



**Question to T Krishnamacharya:**

**"Can you explain the concept of Vinyāsa and Pratikriyā Āsana?"**

"The question asked relates to Yoga and not to Vidyā Abhyāsa. There is no Āsana without Vinyāsa. Yoga is an experience, Āsana is the third of the eight limbs of Yoga and it is also important to pay attention to first two limbs, namely Yama and Niyama.

One who wishes to enquire into and understand Vinyāsa should first know what is Āsana. According to Patañjali Yoga Sūtra, Āsana is defined as "Sthira Sukham Āsanam".

Sthira - Namely firm and without disease and Sukham - pleasant and comfortable. To be in Sukham state, all parts of the body should be in perfect harmony. This is true for all, whether one is a man, woman, deaf, mute, blind or even for animals. Any action that disturbs this state of harmony should be followed by a Pratikriyā to restore the harmony. One cannot but accept this principle.

To attain Sthira and Sukham, let us consider that you are teaching an Āsana such as Paścimatāna Āsana, Utkāṣa Āsana or Pūrvaṭana Āsana. These Āsana may be in various positions - like standing, sitting, lying, inverted etc. During any of these postures, the various parts of the body muscles, joints etc. get displaced. In order to restore them to their natural position one has to perform Pratikriyā or counterpose.

For example if a teacher asks you to stay in Paścimatāna Āsana for fifteen minutes this would displace the rectum upwards. If proper Pratikriyā is not done, the rectum will not return to its proper position. Such lapses in practice lead to problems and sometimes the practice of Yoga itself is blamed for this.

Similarly continuous sitting can lead to muscles of the buttocks being displaced. Sitting on a pillow is not an adequate or proper compensation for this. Proper Pratikriyā is essential. Vinyāsa is to place the body in a particular position.

This may involve various steps. The steps may be 4 or 40 or 90 or over 100 depending on the practice of the person. The Krama and Pratikriyā are known to students who have studied under the direct guidance of a teacher.

Practice without this knowledge has led to problems that have brought Yoga into disrepute. The concept of Pratikriyā is also stated in traditional Indian medicine. Similarly in Yoga too there exists the concept of Pratikriyā, both in the practice for curative and preventive purposes.

The practice of Yoga should not lead to imbalance and ill health. Āsana is an individual experience; this cannot be explained by books. The pronunciation of "A" cannot be explained by a written text. So also breathing.

In God's creation the body consists of five elements with three Guṇa. In Āsana practice, in order to prevent crookedness and imbalance and maintain alignment, proper breathing, Vinyāsa and Pratikriyā are a must.

These concepts have been handed down by long standing tradition and are beyond dispute or questions."