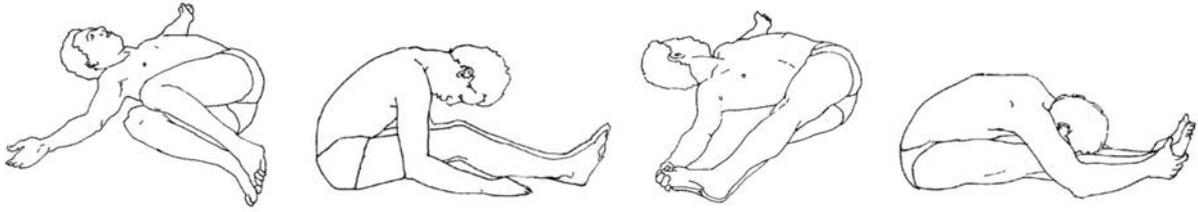


Laṅghana Kriyā has two functional dimensions.....



Laṅghana Kriyā is a Viniyoga methodology with its reducing, lightening or contractive potentials within the practice of Āsana, Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma. 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 effects a concentration of Agni from the periphery to the core. This outcome is approached traditionally through effecting systemic changes, primarily in the systemic energies of digestion and elimination. Thus from an Āyurveda perspective, the use of practices which bring about a functional energetic change in the qualities of Vāta, Pitta and Kapha Doṣa.

However, not so well known in Yoga circles is that Laṅghana Kriyā has two functional dimensions within which this principle can be applied within a wider context. These are either as a palliative technique, as in Laṅghana Cikitsa, or as a purificatory technique, as in Laṅghana Kriyā. The technical descriptions are Śāmanam Kriyā, as in a palliative process, or Śodhanam Kriyā, as in a purificatory process.

Thus, Laṅghana Cikitsa as a Śāmanam or palliative process effects a systemic change by helping to alleviate the intensity of symptoms being experienced by the individual. This approach, as a methodology, can be applied as if to quieten or reduce hyperactivity or excess in the system and its physical, energetic or psychological impact.

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

As such, Laṅghana Cikitsa as a Śāmanam or palliative process, is one of the staple application principles in the Viniyoga tool box. However, its application is often standardised, given that most students are not individually taught but practice within generic application 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 Śāmanam application of Laṅghana Cikitsa is one of the reasons that the 'Viniyoga approach' 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 Cikitsa and here one might suggest that it is only a first, albeit very important step, in the process towards effecting change at a deeper level. In other words, how to embrace a transformational emergence beyond that of cultivating the habit of attenuation or a weakening of symptoms as we experience them.

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.

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

Here is where the practitioner is required to have an interest in going beyond symptoms 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.

Hence the idea of Laṅghana Kriyā as a form of purificatory, rather than palliative practice. In this aspect of practice, 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 desired role for Yoga within their life support agenda.

*"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'."*

In other words not only just needing to establish and maintain a home support practice, already a personally challenging process for many. Rather, here we are embracing how to establish 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'.

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 say, just turning up at a group class.

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

Thus, both Laṅghana Cikitsa and Laṅghana Kriyā are further 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, according to the level of intention and the reality of possibilities.

Finally, on a closing note regarding a palliative or purificatory Yoga Sādhana, we can compare the Kriyā Yoga process in Chapter Two of the Yoga Sūtra with its intention of a palliative attenuation, with the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga process and its intention of purification as expressed in verse 28 of the same Chapter.