

Though there are many different aspects to formal 'home' practice.....



Though there are many different aspects to Krishnamacharya and Desikachar's teachings on cultivating a formal 'home' practice, they fall into two general groups:

Firstly Bāhya Aṅga Sādhana through Haṭha Yoga and the practice of Kriyā, Āsana, Mudrā, Bandha and Prāṇāyāma.

Secondly Antar Aṅga Sādhana through Rāja Yoga and the practice of Dhāraṇā and Bhakti Adhyayanam or the chanting of the Veda, or Jñāna Adhyayanam or the chanting of the Yoga Sūtra.

In considering the relationship and intertwining of these multifarious practice elements we can use the analogy of raising a family. In other words how to accommodate the emerging issues we need to contend with, such as the impact on our time and energy, as we look to stream developmental priorities within these additional commitments.

Here I want to consider some of these issues just from the viewpoint of time. For example if we look at the issue of time within one aspect of practice, say Āsana, we find that as time goes on we need to make more time for our relationship with this aspect of practice. This is through either adding more Āsana or, even if we work with exactly the same Āsana then the practice should take longer because of the breath lengthening.

What is meant here is that one of the primary foci in Krishnamacharya's teaching around Āsana is that progression for adult practitioners is more about mastery of the breath, rather than just mastery of the form. In this context a developmental path is the evolution of the breath from say a starting point of around six breaths a minute, to four breaths a minute, to three breaths a minute, or even less.

In other words a starting point maybe inhale 5 seconds and exhale 5 seconds, with an evolution over years towards say 10 seconds inhale and 10 seconds exhale, or ratio variants totalling around 20 seconds each breath.

So whether adding more Āsana or deepening our relationship with the same Āsana through developing and refining the breath, we end up needing to make more time in our life for this facet of our relationship with Yoga practice.

This same developmental challenge, or perhaps developmental dilemma, applies to other aspects of our Sādhana, such as Mudrā, Prāṇāyāma, Adhyayanam, or Dhāraṇā. Maybe this is a factor in why many Yoga students end up with only an Āsana practice, as if just raising just one child in their Yoga 'family'?

However the family analogy is perhaps limited in that it doesn't address the issue of, in Patañjali's view, the difference in subtlety twixt Bāhya Aṅga Sādhana and Antar Aṅga Sādhana. In other words the transmutation from the externality of Haṭha Yoga Sādhana towards the internality of Rāja Yoga Sādhana.