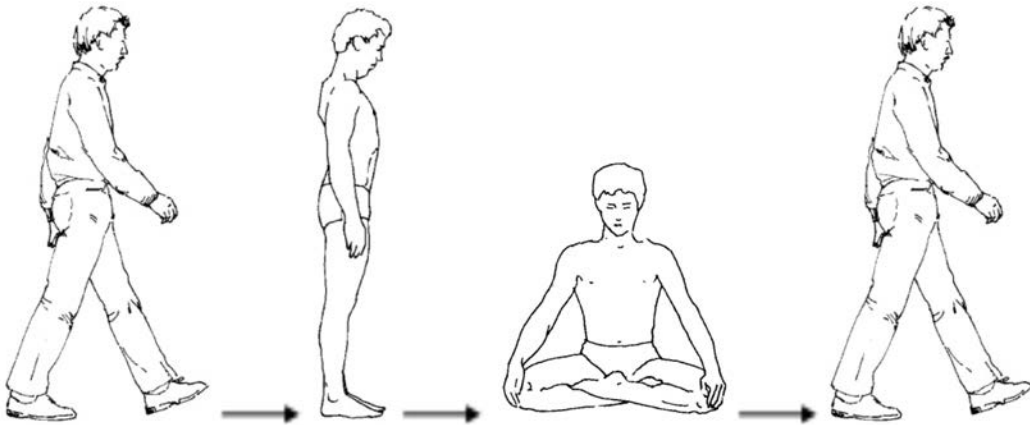


## 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers – Collated from 2011 to 2024



The role of this PDF is to offer the Yoga Studies blog quotes accumulated so far within the 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers series as single resource.

Started in 2011, these are a collation of short posts collected over 13 years, on teaching Yoga in the West within the 21st Century.

They range from Yoga Teaching tips and tactics, through to quips and quotes as observations, advice and social commentary.

1.

"Tradition is honouring the function.  
Innovation is adapting the form.  
Good not to get the two confused  
or even worse – the wrong way round."

2.

"TKV Desikachar taught the Viniyoga of Yoga,  
or application of Yoga according  
to state of life, place, time and circumstance  
to optimise the student's potential within  
that situation as seen from his  
own, forever evolving, innovating and  
maturing, developmental teaching thread."

3.

"Śavāsana is a recovery  
from the fatigue of practice,  
rather than a recovery  
from the fatigue of Saṃsāra."

4.

"Dhyāna Sādhana was taught according to the principles of Cikitsā, Rakṣaṇa and Śikṣaṇa Krama, with meditational practices ranging from pacification to protection to empowerment."

5.

"The Viniyoga of Yoga perspective is that the role of Śavāsana is its specific use as a transition from the fatigue of the Āsana, rather than its general use as a recovery from the fatigue of life."

6.

"Viniyoga is not a term that can be applied to group class teaching."

7.

"The Viniyoga of Yoga is the art of learning how to practice, rather than what to practice."

8.

"Modern Postural Yoga is most certainly one way in. However have we become trapped within this way in and thus can't find the way out?"

9.

"Throughout Krishnamacharya's teaching life he remained focused on the priorities of seeing the who as the starting point before considering the what."

10.

"The Viniyoga of Yoga is a name for a system to teach to a student, rather than about students to teach a system to."

11.

"Yoga Cikitsā is about Respecting the Problem and Treating the Person. Rather than Respecting the Person and Treating the Problem."

12.

"I wonder whether too much time is being spent around looking at inventive ways of performing a particular Āsana, rather than looking at questions around its role and purpose in Yoga. A rationale to consider as to why or even whether we need to do it?"

13.

"Tri Bandha Sādhana – Jālandhara, Uḍḍiyāna and Mūla, starts from the top down rather than the bottom up, in both senses."

14.

"The art of Viniyoga presumes that the five application principles of

1. What is being taught,
2. Why it is being taught,
3. When it is being taught
4. Where it is being taught and especially
5. How it is being taught,

are personally applicable and socially relevant to Who is being taught."

15.

"The beauty of Krishnamacharya's teaching is that it is about learning Yoga for different types of people, rather than today's increasingly studio driven group class modality of learning different types of Yoga for people."

16.

"Five questions my teacher taught me that need to be 'posed', for or to any student wishing to practice Sarvāṅgāsana, or even for and to any teacher wishing to teach Sarvāṅgāsana, whatever the situation.

1. Who is going to practice it?
2. Why do they wish to use it?
3. When are they going to practice it?
4. How are they going to get in and out of it?
5. What do they need to have done to verify their capability?"

17.

"It appears that Modern Therapeutic Yoga is increasingly angled at looking at the problems in front of the person in terms of Yoga for What, rather than looking at the person behind the problems in terms of Yoga for Who."

18.

"Just because a person can achieve the form of the Āsana,  
we can't presume they will also achieve the experience of the Āsana."

19.

"Some people use Yoga (or even training for a career as a Yoga Teacher),  
to move away from something undesirable for, or in their lives (Abhāva).  
Others use Yoga to move towards something desirable (Bhāva) for, or in their lives.  
Either can be positive, however good to be clear about our motives,  
especially if our relationship with that which we wanted to move away from,  
or that which we wanted to move towards,  
changes along the way."

20.

"Five questions my teacher taught me that need to be 'posed',  
for or to any student wishing to practice Śīrṣāsana,  
or even for and to any teacher wishing to teach Śīrṣāsana,  
whatever the situation.  
1. Who is going to practice it?  
2. Why do they wish to use it?  
3. When are they going to practice it?  
4. How are they going to get in and out of it?  
5. What do they need to have done to verify their capability?"

21.

"Our Yoga Teaching needs to be an appurtenance to our Yoga Practice.  
Rather than our Yoga Practice being an appurtenance to our Yoga Teaching."

22.

"As a Yoga Teacher we need to ensure that our personal Yoga Practice  
doesn't become a repetition of, or rehearsal for, our Yoga Teaching plans."

23.

"In the novice phase of our relationship with a Yoga Class,  
it's not so much about what we bring to the Class,  
it's more about what we take away from the Class.  
A sign of a maturing in our relationship with a Yoga Class,  
is that we accept more responsibility for what we bring to the Class,  
being a determining factor in what we take away from the Class."

24.

"In the novice phase of our relationship with a 121 Yoga Teacher,  
it's not so much about what we bring to the Lesson,  
it's more about what we take away from the Lesson.  
A sign of a maturing in our relationship with a 121 Yoga Teacher,  
is that we accept more responsibility for what we bring to the Lesson,  
being a determining factor in what we take away from the Lesson."

25.

"The Commercialised in-Corporation of Viniyoga  
is in danger of becoming a parody of  
the Personalised incorporation of viniyoga."

26.

"It is ironic when a collective term used to describe  
an approach to teaching an individual,  
becomes an individual term used to describe  
an approach to teaching a collective."

27.

"Sat Viniyoga  
is about learning to do more with less.  
Asat Viniyoga  
is about learning to do less with more.  
Whether Āsana or Students!!"

28.

"I wonder if Modern Postural Yoga is confusing,  
experiencing a supple body,  
with experiencing a subtle body?"

29.

"Yoga Cikitsā is about  
treating a person in a problem.  
Rather than  
treating a problem in a person."

30.

"Two primary roles in the adaptation of Āsana  
to the needs and potential of the student are  
Facilitating a decrease of tension within the body  
whilst  
Facilitating an increase of attention within the breath."

31.

"Amongst the Antarāya that  
relegate Prāṇāyāma to the wish list  
is the choice of a long relaxation as  
a substitute ending to Āsana practice."

32.

"One hallmark within TKV Desikachar's teaching on Āsana, was not to confuse 'appropriate' alignment techniques, with 'proper' alignment techniques.

The former implies a personalised starting point, whilst the latter implies a developmental potential.

However both need to be related to 3 questions:

Where am I coming from?

Why am I practicing Āsana?

Where am I going to?"

33.

"TKV Desikachar did not teach different people different things.

Nor did he just teach the same thing to different people.

He taught different people the same thing in different ways.

The same could be said of T Krishnamacharya's teaching.

Hence the context of the phrase the Viniyoga of Yoga."

34.

"Something spreading more widely may not automatically mean that something is developing.

Should we be reflecting more on that which helps Yoga to develop, rather than on that which helps Yoga to spread more widely?"

35.

"There are those Yoga teachers who speak to your fantasies and those Yoga teachers who speak to your realities."

36.

"I feel we need to ensure that we use our practice to support our teaching, rather than using our teaching to support our practice."

37.

"As a teacher it can be helpful to consider Āsana as vehicles to transmit the fundamental principles of practice.

For example a cardinal principle of practice is that Āsana have a primary and a secondary aspect within their Lakṣana.

Thus we must inquire into what is the primary aspect in this Āsana, and what is the secondary aspect in this particular Āsana?

The idea is to maintain the integrity of the primary characteristics.

Thus we may need to compromise the secondary characteristics.

For example in Uttānāsana to sustain the primary work in the spine we can consider a secondary compromise by releasing the knees."

38.

"Krishnamacharya and Desikachar's transmission sought to preserve specific personal priorities when transmitting Yoga teachings to others.

For example when teaching youngsters, the focus was on doing less with more.

However when teaching adults personally, the focus was on doing more with less.

This would be with regards to Āsana practice, as well as with regard to the number of Students."

39.

"All of Krishnamacharya's and Desikachar's life work focused on the training of students, some of whom then went on to become teachers. Rather than the reality that pervades Yoga today, in that the priority is on the training of teachers, some of whom may go on to become students."

40.

"Yoga offerings include

- Yoga for Asthma
  - Yoga for Bunions
  - Yoga for Colds
  - Yoga for Digestion
  - Yoga for Eyesight
  - Yoga for Flexibility
  - and so on through to
  - Yoga for Volleyball
  - Yoga for Witches
  - Yoga for Xmas
  - Yoga for Yahoos
  - Yoga for Zombies
- Is it not time for more
- Yoga for Yoga?"

41.

"Has the fusion of Yoga and Fitness become a confusion of Yoga as Fitness?"

42.

"You apply therapeutics through Cikitsā, but not protection or preservation. This is the role of Rakṣaṇa."

43.

"The principles of Cikitsā, Rakṣaṇa and Śikṣaṇa Krama are more applicable to the 'mindset' of a person, rather than looking through the 'fitness' of their body."

44.

"My Āsana study with Desikachar was shaped around forming a deep appreciation of specific core principles that underpin the planning and practice of Āsana and their application to the individual student's constitution, psychology and need.

Amongst these dozen or so core principles, the first group when looking at any Āsana in depth, were the concepts of Nāma, Rūpa and Lakṣaṇa, or the name, form and characteristics of that particular Āsana. Obviously, the Nāma is a useful tag point for identification and the Rūpa is vital as a reference point for the Sat Viniyoga, or right application of the Āsana within overall considerations of initial direction and outcomes through such as the Śikṣaṇa Krama, Rakṣaṇa Krama or Cikitsā Krama application of the forms used. However, I do feel these days that our understanding in Āsana practice is more dominated by the Nāma and the Rūpa with little emphasis on the Lakṣaṇa or inherent characteristics of the Āsana and how understanding this aspect can have a profound effect on the approach, application and outcome of the overall or accumulative impact of the Āsana within the student's practice.

The teachings of Krishnamacharya around Āsana included an in-depth appreciation of the Lakṣaṇa, especially around the thirty or so primary and secondary support Āsana such as Uttānāsana, Jaṭhara Parivṛtti, Bhujāṅgāsana or Januśīrṣāsana."

45.

"Desikachar taught me that there were eight steps in the journey towards learning the teachings.

1. Upadeśa
  - To come near to the teachings and remain
2. Śravaṇa
  - To listen to the teachings with an open ear
3. Grahṇa
  - To seize hold of or grasp onto the teachings
4. Dhāraṇā
  - To concentrate on memorising the teachings
5. Manana
  - To carefully reflect on the teachings
6. Anuṣṭhāna
  - To live with and put the teachings into practice
7. Anubhāvana
  - To have some experiences from following the teachings



## 8. Pracāra

– To share and apply the teachings with others  
In the other words the journey towards:  
coming near to, listening to, grasping, memorizing,  
reflecting, applying, experiencing and sharing the teachings."

46.

"Krishnamacharya's approach to teaching children Āsana, was more about cultivating strength in Prāṇa Sthāna and movement in Apāna Sthāna. Whereas for teaching adults Āsana, the approach was now more about cultivating movement in Prāṇa Sthāna and strength in Apāna Sthāna."

47.

"The First and Second Chapters of the Yoga Sūtra can be linked to the teaching concepts of Śikṣaṇa, Rakṣaṇa and Cikitsā Krama. In that the Samādhi Yoga in Chapter One can be seen as apt for a Śikṣaṇa situation, whereby the primary aim is discernment, as in exploring what lies within the sense of I-Am. Whereas, in Chapter Two, the Kriya Yoga section can be seen as being apt for a Cikitsā situation, whereby the primary aim is recovering, as in reducing agitation through lifestyle changes. Whereas, in the Bāhya Aṅga section of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga can be seen as being apt for a Rakṣaṇa situation, whereby the primary aim is establishing stability, through a formal practice within a Yoga Sādhana."

48.

"A suggested strategy is to focus primarily on the length of the breath when working in group class situations with Āsana. Whereas, a suggested strategy is to focus primarily on the subtlety of the breath when working in group class situations with Prāṇāyāma."

49.

"In terms of Prāṇāyāma from a one-to-one perspective, we need to consider whether the practice starting point for the practitioner is from a Rakṣaṇa, Cikitsā, or Śikṣaṇa Krama viewpoint. From a Rakṣaṇa Krama viewpoint, the situation we are focusing on initially is on developing the length of the breath. From a Cikitsā Krama viewpoint, the practitioner's energy and respiratory capacity may be low, so the scope for working on the length of the breath may well be limited. Therefore a suggested strategy initially, is to focus on the subtlety of the breath. Whereas, from a Śikṣaṇa Krama viewpoint, the potential is there to work and develop both the length and the subtlety of the breath. So both options can be explored from the onset."

50.

"When we are talking about Yoga, what percentage of the time are we in reality actually only talking about Āsana?"

51.

"When talking about Yoga as if a practice, I feel it could be helpful to distinguish between which aspects of Yoga practice we are actually referring to as they tend to have differing, and at times even seemingly contrasting, facets, paradigms and purposes."

52.

"If we can accept that Yoga is more than just Āsana, what would you see as the difference between Āsana as a practice and Yoga as a Sādhana?"

53.

"Although the inhale is the exploratory means to learn more about the Prāṇa Sthāna, it is initially the exhale that will teach us about the Apāna Sthāna, and here is a primary means in the application of Āsana as a therapy.

In terms of the breath, the exhale is naturally passive, the inhale is naturally active. So, one of the initial primary principles in the Viniyoga of teaching the art of breath work, is how to make the exhale active."

54.

"Initially, if teaching breath work in group situations, we don't need to worry about people using Ujjāyī or not. Because, even if you are not using Ujjāyī and you want the student to learn to make the exhale longer, they must learn how to initiate the exhalation by contracting the abdominal muscles.

So, making the exhalation longer is something you can learn and refine independently of Ujjāyī. Sometimes, even within the very act of making the exhalation longer people will naturally shift to Ujjāyī. If teaching individually, we can start with introducing the student to the process of activating the exhalation. However, given the uniqueness of the personal dynamic, initiation into the art of Ujjāyī can usually be presented within the first lesson, along with accommodating the structural and the performance differences between the characteristics of the exhalation and of the inhalation."

55.

"One approach in the Viniyoga of teaching the art of breath work within group situations is that of, within working Āsana the Bhāvana is on cultivating the length of the breath. Whereas, within seated Āsana the Bhāvana is on cultivating the subtlety of the breath. The technique of Ujjāyī can be used within both situations as in, placing the focus on length within working Āsana, and placing the focus on subtlety within seated Āsana."