



Laṅghana Kriyā can be used for pacification or for purification.....

Laṅghana Kriyā is the viniyoga methodology with its reducing, lightening or contractive potentials within the practice of Āsana, Prāṇāyāma and Mudrā. As a practice process it is actualised through an understanding of the primary principles that inform Haṭha Yoga and Āyurveda.

The viniyoga, or application of Laṅghana Kriyā affects a withdrawal of Agni from the periphery to the core. This outcome is achieved through effecting changes in the systemic energies of digestion and elimination. Thus from an Āyurveda perspective, the use of practices which bring about a change in the principles of Vāta, Pitta and Kapha Doṣa.

However, not so well known in Yoga circles is that Laṅghana Kriyā has two functional dimensions within which the principle can be applied. This is either as a palliative technique or as a purificatory technique. The technical names are Śamanam Kriyā or Śodhanam Kriyā.

The former or Laṅghana Kriyā as a Śamanam or palliative process effects a systemic change in helping to alleviate the symptoms being experienced by the individual. This approach, as a methodology, can be used as if to quieten or reduce hyperactivity or excess in the system and its impact at the physical, energetic or psychological levels.

This outcome is realised through the use of such Yoga practice techniques as exhalation, or mild pause after the exhale in Āsana or simple seated breathing, or through or within the application of forward bending or closing Āsana, or elementary twisting Āsana.

As such it is one of the staple application principles in the viniyoga tool box, especially given that most students are not individually taught but practice within group classes of varying sizes.

Here it might even be argued here that given many students are attracted to Yoga because they are experiencing an excess of something they wish to reduce, the widespread Śamanam application of Laṅghana Kriyā is one of the reasons that the 'viniyoga system' is seen as primarily focused within a therapeutic context, or even 'meditation for the extremely tired', as described by one UK daily paper.

However this is only one aspect of Laṅghana Kriyā and again one might argue that it is only a first, albeit very important step, in the process towards effecting change at a deeper functional emergence level beyond that of cultivating the habit of attenuation or reduction of symptoms as we experience them.

In other words of course palliating or reducing symptoms is valid and necessary, but for many its enough given our busy lives and personal stories. At least until they rise up again in the 'modern' style of detox-retox-detox-retox.

Here is where the practitioner is required to have an interest in going deeper and effecting a change at the level of what is called Śodhanam Kriyā or those actions which can effect a change at a deeper causative level.

*"In its beginning stages it's about
our practice supporting our life.
In its maturing stages it's about
our life supporting our practice."*

Hence the idea of Laṅghana Kriyā as a form of purificatory rather than palliative practice. In this aspect of practice its the same tools that are used but with a different intensity and longer use in terms of application. Albeit within a different caveat of practice intention and learning criteria that for many is not part of the role of Yoga within their life support agenda.

In other words not only just needing to establish and maintain a home practice, already an impossibly difficult process for many. Rather establishing a home practice that has a developmental rather just a maintenance process within an intensity and length by which the system can 'cook' and 'cleanse', rather than just 'cool' and 'reduce'.

*A short term strength of the viniyoga of Yoga methodology is,
that you can have a personal daily practice session designed for only 25'.
A long term weakness of the viniyoga of Yoga methodology is,
that you only have a personal daily practice session designed for 25'.*

Of course establishing and maintaining a short home practice is an important step and in its own way an important developmental step in the movement away from just turning up at a group class.

However it also a bit like comparing the Kriyā Yoga process in Chapter Two of the Yoga Sūtra with its intention of attenuation, with the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga process and its intention of purification discussed later in the same Chapter.

Future posts will offer some practice examples comparing Śamanam Kriyā or Śodhanam Kriyā practices, albeit with the reference point given within the viniyoga vignette series of these examples not being taken as fixed templates.

They are merely reflections of the rich and multifarious possibilities in how the principles in the viniyoga of Yoga can be expressed as learning and experiential tools within a myriad of situations and personalities and according to the level of intention and reality of action.