

Sri K Pattabhi Jois

In Memoriam 1915-2009



Sri Krishna Pattabhi Jois, of the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, passed away at his home in Mysore, India on the 18th May, aged 93. Pattabhi Jois will be remembered as one of the prominent yoga teachers of his time.

Pattabhi Jois was born in 1915, in South India. As he grew up, like most Brahmin boys, he undertook study in the Vedas and other Hindu Rituals. In 1927, Pattabhi Jois attended a yoga demonstration. Later, he spoke with the teacher, the great scholar and yogi, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya. For the next two years, Pattabhi Jois studied with his new Guru.

From 1930 to 1936, Pattabhi Jois studied Sanskrit, Veda, and Advaita Vedanta at the Sanskrit College in Mysore. A chance encounter with his guru led to their relationship being rekindled, and this relationship continued into the mid 1940's. The Maharaja of Mysore offered to build Krishnamacharya a yoga shala, where he taught for some years. Pattabhi Jois also became known to the Maharaja, and, in time, he was asked to begin teaching yoga at the Maharaja's Sanskrit College. Pattabhi Jois accepted, and the Yoga Department of the Sanskrit College began in 1937. Jois continued as the head of the department until his retirement in 1973. From 1976 to 1978, he was Honorary Professor of Yoga at the Government College of Indian Medicine.

Pattabhi Jois also established the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, where thousands of students from around the world have attended classes. Andre Van Lysbeth became the first westerner to study with Pattabhi Jois, in 1964. However, it wasn't until the early 1970's that he became more widely known in the West. At this time, interest from some Americans who had come across him in India led to his first trip to the USA.

From here, the popularity of his teaching grew, with students embracing Ashtanga yoga. At this time, his influence on the world of yoga increased exponentially. Over the years, Pattabhi Jois continued teaching from his yoga centre in India, as well as travelling the world, teaching at the invitation of his students.

While at the College, Guruji met and married Savitramma, who became his much-loved wife. They had three children, Manju, Saraswati, and Ramesh. Following the guru-student tradition, his grandson, Sharath, has studied and taught side-by-side with Guruji in Mysore for nearly two decades. Pattabhi Jois's legacy includes a number of teachers that he personally certified to teach and represent the Ashtanga Yoga tradition.

Throughout his life, Pattabhi Jois remained true to the teachings and guidance of his own Guru. He faithfully preserved and passed on to his students what he had learnt through many years of practice and study, enabling this system to be an ongoing guide for students of this tradition.

His presence will be dearly missed by all who had the good fortune to meet him. Pattabhi Jois, or Guruji as he was reverentially addressed, was known throughout the world as a dedicated practitioner and teacher of yoga. Guruji will be remembered as one of the most prominent and influential teachers of our time. Many were fortunate to have practised with him in person, and an even greater number have been drawn to, and inspired by, his teachings.

Beyond his deep knowledge of yoga, his compassion, humour, and faith – through both happy and difficult times – were evident to those who knew him. He will also be remembered for his work conducted through the Sri K Pattabhi Jois Charitable Trust.

Iain Clark is one of only 5 people in Australia to have been personally Certified by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois to teach and represent ashtanga yoga. www.ashtangayogashala.com.au