



## Last of the Great World Teachers, T. K. V. Desikachar is Dead at 78,

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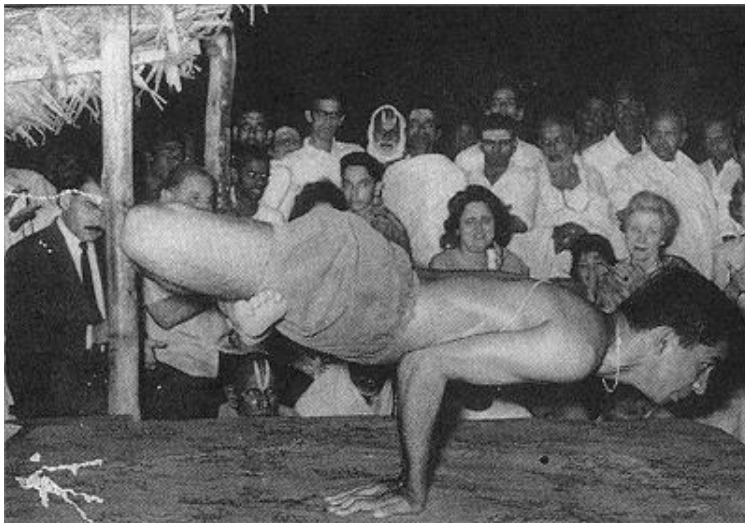
Tirumalai Krishnamacharya Venkata (“TKV”) Desikachar, who was trained as an engineer but became a world-renowned proponent of Yoga Therapy, died August 8th at 2:45am in [Chennai, India](#).

If there was a Mt. Rushmore of yoga, Desikachar’s face would be carved there.

His moderate age at death (78) seems to deny yoga’s promise, but his three great colleagues (and their shared guru—Desikachar’s father—T. [Krishnamacharya](#)) all thrived past 90.

We put TKV in a class with 3 other yoga greats: [Indra Devi](#) (1899 – 2002), [K. Pattabhi Jois](#) (1915 – 2009), and Desikachar’s uncle, [B.K.S. Iyengar](#) (1918 – 2014).

Desikachar was his father’s first son. In the Indian family hierarchy, that gave him a special franchise to extend his father’s *jati*, or professional activity. His father’s legendary ferocity pushed him, but Desikachar never felt any special enthusiasm for the practice.



In one story, he climbed a tree to flee his yoga practice regimen Krishnamacharya had imposed on him.

But his father waited stealthily for him to descend, then rope-tied him in lotus pose (the classic bound-leg meditation position). Krishna-macharya then left him to stew a few hours.

Imagining a different life for himself, Desikachar earned a degree in mechanical engineering at age 23, and planned to settle in that field, but

after witnessing his father’s [Ayurvedic](#) healing work close at hand, he was inspired to submit to his guruship. After 1961, he became one of his father’s most passionate advocates and long-studied apprentices.



When the famous spiritual guide, [Krishnamurti](#), approached Krishnamacharya for yoga instruction in 1965, Krishnamacharya passed the teaching assignment to his son.

Their relationship prospered, and later that year, Krishnamurti sponsored Desikachar's first teaching trip abroad—to the U.K. and Switzerland.

After that, TKV departed India regularly for teaching trips. He began coming to the U.S. in '76, when he was hosted by Colgate University.

Desikachar founded the [Krishnamacharya Yoga](#)

[Mandiram](#) (KYM) that same year, partnering with two other longtime Krishnamacharya students, [A. G. Mohan](#) and [Srivatsa Ramaswami](#).

At KYM, he elaborated his yoga therapy practice and applied [asana](#) (postures), [pranayama](#) (breath practices) and the principles of [Ayurveda](#) to patient care.

His healing skill, humility as a teacher, and practical attitude toward yoga's use for students, won him enduring fame.



Both local and international students flocked to the Mandiram, and numerous famous teachers took Desikachar as their primary guide in the practice, including [Chase Bossart](#), [Kate Holcombe](#), [Leslie Kaminoff](#), [Gary Kraftsow](#), [Larry Payne](#) and [Mark Whitwell](#).

Among [his eight books](#) were two translations of yoga's "Bible": [The Yoga Sutras](#). He de-emphasized the book's advice for lonely, striving yogis, and highlighted its value for householders.

This interpretation, first offered by his father, was evident throughout his '99 reference book, [The Heart of Yoga](#)—widely used in teacher training programs—and his moving [Health, Healing and Beyond](#) (2005) where he mixed pragmatic messages about the yoga path with the life story of Krishnamacharya.

Though he was a committed secularist, the interface between yoga and religion interested him. He lectured and published on the subject, and famously submitted to his father's tutelage only on the condition that religion be left out of it.

In his last years, he suffered from dementia.

The immediate cause of his death isn't known.

Among family members who've made their mark, he is survived by his son, [Kausthub](#)—who published a biography of his grandfather and teaches yoga worldwide—and his younger brother, [Sri T.K. Srihashyam](#), who teaches in Europe and wrote *The Emergence of Yoga* (2014), a study of yoga's history, philosophy and practice.

