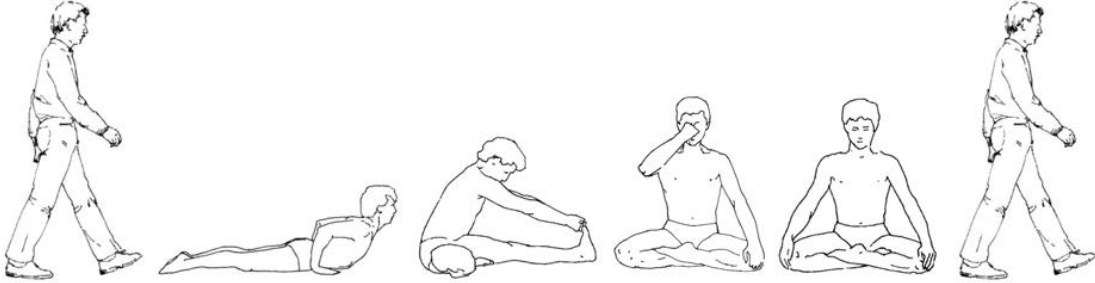


The Viniyoga of Planning Principles within Āsana Mudrā and Prāṇāyāma



Vinyāsa Krama – Intelligent sequence building in Āsana Mudrā & Prāṇāyāma

1. In terms of Practice Planning the Spirit of Viniyoga is achieved
2. General Guidelines for Practice Planning:
3. General Guidelines for Choosing Āsana:
4. General Guidelines for Setting Practice Aims or Learning Outcomes:
 5. Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice
 6. Voluntary Efforts and Involuntary Effects in an Āsana Practice
 7. A third factor, that of Respect for Responses
 8. We must also consider the safety factors
 9. The element of compromise in the body
 10. The adaptation of the Āsana Practice
 11. What is the role of the Practice of Āsana?
 12. Summary of Ideas around Practice Planning

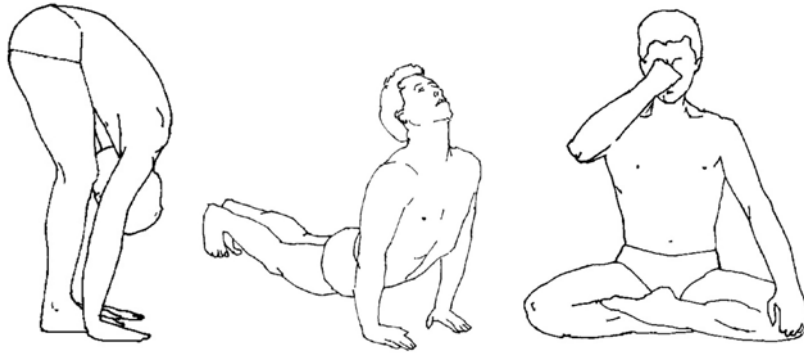
*"The Spirit of Viniyoga is starting
from where one finds oneself.
As everybody is different and
changes from time to time, there
can be no common starting point,
and ready-made answers are useless.
The present situation must be examined
and the habitually established
status must be re-examined."
– TKV Desikachar*

**1. In terms of Practice Planning
the Spirit of Viniyoga is
achieved by two broad means:**



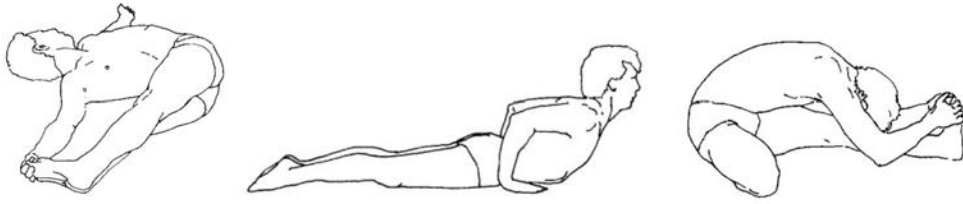
1. The selection of practice material that is appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the student.
2. The intelligent use of Vinyāsa Krama.

2. General Guidelines for Practice Planning:



1. Be clear about your purpose.
2. Hold the reflection that practice is a means, not an end.
3. Remember 'can' is not the same as 'should'.
4. Ask yourself what is most effective.
5. Plan for others as it applies to them, not as it applies to you.
6. Consider its relationship to both short-term and long-term goals.
7. Look to cultivate a quality of Sattva by diminishing Tamas and channeling Rajas.
8. Keep it simple and consider how to spend more time in fewer Āsana.
9. Make the practice shorter than the time available.
10. Stick to the conventions of technique unless there is a reason to change them.

3. General Guidelines for Choosing Āsana:



1. Yoga emphasises that Āsana must not be neglected, it is a valid tool that needs a precise application, hence respecting that there need to be guidelines when choosing.

2. Most of the Āsana are not close to the postures of the body we use in our daily life and its activities.

3. Āsana practice seems to mean different things to different people.

4. These days people begin Āsana practice at different stages of their life.

5. The body undergoes many changes and then there are many influences on it through one's work, interests and otherwise.

6. It can be said no human body is perfect. As such there are definitely certain vulnerable parts and some strong aspects.

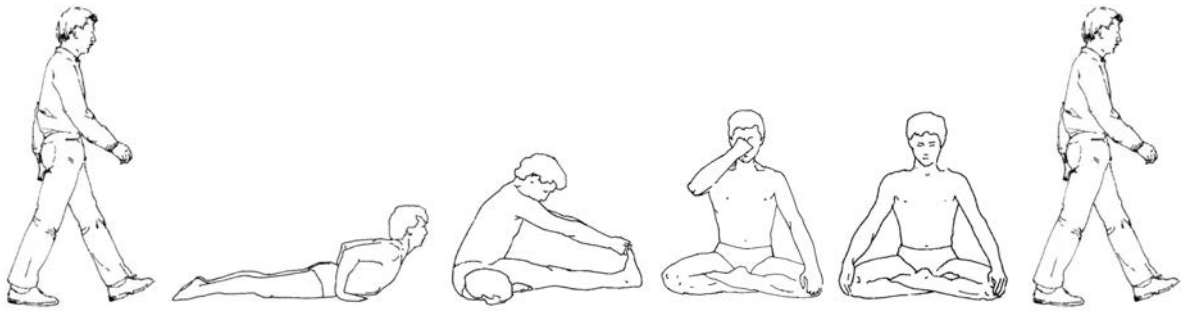
7. When the body gets used to certain things, less awareness about them seems to happen.

8. There is also a restrictive fight-flight-freeze response which, in no time, can change the physiology of the body.

9. It is not humanly possible to adapt Āsana practice to respect all the considerations. Hence, a safe compromise that produces certain positive effects and limits negative effects is the only proper alternative.

10. The principles we utilise through the Viniyoga of Āsana practice are a fair attempt in this direction.

4. General Guidelines for Setting Practice Aims or Learning Outcomes:



1. Be clear about the difference between Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes. Furthermore, distinguish between short-term and long-term aims and short-term and long-term intended learning outcomes.

2. Appreciate how you can factor short term outcomes within long-term aims, though avoid having too many aims or intended outcomes within one practice. Thus, in order to be clear about the goal and avoid trying to reach too many goals in the same practice, it is necessary to consider some practice technicalities in order to bridge the gap between the short-term outcomes and long-term aims.

3. Consequently, it is better to consider distinguishing starting from the immediate situation, rather than with what are long-term aims, in order to respect where a person is coming from, in terms of age, situation, gender, work, lifestyle, etc. As well as including the variable of a person's previous training and other factors such as time of day and the season, both inside and out.

4. Furthermore, we must also respect the after-effect of the Āsana practice, as well as the after-action yet to come. Here we must respect the travel from A to Z and that Z seems to vary much more than A. For example, there are generally fewer variables with practice in the morning. Whereas, with practice in the evening we are more subject to the day's effects and thus more variables.

5. 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.

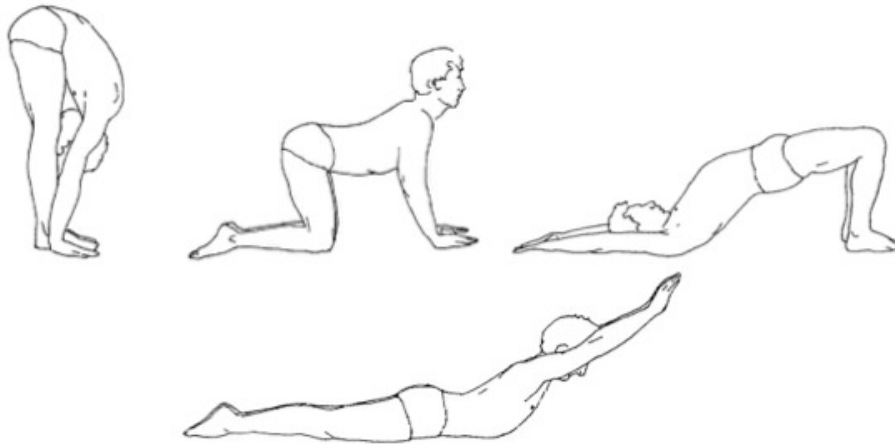
6. If being practised regularly, consider the impact of the accumulative effect of Āsana and Pratikriyāsana, in any one practice, and especially over time on any aims and intended outcomes. Observations here can be helped by keeping the practice concise, consistent and coherent in intention and execution.

7. Allow for any unexpected or unintended learning outcomes.

8. Thus the relationship between Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes needs to consider the 'What' as being very different from the 'Who'.

9. Finally, whatever the Practice Aims, or the Intended Learning Outcomes, try to conserve the Spirit of Viniyoga.

5. Different Types of Postural Activity in Āsana Practice:



1. Generally, in terms of Āsana practice, we can consider two types of physical activity that of Dynamic or Movement and Stay or Static: Dynamic is the movement aspect of an Āsana or posture. Here some Āsana are more suited to Movement or Dynamic Work

2. 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.

3. Generally, in terms of Āsana practice, we can consider two types of physical activity, that of Dynamic or Movement and Stay or Static. Stay is the Static aspect of an Āsana or posture. Though some Āsana are more suited to Stay or Static Work.

4. Linking Dynamic and Static Āsana within a Vinyāsa Krama. In this respect the application of the principles of both dynamic and static work, when planning for Āsana practice, allows for a more efficient use of the body and respect for the variables such as time of day, time of year, time of life, preceding or following activities, the length of practice, the role of practice, our practice needs, etc.

5. Amongst the technical learnings of the different possibilities for Āsana are topics such as, the developmental application of Āsana within the refinement of the practice from more movement towards more stasis.

This involves an exploration of the immediate or longer-term potentials for different Āsana:

- When used with long-range movement
- When used with mid-range movement
- When used with short-range movement
- When used with micro movement.

6. This would also involve a theoretical study of the Lakṣaṇa of individual or groups of Āsana.

This is supported by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of movement or stay in specific Āsana.

All of which to help in appreciating which Āsana are best used dynamically, or which Āsana are best used statically and which Āsana can serve the practice in both a dynamic and a static application.

7. 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.

8. 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 Prāṇa, Apāna and Agni, and experience of how to direct the breath in the spine.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

6. Voluntary Efforts and Involuntary Effects in an Āsana Practice:



1. As well as the consideration around the use of Āsana dynamically or statically, there is also, depending on our background to Āsana practice, the voluntary effort and the involuntary effects. According to the impact of this in the background, certain voluntary intentions can, often unconsciously, trigger certain involuntary, multi-levelled responses.
2. Thus, this means these effects can also apply to our attitudes whilst working habitually in a particular Āsana. For example, an involuntary response as a result of memory. So we can have a blindness, in that we are unaware of the position of the arms, legs, or body, as well as in our attitude. Thus, we need to at least apply movements voluntarily in our efforts to influence the qualities of the Āsana.
3. Also, certain steps have to be taken to avoid, anticipate or compensate for the effects of the involuntary response. This means certain steps have to be taken to consider the voluntary intention and a potentially involuntary response. From this, we can evolve certain suggestions with regard to anticipating potentially unconscious practice patterns.
4. 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.

7. A third factor, that of Respect for Responses:



1. There is also a third factor besides the relationship between voluntary efforts and involuntary effects, namely a person's response to the notion of effort and effect. In the travel from our everyday postures to Yoga postures we need to consider respect for the idea of responses. We can often ignore the body's response to our efforts within our aims and intentions for ideals, such as in Āsana. Voluntary efforts and involuntary effects are the variables.

2. Responses should be looked at according to the psychological attitude of the individual.

We need to consider what is the end and what are the means.

This is also seen as cause and effect.

The responses to the voluntary action should be considered as a safety valve.

All this assumes we have respect for the individual and the individual has or develops respect for themselves.

3. Voluntary,

as in a controlled action

and involuntary,

as in an action or reaction

without conscious control,

have both positive and negative aspects.

For example, a person who has a particular problem would seemingly come voluntarily.

However, their reaction in response to what we ask them to do may be involuntary.

So we have to consider a person's responses.

As in, what are and what are not acceptable responses when we travel from everyday postures to Yoga Āsana.

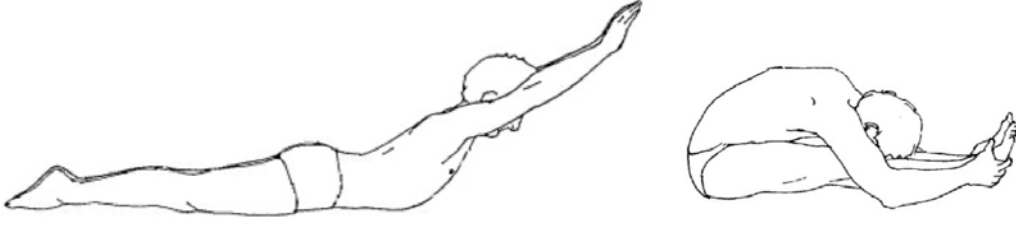
4. So Āsana are considered as voluntary phenomena, like writing with your opposite hand. Thus, it is an action which requires conscious control. However, when you are used to going from everyday postures to Yoga Āsana they become automatic in use. Thus, they become involuntary.

5. We must consider our waking posture, which is usually standing or sitting. Thus, we have a gap from this to the main Āsana we intend to use.

How can we bridge this gap from everyday postures to Āsana, in terms of form and function? Principles of practice are means to bridge the gaps according to place, time and circumstances. Here, we can cultivate steps towards being able to access an Āsana with a conscious composure, remaining awake within it and maintaining a respect for responses.

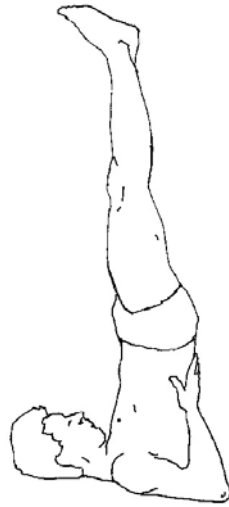
6. Āsana are not automatic but can become so. The inevitability of voluntary actions is that we get used to them and they become involuntary. With this, the risk factor is increased as well. So, what is voluntary and what is involuntary is completely different when there is a 'new' response. However, 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.

8. We must also consider the safety factors:



1. Along with creating a situation for 'new' responses to occur, any guidelines must also consider the safety factor. This is helped by being able to distinguish characteristics between say Bhujangāsana and Paścimatānāsana. Thus an elementary knowledge of what happens in the body is required, along with consideration of prerequisites and appropriate Pratikriyāsana.
2. For example, we have Śīrṣāsana and Padmāsana. Because of being able to do these Āsana a person wants to do Padmāsana in Śīrṣāsana, exploring an Āsana known as Viparīta Padmāsana. However one has to know the factors involved. One cannot assume that because two things are possible, a third will follow automatically.
 3. For example Viparīta Padmāsana could be approached by working dynamically from Ardha Padma Sarvāṅgāsana into Ardha Padma Halāsana. This would ascertain the ability to work into and with Padmāsana in an inverted Āsana such as Śīrṣāsana. Thus, any Āsana practice must allow for certain safety factors, so we are able to work with respect and regard for the individual involved and yet retain consideration of and for the safety factors.

9. The Element of Compromise in the body:



1. Working with safety factors brings in another factor to consider.

This is the element of compromise in the body.
This is often something you don't see.
For example, an involuntary movement of the head in Sarvāṅgāsana.

2. Thus, the body tells us something but, we are not always aware of what it is.

This can be the result of factors in one's life.
For example, age, profession, activities.
And, as said, it can often show in ways we cannot see.
For example, position of feet, tension in face, position of hands, angle of shoulders, angle of arms.
So we must respect our limitations as well as our assets.

3. This also applies that, as a teacher, we should be aware of the student's limitations.

These are variables according to the person, as well as the climate, the environment, etc.
They are not constant and neither are the effects.
This compromise can react in many ways.

For example:

You put your mind in one place during an Āsana, the body compensates and places the escape elsewhere.

4. It is usually the teacher that initially observes the escape, rather than the area of the body where the mind is.

This is another example of an involuntary, as in unconscious, response to a voluntary, as in conscious, movement. Thus, for example, in Āsana what we try to do can have different responses:

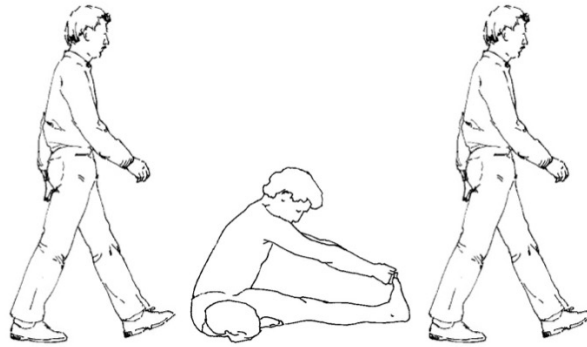
Such as what we want to happen, and what we don't want to happen.

If voluntary intentions produce involuntary responses, then you can lose touch with what is happening.

5. If you are doing the same Āsana practice, over a long period of time, it is not the same, because it becomes a habit. In this, it can have a different effect to what is required. Thus, when you design an Āsana practice for a long period you should be very careful. In this situation perhaps accommodate a compromise and build in a safety factor.

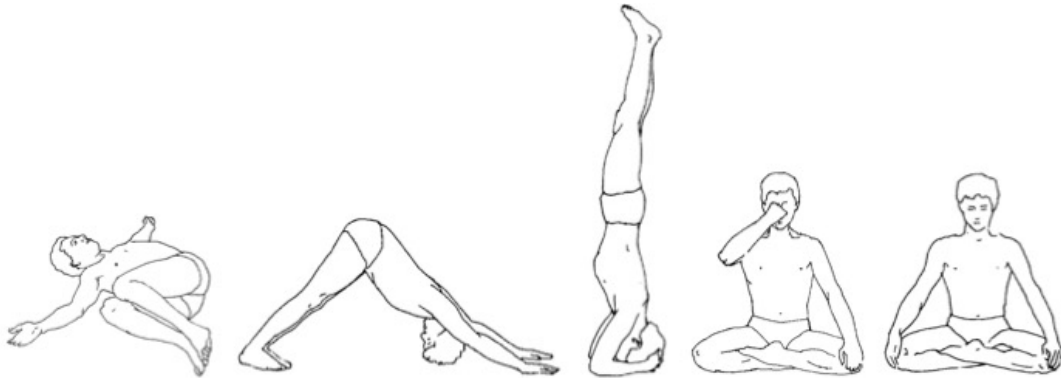
6. We can either respect our limits and accommodate them, or else overwork them and risk creating a need to rectify. This is where the idea of using the same Āsana practice all the time has limitations.

10. The Adaptation of the Āsana Practice:



1. The question that arises here is how to relate the idea of adapting the practice to the peaks and troughs of the body, mind and emotions?
2. By combining adaptation along with the idea of using the value of constants, to better understand the fluctuations in the peaks and troughs. No practice is ever the same over a period of days.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Regarding personal practice, one might suggest that, both the intention and application of adaptation needs to be more short-term regarding the external factors. This is amidst sustaining the longer-term internal direction, within a more consistent constant with minimum compromise. In other words, look after your short-term personal practice needs within the scope and scape of your longer-term practice aims.

11. What is the role of the practice of Āsana?



1. Perhaps at this point, we need to consider what is seen, especially these days, as a role for the practice of Āsana.

For example:

- Physiological Limitations
- Psychological Tensions
- Recreational Pastime
 - Fitness Activity
- Prepare for Prāṇāyāma
- Prepare for Chanting
- Prepare for Meditation
 - Personal Ritual
 - Self-Inquiry
 - Something else?

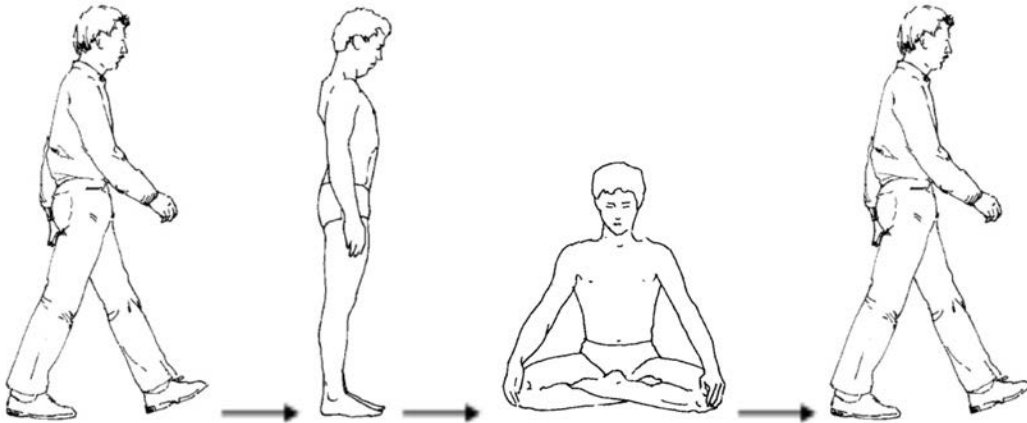
Thus the roles are many....

2. There is also what can be seen as a negative approach to the practice of Āsana.

In that, we are as if walking backwards towards Yoga, because we are looking more at what Yoga can take us away from, rather than looking more at what Yoga can take us towards. Within this story we use Āsana to take ourselves away from something we perceive as unhelpful. However, Āsana practice that can help to promote well-being in the individual has to be beneficial.

This is one more reason as to why we should investigate these principles in practice planning.

12. Summary of Ideas around Practice Planning:



1. Given the changes in the body are manifold and the changes in the mind are also manifold, as well as the manifold changes in the emotions. How can we meet these manifold changes and yet still promote well-being within our practice?
2. Firstly, we must go back to the primary principles underpinning the Vinyāsa Krama of Āsana in terms of variables as assets and variables as limitations.

For example:

- Guidelines in Setting Aims
- Different Types of Activity
 - Voluntary Movement
 - Involuntary Movement
 - Responses
 - Respect
 - Safety Factors
 - Compromise

To ignore or override these principles is not to intelligently consider that there are many variables.

3. 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