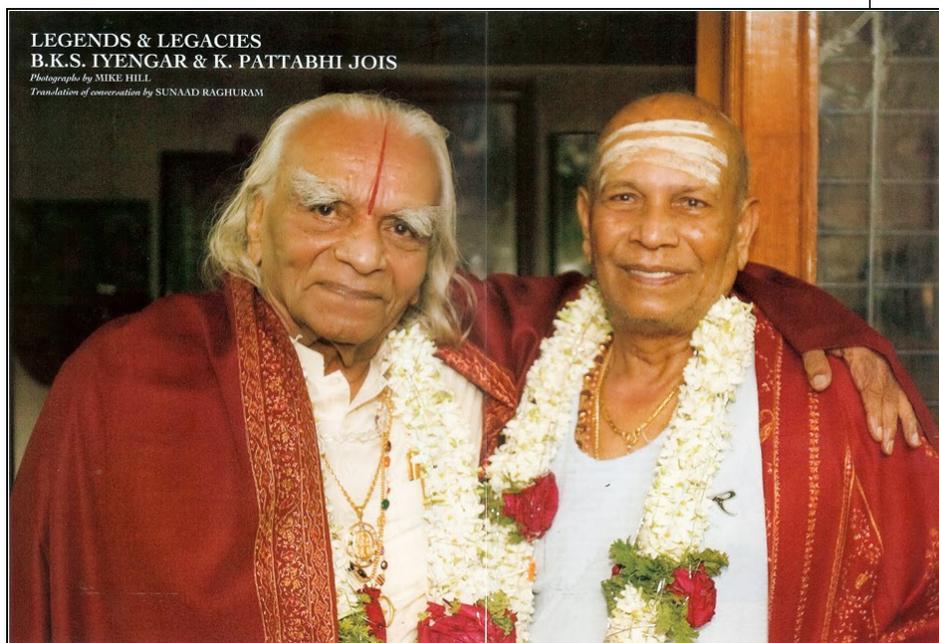


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Ashtanga pranayama sequence	Pranayama	Asana	Yoga meditation	Mudra&Bandha and Kriya	Mantra	Moon days
Oil bath	Clips	Audio/pdf book	Zen and Vipassana Meditation	Index	interviews for Sthira&Bhaga	textos propios

domingo, 23 de febrero de 2014

Sri K Pattabhi Jois and BKS Iyengar reunite...



Legends & Legacies
B.K.S. Iyengar & K. Pattabhi Jois

Translation of conversation by Sunaad Raghuram

Namarupa- Issue #4

In 1934, K. Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar, both still young men, were students of the fearsome...and soon to be legendary... yogi T. Krishnamacharya. India was still under rule of the British, and the Maharajas of India still had their limited roles intact as head of state. Their glory and pomp were still present, their care for maintaining the traditions of their beloved country foremost in their minds, all the more important while under foreign rule. The Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnarajendra Wodeyar, particularly well known for maintaining and archiving traditional Sanskrit texts, had a great love for traditional art, music and yoga. The inhabitants of Mysore celebrated the important religious festivals such as Dusserah with grandeur, lived in a well kept up and clean city and generally maintained the lifestyle and traditions of ancient India. Enveloped in this atmosphere, the young boys learned yoga from Krishnamacharya, who was himself under the patronage of the Maharaja.

While Pattabhi Jois was destined to remain in Mysore, and Krishnamacharya to eventually move to Madras in 1954, the young Sundaraja Iyengar was sent to Pune, in Central India in 1934 with little or no resources other than the command from his guru to go teach. He stayed there teaching and practicing, while in Mysore Pattabhi Jois attended the Sanskrit University, continued his yoga practice and eventually took a teaching position at the Sanskrit University. The two guru brothers did not meet again until 1940. Although little is remembered by the two men about this meeting, they recall that it was during one of Krishnamacharya's yoga propagation tours- the venerable yogi had come to Pune with Pattabhi Jois, to visit a nearby Swami Kuvalayananda and his Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute. The two men stayed at Iyengar's house for a short time.

The years passed, and after an initial spark in the 1960's and 70's, the practice of yoga spread around the world like wildfire, after having been practically hermetically sealed in India for countless thousands of years, just the barest whisper of it having escaped earlier on with seekers such as Madame Blavatsky, Vivekananda and others. The names Pattabhi Jois and Mr. Iyengar became familiar on the lips of untold thousands of yoga practitioners, and yet the two men had not shared so much as a cup of coffee since

1940.

And then 2005 arrived; sixty five years after their last meeting.- Pattabhi Jois had just celebrated his ninetieth birthday, Iyengar had reached his eighty seventh year, and it was now time for two of the most influential yogis of our time to meet again- but first, a cell phone call by mobile was in order:

“Yaru yaru? (who is it)”

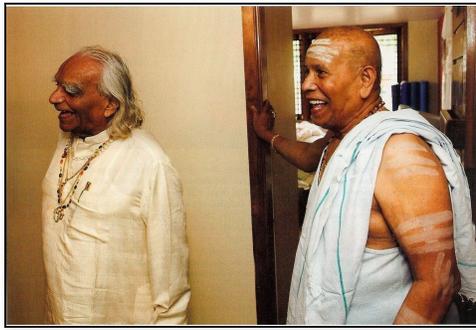
“Pattabhi, it’s Sundaraja!”

So began the conversation preceding what was to be a historical visit.- two men who are normally fearsome in their capacity as teachers were so brotherly on the phone, it was nothing short of endearing.

Their reunion (facilitated by Alexander Medlin whose interviews were included in the last issue Namarupa and appear in this one as well) was a joyous one by any standard. Mr. Iyengar drove four hours south from Tumkur where he was being honored as part of a yoga festival. Unable to attend Pattabhi Jois’ birthday celebration due to its confluence with Guru Purnima, the day when all spiritual teachers in India are usually engaged in addressing their own students, the close proximity of Tumkur allowed for a quick visit just a few days after Pattabhi Jois’ ninetieth. Accompanied by a party of six students and his secretary Raghu, Mr. Iyengar arrived at about one pm in Gokulam. There were smiles all around as the two great masters embraced each other and began a flurry of conversation in Kannada. One of Iyengar’s students, who hails from Karnataka, remarked, “Guruji is always saying that he does not know Kannada very well, but look at him now, going on and on with you!”

Coffee was given to everyone present, and after some time, all adjourned to the adjacent room and the two men shared their first meal together since 1940.

Pattabhi Jois’ daughter, Saraswati, had made sure that only the most special dishes were prepared. After the meal was finished, Pattabhi Jois’ grandson Sharath, co-director of the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, invited everyone downstairs for a tour of the yoga sala, and Mr Iyengar’s student, Madhava, began putting questions to the two men:



Madhava: When you gentlemen started learning yoga did you imagine that it would all grow so big?

K.Pattabhi Jois: No, no, not at all. At a young age I saw Krishnamacharya giving a yoga demonstration, and was fascinated by the postures. The next day I went to him, prostrated before him and begged him to take me on as a pupil. He spoke rather gruffly to me asking who I was, and he was quite intimidating. He then asked me where I came from and who my father was. I explained that I came from the village of Kaushika five miles away and that my father was an astrologer and priest. Would I be prompt in attending classes, he asked me – I readily nodded yes. The next day I was promptly in class. And on that very day began the beatings (much laughter!).

M: Then why didn't you quit?

KPJ: My God, how could I? There was this great desire in me to learn.

M: If I had been you I would have run away a long time ago.

KPJ: Oh no, as I said, I really wanted to learn. I remember two friends of mine, Garuda and another chap Hassan Rangaswamy, we all would learn together. (To Iyengar) Do you remember Garuda?

B.K.S.Iyengar: Oh yes, I do.

KPJ: In 1932 the Maharaja of Mysore invited Krishnamacharya to teach in Mysore, and he opened a yoga shala near the Jagan Mohan Palace – we all used to practice there. There was this director of education, I forget his name, what was his name?... N.S Subbarao! It was this man who fixed a salary for Krishnamacharya and sent him to all the district headquarters to teach and propagate yoga. When Krishnamacharya came to the Sanskrit Pathasala in 1932, I went and stood before him and paid my respects. He said “Hey, Its you!” I said, “Yes Guruji, I am studying here.” He seemed happy and my

practice under him began all over again.

On occasion we would get invited to the palace to give yoga demonstrations – me and my friend Mahadev Bhatt. Once they gave us a gift of five rupees, and a Hanuman kaccha (underwear), and we were so happy. (To Iyengar) Remember that lady from America Indra Devi? She would come to practice at the yoga sala.

BKS: Yes, yes I do – she changed her name to Indra Devi much later, isn't it?

KPJ: I heard she died recently.

BKS: In Brazil.

KPJ: Ahh Brazil. Well one thing led to another and we continued to practice. We had Mahadev Bhatt, Srinivas Achar, Ranganath Desikachar, and all of them.

KPJ: Yes I remember them all.

M: You have earned much more than five rupees now but I guess that five rupees that you got from the Maharaja must be special, isn't it? Which do you think is more valuable, the five rupees or the money you have earned now?

KPJ: Well, those five rupees were very, very special. After I got the money, I put it in a trunk underneath a pile of clothes. I would open the trunk every day, look at the note, and close it back again (much laughter). You know what, I had never seen one rupee in full until then! (more laughter). Well that was life then...

And so it went, history that has become legendary in our time, casually recalled after a good lunch. More photos of the two were taken. Afterwards, all adjourned upstairs for yet more coffee, and of course conversation about coffee. There was general agreement with Mr. Iyengar that coffee is certainly the soma rasa (the intoxicating nectar of immortality) of the Kali yuga (the present age of darkness)- to which Pattabhi Jois added, "Yes, and you get so many different brands or soma rasa in the shops these days!"

As the afternoon hour quickly passed by, the time came for Mr. Iyengar to make a move, and the conversation returned to Krishnamacharya.

BKS: The credit goes, whatever one may say, no doubt, to our guru – he was a sea (of knowledge), but he did not give what he had to all of us. He had plenty of knowledge, but he just gave a little here, a little there, a little there. Like the hen or the cock that pecks, we had to peck and take his knowledge. And we learned, and it is we who made it to grow into examples. So my advice to all of you – see that the light that has been light by Krishnamacharya’s direct pupils does not fade at all. The light (of his teachings) should be kept burning – the yoga dipa (a lamp, light). So please keep to the practice. Let it be burning, burning, burning.

KJP: We began to understand yoga the moment he made us stand in a stone court yard burning in the sun for hours on end!

BKS: Can I add something more? You have to sweat 100 percent, not only physically but intellectually then you know something of yoga. So 100 percent from the body, 100 percent from the intelligence. You have to sweat, intelligence has to sweat.

At the close of such an important day, those of us present silently acknowledged the thrill and inspiration of seeing these great men together. The years of history – the differences and criticisms between their so called “camps” of yoga seemed like a vapor, a cloud of senseless, intellectual fog that lifted as the two shared coffee. As far as Pattabhi Jois and Mr. Iyengar were concerned, they were just old yoga brothers seeing each other after a very long time: “1934 together, 2005 together. I think that’s important and a rare privilege,” remarked Mr. Iyengar.

Differences in practice, styles, philosophies and opinions always exist- these are but peripheral concerns. The message of mutual respect and friendship lies at the heart of the great Indian traditions, and in the hearts of these two revered men.



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[Entrada más reciente](#)

[Inicio](#)

[Entrada antigua](#)