

IN THE FATHER'S NAME
Interview with Sri Manju Jois

By Giuliano Vecchiè

To be the son of a giant of yoga is a big responsibility. But what is essential of Sri Manju Jois, the eldest son of Sri **K. Pattabhi Jois**, is the extreme simplicity. Yes, it is true that there are a lot of students who call him “guru”, but it is also true that it doesn't care too much about it and he tries to always be a very simple person, without structures and without that kind of mysterious glow typical of those people who want to “show off” as gurus without being it.

Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, the very famous yoga style taught by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois is becoming more and more popular also in Italy thanks to many teachers who are visiting our country to spread the knowledge of this practice. Direct son and heir of Sri Pattabhi Jois is Sri Manju Jois. He has been invited to the **Gymnasium Club of San Lazzaro di Savena**, for his first workshop in Bologna, and he has accepted to speak about his famous father.

1. Who really is Sri K. P. Jois?

Sri K. Pattabhi Jois is the greatest Ashtanga Yoga Master and if you want to know some background of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois he was born in a small town in India called Kashika, he grew up with four brothers, three sisters and some brothers were farmers, priests and P. Jois wanted to become something else and therefore he went to Mysore and went into a Sanskrit College and started to study Sanskrit, Vedanta and everything, then one day he saw T. Krishnamacharya teaching Yoga and he got really really interested and joined Krishnamacharya in his school and became a very serious student of Krishnamacharya. So Krishnamacharya got a lot of ...to Pattabhi Jois in order to be sure that P. Jois was serious, so P. Jois showed that he is serious. Then he started showing him postures and continued to practice yoga starting teaching in Mysore

2. Pattabhi Jois the teaching of Sri T. Krishnamacharya but Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga was really the only style taught by him?

Yes, Ashtanga Yoga is a very traditional practice and all come from Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Hatha Yoga actually, and he was what he learned by his Guru and passed to P. Jois. and Vinyasa is the rhythm that creates vibrations and heating in your body...that's why it is called Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga.

3. There are some people saying that Vinyasa is only for young people in order not to annoy them during the practice...what do you think about it?

It is not true because it is written: vinyayogena asana ...that means do not do the practice of asana without vinyasa otherwise you do not get the benefits. You have to practice vinyasa. It is like a rhythm and is also called as Namaskara or salutations. Who says so is people who don't go deep into the things....Always doing Vinyasa is doing Ashtanga Yoga. Vinyasa is not only for boys but for everybody...and (Sanskrit text) young, old, too old, weak, sick, too sick, anybody.

4. But how is possible for sick people to practice Ashtanga Yoga? It is difficult!

No, nothing is difficult. You should have the passion to do it. If you put passion you can do everything. Many sit and say I can't do it, I can't do it so they put negative thoughts in their mind and then they block their minds and they cannot do it anymore. But if you say I can do it, and you do it and go on doing it, maybe it can take a month but finally you succeed.

5. What does it mean for you to be the son of Sri K. P. Jois?

Is a blessing because he gave me such a big knowledge since when I was a child and so I am a very fortunate son of P. Jois. Therefore I would like to spread the knowledge of Yoga as my father did and go around the globe and teach is my passion

6. Which was the type of practice your father asked you to do when very young? Did you practice the normal Ashtanga Series or something adapted to your own capacity and age?

At the beginning I could make the postures that I wanted to do. He was not too strict when I was 7 years old, he let me do only the asana that I wanted, but when I started growing up he slowly got serious and he wanted to be sure I learned in the right way. Then I had to practice yoga in his presence in order to be sure that my bandhas were right, my Ujjayi breathing was right, my postures were right. Then he started to give me postures and if I couldn't make one he gave me another one to try. That helped me to master the postures. He never told me you have to stop here because you have to master the posture before passing to the other one. He always encouraged me to go other way round in order to master the posture. And this gave me a lot of flexibility that helped me a lot and yoga should be taught like my father did with me.

7. What is similar in you and your father from the psychological point of view?

We think the same. We are both passionate of Yoga, of Ashtanga Yoga and of teaching yoga... We feel the same and there is always been a very good relationship.

8. How has been your first experience in America when you and your father have been invited by David Williams and Nancy Gilgoff in order to teach in that country?

It was not very shocking for me, because I already knew what to expect from America and for my father was the same because I was cooking Indian food, we could speak Indian and for my father was totally comfortable and he enjoyed himself.

9. In 1975 during your first visit in USA you decided not to come back to India and to live in America for the rest of your life. May we know why you decided in that way and how was the reaction of your father?

Not, it is not true, because in the beginning I had no intention to stay in America. I was happy in India. In America I got a lot of friends and they got from all over. They were studying yoga in Encinitas and they invited me to teach there. Then it was David Williams who invited me to Haway. Then I decided to stay, and that is how all is started. My father was happy, but my mother was happier because she always encouraged me to go my own way.

10. Both Sri K. P. Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar have been students of Sri T. Krishnamacharya. When I was in Mysore in 1998 I asked your father: "Why are the two styles so different?" I ask you the same to you.

Differently from my father, B.K.S. Iyengar started teaching to western people and found that western people are stiffer and he had to change a bit in order to let them practice and he had to find different ways to reach the posture. He then made few adjustments and I think there is nothing wrong with it,

and he never called Iyengar Style, it is people who called it Iyengar Yoga. Iyengar calls it Ashtanga Yoga.

11. You know that, when he was young, Mr. Iyengar practiced something quite similar to the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga as we know it today. Why, in your opinion has he changed the practice of yoga in such a way?)

Krishnamacharya sent Iyengar to Poona and there he started his own way. He had to change the practice because people who enter the yoga class could not do the posture as it had to be done, and he asked them to do this and that, for example Paschimottanasana but they could not do them and then he had to modify the asanas. He has done it in a good way, but he did not change the Yoga practice. About the asanas

12. One of the most clear difference between Iyengar Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga is the use of ropes, bricks and so on. And Ashtanga Yoga never uses such a tool. What do you think about it?

Ashtanga yoga is very ancient and on that times there was no use of tools, but in modern age some people have problems and every body is different, therefore you have to help them and sometimes you can use some tools. This is a way actually. For example, if people have problems with the hips you can use a brick, if you cannot reach the feet you can use something else etc. All about the stretching, you know? So, you have to give people all the tools to succeed the practice. That's good. So I am not against this kind of tools if they can help you better. However they should not depend on them all the time! If you depend on them you will not get progress!

13. A last thought about your father...

I am so happy to be the son of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. He is a wonderful man. He has full of love for his wife, for his children. He tried to give all the education to his children. He wanted to give yoga and wanted me to master it and to teach Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, so I am very fortunate to be his son. I go to visit him every year and I spend a lot of time with him. He has a lot of knowledge and when he says something in Sanskrit I immediately write it down and he explained to me the exact meaning. So what I can say is that I am very fortunate to be his son.