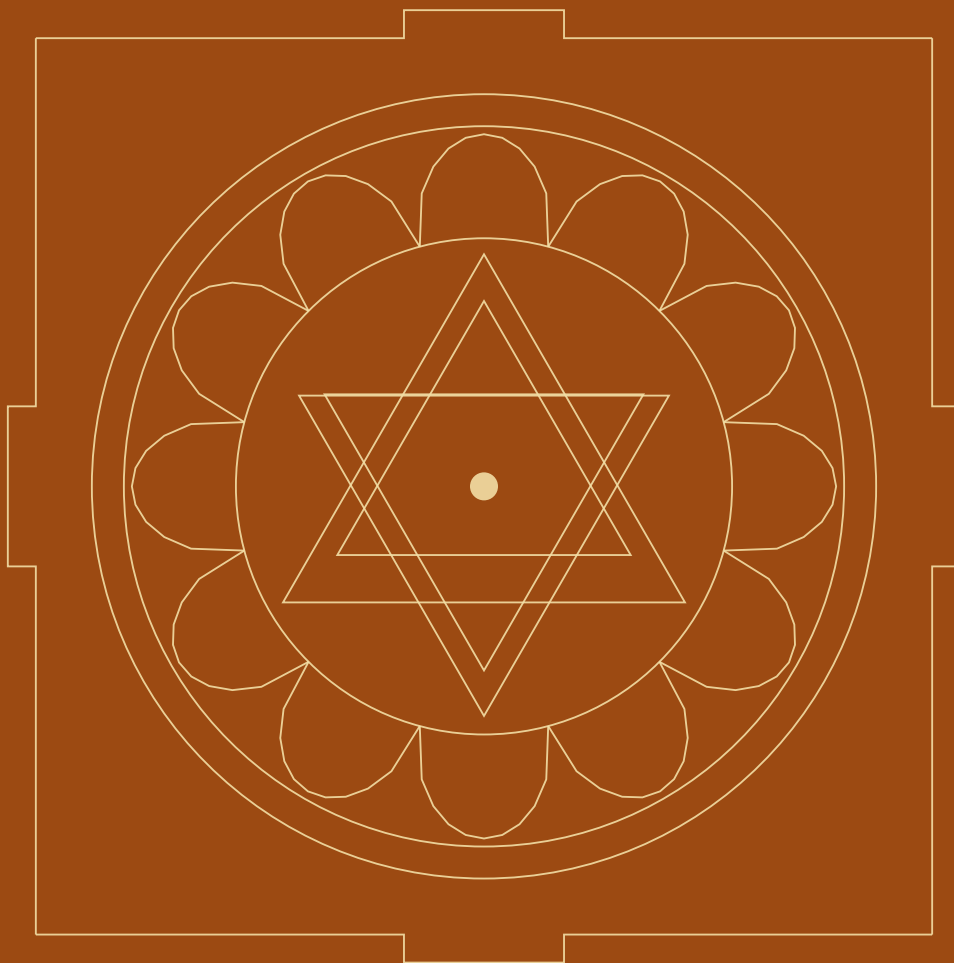


PRACTICE

Ashtanga Vinyasa: The Primary Series, Pose by Pose

Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois and Mysore, the three places of attention, the count of every posture, and a safe way to learn the series at home



योग

yoga

YOGIDE

Free sample

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Contents

Before you begin	4
How the counts are given	5
How the texts are numbered	5
How to use this book	5
Chapter I. Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois, Mysore: the documented history	6
The name	6
Krishnamacharya at the palace	6
The Yoga Kurunṭa: what is claimed, what is known	6
Sjoman and Singleton: the scholars' reading	7
K. Pattabhi Jois	7
After Pattabhi Jois	8
The series of the method	8

teacher or medical advice. Questions: administration@lacangel.fr

Before you begin

Before dawn, in a Mysore-style shala, a room fills with people who do not speak to one another. Each unrolls a mat, stands still for a moment, and begins. Nobody calls out the postures. Everyone breathes with the same audible sound, but no two are at the same place in the sequence: one is in the sun salutations, another folds forward on the floor, a third lies in the final rest. A teacher walks between the rows, watches, sometimes helps, sometimes says one word: the name of the next posture. This is the Mysore style of Ashtanga Vinyasa, and the sequence most of these people are practising is the one this book is about: the **primary series**, yoga cikitsā (योगचिकित्सा), "yoga therapy".

This book is the document you lay at the end of your mat. It gives:

- **the documented history:** Krishnamacharya at the Mysore palace, Pattabhi Jois and his institute (1948), the lost Yoga Kuruṇṭa, the debate opened by Sjoman and Singleton; what is documented is called documented, what is claimed is called claimed;
- **the method:** trisṭhāna (breath, posture, gaze), the bandhas without any breath retention, and vinyāsa, the count, with when it is spoken aloud and when it is not;
- **every posture of the series in order:** devanāgarī and transliteration, meaning of the name, published count, breath, gaze, a preparatory version and a precaution;
- **a way to practise alone and last:** half series, short practice, rest and moon days, adaptations for knees, wrists and lower back;
- **an honest account of injuries**, with the studies that exist and their limits.

This book sells no school and claims no authorisation from any lineage. The Ashtanga method belongs to the teachers who carry it; the names "Mysore style", "KPJAYI" or "Sharath Yoga Centre" are used here only to refer to what they designate. Yoga Mala, the book of K. Pattabhi Jois, is cited and summarised; it is never copied.

About the translations.

All translations of Sanskrit verses in this book were written for Yogide from the Sanskrit. They are not copied or adapted from any modern published translation.

Health first.

Ashtanga Vinyasa is a demanding physical practice: jumps, repeated push-ups, deep forward bends, hip rotations, inversions. This book is not medical advice and does not replace a teacher. Talk to your doctor before you start if you are pregnant or have recently given birth; if you have heart disease, high blood pressure, glaucoma or a retinal problem, osteoporosis, a hernia, a disc problem, a recent injury or surgery, or a knee, wrist or shoulder condition. Stop at once and seek help if you feel chest pain, breathlessness out of proportion, palpitations, faintness, a sudden severe headache, or numbness or weakness on one side. Emergency numbers: 911 (US, Canada), 999 or 112 (UK), 112 (EU, India).

Headstand, shoulderstand, plough and the ear-pressure pose are described here for knowledge and are learned with a teacher, never alone from a book.

How the counts are given

Each posture comes with its **count of vinyāsas**: "Count: 22 (posture at 8 and 15)" means 22 breath-movements from standing (samasthiti) back to standing, the posture being reached at the 8th and, on the second side, the 15th. Yoga Mala sets out the series in this way. The figures printed here are those of the practice sheets published by AshtangaYoga.info (Ronald Steiner; posture sheets of 2004, summary sheet of 2015), checked one by one on 17 October 2026. Teachers do not always count exactly alike (a published comparison notes small differences between Pattabhi Jois, Sharath Jois and Lino Miele): when your teacher counts differently, follow your teacher.

How the texts are numbered

- **Yoga Sūtra (YS)**: GRETIL electronic text (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages), numbering of that edition.
- **Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (HYP)**: GRETIL electronic text, version of 31 July 2020, numbering of that edition.
- **Yoga Tārāvalī**: text published on sanskritdocuments.org (not a critical edition); variant noted where the Ashtanga chant differs.

How to use this book

Read Chapters 1 to 3 once. Practise the salutations and standing postures (Chapters 4 and 5) for several weeks, then add one posture at a time (Chapter 10). Chapter 12 holds the series on one page; read Chapter 11 before anything hurts.

Chapter 1. Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois, Mysore: the documented history

The name

Aṣṭāṅga (अष्टाङ्ग) means "eight limbs". The word comes from Patañjali, who lists the eight limbs of yoga in a single sūtra:

यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाधयोऽष्टावङ्गानि ॥

yamaniyamāsanaprāṇāyāmapratyāhārādhāraṇādhyānaśamādhayo 'ṣṭāv aṅgāni "Restraints, observances, posture, regulation of the breath, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation and absorption are the eight limbs." (Yoga Sūtra 2.29, GRETIL · our translation)

Pattabhi Jois presented his method as the practice of these eight limbs, beginning with the third, posture. Vinyāsa (विन्यास) is an ordinary Sanskrit noun meaning "placing, arrangement" (Monier-Williams); in this method it names the placing of each movement on a breath. "Ashtanga Vinyasa" is therefore a twentieth-century name for a method, not the title of an ancient text. Wikipedia summarises another suggestion by Mark Singleton: the name may echo ashtang dand, the old name of a sun-salutation-like sequence of Indian gymnastics. It is a hypothesis; the method's own teachers refer to Patañjali.

Krishnamacharya at the palace

Tirumalai Krishnamacharya was born on 18 November 1888 and died on 28 February 1989. He studied Sanskrit, the classical systems of philosophy and Āyurveda. In the early 1930s the Maharaja of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, gave him a wing of the **Jaganmohan Palace** for a yoga school, the yogaśālā, which opened on **11 August 1933**. In **1934** Krishnamacharya published *Yoga Makaranda* through Mysore University; a second book, *Yogāsanaṅgalu*, is dated to about 1941. The yogaśālā lost its funding after independence and closed in **1950** (Wikipedia, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya).

In that hall, Krishnamacharya taught sequences of postures linked by movement and breath. *Yoga Makaranda* already lists nearly all the postures of what would become the primary series, described with their vinyāsas (Wikipedia, Ashtanga vinyasa yoga). Among his pupils were B.K.S. Iyengar, who later founded his own method in Pune, and a young Brahmin from Hassan district, Pattabhi Jois.

The Yoga Kuruṇṭa: what is claimed, what is known

Krishnamacharya said that he had learned from a teacher named Rāmamohana Brahmācārī, near Mount Kailāsa, over seven and a half years, and that he had studied a text called the *Yoga Kuruṇṭa* (also spelled *Korunta*), attributed to a sage named Vāmana. According to the accounts summarised by historians (they vary), he later found the text badly damaged, and his only copy was lost; no copy has ever been produced

(Wikipedia, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya; Ashtanga vinyasa yoga, citing Singleton 2010). Pattabhi Jois said that he learned the method from Krishnamacharya and through him from this text, which he stated he had never seen himself (Wikipedia, K. Pattabhi Jois). It is also noteworthy that Yoga Makaranda (1934) and Yogāsānagalu do not cite it.

The honest position is therefore this: the Yoga Kuruṇṭa is a source **claimed** by the founders of the method, which no one can verify today. You do not need it to practise, and you do not need to deny it to respect the lineage. Not everyone in the family tells it the same way: Pattabhi Jois's son Manju Jois has said that the sequences were created by Krishnamacharya (Wikipedia, Ashtanga vinyasa yoga).

Sjoman and Singleton: the scholars' reading

Two books changed the way the history is told.

- **Norman E. Sjoman**, The Yoga Tradition of the Mysore Palace (Abhinav Publications, 1996), studied a nineteenth-century compendium kept at the palace, the Śrītattvanidhi, with its illustrated postures, and argued that Krishnamacharya also drew on the palace's tradition of gymnastics.
- **Mark Singleton**, Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice (Oxford University Press, 2010), showed that the physical culture movements of the early twentieth century, Indian and international, shared many postures and ideas with the new yoga, and argued that Krishnamacharya, like other teachers of his time, wove elements of physical culture into his yoga. He also reports that sun salutations were then considered exercise rather than yoga.

These are scholarly arguments, debated by other scholars. They do not make the practice false; they make it modern: a twentieth-century creation of Mysore, rooted in the haṭha texts (which name some of its postures), in Sanskrit learning and in the physical culture of its time.

K. Pattabhi Jois

Krishna Pattabhi Jois was born on **26 July 1915** at Kowshika, near Hassan, and died in Mysore on **18 May 2009**. In 1927, aged twelve, he saw a demonstration by Krishnamacharya in Hassan and became his student the next day. He went to Mysore to study Sanskrit and studied with Krishnamacharya there from 1932. He taught yoga at the Sanskrit College from **1937 to 1973**. In **1948** he established the **Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute** in his home in Lakshmipuram (Wikipedia, K. Pattabhi Jois).

Western students came late. In **1964** the Belgian André Van Lysebeth spent two months learning the primary and intermediate series with him; his book *J'apprends le yoga* (1967) printed the address in Mysore and brought Western students. Jois first taught in the Americas in 1974 and 1975. To accommodate the growing number of students, a new shala opened in **Gokulam** in **2002** (Wikipedia, K. Pattabhi Jois).

His book ***Yoga Mala*** was written in Kannada from 1958; most accounts date its publication to 1962, while the encyclopedic summary gives 1958. An English translation by Eddie Stern appeared in 1999 and was republished by North Point Press (New York) in 2002. It describes the sun salutations and the primary series posture by posture, with the count of vinyāsas.

An honest history includes this.

After Pattabhi Jois's death, former students, women and men, publicly described sexual abuse by him, including in the guise of "adjustments"; several well-known Ashtanga teachers corroborated these accounts. In 2019 his grandson R. Sharath Jois publicly acknowledged that he had witnessed "improper adjustments" (Wikipedia, K. Pattabhi Jois). Matthew Remski gathered survivors' accounts in *Practice and All Is Coming* (2019). For your own practice, this means one simple rule: **no one may touch you without your consent**, and you can refuse any assistance at any time.

After Pattabhi Jois

His grandson **R. Sharath Jois** (1971–2024) directed the institute from 2007; in 2019 he opened the Sharath Yoga Centre, while Pattabhi Jois's daughter Saraswathi Ranganaswamy continued to teach under her father's name. Sharath Jois died in November 2024 during a teaching tour in the United States (Wikipedia, R. Sharath Jois; Sharath Yoga Centre). Many students of Pattabhi Jois teach worldwide, some authorised by the Mysore institutes, others not. This book takes no side.

The series of the method

The method is organised into fixed series (Wikipedia, Ashtanga vinyasa yoga):

Series	Sanskrit	Meaning	Main work
Primary	योगचिकित्सा, yoga cikitsā	yoga as therapy, as "treatment"	forward bends, hip rotations, twists
Intermediate	नाडीशोधन, nāḍī śodhana	purification of the channels	backbends, deeper hip work, legs behind the head
Advanced A to D	स्थिरभाग, sthira bhāga	the part of steadiness	arm balances and extreme postures

Cikitsā is the ordinary Sanskrit word for medical treatment (Monier-Williams). The name expresses the tradition's view that the first series puts the body in order; it is not a medical claim, and this book makes none. This book covers the primary series only, and will never cover the advanced series: they belong to the relationship between a student and a teacher.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 42 pages.

Get it here: <https://yogide.com/books/ashtanga-vinyasa-the-primary-series-pose-by-pose/>

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