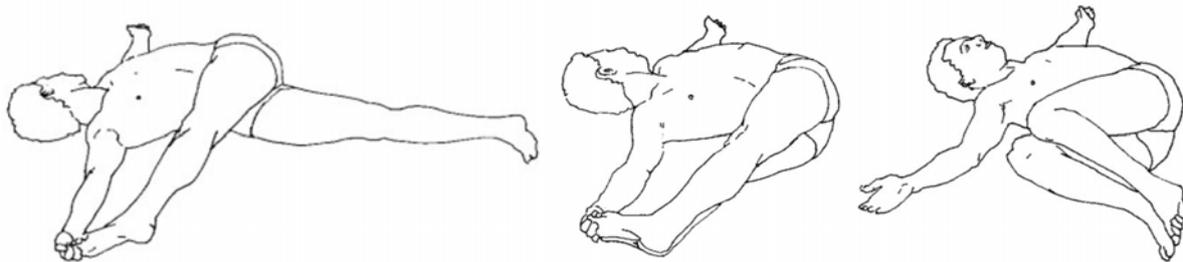


How do the teachings from Krishnamacharya and Desikachar apply Yoga to the individual?



Fundamentally, the starting point determines the direction.....

In exploring this premise, I would suggest reading a post from 2018 exploring the chronological teaching model outlined in the article 'What are the concepts of Sṛṣṭi Krama, Sthiti Krama and Anta Krama'. Especially considering that these important principles from Krishnamacharya's formational teaching, in the later years in Mysore and early years in Madras, also influenced and set the styles for those of his pupils who went on to influence the teaching of Yoga in the West.

However, if we apply this chronological model within the generic modality inherent within much of group class teaching in the West these past decades, we already have an issue, since most people coming to Yoga are already at some point in their middle years or Sṛṣṭi Krama. This can also mean that despite looking for such as physical fitness or mental challenge, they are not necessarily coming from a Sṛṣṭi or growth stage starting point.

"This is the stage to develop the body and its associated skills such as strength, coordination and mobility, through practising lots and lots of Āsana. Furthermore, obviously, with very young people, their interest and attention will be more engaged by using a wide range of challenging Āsana and utilising progressive choreographically based Āsana sequences involving proprioceptive skills such as jumping and focal skills techniques such as external gazing or numerically based movement learning steps."

Furthermore, these days even more likely is the trend of looking to Yoga in order to service the system, or even repair a breakdown. Like going to the car mechanic, the body is getting a bit cranky and needs to be at least serviced or even repaired. Here, one may even extend this analogy to the driver as well as the car.

Thus, from the very start, we are faced with the effects of cumulative disturbances manifesting as, for example, stress or back pain. We are also likely to have some accompanying psychosomatic or psychological difficulties, and we may well feel the need for external support, seeking a 'refresh', 'reboot' or 'reset' within our busy lifestyles.

As well as this, the body and mind may not have been built up in terms of Sṛṣṭi and may well be breaking down due to the effects of unhelpful habits, or an unhelpful diet, perhaps from not growing up healthfully.

Thus, Yoga students in the West have two problems: the age at which we come to Yoga and the reason why we come to Yoga, as in what am I seeking from Yoga? So, people are coming to Yoga for lifestyle support or servicing, or even repair, but many are offered practices that are perhaps more suited to someone who is young and relatively fit and healthy, with much more time and energy.

So, the question for us in this situation is then, where should we begin with people within situations such as these? This is where another model may be helpful, the one which says that Yoga needs to be presented according to the starting point of the person. This model has three aspects or stages, that of Śikṣaṇa Krama, Rakṣaṇa Krama and Cikitsā Krama:

*"The teacher decides which of the Tri Krama 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.
Cikitsā Krama looks for adaptation, healing, recovering..."*

– TKV Desikachar 1998

1. Śikṣaṇa Krama

If there are no obstacles, limitations or restrictions, whether the person is 24 or 34 or 44, the practice can be taught in the Śikṣaṇa way.

You can teach the Āsana in their most intense forms with all the nuances of Bandha, gazing and so forth. However, the practitioner must have sufficient innate energy. This is not a technique for boosting flagging energy, so we must be very thoughtful.

2. Rakṣaṇa Krama

The second aspect of this model is Rakṣaṇa, practising Yoga to support or protect us. We aim more at sustaining our health and our innate resources, rather than going to, say, the extremes of the Āsana. We must be careful not to make the practice itself another source of stress. Here we have physiological and psychological considerations and limited time, so the practice is developed accordingly.

*"Preventive health is a self-discipline and only a minority
seeks Yoga as a preventive measure to prevent illness.
Most people seem to seek Yoga only for therapy.
But it must be remembered that the essence of Yoga is discipline.
Essentially it is the discipline of the body,
it is the discipline of the mind and
it is also the discipline of the spirit.
But prevention does not interest people
even though it is of obvious importance.
People get interested only when they are in trouble.
So we now need to develop strategies
using the salient principles of Yoga practice,
so that it can be adapted to people with specific problems."*

- TKV Desikachar 1998

3. Cikitsā Krama

The third aspect is where one's inner and outer health account is well overdrawn, completely in the red (Cikitsā). As we all know, if you are overdrawn, your first priority is to get rid of your overdraft. It is important that when we are dealing with people, we find out which of the three is initially most important and relevant to them and their current situation and potential.

*"Yoga Cikitsā is about
treating a person in a problem.
Rather than
treating a problem in a person."*

So to summarise:

If somebody comes who has innate energy, as if money in the bank, then they can spend it, invest it, and develop it. This is Śikṣaṇa Krama.

If someone comes who is not overdrawn but who has no extra money, then we want to make sure that they maintain what they have and do not become overdrawn in the future. This is Rakṣaṇa Krama.

*"You apply therapeutics through Cikitsā,
but not protection or preservation.
This is the role of Rakṣaṇa."
- TKV Desikachar 1983*

If someone comes who is completely overdrawn energetically or in terms of health and well-being, the priority must be to reduce the overdraft. This is Cikitsā Krama.

*"People come to study Yoga for many reasons,
however it comes into two groups.
1. They come to learn or study (Śikṣaṇa).
2. They come to us for support rather than to study (Rakṣaṇa).
So the Yoga we offer to the person who is inquiring
is not the Yoga we offer to the person seeking protection.
Therefore one can give the wrong advice (Asat Viniyoga) to the right person
and vice versa (Sat Viniyoga).
This can do more harm than if the person had not come.
The intention must be right as must be the execution."
- TKV Desikachar 1978*

These are some aspects of the teaching approach of Krishnamacharya, towards students of different ages, stages interests and energy, around the concept of the Viniyoga of Yoga and its art of learning how to apply the practice according to age, life stages, personal interest and future potential of the student.