



I feel Krishnamacharya's accomplishments should not be defined just by his more well known characterisations, such as his remarkable philosophical background being applied to contextualising traditional Indian texts from within a Yoga viewpoint, or his unique access to Haṭha teachings and texts and innovating from these resources when choreographing modern postural Āsana syntheses for children and young adults.

"All of Krishnamacharya's and Desikachar's life work focused on the training of students, some of whom then went on to become teachers."

However, what he is less well known for is his work with individual students, probably because it happened behind closed doors and students rarely had cause to speak about it to others. Nor would they have reason to want to teach it to others as it had been taught to them, as it was given at a particular moment in time, within a unique situation, with a specific purpose and within a private, rather than a public group setting.

"In recommending Yoga practices, teachers should always consider an individual's particular circumstances. Just as other activities and practices must be adapted to the changes in one's life, such as ageing, so too Yoga practices need to be adapted as the practitioner changes."
– T Krishnamacharya on Yoga Sūtra Chapter One verse 34

For me, it was this skill in initiating an individualised practice according to the student's unique needs, interests and potentials. Furthermore, to then refine the individual students personal Yoga practice according to their responses. Finally, teaching each student how to develop their understanding of what best supports the role and goal of their practice.

*"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."*

Thus as a teacher initiating and guiding a student's short term needs amidst long term interests, he was able to move freely within his way of looking at Yoga as either Śakti Krama or Yoga practice as a means of power, Adhyātmika Krama or Yoga practice as a means of self-inquiry, or Cikitsā Krama or Yoga practice as a self-therapeutic treatment.

*"Like everything, Yoga must be presented intelligently.
It should be spoken of carefully and offered according to
the aspiration, requirement and the culture of the individual.
This should be done in stages.
Systematic application of Yoga
– be it concerned with physical exercises, deep breathing,
relaxation, meditation, lifestyle, food, studies – is the need of the day.
This I believe – is what the word Viniyoga represents."
– TKV Desikachar*

This is what TKV Desikachar later termed as the Viniyoga of Yoga according to the needs, interests and potentials of the student as a unique individual. I feel this term devised and suggested by Desikachar, when travelling in Switzerland in 1983, in response to requests by his Western students for a collective name to describe Krishnamacharya's approach to teaching Yoga, depicts his greatest strength and finest grace with his potential to empower individual students into profound experiences of what Yoga is.

*"Different suggestions are available in our tradition
to help the beginner arrive at the highest state of Samādhi."
– T Krishnamacharya on Yoga Sūtra Chapter One verse 42*

In addition to discussing Krishnamacharya's approach to applying Yoga to individual students, it might be appropriate to offer an observation around his use of the term tradition as some talk about the Viniyoga tradition. When Krishnamacharya talked about 'his' tradition he was not referring to Viniyoga, rather to his own philosophical and spiritual tradition. Here Krishnamacharya's personal devotional philosophy and spiritual practices were grounded in the teachings that were formulated from the early threads of Bhakti devotionalism by the great sage Rāmānuja, who was a disciple of Śrī Yāmunācārya.

*"Action is best performed when it is for the good of the society,
with the spirit of dedication to the lord and
with freedom from the attitude of being the doer and the beneficiary."
– TKV Desikachar on Gitārtha Saṃgraha of Śrī Yāmunācārya Śloka Seven*

Śrī Yāmunācārya, composer of texts such as the Gitārtha Saṃgraha, Siddhi Traya and Stotra Ratna, was the grandson of the 9th century sage Śrī Nāthamuni and a forebear of T Krishnamacharya. These teachings evolved over centuries into what became known as the Saṃpradāya of Viśiṣṭādvaita, or qualified non-dualism and this is still seen, along with Advaita and Dvaita, as one of the three primary schools of Vedānta within India today.