



## **Guruji: A Portrait of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Through the Eyes of His Students**

*Guy Donahaye , Eddie Stern*

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## **AN UNPRECEDENTED PORTRAIT OF A GREAT YOGA TEACHER AND THE WAYS IN WHICH TEACHINGS AND TRADITIONS ARE PASSED ON**

It is a rare and remarkable soul who becomes legendary during the course of his life by virtue of great service to others. Sri K. Pattabhi Jois was such a soul, and through his teaching of yoga, he transformed the lives of countless people. The school in Mysore that he founded and ran for more than sixty years trained students who, through the knowledge they received and their devotion, have helped to spread the daily practice of traditional Ashtanga yoga to tens of thousands around the world.

*Guruji* paints a unique portrait of a unique man, revealed through the accounts of his students. Among the thirty men and women interviewed here are Indian students from Jois's early teaching days; intrepid Americans and Europeans who traveled to Mysore to learn yoga in the 1970s; and important family members who studied as well as lived with Jois and continue to practice and teach abroad or run the Ashtanga Yoga Institute today. Many of the contributors (as well as the authors) are influential teachers who convey their experience of Jois every day to students in many different parts of the globe.

Anyone interested in the living tradition of yoga will find *Guruji* richly rewarding.

## **Guruji: A Portrait of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Through the Eyes of His Students Details**

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## **From Reader Review Guruji: A Portrait of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois Through the Eyes of His Students for online ebook**

### **Florence says**

This is an account of the life of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. It is inspiring to read about someone who inspired so many others. If you want to read about yoga, family, life, and inspiration, this book is an excellent read. It is also fascinating to learn about someone who lived for a very long time and never really looked older. It is apparent that Sri K. Pattabhi Jois possessed much wisdom. This book is well-written and highly recommended.

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### **Kelly Ludlow says**

#### **Definitely recommend to get a history of what Pattabhi Jois was like as a teacher.**

A good place to start! Lots of tangible ideas here. Especially in regards to the philosophical aspects. Also worded very accessibly.

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### **Matthew Remski says**

Intentionally or not, this is a profoundly deceptive book.

Please Google “Yoga’s Culture of Sexual Abuse: Nine Women Tell Their Stories” for a mainstream, fact-checked article featuring the testimony of nine women who report being sexually assaulted by Pattabhi Jois between 1992 and 2002 in Mysuru and around the world.

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### **Katy Sisko says**

I liked this book at the beginning, but it got very repetitive as many of the people interviewed kept saying the same things about Guruji. It was tough and caring and adjusted his teaching to each individual, etc.

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### **Chuck says**

I love this book. It's almost over and I'm sad. I guess that reveals how attached I am. I'm reading the last pages very slowly. I'm an ashtangi and just as you practice the same poses each day, each interviewee is asked some of the same questions about their experiences with Guruji -- such as why he emphasized the asana piece of the 8 limbs so much, the role that his wife played, etc. -- the answers are fascinating and cause you to think much about the ashtanga path and what sort of change a person goes through with a daily practice like this one, as well as juicy stories about the human beings involved. I might start over from the beginning.

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### **Jayme says**

I took my time with this book and savoured every chapter. Because I'm a practitioner of Astanga Vinyasa Yoga, the method which Pattabhi Jois brought to the west, this book touched me deeply. It included stories from several senior teachers I've studied with. I never had the honour of learning of Guruji, but these stories gave me a glimpse of the man and made me feel closer to the lineage.

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### **Mander Pander says**

Bittersweet. This won't provide you asana technique, so if you want help with specific postures, look to Kino MacGregor's or David Swenson's books on the primary and intermediate series. For practitioners of Ashtanga who want more info on the lineage and the guru, this is a good resource...but like every other time when the velvet curtains part and you can poke your head behind them, there's a "for better or worse" aspect, so keep that in mind.

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### **Rose says**

It's been a couple years since I read this, but I loved the texture of all the interviews -- and I think especially those with less well-known ashtangis. A tremendous addition to the 1 percent theory that we as ashtangis are encouraged to pursue alongside that 99 percent practice. Love that we're reading this for the Ashtanga Yoga: Ann Arbor book club with Dominic! What a treat.

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### **Angela says**

Just re-read this book in preparation for a book group gathering with about 20 others at Ashtanga Yoga: Ann Arbor this Sunday.

Because information like this wasn't available when I started practicing, I did my best to pick it up by hearsay and from the EZBoard. To me, this book is a profound treasure-trove and I read sections of it over and over again to absorb its inspiration.

This time around, I am struck by:

- the varying degrees of professed certainty about the tradition, throughout the text
- the different explanations subjects give for the transformative energy of SKPJ: some say he's magic, some say he's an archetypical-mythic healer, some say he's a therapist for psyche and soul, some say what he transmits is discipline and science. Varying "structures of consciousness" (see Jean Gebser) are clearly illustrated throughout.
- the humility and profundity and self-responsibility of Nancy Gilgoff

-the truth of David Swenson's transcendence of all claims to truth or special legitimacy

-the light and joy and natural-born, curious courage of Joanne Darby

-the brittle certainties of Brad Ramsey and Annie Pace

-the raw, warm, attractive honesty of Nick Evans

-the sheer enlightened beauty of Rolf Naujokat and Norman Allen

-the hidden influence of the caste system and gender norms

-the rapprochement of travels on the hippie trail with the family ways and energy of Guruji

-the shift from the hippie generation to the seeker generation of the late 70s and 80s

For ashtanga practitioners, reading this book within the first year or two of daily practice would be a great idea.

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### **Amber says**

I received this book for free as First Read on Goodreads.

I signed up to win this book for my husband who does yoga and likes reading about it. He tried to read the book and couldn't get into it. It wasn't something that he enjoyed. I then tried reading it but couldn't get into it either. I was hoping for more of a story and I think that my husband was hoping for more techniques. It wasn't the book for us.

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### **Barbora says**

very inspirational :) thank you!

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### **Laura Zurowski says**

As someone who didn't develop a love of Ashtanga until my early 40s, my first response to the stories in Guruji was that I had missed so much. "If only I had discovered this in college! I could have been one of those pioneering adventurers discovering and learning the practice while my body was still young with fewer aches and pains." However, regret for a past that didn't exist for me quickly gave way to a deep feeling of happiness and appreciation that such a record of the life and work of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois was created. Thank you to Eddie Stern, Guy Donahaye, and all the individuals involved with compiling this book! While we're unable to travel back in time and study personally with Jois, the stories in Guruji provide a beautiful description of a time when the world, Mysore, and even Ashtanga was so different from what we experience now.

It's not surprising that the reviews for this book are either 4-5 stars or 1-2 stars (seems like a bunch of people received this title for free from a contest and were subsequently disappointed.)

You are going to LOVE this book if you have a dedicated Ashtanga practice and have been progressing in your awareness of the 8-limb path as taught through the Ashtanga yoga method. Several very well known and respected teachers who studied with Jois in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s are interviewed and it is wonderful to hear their stories from "back in the day" when getting to Mysore was a test of endurance and the shala had only a few Western students.

You are probably going to NOT LOVE this book (so much) if you don't have any prior knowledge of Ashtanga. If you're curious about Ashtanga, but aren't that familiar with it yet, a better book to start with would be something like Kino MacGregor's "The Power of Ashtanga Yoga". That book, which I also own and find valuable, provides an overview of the practice plus detailed photos and descriptions of the physical postures and is a great launching pad for a newcomer as well as a resource for something currently working through the primary series.

Like many of the interviewees in Guruji, a regular Ashtanga practice has transformed both my body and mind. While my personal practice may not be the stuff of YouTube videos featuring advanced postures of strength and flexibility, it is something I hold precious and hope to continue with throughout my life-time. The story of Guruji is certainly an inspiring and motivating one to help me along that journey.

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### **Laura Tulloch says**

I loved this book as it gave me a much deeper insight into what yoga is really all about, ie: it's something you try to fit in every day around work and life, with an approach which is open, humble and kind to yourself and everyone around you. It doesn't have to be going away on a 10-day retreat into a rain forest to get away from everyone and having an aloof and/or holier-than-thou attitude, which is the approach that some people seem adopt!

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### **LaTisha says**

What a wonderful book!! I highly recommend it for anyone who wants to have an understanding of Guruji, ashtanga and yoga. I wasn't able to practice with Guruji, but this book made me feel closer to this wonderful lineage of yoga that he has passed down. My view on the practice and the world has changed because of this book. Namaste.

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## Corey says

"That it is ultimately about being a kinder, nicer, loving person, and that should be the focus in this practice. It's not about being better than anybody else. And if you've forgotten that, please remind yourself of it. Without that, this practice has no heart, so it needs to be performed with great gratitude, great devotion, and great love and respect for the people around you, the best that you can. We are all frail, we are all human, we are all limited, and we make mistakes. But every time you fall off the horse, get back on with humility and love. Really, keep doing that and you can't go far wrong. I think." - Nick Evans interview in "Guruji"

I think an important book for all Ashtanga practitioners, all yoga practitioners for that matter, would be well-advised to read.

A fascinating set of in-depth interviews with the students of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, detailing the great teacher of Ashtanga. A practice that has changed my life, as well as so many others. If you never got the chance to know Pattabhi Jois, like me, this may be the closest thing to seeing the man -- through the words of his beloved students.

A lovely loving portrait, and I recommend it whether or not you practice yoga. But if you do, and particularly if you practice Ashtanga, I think it required reading. This is our history; where the practice came from and how it was shaped -- who shaped it. For a practice, that so many of us give our devotion and heart-wrenching-life-altering work to, it is critical to know its history, and about the man who pioneered this thing we love.

(Oh yeah and I stopped and started it a lot. Reread. Because such is how it went. Doesn't mean it is less compelling of a read, it was just the personal way I read this series of interviews.)

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