

# the son also rises

*T.K.V. Desikachar brings to the practice a full spectrum of yoga therapy, philosophy, and Ayurveda learned from his father, T. Krishnamacharya.*



**An advocate of individualized yoga** practices that respect the needs and abilities of each student, T.K.V. Desikachar has created nonprofit foundations and written several books, including *The Heart of Yoga*—all while teaching internationally.

**Why did you give up a career in engineering for yoga?** A prestigious firm in Northern India offered me a job. On my way there, I stopped in Chennai to visit my father, T. Krishnamacharya [the yoga master, many of whose students became masters in their own right, including Indra Devi, B.K.S. Iyengar, and K. Pattabhi Jois]. One morning a foreign woman stepped out of a car, called to my father, hugged him, and thanked him profusely. She had suffered insomnia for years. No amount of sedation helped. After a friend suggested yoga, my father taught her. She had finally slept well the previous night. I was stunned. How could my father, who was not a medical doctor, cure a person of insomnia? I realized the potential of yoga, turned down the job, and stayed back to study yoga with him.

**What did he teach you?** My father tested my dedication. Lessons started at 3 a.m. My father would chant each verse of Hatha Yoga Pradipika, and I had to repeat thrice. My studies invariably disturbed our family in this tiny apartment. But I persisted. I got another job in a Chennai-based firm; every evening after work, my father gave me an asana practice. My studies continued this way for a year, then my father finally relented and asked me to come to him for classes at 5 a.m. instead of 3! I am grateful to my father, for without his initiative, yoga would not enjoy the popularity it does today.

**What distinguishes your teaching from other yoga?** The practice is adapted to suit the needs, abilities, and interests of each individual. Unfortunately, today's standardization is a one-size-fits-all approach. This can impose great risk. This is why my father chose the sutra *Heyam dukkham anagatam* as the motto for our institute: Pain in any form must be anticipated and avoided. I never compromise by standardizing yoga practices for different people. Adapting yoga to suit the needs of every unique individual is where the true greatness of yoga lies.

**What do you wish yoga students might experience?** My wish is that more students experience the vastness of yoga, not simply asana. Increased attention to the concept of body consciousness has become very popular. Yoga was primarily evolved for inner limbs such as mind, senses, emotions. Unfortunately, many yoga teachers themselves are not aware of these techniques to be able to guide students in these domains. It is my sincere wish that both teachers and students of yoga move beyond their obsession with the body level, to actually experience these subtle and more powerful dimensions of this ancient wisdom. This requires patience and commitment and a serious search to look at oneself. ❖

*T.K.V. Desikachar will teach at YJ's 14th Annual Colorado Conference in Estes Park in September.*