



A fundamental facet in the principles of Āsana, Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma practice, in the teachings of Krishnamacharya through Desikachar, is the ordering of Āsana according to the acronym SLIBSS.

It is the practice arrangement or Vinyāsa Krama in the following order:

- Standing Āsana
- Supine Lying Āsana
- Inverted Āsana
- Prone Backbend Āsana
- Sitting Āsana
- Seated Āsana

This is referred to in Religiousness in Yoga page 23-27. It is the foundational structure on which all the other variants of Āsana, Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma practice arise from or are goals towards.

Vinyāsa Krama is pronounced according to its meaning as Vi-Nyāsa Krama or special placing in a sequence of steps. It is the arranging of the various postures or breathing patterns in an intelligent sequence, respecting the variables in the student and the purpose of the practice.

What might be helpful to consider is one of the ways Desikachar presented this teaching to me within our lessons in that the Viniyoga of Vinyāsa Krama is comparable to the notion of climbing steps.

Here intelligent application means to climb each step by bringing both feet onto the same step before taking the next one. In other words ensure we are grounded and stable before we take another step.

It also has the benefit of allowing a steady view of what is involved in taking the next step as well as reducing the risk of losing what we already have. However this way of approaching the developmental aspects of our practice may be at variance with our more usual way of climbing steps, such as one step at a time.

How do we know that? Here a teacher who knows you as an individual rather than a member of a group can be very helpful. For example we all have different modes of being, some climb steps slowly, some quickly, some two at a time, all according to our innate tendencies.

This is an attitude to life that can reflect in the way we practice, or in the choice of the style of practice, or how we approach 'progressing' our practice, or even in the teacher we 'choose'.

Thus the way I was taught by Desikachar was that if I move away from this schematic as the core of my Āsana practice or teaching, there needs to be a compelling rationale within which it remains a potential goal to move back to or towards, both short term and long term.

*Sometimes the Vinyāsa Krama,
or special placing of steps from,
is more important than the steps to.
At other times the Vinyāsa Krama,
or special placing of steps to,
is more important than the steps from.
In our life as well as our practice.*

Obviously in terms of Āsana as a starting point not all aspects of SLIBSS may be possible both as a short term for beginner or longer term because of specific situations or conditions. However the reference as a potential remains a valid guideline.

*"The teacher decides which of the trikrama is the best for the student:
Śikṣaṇa Krama requires a perfect knowing to transmit a strict practice,
without any compromise, as it should be in Vedic chanting for example.
Rakṣaṇa Krama is aimed at protection and preservation;
it promotes continuity in any levels like health, abilities, knowledge, etc.
Cikitsa Krama looks for adaptation, healing, recovering..."
– TKV Desikachar speaking with his
senior Western students London 1998*

Thus the Viniyoga of SLBSS within a Vinyāsa Krama would depend on criteria such as the relationship of the student to the principles of Cikitsā, Rakṣaṇa and Śikṣaṇa Krama.

*"Śikṣaṇa Krama – do something perfectly or correctly.
Anything is taught to achieve perfection in the practice of Āsana and Prāṇāyāma.
In other words teaching children and healthy people
where you can take risks with no problems.
Not a valid approach for groups.
We need to use intelligence and Viveka,
not follow the idea of no pain, no gain to
become painless or to get to a point without suffering."
– TKV Desikachar France August 1983*

Add to this the notion that in its essential role Yoga was seen as a means to destabilise our perception of self in order to 'break up' the notion of what we see as the 'I'.

Perhaps comparing this against the modern approach where folks come to classes seeking stability as a counterpose to the destabilising effects of our worldly involvements, then the notion of Vinyāsa Krama as presented here can have even more relevance.

Personally I find that after 40 years of working personally and professionally within this convention these core principles still remain rock solid guidelines to work from and towards. Hence the meaning of Vinyāsa Krama as intelligent steps.