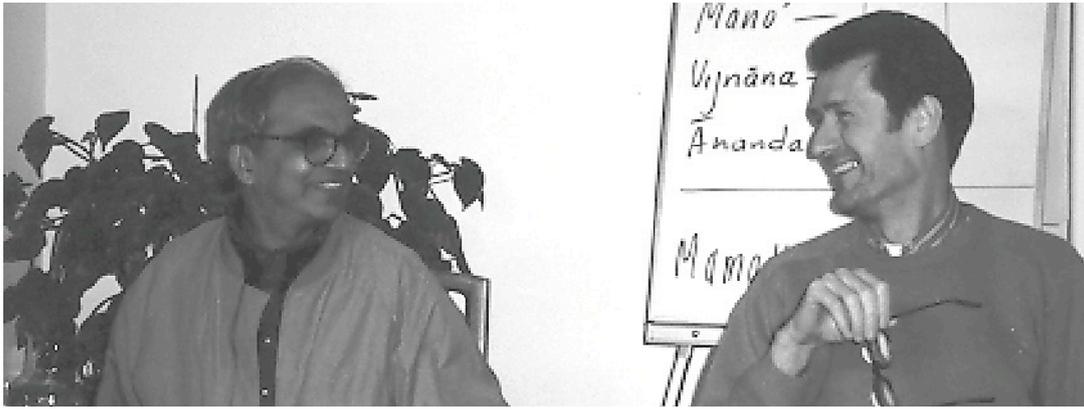


- Notes from TKV Desikachar's lectures at a 6 day retreat in England in April 1992



There are two categories of practice, the Śikṣaṇa Krama way, according to the rules, or the Cikitsa Krama way, the application or adaptation of a posture to suit a particular person or a particular situation.

- The authority for the postures comes from the teacher, although some rules are indicated in the texts.
- Postures need to be adapted to suit particular bodies and their limitations.
- The action of a posture may be delayed because the student has tried to force the body into a posture.
- Never measure something by its immediate effects.

Yoga is often attributed to Āsana practice alone, which is only the part of Yoga focusing on the physical body or servicing the body.

The body can be underused, overused and abused, we need to be aware of what is happening with the body, but we also need to do something for the mind. It is possible to be aware of the state of the mind by observing the body during an Āsana practice.

- There are many postures to suit a variety of different body types.
- Āsana practice is to prepare the body, to sit for Prāṇāyāma.
- Āsana also helps to get rid of impurities so that it is possible to do something deeper, inside the mind.
- Planning should precede practice, fix your goal, building step by step and there should be check points along the way.
- There are simple postures for Prāṇāyāma and Dhyāna, so that we can relax in the body and not be distracted by it.
- There are challenging postures, to enable us to master our bodies and for young people who will be engaged by the performance aspect of the posture.
- There are also corrective postures.

Āsana practice should take into account:

- Where we are
- Where am I?
- Where are we going
- What is my goal?
- What happens afterwards
- How do I continue with my life?

There needs to be steps in the sequence to lead to the goal and counter postures to prepare for life after the Yoga practice, a Vinyāsa Krama (Special placing in steps).

The postures need to be visualised prior to being executed, Bhava (Becoming, turning into).

It is important to prepare for life after a Yoga practice so that a student is fully prepared for life outside the Yoga room.

A teacher needs to know a student's body and state of mind to prepare a suitable practice, to take into account the particular student's problems be they physical or psychological.

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).

Breath makes Āsana part of Yoga and also makes it adaptable.

The trunk is the most important part of the body, most postures are adjustments of the legs and to a lesser extent the arms. It is possible to do many postures without moving the trunk.

The trunk is involved in the breathing, it brings out changes in the most vital part of the body.

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.

- Inhalation - straightens the spine - expanding/awakening
- Exhalation - contracts the spine - shrinking/contracting

The lower abdomen is the dullest part of the spine, it is the starting point for the exhalation. Exhalation is the most important part of the breath, it encourages the inhalation. By increasing the exhalation we bring attention to the lower abdomen.

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.

There can be refinement of the posture through the breath.

The attention is within the posture if we concentrate on the breath.

- Breathing is done in a harmonious way, Yoga is non-violent.
- 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.

Breath presents different possibilities in Āsana. The breath makes it possible to find ways to achieve access to the posture, it is possible to adapt a posture through the breath. By varying the breath we vary the effect.

The focus should be on the contraction or expansion of the abdomen or chest during Āsana.

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.

The traditional model, Śikṣaṇa, for Yoga was to stay in a posture, Krishnamacharya introduced movement in the postures.

He decided that you could be in one posture and do a number of variations.

- Yoga has been adapted to life in the modern day.
- Any posture far removed from the normal posture is a problem and therefore risky if there is any problem with the body.
- Inverted postures present problems because of the tension that people carry in their necks.
- Postures that create tension should be avoided.
- Moving into the posture after the exhale is an adaptation.

Krishnamacharya designed aids to help people achieve postures.

Slow movement has a different action on the muscles, it is harder work.

The role of Āsana, its purpose and goal must be respected.

Opposite postures are a handicap but can help us to appreciate something different in a posture.

We must feel ourselves and what is happening in a posture.

Students need to be aware of which parts of the body to bring attention to, without the teachers hands to remind them; so by reminding them in another posture they will be aware of which part to move.

Breathing should be done to have maximum effect on the spine; so start the inhale at the top of the lungs, down with contacted abdomen to hold spine erect, offering from top to bottom.

Inhale from top to bottom makes sure that the spine is erect.

It was believed that breathing from the bottom to the top would send the internal organs further down, which wasn't considered healthy, whereas breathing from the top to the bottom lifted the organs.

It also helps to work on the upper portion of the spine, which is a very sluggish area, this type of breathing helps to create movement.

The hands should be upwards for counting and breathing, with elbows slightly bent to keep the shoulders relaxed.

Prāṇāyāma without Bandha is considered useless by Nāthamuni (Teachings from T Krishnamacharya transmitted as a homily attributed to his forebear Nāthamuni), the Bandha he advised using are Jālandhara, Uḍḍiyāna and Mūla Bandha.

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.