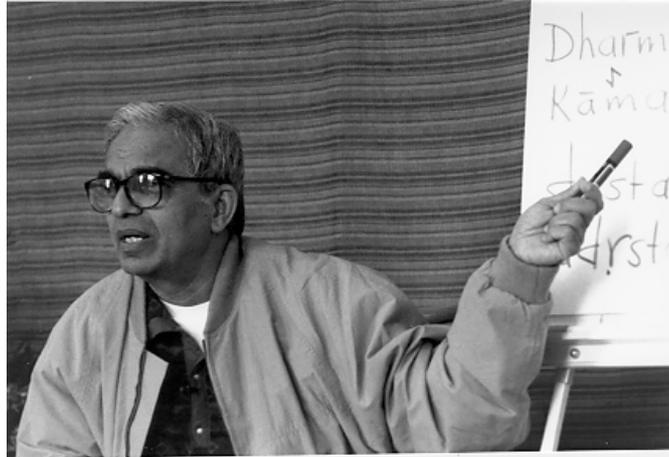


Yoga as a View, Practice and Tool

Part Three – Yoga as a Tool

The viniyoga of Yoga – Yoga and Sādhana



Yoga as a Tool – The Art of viniyoga for developing a Personalized Practice

Yoga as a tool is more likely to be the starting point for most students these days in that we often choose a style or approach to Yoga as a starting point in our Yoga experience.

There are many, many choices these days, although the common denominator now appears to be based around Yoga teachers rather than Yoga teachings.

For example we can choose from Anusāra, Aṣṭāṅga, Bikram, Dru, Gītānada, Integral, Iyengar, Jīvamukti, Kripālu, Kuṇḍalinī, Sahaja, Scaravelli, Śivananda, Satyānanda, the viniyoga of Yoga, etc.

Which is fine in itself. However the question that arises is how do the various methodologies relate to the principles of practice in order to realize the view of Yoga?

My own field of expertise lies within the teachings often referred to as the viniyoga of Yoga, so I can only speak with experience from this perspective.

The primary principle here is that the practices of Yoga must be adapted to the starting point, potential and needs of the student. Within this premise is a further question how, or even how much, the tools of Yoga utilize the practice principles of Haṭha, in order to realize the view of Yoga as formulated in what is seen as a primary teaching on Rāja Yoga or the Yoga of Samādhi, the Yoga Sūtra.

This developmental process often starts with the physical limitations of the student in terms of Āsana. However, how much does this process integrate the principles behind practice and also evolve towards exploring the spiritual potential inherent within all beings?

A further factor are the ambitions of the student in wanting to explore beyond what we take to be the everyday self.

These days the purpose and role of Yoga is much broader or, perhaps some may argue, shallower in the ways Yoga (often meaning just Āsana) is presented.

However these myriad of possibilities in the ways Yoga can be presented, speaks highly of the potentials of Yoga to meet many needs such as exercise, fitness, health recovery, stress reduction, emotional balance, mental performance, energetic stability, to name but a few modern examples of Yoga as a tool.

From my own background the developmental tools of Yoga come from my deep immersion in the teachings of T Krishnamacharya as received through many years of individual lessons with my root Yoga teacher TKV Desikachar.

Within this 25 years of study were the tools of applying Yoga individually (the viniyoga of Yoga) in appropriate and developmental steps according to the needs, interest, potentials and possibilities of each student's journey.

Within these teachings the tools include:

- Intelligent practice planning according to needs, time available, personal abilities, energy, potentials and desires of the student.
- The importance of the breath within Āsana and Prāṇāyāma.
- The refinement of the practice from Āsana towards Dhyānam.
- The principles of developmental application of the tools to bring the student closer to the qualities inherent within the goals of practice.
- The application of a customised developmental practice according to stage of life, gender, profession, family commitments, constitutional health, energetic tendencies and psychological characteristics.

So it appears that the conceptual models of Rāja or Haṭha on their own mean little without the tools of intelligent and appropriate application (viniyoga).

Plus the link of tools to the principles of practice must also in turn link to the view which underpins the processes of Haṭha Yoga towards Rāja Yoga.

To summarise the three aspects or strands for Yoga Practice and Study:

1. Yoga as a View of Samādhi as a process for our long term goal map.
2. Yoga as alchemical Practice according to the principles of Haṭha as guidance for the direction of our physical and energetic practices.
3. Yoga as a customizable Tool for intelligent, appropriate and developmental application of our practice as a personal Sādhana.

This is also why I have chosen to focus this last phase of my Yoga teaching work around expanding the possibilities for student's personal development rather than just learning for yourself through teacher training courses.

The Personal Sādhana Programme now offers many separate, yet linked, strands each with modular developmental options for deepening our exploration of Yoga from the personal perspective. Learn Rāja, Haṭha and viniyoga firstly in terms of training for our lifetime of work with ourselves.

Rather than the current vogue of trying to learn to train as a student amidst training as a teacher for others. This is the message of T Krishnamacharya and TKV Desikachar within viniyogasāra or the essence of viniyoga.

Paul Harvey November 2010