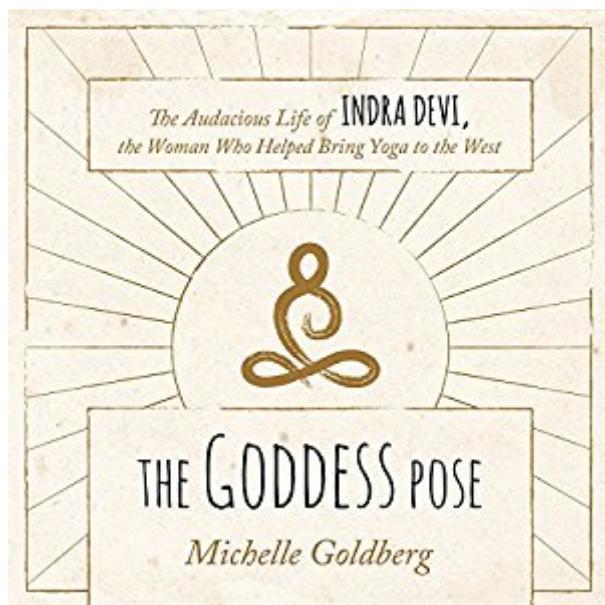


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The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life Of Indra Devi, The Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga To The West



Synopsis

When the woman who would become Indra Devi was born in Russia in 1899, yoga was virtually unknown outside of India. By the time of her death in 2002, it was being practiced everywhere, from Brooklyn to Berlin to Ulaanbaatar. Born into the minor aristocracy (as Eugenia Peterson), Devi grew up in the midst of one of the most turbulent times in human history. Forced to flee the Russian Revolution as a teenager, she joined a famous Berlin cabaret troupe, dove into the vibrant prewar spiritualist movement, and, at a time when it was nearly unthinkable for a young European woman to travel alone, followed the charismatic theosophical leader Jiddu Krishnamurti to India. Once on the subcontinent, she performed in Indian silent cinema and hobnobbed with the leaders of the independence movement. But her greatest coup was convincing a recalcitrant master yogi to train her in the secrets of his art. Written with vivid clarity, *The Goddess Pose* brings Devi's remarkable story - as an actress, yogi, and globe-trotting adventuress - to life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A tremendous amount of research has produced a very detailed biography, not so much about yoga, but rather about an independent woman who lived around the world, leaving her influence wherever she went. (If you're interested in yoga specifically, besides reading the preface, go directly to chapter 7 for the roots, and chapter 19 for an assessment of the spread of yoga today.) Most of the book is about Eugenia Peterson / Indra Devi herself, her constant movement, forward-looking reinvention, and proselytizing of yoga over decades of world history, as well as her companions,

including many westerners who adopted Indian names. She was remarkable enough that, as a young adult, she convinced Krishnamacharya to teach her yoga, in spite of initially refusing because she was a woman (and western), and he ultimately sent her off to teach her western-palatable yoga to others. However, some readers may find the detailed accounting of her activities a bit tedious, because at times it reads sort of like going through someone's old date books and journals, but for me, getting various connections illuminated and explained was fascinating. (If you're interested in other influences besides Indra Devi, see the other books mentioned at the end of this review). As someone who grew up in S. California, I was vaguely aware of the various personalities involved in Theosophy decades ago, and was always curious about how those early roots lead to the current popularity of yoga, new-age thought, and alternative medicine, and the personalities involved. This book connects many of those threads, tracing how a diplomat's wife became a yoga author (see her many books currently listed on) and teacher, involving some personalities you would never expect (e.g.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book about the life of Indra Devi, the times she lived in, the places she lived and worked, her wide range of abilities, the fascinating people she met, and the growth of interest in India and eastern religion, as well as the origin and development of yoga in its various versions and stages. The book is packed with information about Ms. Devi's unusual life and the many intriguing people she interacted with during her long (just short of 103 years). Michelle Goldberg states from the introductory chapter that she writes as an admirer rather than a believer, and her slightly cynical stance on the romanticized view of India that has been popular over several generations may surprise some readers. However, I appreciate the thoroughness of her research and her efforts to dispel popular myths, particularly about hatha yoga practices. I especially enjoyed her frequent digressions from Devi's life story: we learn about the birth and growth of the Theosophical movement and the lives of Mme. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, as well as the life of Krishnamurti, from the time he was discovered as a young boy. Goldberg also tells us about the many important people Devi met, including Rabindanath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Sai Baba, and so many other influential people like B.K.S. Iyengar, Yehudi Menuhin, and Pattabhi Jois. Goldberg also tells something about the political situation in all of the many places where Devi lived and worked. It was intriguing to follow Indra Devi through so many tages, and to learn a bit more about the situations faced by women through those years. Goldberg tries to give an objective view of Devi's life and her character, highlighting her positive energy and dedication to her cause as well as her very human imperfections.

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