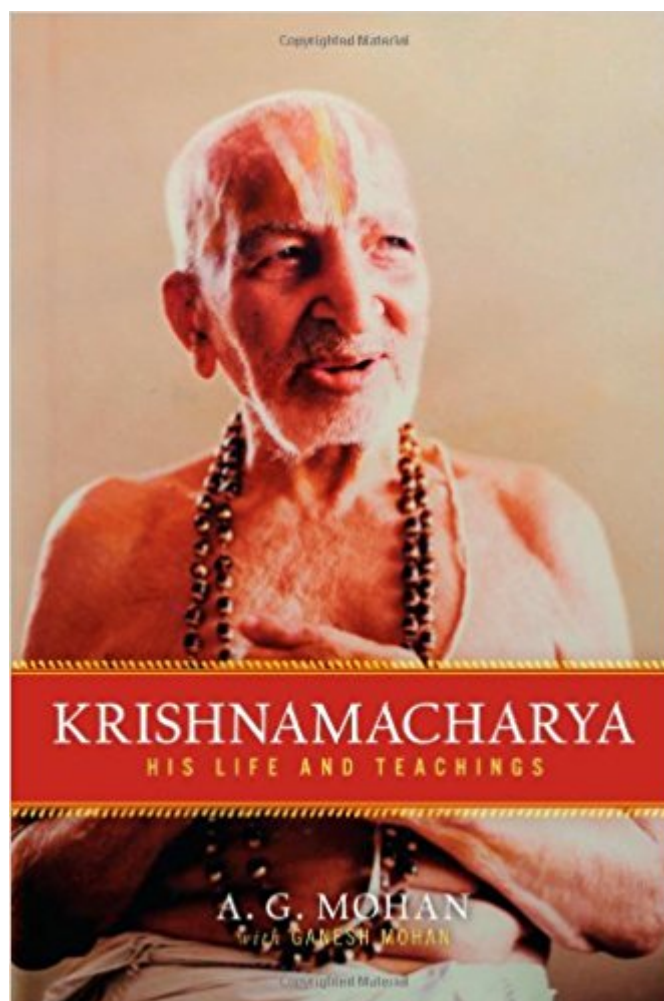


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Krishnamacharya: His Life And Teachings



Synopsis

Here is a personal tribute to "the father of modern yoga" Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989), written by one of his longtime disciples. Krishnamacharya was a renowned Indian yoga master, Ayurvedic healer, and scholar who modernized yoga practice and whose students—including B. K. S. Iyengar, K. Pattabhi Jois, T. K. V. Desikachar, and Indra Devi—dramatically popularized yoga in the West. In this book, the author, A. G. Mohan, a well-respected yoga teacher and yoga therapist, draws on his own memories and Krishnamacharya's diaries and recorded material, to present a fascinating view of the man and his teachings, and Mohan's own warm and inspiring relationship with the master. This portrait of the great teacher is a compelling and informative read for yoga teachers and students who truly want to understand the source of their tradition and practice.

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Customer Reviews

"Preserving and passing on the teachings and traditions of his teacher, T. Krishnamacharya, was my grandfather's life work. This book explains the legacy, and gives a better understanding into the life and work of a great master."—Sharath Rangaswamy, grandson of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois "Krishnamacharya is absolutely delightful. It gives us an intimate window into the devotion, intensity, and clarity of the true source of modern yoga, Sri Krishnamacharya. A. G. Mohan gives us urgently needed lessons on the inner subtlety and depth of yoga."—Richard Freeman, author of *The Mirror of Yoga* "A. G. Mohan's book about

the life and teachings of Krishnamacharya is an important link in the chain of yogic knowledge, handed down from past to present via teacher to student. We gain double benefit with Mohan's book. We not only benefit from greater insight into the teachings of Krishnamacharya but we also experience the wisdom of A. G. Mohan as well."

—David Swenson, author of *Ashtanga Yoga: The Practice Manual*

"Very few students actually stayed with Krishnamacharya to study and carefully practice what he was offering; A. G. Mohan is one who did. Read this book because it is a fascinating window into a deeply personal relationship in the age old practice of yoga transmission and learning."

—Mark Whitwell, author of *Yoga of Heart*

"This book is a great addition to the growing number of books documenting the history of modern yoga, and is a must read for the serious yoga practitioner."

—YogaBasics.com

A. G. Mohan was a student of "the father of modern yoga," Yogacharya Sri T. Krishnamacharya (1888-1989), for eighteen years. He is the author of several books on yoga, including *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind*; *Yoga Reminder*; and *Yoga Therapy*. Co-founder of Svastha Yoga & Ayurveda, he is respected internationally as a teacher of rare authenticity and knowledge. He divides his time between Chennai, India, and Singapore. Learn more at svastha.net.

Krishnamacharya died on February 28th, 1989. I first realized that he was the master behind my lineage (and pretty much any lineage around these days) in the early 2000s, so as much I as I would have wished to travel and meet him, I never had a chance. This is why a book like *Krishnamacharya: His Life and Teachings* by A.G.Mohan is so valuable, so precious. Consider for example when Mohan attends his first lecture with him: "... The subject of the lecture was ancient rituals, but Krishnamacharya linked the practices of yoga to the subject, I became spellbound, immersed in Krishnamacharya's discourse and the power of his presence, as if I were sitting at the feet of an ancient sage". And a sage he was. Krishnamacharya was, for what I gather in the book and by sheer force of the devotion of his direct students, a Guru's Guru. I was impressed at how he would refuse students he did not consider serious. He used unconventional methods to test the level of truth behind the desire to learn from potential students, for example when once Mohan asked him what would he do if a wealthy student of dubious intentions came by asking for teachings and he replied he would, for example, ask for him to come back with the equivalent of, say, 5000 dollars, and if the student did bring it, then he would return the money, content in the knowing that the student was serious. Krishnamacharya was fiercely and one pointedly committed to the spread of

yoga, and he succeeded. I almost felt he would wink to all people out there showing fancy poses, talking about yoga, discussing through blogs, propagating, advertising, letting yoga work its way into our collective imagination. This, is the reason behind all his (and students) demonstrations of advanced asanas, even to people who could clearly not do them at once, or so he told Mohan, it was advertising. However, when it came to actually teaching: "Taking into the account the structure of the body and the distortions in the body, one should do the appropriate asana. Only experts can guide the student..." On the chapter of asana, his words about headstand are quite remarkable: "Remember, headstand is not just an asana. It is classified as a mudra".... "He [Krishnamacharya] felt that the rate of breathing [in headstand] should slow down to as few as two breaths per minute, for a duration of at least twenty-four breaths" When Mohan suggested buying a tape recorder to retain his teacher's words for posterity Krishnamacharya was actually all in favor. This is why some of the quotes are so vivid, and this is a great asset which I as a student rejoice in. Mohan still has these recordings and they are available for purchase in his website (although the links do not seem to work for me at the moment), here with all proceeds going for the preservation of Vedic knowledge. On the chapter of pranayama, kryias and yoga therapy there is an excerpt of an interview where he discussed how stopping his pulse and heart beat " ...All happened automatically... I did it by practicing pranayama, vishama vritti, in nadishodana pranayama and meditation as well..." Easy does it, you see? I almost do not want to tell more for fear of spoiling it, but let me just for a moment take you to a room where the master is about to die, he is 100 years old, and Mohan asks him "What is most important in life?" among other things, he replies: Health, longevity, a tranquil mind. I am very glad I read the book, and I think I will be re-reading it, this one of those rare "long term keepers"

You always learn something from the life of a great master, and so too, I learnt important things in reading this biography of Krishnamacharya. Some of the most important things I learnt were gleaned from snippets of how the master lived, including his disciplined life and daily schedule which begun at 2am in the morning when he awoke, and ended at 8pm at night when he went to sleep. Other instructive examples included Krishnacharya's approach to chanting and devotional ritual as modes of mental discipline, and his habit of casting his eyes down while walking and sitting as a way of withdrawing the senses. Krishnamacharya's thought and comments on aspects of yoga, his advice to A.G. Mohan and others, and his personal response to different situations including economic and moral choices as well as health conditions, were all instructive. As the author A.G. Mohan himself said in his book, he himself learnt most from just sitting at the feet of his guru

Krishnamacharya, and imbibing the example of his being and personal conduct. Reading this book, we have a little taste of what it means to sit at the feet of this great master of yoga, and to learn from his personal example. Even a little drop can take us a long way.

Here is one student who was so close for so many years to a great yoga teacher, a legend, and I was so eager to learn more about this amazing yogi only to be left in disappointment that the book lacks essence. The book is missing details. I would have expected so much more description and details about the life and teachings of Krishnamacharya from someone who spent so much time with him. I would have loved to read 400 pages on Krishnamacharya's life. What did he have for breakfast, lunch and dinner.. How long did he meditate, what did he say to his students in details about yoga, everything. Sadly, this book is only a short summary of his life.

This beautiful book answers many questions for those in the West who, like me, are ardent practitioners of Ashtanga Yoga in the tradition of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois (Guruji). Largely because of his reclusive nature and his disinclination toward any sort of publicity, Krishnamacharya has been a mysterious persona. We all know Guruji studied with him for several decades, beginning in his childhood, but we have known precious little of this towering figure in the pantheon of yoga masters. A.G. Mohan has done a singular service in presenting this valuable information on the life and teaching of Krishnamacharya. I shall be forever grateful.

Fifty years ago, when I was in highschool I went to the library and I saw a book with Krishnamacharya's picture on the cover. I was intrigued. Who was this exotic man? And what exactly was yoga, anyway. I've been working on the answers to those questions ever since, and this book is a good companion on my journey. Reviewed by Lynn Somerstein, co editor of *Defining Moments For Therapists*

I found this book to be an easier read than many other Yoga Texts. It was understandable from beginning to end - and quite informative. I've always been curious to know more about the master yoga teacher Sri Krishnamacharya. This text helps us to see his intellect & influence on our ideas of Yoga today. But, also speaks about the man himself, and we get to hear a bit about his personality. I wish I would have been born earlier to have been able to be graced with his direct teachings.

Excellent writing on what it's like to have been a student of this great Teacher. The author recounts the lessons learned by Sri Krishnamacharya and his way of teaching. Not only is a valuable book for learning the depths of yoga but also for the traditional values of the student/teacher relationships.

A must read for anyone interested in Vinyasa Ayurveda and all aspects of Yoga from one of the greatest Gurus of all time.

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