

## 108 Saṃskṛta Core Concept Pointers – 13 – Prāṇa



### Links to Related Resources & Longer Articles:

- Prāṇāyāma & Bandha Practice Techniques Glossary
  - Grouped into Primary, Secondary & Ancillary Techniques
    - Āsana & Mudrā Practice Techniques Glossary
      - Grouped into Standing, Kneeling, Lying, Inverted, Backbend, Seated & Sitting
- A Twelve Day Intensive Prāṇāyāma Sadhana proposal for Nāḍī Śōdhana....
- Āsana practice as a prerequisite to exploring how to integrate Prāṇāyāma
  - Cale Vāte Calaṃ Cittam – As is the Breath so is the Psyche.....
- Compendium of Quotes from TKV Desikachar on the Yoga of T Krishnamacharya.....
- Correct vibrational intonation was an important emphasis within all aspects of Mantra
- Deepening our relationship with Prāṇāyāma deepens our relationship with Āsana.....
  - Exploring Prāṇāyāma within Cikitsā, Rakṣaṇa and Śikṣaṇa Krama...
- Finding your starting point within Āsana to set a direction and route towards a goal...
  - Guidelines for exploring the Breath in Āsana Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma
- How do we apply Viniyoga to students already set in a particular mode of Āsana?
  - If we appreciate the role of breathing in Āsana how can we make it longer?
    - Keeping the breath longer than the movement within an Āsana
  - Know your breath and its unique characteristics in Āsana and you will.....
  - Longer term Vinyāsa Krama within the Viniyoga of the breath in Āsana.....
    - My understanding on the context and content of Yoga Makaranda....
    - Nāma, Rūpa, Lakṣaṇa – The Name, Form and Characteristics of Āsana
      - Prāṇa – Its origin, function and malfunction
      - Prāṇāyāma within Rāja Yoga and Haṭha Yoga
- Religiousness in Yoga Study Guide: Chapter Seventeen Theory: Various Approaches...
  - Sound – A Means Beyond Āsana and Prāṇāyāma.....
- Studying, Practicing and Learning the Tri Bandha involves Theory, Techniques and...
  - The breadth, depth and potential of Desikachar's teachings on practice.....
  - The breath can be a key to unlocking the mystery of the relationship.....
    - The Breath has its own developmental process within an Āsana.
      - The presence and actions of Prāṇa Śakti.....
    - The Viniyoga of Inversion as an Āsana or as a Mudrā.....
  - Though there are many different aspects to formal 'home' practice.....
    - TKV Desikachar talks on Śraddhā in the light of the Yoga Sūtra.....
    - What are the concepts of Sṛṣṭi Krama, Sthiti Krama and Antya Krama?
      - YOGA AND MODERN MEDICINE – Interview by TKV Desikachar
- YOGA: SURGERY SANS INSTRUMENTS – Interview with TKV Desikachar 1998

### Collated Related Short Posts & Quotes:

"The power of the breath,  
the power of the senses and  
physical strength of the body are each distinct properties.  
They should not work against each other  
but rather contribute to each others well being."  
– T Krishnamacharya on Yoga Sūtra Chapter One verse 30

"There are indications that  
accompany the distractions.  
Such as a sense of uneasiness,  
or a melancholic moodiness.  
Or, as an agitation in the body  
and in the breath, expressed as  
unsteadiness in the limbs and  
in the exhalation and inhalation."  
– Paul Harvey on Yoga Sūtra Chapter One verse 31

"Slow and regulated breathing using special techniques to lengthen the  
the inhale and exhale processes are also helpful techniques to quieten the disturbed mind and  
reduce the unpleasant consequences of this state. Along with these breathing techniques  
examination of food habits and changing them to suit is also a must."  
- T Krishnamacharya on Yoga Sūtra Chapter One verse 34

"From this, the role of senses and sense objects  
in causing a ground for disease becomes evident.  
They are chiefly responsible for creating disturbance in the mind.  
Hence the value of Vairāgya insisted as an aid to help the student.  
Otherwise the whole system is sure to reach a state of chaos  
because of the erratic movement of vital energy all over the body.  
To put it another way, disease results from excess of contact  
with objects not conducive to the individual system."  
– T Krishnamacharya on Yoga Sūtra Chapter One verse 34

"Our continued effort  
with the breath in Āsana  
is that which helps to enliven  
our various levels of interaction  
with our inner and outer worlds as  
expressed through the Pañca Maya."  
– Paul Harvey on Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 47

"From Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 47  
Krishnamacharya taught that the  
common denominator for successfully uniting  
both aspects of relaxation and the infinite  
within the practice of Āsana is the breath.

He saw it as continued effort  
and synonymous with giving life.  
The continued effort of the breath is that which gives life."  
– Paul Harvey on Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 47

"Within the practice guidelines for Prāṇāyāma  
Length and Subtlety are the fruits of a process,  
they are not tools for use within this process.  
The tools here are Deśa, Kāla and Sām̐khya.  
By these the breath becomes Dīrgha and Sūkṣma,  
in other words the breath becomes Long and Subtle."  
– Paul Harvey on Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 50

"When working with the Breath in Āsana,  
it's perhaps less appealing initially,  
but ultimately more attractive, satisfactory  
and effective, to integrate a Bhāvana on  
the Samāpatti of Śaithilya and Ananta,  
within a developmental Prāṇāyāma Sādhana,  
focused towards the Siddhi of Dīrgha or Length,  
supported by its counterpoint, Sūkṣma or Subtlety."  
– Paul Harvey on Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 50

"Remember the mind should follow  
the exhale, inhale and retention.  
Exhale, inhale and retention all support the vital force."  
– From T Krishnamacharya's composition,  
the Yoga Rahasya Chapter One verse 34

"Without Āsana,  
Prāṇāyāma cannot become accomplished.  
Without containing Prāna,  
the mind cannot achieve steadiness."  
– From T Krishnamacharya's composition,  
The Yoga Rahasya Chapter One verse 45

"If engaging therapeutically, firstly  
examine the gait of the breath  
and the power of the body.  
Otherwise it will not bestow fruits."  
– From T Krishnamacharya's composition,  
the Yoga Rahasya Chapter One verse 85

"You have to practice in such a way that  
day to day the breath gets longer and subtler."  
– From T Krishnamacharya's composition,  
the Yoga Rahasya Chapter Two verse 30

"Mudrā practice is important since it assists the ten Prāṇa to move freely in the Nāḍī."  
– T Krishnamacharya introducing Chapter Three in the Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā

"Question to T Krishnamacharya –  
Q: Some people describe that Kuṇḍalinī  
goes through the Suṣumṇā  
to the Sahasrāra.  
Is this correct?  
A: No, it is the Prāṇa Vāyu that  
moves through the Suṣumṇā.  
– Śrī Krishnamacharya – The Pūrnācārya  
– published by the KYM in 1997"

"Breath is indispensable for life  
and its absence is death.  
Hence the necessity to make it longer  
and accumulate the Prāṇa Śakti.  
Just as a rich man accumulates money slowly to get wealthy,  
so also one should practice every day,  
through the proper use of the breath in Āsana,  
to maintain good health."  
– T Krishnamacharya's response to a question on breathing.

"What appears as Yoga to  
an outsider is mainly the  
physical aspects of our practice.  
They will not be aware of  
how we breathe,  
how we feel the breath,  
and how we co-ordinate  
breathing with physical movement.  
They tend to be interested only  
in our flexibility and suppleness."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Two Page 13

"While we use the breath for the body in Āsana,  
in Prāṇāyāma we accept the posture and forget the body.  
The only requirement is that we must be comfortable and keep our backs straight."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Nine Page 117

"Holding the breath gives us a moment when there is nothing happening.  
A moment when it should be possible to count.  
In fact, the best time to introduce Mantra is not during  
inhalation or exhalation but while holding the breath.  
It is said that a moment of holding the breath is a moment of Dhyāna.  
Some Mantra are very long.  
Since we do not have to concentrate on breathing while holding the breath,  
these longer Mantra can be recited correctly."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Nine Page 128-129

"Prāṇa is simply the expression of Puruṣa in all parts of the body and beyond.

This Prāṇa has an intimate relationship to the mind  
because the Puruṣa sees only through the mind.

Thus Prāṇa, mind and breath are interrelated.

Whatever happens in the mind influences the breath."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Ten Page 135

"What we are trying to do in the practice of Prāṇāyāma  
is to confine more and more Prāṇa within our bodies.

When Prāṇa is not able to enter our bodies,

it is because something is there that should not be."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Ten Page 136

"However, in Āsana attention is divided between the breath and the body movement.

In Āsana we use the breath as the medium of movement to affect the body.

Since our attention is divided between body and breath,  
the effect upon Prāṇa will not be as much as in Prāṇāyāma."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Ten Page 138

"Nobody can control the Prāṇa,  
it has its own movement.

We create a condition in which the Prāṇa returns."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Ten Page 141

"It is beyond our conscious effort to move the Prāṇa.

What is within our conscious effort is the breath,  
so we use the breath to make this movement possible."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Ten Page 142

"This is what I mean by having Prāṇa inside the body.

When this is the case,

a person is not affected by the whims and opinions of others."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Eleven Page 148

"If we are completely absorbed in the breath in Prāṇāyāma,  
automatically there is Pratyāhāra."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga Chapter Eleven Page 153

"The choice of a proper ratio involves two things,  
what can be done and what should be done.

What can be done involves a given person's capacity  
to inhale, hold the breath, exhale and hold the breath.

What should be done involves

our direction of movement, our aim, our need."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Choosing a Ratio and the proper technique for  
Prāṇāyāma' Chapter Twelve Page 163

"What can be done can be easily established if we observe our breath in Āsana."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Choosing a Ratio and the proper technique for Prāṇāyāma' Chapter Twelve Page 163

"As Uḍḍiyāna Bandha is done on holding the breath after exhalation,  
one of the most important requirements  
is that we are able to do a long holding of the breath  
without sacrificing the quality of the inhalation and exhalation.  
If this is not possible we should forget about Bandha for the time being."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'The Concept, Preparation and Techniques of Bandha' Chapter Fourteen Page 197

"We should anticipate a great reduction in our ability to do  
long breathing and holding the breath once we introduce the Bandha.  
There is quite a lot of effort involved in doing them.  
If a person can do 10.10.20.10, I have found  
that with Bandha the breath is reduced to 6.6.12.6,"  
– TKV Desikachar 'The Concept, Preparation and Techniques of Bandha' Religiousness in  
Yoga Chapter Fourteen Page 200

"Many people have this problem of maintaining attention during the practice.  
You can place your attention on a particular part of the body  
but there must be something happening, a movement.  
That's why the best movement is the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Various Approaches to Yoga' Chapter Seventeen  
Page 237

"The number of times you say OM on inhalation, holding the breath,  
and exhalation is influenced by the length of the breath.  
We cannot fix the number of recitations on the basis of the Praṇava itself.  
We can only fix it on the basis of a person's capacity of breath.  
If you are simply using OM, it can go with almost any ratio.  
If you are using something more complex, say Gāyatrī Mantra,  
it is very long and has different structures so there are regulations on  
how many times you say it when you inhale, hold the breath, and exhale,  
and in what part of the Mantra you can break, etc."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Various Approaches to Yoga' Chapter Seventeen  
Page 238-239

"The obstacle is also called Kuṇḍalinī because it looks like an earring  
worn by women in the olden days and Kuṇḍali means 'earring'.  
It is also called Śakti because its power is so great that  
it is able to block the flow of Prāṇa into the Suṣumṇā.  
We must note that it is Prāṇa that is eventually  
supposed to go into the Suṣumṇā.  
Many books describe that which goes up as Kuṇḍalinī.  
Kuṇḍalinī does not go up.  
Suṣumṇā is like a conductor through which energy flows.

This energy is the same energy that is always present, Prāṇa."  
– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Various Approaches to Yoga' Chapter Seventeen  
Page 243-244

"The terms Ha and Ṭha also represent  
two extreme sides of a wavering mind.  
Ha often is meant to represent the sun, Ṭha the moon.  
Suṣumṇā in the middle Nāḍī.  
Prāṇa in the Ha and Ṭha represents  
a confused and wavering mind.  
Prāṇa in the Suṣumṇā represents a clear, steady mind.  
Hence, Jñāni is one whose Prāṇa is in Suṣumṇā  
and Ajñāni is one whose Prāṇa is still  
in the opposite two Nāḍī, Ha and Ṭha."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Various Approaches to Yoga' Chapter Seventeen  
Page 246-247

"While it is used as a metaphor that the Kuṇḍalinī  
is going up, really, it does not make sense.  
If we say that Kuṇḍalinī is an energy that gives us truth,  
then we have to accept the fact that we have  
two energies in life, Prāṇa and Kuṇḍalinī.  
Some also say that energy is sleeping.  
What is meant by this?  
Many of these ideas, I'm sorry to say,  
are based on incorrect translations.  
Kuṇḍalinī represents Avidyā,  
and the absence of Avidyā  
represents absence of Kuṇḍalinī."

– TKV Desikachar Religiousness in Yoga 'Various Approaches to Yoga' Chapter Seventeen  
Page 248

Principles behind the Practice of Āsana

"We investigate the reaction  
of the effort on the breath.  
The sound and speed of the  
breath expresses the effort.  
Therefore, in Āsana, there  
is a relationship between  
the effort and the breath."

– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

Principles behind the Practice of Āsana

"The test for intelligent effort  
is the response of the breath.  
Therefore, the technique is  
proper and intelligent effort  
and the response of the

breath to that effort."  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

Criteria for the quality of Āsana

1. In the beginning the breath must be good.
  2. As one progresses the breath must still be good, but the Āsana is better than it was.
- TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

Criteria for the quality of Āsana

1. One must be present in the action.
  2. Even with the eyes closed one must recognise the Āsana.
  3. One should not suffer and want to be away from the Āsana.
  4. It is the breath which defines the quality of the Āsana.
- TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

Criteria for the quality of Āsana

"If one takes care of the breath much more happens.  
Perhaps some bad effects can be reduced.  
But, because of its importance we can force it on people  
and they find it difficult to understand the  
mechanics and application, such as counting."  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"If we relate to part of the breath,  
we are related to all of the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"If we direct the mind onto one part of the breath,  
then the mind affects the other parts of the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"Of the Four Aspects of the breath which is more important,  
(such as) holding after inhalation by will and so on?"  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"Before studying Prāṇāyāma one must understand something about the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"My understanding of Prāṇāyāma is that the Kumbhaka should be an aid.  
The aim is to get a feeling difficult to put into words, but different from normal states.  
The question is how much does Kumbhaka play a part in this?  
So Investigate the use of Kumbhaka and only use it when it helps you be with the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"Do not make a style or fashion out of Kumbhaka.  
Only use it if it helps you feel the breath and  
what is happening inside the body."



– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"By observing how the breath responds in Āsana i.e.

Forward Bends.

Backward Bends.

Lying Postures.

Inverted Postures.

Twist Poses.

As to whether there is a better quality in either inhalation or exhalation,  
one can decide how to proceed in Prāṇāyāma."

– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

1. Know the Breath from the feelings in the Āsana.

2. Choose a ratio close to that used in Āsana.

3. Choose a technique to suit the day.

4. Choose a proper posture for the spine.

– TKV Desikachar Switzerland 1978

"The Āsana in which you sit can alter the characteristics of the breath."

– TKV Desikachar 1980

"Then he has certain ideas also about Kuṇḍalinī.

The force is Prāṇa,

the force called Śakti or Kuṇḍalinī is indeed Prāṇa.

The only means that can have any effect is the use of Prāṇāyāma,

with emphasis on exhalation and the Bandha,

aided by devotional chantings.

And the evolution of Kuṇḍalinī is very much linked to the person's state of mind and Vairāgya."

– TKV Desikachar from lectures on 'The Yoga of T Krishnamacharya',

given at Zinal, Switzerland 1981.

"There are categories of Sādhana relating to Body, Breath, Senses and mind."

– TKV Desikachar France August 1983

"The request for learning must come from the aspirant.

Only then can the process be step by step.

First one question which is understood, then the next.

For example Annam is Brahma,

then Prāṇa is Brahma.

This was the traditional approach by the aspirant."

– TKV Desikachar France 1983

"The ancient people introduced holding of the breath

to stop, to quieten the mind,

considered as linked to the movement of Vāta."

– TKV Desikachar December 1987

"According to Krishnamacharya,

one who has not mastered the Bāhya Kumbhaka,  
has not mastered the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar 1988

"The first step in the practice of Āsana is the linking of the mind to movement and breath."  
– TKV Desikachar Madras December 26th 1988

"A question:  
Who in you linked breath to body movement?"  
– TKV Desikachar Madras December 26th 1988

"Breath can change the Āsana,  
as in Mahā Mudrā 10.0.10.0,  
or the same with 10.0.20.0."  
– TKV Desikachar 1991

"The breath makes Āsana part of Yoga."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The attention is within the posture if we concentrate on the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"Some people felt that it was dangerous to interfere with the breath during Āsana practice,  
it was felt better to segregate Yoga practice into Āsana, Prāṇāyāma and Meditation  
(Dhyānam)."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The breath makes it possible to find ways to achieve access to the posture,  
it is possible to adapt a posture through the breath."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"So much happens in the spine with the breath,  
we need to be aware of our breathing to have a maximum effect on the spine."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"Exhalation is the most important part of the breath,  
it encourages the inhalation.  
By increasing the exhalation we bring attention to the lower abdomen."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The breath becomes very short using Bandha.  
It is necessary to have a very long exhale  
before it is possible to work with them effectively."  
– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"Emphasis on the inhale brings attention to the upper chest,  
with the retention of the breath after the inhale  
the spine will stretch and create heat."

– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The breath involves the spine,  
and it brings out changes in  
the most vital part of the body."

– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The breath presents different possibilities in Āsana.  
For example, there can be a refinement of the  
posture through developing the breath."

– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"Using the breath in Āsana  
makes the Āsana adaptable.  
For example, by varying the  
breath we can vary the effect."

– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The breath should be slow, smooth and powerful.  
It should be held for 1"-2" after the inhale to prevent contraction.  
Retention is also the extension of the hold after the exhale  
and it is carried out to retain the state of contraction.  
It is necessary to complete an exhale otherwise the inhale will get shorter.  
Contraction of the stomach after the exhale will make it more effective."

– TKV Desikachar England 1992

"The practices dealing with the body and the  
breath are known as Āsana and Prāṇāyāma.  
They are interlinked, in Āsana the body is  
the focus and the breath serves this focus.  
In Prāṇāyāma the regulation of the breath is the focus,  
the body is prepared adequately via Āsana for this  
regulation to materialise without any resistance."

– TKV Desikachar Madras 1996

"The great yogin Yājñavalkya said that the constant and intensive  
practice of Prāṇāyāma brought Prāṇa and Agni together,  
and gradually the obstacle at the base of the Suṣumṇā would be totally dissolved.  
He gave this block the name 'Kuṇḍali' meaning coiled  
or 'Kuṇḍalinī' meaning 'rolled up' in other texts.  
Kuṇḍalinī represents that which blocks access to the central energetic channel.  
When this obstacle is eliminated, Prāṇa penetrates  
and begins to rise in the central channel.  
This is the most precise description we have of the process.  
This is also the most clear and coherent."  
– 'Concerning the Cakra' by TKV Desikachar

"The breath is related to the intellect, chest, respiratory system, digestive system, etc.

So one should consider and understand the relevance of the breath to these areas.  
Also how these areas are in students before we start applying specific principles of breathing,  
otherwise it could aggravate the area and any inherent problem."

– From personal lessons with TKV Desikachar

"The difference in chest to stomach and stomach to chest  
breathing is minimal in the length of the breath.  
How you bring about the length of the breath affects Āsana differently.

Apart from medical restrictions,  
to give respect to the chest, the spine and gravity  
we need to breathe chest to stomach on the inhale."

– From personal lessons with TKV Desikachar

"Prāṇa is that which helps us handle things.  
It is not something we can handle."

– From personal lessons with TKV Desikachar

"To influence Prāṇa,  
we have to influence the mind.  
This is achieved by the by means of the breath."

– From personal lessons with TKV Desikachar

"We can use Āsana to explore the breath and  
then use Prāṇāyāma to experience the breath."

– From personal lessons with TKV Desikachar

"Conscious breathing is one of the greatest tools  
to influence the effect of the postures  
without changing the posture."

– TKV Desikachar

"The quality of our breath expresses our inner feelings."

– TKV Desikachar

"The act of establishing contact with the external world is called Yoga.  
It is continuous, inevitable, swiftly changing.

Yoga is a basic fact of life.

However it is the quality of the relationship that leads to a healthy life and well being or  
otherwise.

The clarity and strength of the force involved in the contact and awareness of the contact  
is reflected in the flow of what is called Prāṇa Śakti,

What is it that disturbs this flow?"

– TKV Desikachar

"Contact with breath  
is contact with life."

– TKV Desikachar

"To use the breath in Āsana  
practice is to check change.  
To be able to realise that  
something has changed."  
– TKV Desikachar

"Actively contract the abdomen when exhaling to emphasise Apāna Sthāna.  
Actively constrict the abdomen when inhaling to emphasise Prāṇa Sthāna."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"When bending towards the lower limbs during forward bend Āsana,  
move firstly by as if rounding from the lower back,  
before ultimately rounding from the upper back.  
In terms of a Bhāvana during the movement,  
the focus is on exhaling from Apāna Sthāna towards Prāṇa Sthāna.  
Thus breathing as if from the lower abdomen towards the upper chest."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"When moving away from the lower limbs during forward bend Āsana,  
move firstly by as if arching from the arms and upper back,  
before ultimately arching from the lower back.  
In terms of a Bhāvana during the movement,  
the focus is on inhaling from Prāṇa Sthāna towards Apāna Sthāna.  
Thus breathing as if from the upper chest towards the lower abdomen."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Keep the arms up as you go down  
Thus moving down from  
Apāna Sthāna to Prāṇa Sthāna.  
Lift the arms first as you come up.  
Thus moving up from  
Prāṇa Sthāna to Apāna Sthāna."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"The slower the breath,  
the longer the movement.  
The longer the movement,  
the stronger the effect.  
The stronger the breath,  
the slower the movement.  
The slower the movement,  
the longer the effect."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Āsana is about the movement of the force,  
rather than the force of the movement."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Within the teachings of T Krishnamacharya,  
as transmitted to TKV Desikachar,  
the role of Śavāsana within an Āsana practice was as  
a transitional link pose between categories of Āsana.  
For example between Standing and Lying Āsana,  
or Lying and Inverted Āsana,  
or Inverted and Prone Backbends,  
or Prone Backbends and Seated Āsana,  
or Seated Āsana and Sitting Practices.

The extent of its use and length of rest at each stage,  
when transiting from one category to another within our  
Āsana practice journey, was dependent on the facility  
of the practitioner and the intensity of the practice.

Within this individualised variance is the guiding  
principle that the role of Śavāsana is to facilitate a  
smooth transition for the flow of the breath and also  
the pulse through and beyond the Āsana practice,  
as a marker for the practitioner's state of mind.

However according to Desikachar the Viniyoga of  
Śavāsana was seen in terms of recovery from the  
fatigue of the preceding aspect of the practice rather,  
than say recovery from the preceding aspects of one's life.

Regarding the approach for the recovery  
from the preceding aspects of one's life,  
amongst other things such as Āhāra and Vihāra,  
the wider purpose, content, duration and frequency  
of the Āsana practice must be carefully reconsidered."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Making the Breath longer than the Stillness  
means the body needs to be completely still  
before the Recaka or Exhale is started  
and especially before it is stopped.

Equally the body needs to be completely  
still before the Pūraka or inhale is started  
and especially before it is stopped.

This is harder than it sounds given the  
propensity to want to tweak or adjust  
the body at the beginning and especially  
when at the end of a movement.

Thus making the Breath longer than  
the Movement also means making  
the breath longer than the Stillness."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"The Length of the Breath  
sets the Speed for the  
Movement of the Body.

Rather than the Movement  
of the Body setting  
the Speed for the  
Length for the Breath."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"The Breath is the activating force in all aspects of the Āsana.  
For example, when comparing a dynamic performance  
of an Āsana with the static performance of an Āsana,  
the difference is in the degree or extent of the movement.  
Thus, from a Viniyoga or application of Āsana perspective,  
whether the extent of the movement is what is seen  
as long-range, mid-range, short-range, or even micro,  
the activating force of the Breath is integral to the Āsana.  
From a developmental viewpoint, as in a longer-term  
Vinyāsa Krama, this a journey from those Āsana that  
mainly favour long-range movement, towards those Āsana  
and Mudrā that mainly favour micro-range movement.  
Within this developmental refinement in the relationship  
of Breath as the activating force, sit the place and roles  
of mid-range movement and short-range movement."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"It is not enough in Āsana to just  
work at lengthening the breath.  
We need also to explore how to  
refine the subtlety of the breath.  
Whether within a single Āsana,  
a number of Āsana in one practice,  
or within the evolution of all aspects  
of our practice over a number of years."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

- Bhāvana on the relationship between the Viśuddhi Sthāna and Jālandhara Bandha...  
"A common escape when using Dvi Pāda Pīṭham is the neck arching rather than lengthening,  
resulting in the lifting of the head as if to compensate for the increased sense of the neck  
compressing.

Hence a key Bhāvana here is the deepening of the Jālandhara Bandha whilst working with the  
potential dissipation that can arise through the simultaneous lifting of the arms.

This escape is something that is also further exaggerated when raising the arms at the same  
time as lifting the hips, due to the increasingly upward force from the hips pushing down onto  
the shoulders, also increasingly unstable due to the lifting of the arms.

We can explore this escape by holding a Bhāvana on the relationship between the Viśuddhi  
Sthāna and Jālandhara Bandha through choosing an alternative Vinyāsa Krama in Dvi Pāda  
Pīṭham. One suggestion here is to investigate the interaction between the arms and trunk via  
the breath as shown in the illustration above.

The intention here is to maintain a gradual lengthening in the neck whilst resisting the  
tendency for the shoulders to as if skateboard on the scapula and increase the distance

between the head and the feet. Here also an active role for the arms and shoulders is suggested at all points especially when they are not being lifted. Perhaps experiment with repeating this alternate suggestion for a Vinyāsa Krama in Dvi Pāda Pīṭham some 6 times whilst maintaining a breath pattern of around 4 breaths per minute. The entire sequence taking some six minutes to explore."

– 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"In Āsana one should vary the breath ratio."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"The Bhāvana should vary from Āsana to Āsana.

For example, one could use the Bhāvana to decide the ratio or, where to place the attention on the breath."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"In Āsana one should not always count the breath length, otherwise one loses mindfulness."

– 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"In Āsana the use of metronome should be limited and used as a check on your breathing.

Such as, where you are using a long Prāṇa breath one could use a metronome to check the count."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"In the beginning of our relationship with Āsana, we work at adding Breath to the movement.

As we refine our relationship with Āsana, we work at adding movement to the Breath."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Uttānāsana is an intense standing forward bend.

It is often used to begin a sequence of Āsana.

Its use can improve mobility in the primary joints and extend muscles, primarily on the back of the body.

Its form respects the movements adapted in daily life.

The use of an intense closing Āsana implies some cautions in the stretched areas of the body, such as the lower back, sacrum, hips and legs.

The awareness can be placed on the abdomen leading to a longer, smoother exhalation and counterbalancing, with this inner work, the

physical effort required by its dynamic approach.

There are a number of adaptations to support



the student experiencing a feeling of melding  
between the energetic flow of the movement  
and the depth and stillness of the breath."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Vīrabhadrāsana represents the fighting stance of the warrior  
Vīrabhadra, who is said to represent the fierce form of Maṅgala.

He was created by Śiva from a matted lock of his own hair,  
in a vengeful response to the death of his wife Satī after  
her self-immolation in the sacrificial fire at her father's Yajña.

It's a demanding standing position coupled with a backbend in the spine  
to give the Āsana its opening energising and strengthening qualities.

The focus of attention can be brought to the chest and upper back  
through its form and the emphasis on the breath, especially the inhalation.

Its role as an expansive, demanding standing Āsana can be  
graduated to suit the practice capacity of the student."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Supta Pādānguṣṭhāsana is a lying and apparently  
relatively simple Āsana in its external form.

It is described as the fingers and thumbs holding the  
big toes of each foot, with the legs extended straight  
and held upwards at an angle of 45 degrees with the  
spine and head fully in contact with the ground.

In reality, this is literally beyond the reach of most students.  
Though, given consistent time and appropriate development  
in accessing this Āsana, there is the possibility of deep work.

This is initially felt primarily through the effect on the legs,  
Though, given time the primary effect is felt more in the spine.  
As a Samāna Āsana, an equal breath would be emphasised with  
a Samavṛtti ratio, perhaps incorporating the use of Kumbhaka.

The focus of attention is on the spine, from crown to coccyx,  
and is accessed via the breath, which can help support the  
student's effort within the external demands of the Āsana,  
such as that more often found within the tightness in the legs."

- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Dvi Pāda Piṭham or Two Foot Support combines  
the characteristics of a lying Āsana and a backbend,  
as well as offering an alternative to more intense  
backbends, or as a preparation for inverted Āsana.

This Āsana can be applied initially within a dynamic  
context working as a preparation for the body,  
plus allowing gradual access to stronger Āsana,  
such as prone backbends and inverted Āsana.

The way for progressive work to access the upper half  
of the body, neck and shoulders links to a subtle and  
precise work with the breath, especially the inhalation.

Here the focus of attention is supported through the application of techniques such as, firstly, locational breathing and then, if appropriate, directional breathing. This can further help the involvement of the student in the longer-term intention and purpose of the Āsana. In its more intense Śikṣaṇa form Dvi Pāda Pīṭham is a challenging option for the more experienced student."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Sarvāṅgāsana is the Āsana commonly known as shoulder stand. It is seen as one of the so called "classical" inverted Āsana, the other "classical" inverted Āsana being Śīrṣāsana, or head stand. This Āsana draws together a firmness in the body, with the subtler purpose of the breath, with a sense of inner attention for the student. For this triad to be realised, certain steps need to be respected with regards to a rationale for the application of Sarvāṅgāsana, along with appropriate choices in long-term and short-term preparation for its use, incorporating appropriate use of Pratikriyāsana, and cultivation of an increasing length of stay in the Āsana. For adults, the most important link whilst in the Āsana is the relationship with the breath. Cultivating the power of the breath can also help in keeping the practitioner attentive to the possible bio-stresses accumulating from staying in the Āsana."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Bhujāṅgāsana is more commonly known as the Cobra posture and is seen in many Yoga groups as an example of a "classical" Yoga backbend. It is an Āsana where the emphasis is intended to be on arching the entire spine and expanding the upper chest forwards rather than merely bending backwards. Its energetic opening actions also make the Āsana an essential reference for people's Yoga practice as a prone backbend in one form or another. When inhaling, the focus is to initiate the movement of both the body and the breath from within the Prāṇa Sthāna. Here, the image of the Cobra expanding its hood can be a guide to keeping the emphasis in the upper chest and spine and not over emphasising the use of the arms as a support. Instead, consider the role of the arms as if to draw back from the palms of the hands to encourage a forward movement of the sternum.

This is accompanied by a drawing away of the feet from the hips to experience the Pūrvatāna or front stretch Lakṣaṇa of Bhujāṅgāsana. It may help to think of this particular category of Pūrvatāna Āsana as engaging a wall-to-wall Bhāvana, rather than floor to ceiling movement more commonly associated with the Cobra posture."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Another key Bhāvana for Samasthiti is on the relationship of the neck to the upper spine with the intention of sensitising the Prāṇa Sthāna. We start by activating the back of the neck through the application of Jālandhara Bandha. Here the focus is on lengthening the spine through lifting the back of the neck, rather than dropping the chin towards the chest. Engaging Jālandhara Bandha can create more space between the earlobes and the shoulders, a focus to be maintained when engaging the next step with raising the arms, such as in Tādāsana. Engaging Jālandhara Bandha, means the shoulders lower, the arms extend downwards and effectively lengthen. This activates the arms, meaning active hands. Here, extend the fingers, feel the fingernails. All of which is a support and preparation for focusing on how to access an active inhalation initiated and sustained from the Prāṇa Sthāna. You can practice getting people to explore access to movement in the upper spine with and then without Jālandhara Bandha to help experience its relationship with Prāṇa Sthāna as the starting focus in the spine for the inhalation."  
- 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Janu Śīrṣāsana, known as the head to knee Āsana, combines the qualities of a seated forward bend with those of an asymmetrical pose, in that it works first, on one side of the body more, then on the other side. In this Āsana, the physical focus is on the lengthening of the muscles of the back, spine and the extended leg, and the rotational effects on the joints in the folded leg. Plus, with its seated forward bend Bhāvana, there is a natural support favouring the exhalation, offering opportunities to both lengthen and deepen the breath. This support, along with its internalising and closing qualities, offers possibilities for the student to focus on the quality of the attention within the form of the body.

Thus, using Janu Śīrṣāsana with its seated forward bend Bhāvana, and when linked with a mindful breath, can help the student to experience the deeper function of the Āsana, even if there are limitations with regard to its Śikṣaṇa form."

– 108 Postural Practice Pointers

"Jālandhara Bandha needs to be in place before interacting with the breath and the spine through mid-range movement."

- 108 Mudrā Practice Pointers

"Whatever the effect Bāhya Kumbhaka has, it is extended by the use of Uḍḍiyāna and Mūla Bandha. However the total length of the breath is reduced.

Bandha substantially reduces the lengths of the Pūraka, the Recaka and the Kumbhaka.

Which and by how much depends on the individual."

– 108 Mudrā Practice Pointers

"In Learning the Tri Bandha we engage with certain potential contraindications:

1. The Tri Bandha reduce the length and subtlety of the breath.
2. The accumulative effect when repeated should be more intense, but often the opposite is what can actually happen.
3. In the beginning the use of the Tri Bandha can disturb the system and create tendencies, such as for the practitioner to lose their temper.
4. The continued use of the Tri Bandha can easily raise tensions in the neck and shoulders.
5. If the abdomen appears to be retracted strongly, but the breath is getting shorter the practitioner is probably cheating."

- 108 Mudrā Practice Pointers

"With regard to the breath, inhale pushes down, exhale brings up, Bāhya Kumbhaka tightens. Then total effect should be in the Apāna area, therefore exhale and Bāhya Kumbhaka important.

With regard to directional breathing, if no Mūla Bandha then exhale can start from the navel.

If Mūla Bandha held then exhale from the navel is not possible."

- 108 Mudrā Practice Pointers

"One primary prerequisite to initiation into a Tri Bandha Sādhana was an ability in Prāṇāyāma within a Vinyāsa Krama around Nāḍī Śodhana where the crown was 12 breaths at 12.12.12.12.

Thus, before being taught Uḍḍiyana Bandha, an essential precursor to Mūla Bandha,

there needed to be competence in sustaining Prāṇāyāma, within a Vinyāsa Krama leading to a crown ratio of 1.1.1.1.

with the Pūraka, Antar Kumbhaka, Recaka and Bāhya Kumbhaka

each set at 12 seconds in a crown of 12.12.12.12. for 12 breaths.  
Thus, a Vinyāsa Krama peak of almost 10 minutes sustaining the crown ratio within a Prāṇāyāma practice, with the entire practice itself totalling over 20 minutes, all performed with one technique, Nāḍī Śodhana.  
This technique alone is already in itself demanding to sustain with an inaudible softness, as if pouring oil slowly and smoothly amidst an almost undetectable deftness of finger movement on the nostrils.  
A further example of how there needs to be an effortless skill in working with the Kumbhaka and how our fluency with all four components of the breath sets a practice direction and evolution in that, amongst other goals, it determines our readiness to incorporate the Tri Bandha into our Sādhana."

- 108 Mudrā Practice Pointers

"One aspect in the refinement of Nāḍī Śodhana is the experience of the breath as a subtle vibration rather than an audible sound."

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"When using the Antar Kumbhaka to lengthen the breath, always factor in its effect on the length of the exhale. It should be able to stay the same length and quality. If it is affected, change the length of the Kumbhaka, rather than compromising the flow of the breath."

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"When using Mṛgi Mudrā to control the nostril flow in Prāṇāyāma, the ring finger and thumb remain as if glued onto the nostrils, with one nostril being fully closed and one nostril partially closed, with adjustments to the pressure according to technique and ratio. Even when using Ujjāyī within techniques such as Anuloma Ujjāyī, the finger and thumb remain as if sealed on the sides of the nostrils. Externally it's as if there is nothing to observe in terms of the body. Internally there is a vibrant flow within the dynamics of the breath."

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"In the beginning, Ujjāyī is experienced more as a sound. As we refine its relationship with the breath, through increasing the Length and deepening the Subtlety, Ujjāyī is felt more as a sensation within the body and less as a sound and vibration in the throat."

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"Learning how to hold the breath can lead one to the experience of being held by the breath."

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"The longer term measure of our Prāṇāyāma

potential is determined by our skilful efforts  
within all four components of the breath in Āsana.  
For example, can we maintain a ratio of 8.8.8.8.  
in Parśva Uttānāsana or 12.6.18.12 in Mahāmudrā?"  
- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"One of the joyful experiences that can emerge within our morning practice is the feeling that arises on arriving at our Prāṇāyāma seat and taking that first breath within an atmosphere of having more than enough time in hand left to engage with this aspect of our on the mat Sādhana that day. The sense of Sukha is palpable and offers a spaciousness that facilitates the breath both releasing and entering into the spirit of, as Krishnamacharya spoke of in terms of Āsana, Prayatna Śaithilya and Ananta Samāpatti. This feeling in itself can both automatically lengthen and deepen the flow of the breath without any conscious effort on our part. A precious gift to start the days journey into exploring this vital area of practice. A constant reminder, if not rejoinder, to not forget to leave more than enough time for Prāṇāyāma, rather than it being the token twiddle at the end of the practice, or that which is oft easily at best compromised or at worst, forgotten within the seduction of the bodily experiences."  
- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"Prāṇāyāma is common to both Haṭha and Rāja Sādhana, whether working with the Prāṇa Śodhana of Haṭha Yoga, where you were taught to practice it at each of four transitional points through the day, or with the Citta Śodhana of Patañjali, where it is the pivotal Bahya Aṅga, Prāṇāyāma is seen as the primary means to engage the Élan Vital, the vital force or creative principle."  
- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"Prāṇāyāma, in relation to Haṭha and Rāja Yoga Sādhana, has differing priorities, albeit en route towards similar goals. In Haṭha Yoga the intended outcome of Prāṇāyāma is Prāṇa Śakti. In Rāja Yoga the intended outcome of Prāṇāyāma is Manas Śānti."  
- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"What defines the transition between Cikitsā Krama, Rakṣaṇa Krama and Śikṣaṇa Krama is the desire to practice Prāṇāyāma for the sake of Prāṇāyāma, rather than for purposes such as recovery, or

preventative health, or constitutional support, or reducing agitation, or promoting relaxation. Exploring Prāṇāyāma as Prāṇāyāma offers the potential to propagate a fresh perspective into the relationship between Prāṇa and Nirodha."

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"What can define a transition between Cikitsā Krama, Rakṣaṇa Krama and Śikṣaṇa Krama in terms of the breath? Is it that in Cikitsā Krama, the priority is within Āsana practice and establishing a core relationship with using the breath? Whereas, in Rakṣaṇa Krama, the priority is within Āsana practice, and developing the core relationship, primarily with the exhale and secondarily with the inhale? Whereas, in Śikṣaṇa Krama, the priority is within Prāṇāyāma practice, and developing the core relationship, primarily with the exhale and the inhale, and secondarily with the holds?"

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"Is the primary obstacle to experiencing Prāṇāyāma as a developmental process, coming from what arises within the mind, rather than from within the breath?"

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"Is the primary obstacle to experiencing Prāṇāyāma as a developmental process, coming from what arises within the mind, rather than from within the breath?"

- 108 Prāṇāyāma Practice Pointers

"Contemplate the Source of the Breath."

- 108 Dhāraṇā Practice Pointers

"Cikitsā Krama is to stabilise dispersed Prāṇa. Rakṣaṇa Krama is to conserve stabilised Prāṇa. Śikṣaṇa Krama is to intensify conserved Prāṇa.."

– 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"The journey into the breath in Āsana is one where we evolve from firstly, exploring the breath within ourself towards ultimately, exploring ourself within the breath."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Āsana is the primary choice to work the breath.  
Prāṇāyāma is the primary choice to refine the breath."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"In terms of ageing mainframes and creaking joints,  
it is perhaps useful to remind ourselves that  
Yoga practice is much more than just Āsana.  
In other words, even as the body slows down,  
can we continue to slow the Breath down,  
can we continue to slow the Mind down,  
can we be still within the distraction of age?"

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Prāṇa is the élan vital.

It is the mover and the sustainer of the body in all living beings.  
Because of this all pervasive movement and irrepressible vitality,  
it is also hard to keep reined in through the ten sensory horses.

When the personalised field of Prāṇa becomes unreined,  
it transforms into Vāta and the system becomes disturbed.

The primary practice in Yoga to minimise the conversion of Prāṇa into Vāta is Prāṇāyāma."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Explore how the Breath can:

- Challenge Standing Āsana.
- Support Lying Āsana.
- Develop Inverted Āsana.
- Stimulate Prone Backbend Āsana.
- Refine Sitting Āsana.
- Channel Sitting Mudrā.
- Transcend Seated Prāṇāyāma."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Āsana is an interface between the body  
and the systemic energy processes.

Prāṇāyāma is an interface between the  
systemic energy processes and the psyche.

Dhyāna is an interface between the psyche  
and the awareness that pervades our sense of being."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Ultimately our experience of the Āsana is refined  
through the mystery of the breath,  
rather than the mastery of the form."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"In Āsana, the Breath is an accessory to the Āsana.



In Prāṇāyāma, the Āsana is an accessory to the Breath."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Yoga is more about exploring  
the movement of the mind, whilst  
Āsana is more about exploring  
the movement of the body.  
The vehicle common to exploring both  
is the movement of the breath.  
The yoking of all three is towards the goal of  
experiencing the source of all movement."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Within the energetic processes in Haṭha Yoga  
the concept of Candra is that which can direct  
Prāṇa and Apāna in order to influence the activities of Sūrya."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Constancy of the body  
reveals the inconstancy of the breath.  
Constancy of the body and breath  
reveals the inconstancy of the mind.  
Constancy of the body, breath and mind  
reveals the constancy of awareness."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"According to the teachings of Krishnamacharya and Desikachar,  
Āsana involves extending the length of the breath beyond the body,  
rather than the extending of the body beyond the length of the breath.  
The purpose is to facilitate the field of Prāṇa accumulating in its intensity."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"We realise the Āsana through the breath,  
rather than the breath through the Āsana."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Listening to the breath between Āsana is more  
important than listening to the mind between Āsana."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"The starting point for the Āsana is the breath.  
The finishing point for the Āsana is the breath.  
The journey between the two is via the breath."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Until you have an intimate relationship with the breath,  
it's difficult to have an intimate relationship with the spine."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Remain between the two sides  
for at least one long breath,  
in order to savour the taste  
inherent within this space."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"The more you can work the inhale in the Prāṇa Sthāna,  
the more you can experience the work in the upper spine.  
The more you can experience the work in the upper spine,  
the more you can work the inhale in the Prāṇa Sthāna."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"The exhalation is the foundation from which  
we explore the three other facets of the breath."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"In the beginning, the breath in Āsana  
sets the direction for our Prāṇāyāma practice.  
As we develop this, the breath in Prāṇāyāma  
sets the direction for our Āsana practice."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"When less Āsana time than you would like,  
better to reduce the number of Āsana,  
or the number of repetitions,  
or the length of the stays,  
rather than, reducing the length of the breath.  
Or..... even considering lengthening the breath,  
thus even fewer Āsana, all with a longer breath than usual.  
Here the Bhāvana could be to observe the effect  
of a more spacious than usual Āsana breathing  
on a more cramped than usual daily mindset."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"In the beginning of our journey into the arts of Āsana and Prāṇāyāma, the outcome of our exploration into the breath in Āsana sets a direction and parameters for the beginnings of our exploration into how and where to develop the breath in Prāṇāyāma. As we establish, progress and refine our practice of Prāṇāyāma, the strengths and issues that arise from our practice of Prāṇāyāma invite a subtler investigation of the breath in Āsana. This investigation with its reciprocal and yet increasingly subtle direction offers a more precise guidance for where and how we revisit and engage with our work with the breath in Āsana. Over time we come to both realise and experience the uniqueness of the breath within each of these two arts and the increasingly subtle development of the qualities of the relationship between the breath in Āsana, with that of the breath in Prāṇāyāma."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"In Āsana the emphasis is

more on Body, Breath, Mind.  
In Prāṇāyāma the emphasis is  
more on Breath, Mind, Body.  
In Dhyānam the emphasis is  
more on Mind, Breath, Body."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Bṛṃhaṇa Kriyā and Laṅghana Kriyā, as  
expansive and contractive activities, are two  
potentials explored through Āsana and the Breath.  
Alongside the practice of Āsana, Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma,  
they are actualised through a theoretical understanding of  
the primary principles that inform Haṭha Yoga and Āyurveda.  
The alchemical process underpinning this understanding  
is the relationship between the two primary principles of  
Prāṇa and Agni in order to influence Haṭha Yoga concepts such  
as Prāṇa, Apāna, Sūrya, Candra, Nāḍī, Cakra and Kuṇḍalinī.  
In terms of Bṛṃhaṇa Kriyā and Laṅghana Kriyā, the  
Viniyoga of Bṛṃhaṇa effects a dispersion of Agni from  
the core to the periphery and the Viniyoga of Laṅghana  
effects a concentration of Agni from the periphery to the core.  
Integrating the application of these two specific processes  
facilitates access, through the Merudaṇḍa, Prāṇa and Agni,  
to either energising or cleansing potentials, or as collaborative  
outcomes within the practice of Āsana, Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Energetically, in terms of Prāṇa  
and Cakra, we seek to expand  
and lengthen the upper part of  
the body above the diaphragm.  
Energetically, in terms of Apāna  
and Cakra, we seek to reduce  
and shorten the lower part of  
the body below the diaphragm."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"When inhaling, start the movement in the  
Prāṇa Sthāna from the Viśuddhi Sthāna  
and move the inhale as if towards the  
diaphragm without distending the belly.  
When exhaling, start the movement in the  
Apāna Sthāna from the Svādhiṣṭhāna Sthāna  
and move the exhale as if towards the  
diaphragm without collapsing the chest."  
- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Bṛṃhaṇa Kriyā

has a Lakṣaṇa of  
feeling brighter in  
the Prāṇa Sthāna.  
Laṅghana Kriyā  
has a Lakṣaṇa of  
feeling lighter in  
the Apāna Sthāna."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Svatantra within Āsana, Mudrā  
and Prāṇāyāma implies knowing  
the self-application and effects of  
breath ratios, as well as you know  
the self-application and effects of  
the forms of the important Āsana."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"In Āsana the breath is  
a mirror for the body.  
In Prāṇāyāma the breath  
is a mirror for the mind."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

"Freedom of, or in movement, is obviously an asset  
and of course is a useful health and fitness pursuit in  
the world of homo-sedens that abounds these days.  
However, movement according to the subtle energetic  
principles inherent in Haṭha Yoga, implies further roles.  
Common to all of which is that Haṭha Yoga involves much  
more than merely freedom of movement as an end in itself.  
Thus, in Haṭha Yoga the purpose of freedom in movement,  
even embedded with useful anatomical tips and insights,  
is not the priority that appears to dominate the forms of  
Āsana utilised today within many popularist Yoga styles.  
Of course, freedom in movement is obviously a support in  
helping us embrace and apply the principles of Haṭha Āsana  
practice, but it is not the end in itself that it seems to have  
become, under the guise of branding it all as if it's Yoga.  
For example, it can help with facilitating an exploration  
of the subtle energetic processes that ultimately define,  
guide and differentiate Haṭha Yoga from the movement  
forms that use, imply or imitate an Āsana content, such  
as is found within exercise, fitness, flow, yogalates, et al.  
Thus, these days it increasingly seems to be that, on  
the journey towards the deeper purpose inherent in  
Haṭha Yoga and its relationship to what is Rāja Yoga,  
we are more and more being sidetracked by what is  
proffered within the myriad of movement forms that

proliferate, or even 'pose' as if Āsana practice today."

- 108 Yoga Practice Pointers

General Guidelines for Choosing Āsana:

"Consider, the Physiological, Energetic and Psychological aspects of practice.

Perhaps exploring intended learning outcomes across five areas that practice can enable us to interact with, namely the Body, Spine, Breath, Mind and Emotions."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Relating these two types of activity, dynamic movement in Āsana is the initial way of assessing what is what in the body, in the breath and in the mind.

Furthermore, you can't just press a button and get into and out of an Āsana, you have to move.

So there is a starting point in learning the practice of Āsana."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Consequently in looking at the principles of working with dynamic and static, we must consider the following:

- The Lakṣaṇa of the chosen Āsana
- The Lakṣaṇa of the practitioner's body
- The Lakṣaṇa of the practitioner's breath
- The Lakṣaṇa of the practitioner's mind
- The Vinyāsa Krama to link the Āsana with the practitioner's individual body, breath and mind."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Furthermore, the consideration of the roles of movement and stasis can be further developed through Krishnamacharya's teachings on application of Āsana.

For example, whether for circulation or for purification, within both structural and/or systemic roles for Āsana.

Regarding circulation, or what he called Rakta Calana.

When you want to activate the circulation you move.

Regarding cleansing, or what he called Śarīra Śodhana.

When you want to activate a purificatory process you stay.

Both presume there is competent access to the breath,  
working access to the concepts of Prāna, Apāna and Agni,  
and experience of how to direct the breath in the spine."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Furthermore, the consideration of movement  
or stasis sits within a relationship to the  
deeper purpose of Āsana within our journey  
through the body and the breath, to the mind  
and beyond, through considerations such as:

In relation to the dual concepts of Sthira and Sukham.

Dynamic can be too much effort, as in overly Sthira,  
and Static can be too relaxing, as in overly Sukham.

Thus, the use of movement and stasis in Āsana needs  
to consider how to correlate these two qualities, namely  
that of steady attentiveness with that of spacious clarity."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Furthermore, the consideration of movement  
or stasis sits within a relationship to the  
deeper purpose of Āsana within our journey  
through the body and the breath, to the mind  
and beyond, through considerations such as:

In relation to the fluctuations of the Guṇa.

Ideally, dynamic work is a state of still movement,  
rather than a state of active movement, as in Rajas.

Equally, static work is a state of bright stasis,  
rather than a state of dull stasis, as in Tamas.

Thus, in relation to the Guṇa, the application  
of both movement and stasis in Āsana need to be  
appropriately supported by a quality of Sattva.

As in a quality of stillness within dynamic work  
and a quality of brightness within static work."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Furthermore, the consideration of movement  
or stasis sits within a relationship to the  
deeper purpose of Āsana within our journey  
through the body and the breath, to the mind  
and beyond, through considerations such as:

In relation to the concepts of Dhāraṇā and Dhyānam.

Dynamic is the effort to move the activities of the mind,

as well as of the body, in one direction as in Dhāraṇā.  
The observations from dynamic work also allow us to see  
the role or appropriateness or subtlety of static work.  
Here static can be considered as the holding of the mind,  
as well as of the body, in one direction as in Dhyānam.  
As Dhāraṇā precedes Dhyānam in terms of directing the  
activities of the mind, so dynamic work precedes static  
work in terms of directing the activities of the body.  
So, the quality of the attention within the mind, as well  
as the body, is important in helping us to experience the  
progressive interrelationship between movement and stasis."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice

"Finally, the consideration of movement  
or stasis sits within a relationship to the  
deeper purpose of Āsana within our journey  
through the body and the breath, to the mind  
and beyond, through considerations such as:

In relation to the psychological ideal of remaining there.

According to the definition in Chapter Three verse 2 of  
the Yoga Sūtra, a continuity of psychic activity is the ideal.

This is seen as the ability to stay, as if in the same moment, as  
one moment melds into the next moment and the next moment.

In other words, the ability to internally maintain a continuity of  
experience as if maintaining an apparent stillness of movement.  
Access to such subtle states requires a containment of movement  
that ultimately extends from the body to the breath to the mind."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

Voluntary Efforts and Involuntary Effects in an Āsana Practice

"Thus, with these two aspects there can be a lot of variables.

For example, using or not using the breath in Āsana  
practice can be either a voluntary or involuntary aspect.

Thus, if you are not used to using the breath in an Āsana  
and its quality is affected involuntarily, then we must apply  
a voluntary action to improve or sustain the quality of the breath.

Or, if we are used to using the breath, the way we use it  
can become fixed and unchanging – an involuntary effect."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

A third factor, that of Respect for Responses

"Āsana are not automatic but can become so.

The inevitability of voluntary actions is that we  
get used to them and they become involuntary.

With this, the risk factor is increased as well.  
So what is voluntary and what is involuntary is completely different when there is a 'new' response.  
However, such a response needs to be linked to something deeper than just merely a 'tweaking', or 'inventive' variation within the form of the body.  
Given, that in Yoga the breath is that which gives life.  
By cultivating a role for, and the purpose of the breath, we are creating and re-creating a situation for, not just new, but also more subtle responses to occur and reoccur.  
Within this field for enhancing awareness, through our relationship with the breath, the risk factor is reduced as well."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

The Adaptation of the Āsana Practice

"There is also the impact of fluctuations in the body's physical and breathing processes, on our mental patterns and emotional flows. Along with the opposite, namely the impact of our mental patterns and emotional flows on the body's physical and breathing processes."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

The Adaptation of the Āsana Practice

"Thus, there are always changes, or *Pariṇāma*, in the outcome of the interactions between our physical processes and breathing processes, and our mental patterns within our emotional flows. However, we can also tend towards becoming either over-adaptable or under-adaptable, in trying to absorb, or overcome, these changes in ourselves."

- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers

- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

What is the role of the practice of Āsana?

"Secondly, to intelligently embrace all of these variables as assets rather than limitations, we need to make skilful use of the art of Viniyoga when investigating the *Vinyāsa Krama* of Āsana.

For example:

- Static Movements
- Dynamic Movements
- Relational Variations
- Appropriate Modifications
- Expansive Energetics



- Contractive Energetics
- Preparatory Movements
- Compensatory Movements
- Effective Sequence Building
- Progressive Breathing Patterns
  - Efficient Transitions
  - Relevant Conclusions"
- 108 Yoga Planning Pointers
- The Viniyoga of Planning Principles Guidelines – Collected & Collated

"A key to unlocking the mystery of Yoga is the breath."

- 108 Yoga Study Path Pointers

"Containing the Body,  
or Kāya Nirodha  
doesn't always imply that...  
you can contain the Breath.

Containing the Breath,  
or Prāṇa Nirodha  
doesn't always imply that...  
you can contain the Mind.

Containing the Mind  
or Mano Vṛtti Nirodha.  
doesn't always imply that...  
you can contain the Psyche.

Containing the Psyche,  
or Citta Vṛtti Nirodha  
doesn't always imply that..."

- 108 Yoga Study Path Pointers

"Haṭha Yoga is about the vitality of our Prāṇa.

Rāja Yoga is about the clarity of our Citta.

Krishnamacharya's teachings reflect their  
relative importance, in the correlation and  
integration of both within our Yoga Sādhana,  
as beacons for our outer and inner journey."

- 108 Yoga Study Path Pointers

"To be involved in the  
mystery of one's breath,  
is to be involved in the  
mystery of one's life."

- 108 Yoga Study Path Pointers

"The Body is a vehicle for the Breath.

The Breath is a vehicle for the Spirit."

- 108 Yoga Study Path Pointers

"Krishnamacharya's Yoga Loom had three interwoven threads.

Namely,  
an appropriate application,  
according to,  
an individual's specific needs,  
of:

Kāya Cikitsā through Āyurveda,  
Prāṇa Śakti through Haṭha,  
Citta Adhyātmika through Rāja."  
- 108 Yoga Study Path Pointers

"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."  
- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

"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."  
- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

"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."

- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

"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."

- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

"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."

- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

"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."

- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

"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."  
- 108 Yoga Teaching Path Pointers

– Prāṇāyāma only Planning Questions  
"Design a Prāṇāyāma practice for yourself  
- to influence Prāṇa Sthāna,  
choosing either Samavṛtti or Viṣamavṛtti ratios."  
To Download or View this Question as a PDF Study Sheet  
– Yoga Practice Planning and Theory Questions – Collected & Collated

– Prāṇāyāma Theory Questions  
"Compare and discuss the effects of  
Samavṛtti and Viṣamavṛtti breathing ratios  
on Prāṇa Sthāna and Apāna Sthāna."  
To Download or View this Question as a PDF Study Sheet  
– Yoga Practice Planning and Theory Questions – Collected & Collated