

“puṣpāñjaliṃ samarpayāmaḥ”

पुष्पाञ्जलिं समर्पयामः

Om tat sat

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