

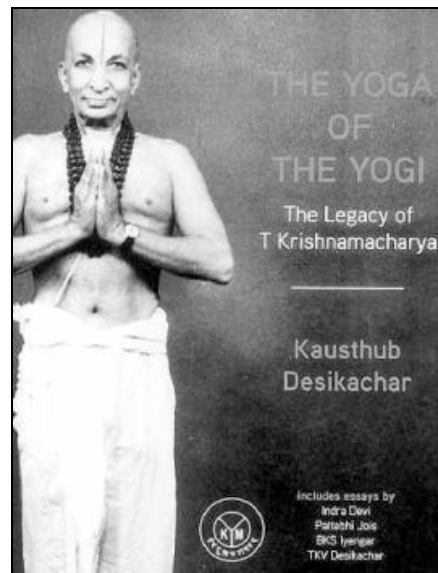
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[Book Review](#)

Patriarch of Yoga



THE YOGA OF THE YOGI — The Legacy of T. Krishnamacharya: Kausthub Desikachar; Published by Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, 31 (Old no. 13), Fourth Cross Street, R. K. Nagar, Chennai-600028.

Rs. 500.

THIS ELEGANTLY wrought coffee-table book is a well-worded homage to a patriarch of Yoga by his discerning grandson. "Yoga is dexterity in action," says the Bhagavad Gita. How richly this definition fits T. Krishnamacharya is shown by the expertise and penchant for perfection evident in the least of the Yogi's words and deeds.

Today, Yoga has become "the in-thing." It is almost a status symbol. It is a panacea for all ills. All over the world we find it practised in a variety of ways by all sorts of people, young and old, rich and poor.

Executives under stress, school children with special needs, men and women in the evening of their lives harassed by geriatric problems, prisoners on the path of reform, policemen tackling crime — all resort to yoga with great expectations.

Ancient practice

This, however, is a revolution of recent decades. Yoga is quite an ancient concept; Patanjali's *Yogasutras*, the definitive text on Yoga is perhaps 2000 years old. But even in the earlier part of the 20th Century, very few people, mostly ascetics living in mountain caves and dense forests,

practised Yoga. And they mastered only a score of Asanas.

If today Yoga is so popular the main credit must go to great teachers like Tirumalai Krishnamacharya whose saga, the grandson, Kausthub Desikachar, has presented in a charming diction. Indeed many of the internationally famous Yoga teachers like Indra Devi, Pattabhi Jois, B.K.S. Iyengar and T.K.V. Desikachar are Yogi Krishnamacharya's meticulously trained students.

Kausthub traces the evolution of his grandfather from his birth as the scion of an ordinary pious orthodox middleclass Vaishnava family to the Himalayan height of a Yogi par excellence. Hunger for knowledge was almost an addiction with young Krishnamacharya.

Travelling mostly on foot and braving inclement weather and climate he crisscrossed the land and studied under a galaxy of teachers not only the minutiae of Yoga but also Tarka and Vyakarana, Samkhya and Mimamsa.

He took degrees from universities as far apart ideologically as Benares and Navadwip, Allahabad and Baroda. He went to Tibet and Manasarovar and finally found his prime Guru in a cave near the lake.

With this hermit, Rama Mohana Brahmachari, he stayed and underwent rigorous training in the theory and practice of Yoga for eight years. All that the master wanted as Gurudakshina was: Krishnamacharya should spread the saving message of Yoga to as many aspirants as possible.

Dedicated life

The book describes how faithfully Krishnamacharya dedicated the rest of his life to train Yoga teachers and use Yoga therapy to alleviate physical and mental suffering.

We got heart-warming accounts of his work as the Yoga teacher of the Maharajah of Mysore and as the founder of the "Yoga shala" in the Mysore palace.

After Independence, however, the Maharajah's patronage ceased and Krishnamachari had to shift to Madras, where he became a legend. Kalidasa says that when a pure mind has made a resolution, nothing can thwart it.

Krishnamacharya took a vow that he would dedicate his life to Yoga and spurned many attractive offers that came to him. Sacrifice characterised his Yoga. As a trainer he was very strict but outside the classroom he was kindness itself.

His approach was always holistic. He studied each patient thoroughly before prescribing a separate regimen for him. "One size does not fit all," he used to stress. And he opened the portals of Yoga to women.

Nature paid its apt tribute by keeping him shining even up to the age of 101; and his son T.K.V. Desikachar has immortalised him by founding the now famous Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram in Chennai.

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