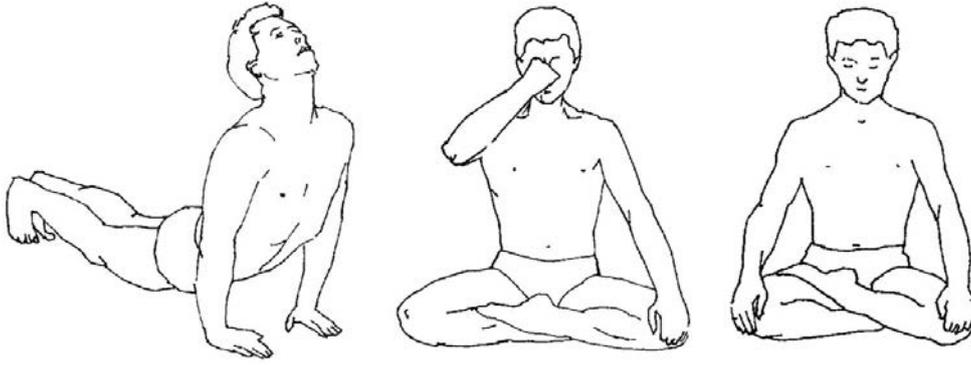


## What are the concepts of Sṛṣṭi Krama, Sthiti Krama and Antya Krama?



What are the concepts of Sṛṣṭi Krama, Sthiti Krama and Antya Krama and what is their significance in relationship to the practice of Āsana, Prāṇāyāma and Dhyānam?

We can approach these three concepts and the question of their relationship with practice from a chronological and within that, a psychological viewpoint. According to the Yoga teachings from T Krishnamacharya there are three chronological and accompanying psychological stages of life, or Tri Krama.

1. The first Krama is the stage of growth and expansion known as Sṛṣṭi Krama. Here, chronologically, the starting point is the age from which people traditionally began the Āsana aspect of Yoga practice.

*"A person is fit to practice when they can eat by themselves."  
– T Krishnamacharya*

This is the stage to develop the body and its associated skills such as strength, co-ordination and mobility, through practicing 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.

*"Śikṣaṇa has different Krama which can be looked into.  
For example Sṛṣṭi Krama to grow, create, develop – physically or mentally.  
In some situations Sṛṣṭi Krama is more important.  
For example in Āsana, ideas of relaxation not valid.  
So more work, more strength, more activity."  
– TKV Desikachar*

This is the life stage context within which some of Krishnamacharya's early students, now seen as founders of modern Āsana based Yoga styles, would have started learning as teenagers. According to Krishnamacharya this stage ended at about 24 and then you moved into the householder stage of living usually around a family based working lifestyle.

2. This second chronological Krama is the stage of remaining or staying in a condition. In other words the ongoing self maintenance, sustainment and day to day support of our life, is known as Sthiti Krama.

When you are in the work, relationships and family lifeplace, who has time to practice Āsana three hours a day, let alone other aspects of Yoga practice? Priorities change. There is a teaching from T Krishnamacharya within his composition the Yoga Rahasya, which says that when you are a family based working lifestyle person you have to look after your family, your work, your relatives, the priest, the beggar.....  
how much time is there available to look after yourself?

*"Having grown, not to become old too soon,  
let us maintain a status quo.  
Sthiti Krama is for a person who has responsibilities, marriage, work.  
No longer a full time student.  
Still time for Svādhyāya.  
Preservation of what you have received as a student.  
So Sthiti Krama very critical in one's life.  
The difference is that you have your own responsibilities.  
You cannot forsake them to study this or that.  
Considered important because it is a challenge from 25-60 to sustain this position.  
Because it is very difficult, there is a great excuse for escaping Svādhyāya.  
We must do it to handle or approach problems around us – children, students, etc."  
– TKV Desikachar*

During this time there is also a psychological developmental shift. From Krishnamacharya's viewpoint you've got the Āsana under your belt, so to speak, and now the priority is to maintain the intensity of your life energy or Prāṇa Śakti. Yoga practice is now prioritised for sustaining more at the level of an energetic, mental and emotional stability. This stage is known as Sthiti Krama where the need is now more energetic and especially psychological rather than physiological.

*"For the householder, in line with Sthiti Krama,  
the most important practice is Prāṇāyāma."  
– T Krishnamacharya*

The early Āsana training supports your physical vitality and health, however it is now time to sustain your psychological vitality, so Prāṇāyāma is now the primary focus with Āsana a secondary priority.

*"Sthiti Krama is a transition to the next stage  
where you begin to accept the inevitable.  
There is a great Saṃskāra of youth.  
We then accept that there will be a setting of the Sun.  
You eat less, reflect more, you think of God."  
– TKV Desikachar*

3. The third chronological stage is known as Antya Krama or the last part, that final life phase when our priorities shift yet again. If you have children they are grown and hopefully flown, you don't have the same ambitions in your workplace, your relationship perspective with immortality shifts towards a relationship perspective that engages increasingly with the notion of mortality.

*"Initially our Yoga Sādhana is about our relationship with living.  
Ultimately our Yoga Sādhana is about our relationship with dying."*

Increasingly it is no longer the outside world that demands our attention, instead it is our inside world that is of more interest. Our life perspective downsizes and internalises as we near the completion of this life cycle like a leaf departing the tree returns to its starting point.

The question is how to positively support that inevitable change in body, breath, mind and emotions in a way that embraces its inner message, albeit within the pulsation of Abhiniveśā and its attendant disturbance?

*"Abhiniveśā is the extra-ordinary instinctive urge to survive at any cost.  
No one is spared. In a way it is a dislike about one's death."  
– T Krishnamacharya*

Thus in the first stage the priority was more physiological, in the second stage it was more psychological, and in this third stage the priority is now more towards the spiritual dimensions at the enduring heart of our inner life and the inevitable interface with the pulsations of survival. Here these final explorations towards the source of being are to be found within the priority of Dhyānam as our primary practice.

*"A person who is physically fit  
and who has been cleansed by the Agni of Dhyānam  
has no fear of sickness, disease, age or death."  
– T Krishnamacharya*

So in the third stage, Āsana and Prāṇāyāma still have their place, but the focus is much more around the idea of Dhyānam or seated meditation, inquiring into what is the ultimate truth within impermanence and its relationship with the notion of what we perceive as death.

Within this focus of Dhyānam on cultivating insight into the nature of nature in order to realise what is not nature and coming to terms with that before the end of our personalised experience with existence and being, ere to reabsorb into the ultimate matrix.

*"There is no death for the Puruṣa  
because there is no change for it,  
and what is death but change."  
– TKV Desikachar*