



In exploring the principles that underpin the practice of Āsana the first idea to consider is that our practice is not just another form of exercise. Yoga Āsana are more than just physical postures or exercises to stretch and tone the body, or enhance our sense of personalised well-being. From within its Haṭha roots the concern of Yoga is our relationship with the force which is behind our movements and its source that initiates our every action.

Further the different practice elements that constitute a mature Yoga practice are not separate compartments. They are linked through the principles underpinning them. For example a respiratory competence learnt through the practice of Āsana facilitates progress within the seated practice of Prāṇāyāma. An enduring stable posture learnt through the practice of Prāṇāyāma supports the cultivation the meditative attitude inherent in progress towards Dhyāna or meditation.

In other words, even though we are emphasising the body by using Āsana there is still a quality of respiratory competence, energetic steadiness and mental focus. Equally when we are engaged in more static meditational practices there is still a quality of physical strength, energetic steadiness and mental alertness. This is reflected through our ability to maintain a sustained physical and energetic stillness within our seated practices with an erect spinal posture.

So from this we can observe that a steady mind and respiratory competence are required to engage the body in such a way as to maximise the potential benefits and access the related developmental steps inherent within the role and purposes of Āsana. Equally a spinal strength and energetic stability are helpful when the focus of our practice is the relationship of the mind and the source of perception, as in the practice of Dhyāna.

This means we can move into the work in the Āsana whilst experiencing less disturbance from the mind and whilst working with the mind in Dhyāna experience minimal disturbance from the body.

To support and draw these different strands together the teachings of Krishnamacharya and Desikachar prioritised increasingly subtle principles or guidelines that are introduced and gradually developed to help us work more effectively within the Āsana because of a learned quality of attention in the mind and thus enhanced sensitivity to and in the body.

From this attentiveness we can also learn about the mind through self observation of our attitudes and patterns in and towards our body whilst working on our Āsana practice. Here its potential is as a tool to help us explore our understanding of self and how integrating these principles into our personal practice can influence our inner and outer environment.

Numerous posts offering insights into all aspects of Yoga practice and the underlying principles, can be explored via this link as a support for anybody wishing to explore how the Yoga taught by Krishnamacharya and Desikachar evolves through and beyond Āsana.

These practice principles also offer a map that, if followed intelligently and practiced consistently with the developmental guidance of a personal teacher, can lead the student towards the experience that lies at the heart of Yoga practice. That of being consciously linked with one's deeper nature and its sagacious qualities.