

# Master of Mysore: celebrating the life of Sri. K. Pattabhi Jois, founder of Ashtanga Yoga.

DIANE ANDERSON

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The beloved founder of [Ashtanga Yoga](#), K. Pattabhi Jois (known affectionately as Gururji by his students), died at his home in Mysore, India, on May 15, 2009. He was 93. Known for his warm yet authoritative personality, Jois consistently emphasized the importance of repetition and devotion—he was fond of saying, "Practice, and all is coming." He also stressed the importance of linking breath to each movement. Today, much of the breath-based, fluid, rhythmic yoga that is practiced in vinyasa classes in the West has been influenced, both directly and indirectly, by Jois's teachings.

Born on July 26, 1915, near Hassan, Karnataka, in South India, Jois was a Brahman, the son of a priest, and had the privilege of learning from the Vedas and other ancient Hindu texts. He was first inspired to study yoga when he was 12 years old, after seeing a yoga demonstration by T. Krishnamacharya. Jois became a student of Krishnamacharya, with whom he was to study for 25 years.

At age 14, Jois left his village for Mysore, where he wanted to study. A few years later he was reunited with Krishnamacharya there, and the two continued their relationship. Krishnamacharya found a patron in the majarajah of Mysore, Krishna Rajendra Wodeyar, who built a yoga *shala* (school). Jois, who sometimes did yoga demonstrations for the majarajah, was invited to join the faculty at Maharaja Sanskrit College in 1937, where he taught and served as the head of the yoga department until 1973.

PATTABHI JOIS -  
Guru of Ashtanga Yoga



In 1948, Jois started the [Ashtanga Yoga](#) Research Institute in Mysore, now the [Ashtanga Yoga](#) Institute, which he oversaw for 50 years. The first Westerner to study with Jois was a Belgian named André Van Lysebeth. In 1967, Van Lysebeth wrote *J'apprends le Yoga* (Yoga Self-Taught), and soon after, other Westerners began arriving in Mysore to study with the master. In 1975, David Williams and Nancy Gilgoff sponsored Jois's first trip to the

United States, in Encinitas, California. During his early visits to the U.S., Jois taught several people who are still leaders in the Ashtanga tradition in the West, such as Tim Miller and David Swenson.

Jois married at 21. He and his wife, Savitramma, had three children: Saraswathi, Manju, and Ramesh.

Saraswati is the mother of Sharath, co-director of the institute.

Jois's *Yoga Mala* was published in 1962 and translated into English in 1999. And he continued to transmit the teachings he learned from T. Krishnamacharya. Many of today's great American teachers, including Nicki Doane, Maty Ezraty, Richard Freeman, Kino MacGregor, Chuck Miller, and Eddie Modestini traveled to Mysore to study with Jois. His work will live on in the hearts and minds of the countless students and teachers whose lives he has touched.