



## Review of the Yoga Makaranda by Sri T. Krishnamacharya

The Yoga Makaranda or Yoga Saram (part one) was written by Sri T Krishnamacharya in 1934.

This work is a wonderfully erudite and thorough review of the rationale for the practice of yoga at this time.

Rooted in Krishnamacharya's personal practice and the study of the 27 texts listed in the bibliography, it offers a comprehensive view of practice at this point in Krishnamacharya's teaching.

Why should yoga practice be done?

Who should practice?

How should one practice?

These questions are answered through the lens of the Indian context as the rebellion against the British Raj began to peak. Yoga is presented as authentically Indian, offering social justice, peace, potency, personal wellbeing and peace.

“Who has the authority to practise Yoga?”

The answer of course is everyone!

However the proviso is that this study must be engaged in with an authentic Guru.

There have been many teachings on chakras some with four or five chakras or sthanas, some with forty. The most common rooted in the Sat-Cakra-Nirupana offers the six chakras and the crown or Sahasra that we all know. Here Krishnamacharya teaches about ten chakras. He also explores Patanjali's limbs of Yoga presenting them as steps or kramas.

Before looking in detail at the practice of asana Krishnamacharya looks at the paths of Yoga, Hatha, Raja, Mantra Laya and so on. He also looks at the rules for Yoga practice (Yogabhyasa), the cleansing practices (Shatkriyas), the movement of prana through the body (Vayus), the 20 mudras, Nadis and more.

The section on asana may be familiar to practitioners of Ashtanga Vinyasa and what was called Viniyoga. It is helpful to see how the '5 breaths per asana style' of practice can be a preparation for the depth of practice with kumbhaka as detailed by Krishnamacharya.

Forty two asanas with their relevant vinyasas and appropriate breath retentions (kumbhaks) are detailed. For each asana there are between 3-48 vinyasas (breath-movement synchronizations), all done with equal inbreath and outbreath.

Krishnamacharya states that:

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“practitioners of *yogabhyasa* ignore *vinyasa krama* and just move and bend and shake their arms and legs and claim that they are practising *asana abhyasa*”

Practicing internal and external retention in asana as appropriate to one's constitution is clearly important. As Krishnamacharya states:

“Those who ignore these rules and only do *yogabhyasa* according to their wishes, by following picture books, will be unhappy as a result because they will obtain absolutely no benefits from this. These people then ridicule *yogavidya* and their *sanatana dharma*, and start doing physical exercises that are contrary to our country's *ahara guna* (diet), *jala guna* (water) and *vayu guna* (climate) and waste a lot of money on this.”

Part of the context of this work is that Western exercise, values and lifestyle are deemed as inappropriate and dangerous for the Indian population.

This quotation highlights the context of the Indians under the Raj:

“The foreigners have stolen all the skills and knowledge and treasures of mother India, either right in front of us or in a hidden way. They pretend that they have discovered all this by themselves, bundle it together, and then bring it back here as though doing us a favour and in exchange take all the money and things we have saved up for our family's welfare. After some time

passes, they will try and do the same thing with *yogavidya*. We can clearly state that the blame for this is that while we have read the books required for the knowledge of yoga to shine, we have not understood or studied the concepts or brought them into our experience. If we still sleep and keep our eyes closed, then the foreigners will become our gurus in *yogavidya*.

We have already given the gold vessels we had to them and bought vessels from them made from bad-smelling skin and have started using these. This is a very sad state. Our descendents do not need these sorts of bad habits.”

This book was a clarion call in its day and today for Indians to claim back and develop their practice, their values and their lifestyle. It is nationalistic in places whilst not utterly demeaning to westerners. Krishnamacharya treads this balance well.

Interestingly Krishnamacharya asks why have people given up fencing and fighting with weapons and practicing archery? These martial arts he considers as the only other valid method, other than *Yogabhyasa* to practice authentic balance within joints and blood vessels, body and mind.

# Radikal Freedom - Yoga as realisation



This book has to be read by any serious student of Yoga. It is a gem, a mine of information and allows a reappraisal of the context of Krishnamacharya's teaching within its cultural context. As a key compilation of the practices and lifestyle of the Yogabhyasin it is invaluable.

Christopher Gladwell  
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