



## Yoga practice as a process precedes Yoga practice as content.....

Where do we start when approaching the determination to open up to practice options beyond the group class mentality with its double edged sword of support and dependency? For example we could start by exploring what it means to cultivate a personal regular home practice in terms of looking at it as from the initial viewpoint of being a process, before considering what is its content.

At this point it might be helpful to examine what are the differences between the two concepts of process and content, so vital in the work of Desikachar around planning Yoga practices for individual students. Here it might also be useful to remind ourselves that Krishnamacharya and Desikachar considered teaching individuals as the only valid means to explore Yoga as having both a process and content.

*"Yoga Sādhana is about what grows out of practising alone amidst the inside at home, rather than practising with others amidst the outside in class."*

So what is Yoga practice as a process? Practice as a process is consideration of all the factors that surround the establishing of a home practice. For example this can be the time of the day, or energy levels at the time of practice, or what the student would be stepping away from in order to engage in practice, or what follows the practice in terms of activity or life demands, or differences in gender and impact on body rhythms, to name but a few aspects of practice as a process.

Here the starting point when working with a students wish to embrace what Yoga means in terms of a home practice, is to first explore the questions around personal practice as a process, before moving onto actual practice content. Essentially it is all the aspects that surround the student's intentions to engage with establishing a personal home practice.

*"In its beginning stages it's about our practice supporting our life.  
In its maturing stages it's about our life supporting our practice."*

For example, such as when is the best time to practice? Here we are also talking about what is the best time psychologically in addition to just chronologically. For example we can have fantasies around 'its good to start the day with practice or end the day with practice'.

However on examining the life of the student we find that they may have provider roles that demand their commitment to others in the morning. Thus the need to get up so early as to offer time to practice becomes unrealistic and overly stressful at this point in their life.

Or exploring what surrounds bedtime. For example, perhaps at bedtime the student may have a pattern of going to bed at the same time as their partner. So this means a separation within what can, these days be important rituals of sharing within the full lives that surround us.

Thus both options, though commendable, may add a tension in terms of Yoga as a process and thus adversely affect any benefits that the content of a Yoga practice may offer, whatever the time we practice.

By way of contrast, Yoga practice as content is what we embrace within the practice in terms of choices around Yoga tools. For example, how we choose and utilise Yoga postures, breathing, chanting, rituals, meditation, etc. Furthermore how we introduce, stabilise and develop content within both a shorter term and longer term environment amidst the ever changing backdrop to everyday life and living.

*"In terms of Yoga Practice within adult lifestyles  
I feel our priorities need to be based more around  
how we practice, rather than what we practice."*

In other words how we develop the breadth and depth of the content of a student's personal Yoga practice is inevitably and continually framed within the diorama of life's hue and change. Hence, the premise that for Krishnamacharya and Desikachar, Yoga practice as a process needs to precede Yoga practice as content.