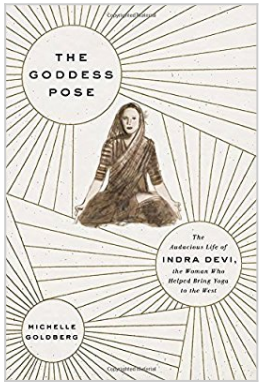

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West

By Michelle Goldberg

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg

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. In *The Goddess Pose, New York Times* best-selling author Michelle Goldberg traces the life of the incredible woman who brought yoga to the West—and in so doing paints a sweeping picture of the twentieth century.

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.

Devi would go on to share what she learned with people around the world, teaching in Shanghai during World War II, then in Hollywood, where her students included Gloria Swanson and Greta Garbo. She ran a yoga school in Mexico during the height of the counterculture, served as spiritual adviser to the colonel who tried to overthrow Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, and, in her eighties, moved to Buenos Aires at the invitation of a besotted rock star. Everywhere she went, Indra Devi evangelized for yoga, ushering in a global craze that continues unabated. Written with vivid clarity, *The Goddess Pose* brings her remarkable story—as an actress, yogi, and globetrotting adventuress—to life.

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West

By Michelle Goldberg

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg

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. In *The Goddess Pose, New York Times* best-selling author Michelle Goldberg traces the life of the incredible woman who brought yoga to the West—and in so doing paints a sweeping picture of the twentieth century.

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.

Devi would go on to share what she learned with people around the world, teaching in Shanghai during World War II, then in Hollywood, where her students included Gloria Swanson and Greta Garbo. She ran a yoga school in Mexico during the height of the counterculture, served as spiritual adviser to the colonel who tried to overthrow Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, and, in her eighties, moved to Buenos Aires at the invitation of a besotted rock star.
Everywhere she went, Indra Devi evangelized for yoga, ushering in a global craze that continues unabated. Written with vivid clarity, *The Goddess Pose* brings her remarkable story—as an actress, yogi, and globetrotting adventuress—to life.

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #165847 in Books
- Published on: 2015-06-09
- Released on: 2015-06-09
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x 1.19" w x 5.90" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages

Editorial Review

Review
“An elegant and richly drawn biography. . . . With a jeweler’s eye for detail, Goldberg presents a singular woman. A quasi feminist ahead of her time. . . . *The Goddess Pose* canters through landmark events from India’s independence to the American invasion of Panama. . . . There is much to enjoy in Goldberg’s cleareyed view of Devi’s life, and there is also a lesson: While (for some) yoga as a discipline may be infallible, the gurus who teach it never are.” —*The New York Times Book Review*

“[A] groundbreaking biography. . . . Goldberg’s impressive research is . . . far-reaching. . . . Her clear prose illuminates the forces of war and social change and reveals the complex roots of our country’s yoga boom. . . . *The Goddess Pose* builds to a thrilling conclusion, exposing the power struggles and sex scandals within Sai Baba’s inner circle, a tale reminiscent of recent bad behavior by other male gurus.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

The story of how Devi came to embrace yoga and spread its gospel in America is as fascinating as it is unlikely. . . . A remarkably coherent, fascinating narrative. . . . Goldberg refuses to moralize—her goal in writing *The Goddess Pose* seems to have been not just chronicling the life of one of the world’s great iconoclasts, but also providing a history for how hatha yoga went from an Indian spiritual tradition to an everyday part of western lives. She succeeds admirably on both counts, writing with understanding and a healthy sense of skepticism.” —*The Guardian*

“Captures Devi’s Forrest Gump-like propensity to live parallel to some of the most important moments of the previous century. . . . Indra Devi died in 2002, just weeks shy of her 103rd birthday. ‘For much of her life,’ Goldberg writes, ‘Devi’s only goal had been to make yoga known to the West.’ Today, 20.4 million, or 9% of all American adults, have practiced yoga in their lifetime. She certainly succeeded.” —*New York Post*

“Goldberg’s book is lots of fun, running through the Russian Revolution, the Weimar Berlin nightlife, Indian independence, 1950s Hollywood and 1960s counterculture. . . . Even if you don’t care enough about yoga to hold a pigeon pose for the length of time it takes to say [the] title, Indra Devi, born Eugenia Peterson in 1899 in Riga, Latvia, remains no less a fascinating character: Constantly searching as she moves from Eastern Europe to India to Shanghai and the United States, she changes names, marries twice, acts and dances—finally making it big about halfway through her century-long life as a yoga teacher, author and lecturer.” —*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

“Most stories of yoga’s journey to the United States have a male protagonist—but not this one. . . . The book tracks [Devi’s] fascinating path through multiple countries (China, Mexico, Argentina), two marriages, and Hollywood fame as a teacher to the stars. Devi lived fearlessly until her death in 2002 at age 102, but her story and influence live on in this can’t-miss memoir.” —*Yoga Journal*

“It’s hard to believe that the life of Indra Devi, the Zelig who helped turn yoga into the plaything of midcentury Hollywood, Noriega’s Panama, and the rest of the world, hasn’t been made into a blockbuster film, never mind a fascinating work of nonfiction. Without idolizing or condemning her, Goldberg evokes Devi’s complicated nature as deftly as she does the Russian Empire, Weimar Berlin, occupied Shanghai, and so many of the other places where Devi worked, loved, and proselytized before her life ended at 103, not long after the century she helped define.” —*New York* Magazine, “7 Books You Need to Read This June”

“*The Goddess Pose,* Michelle Goldberg’s—yes, audacious—new biography of Indra Devi, is not just an investigation of one of the twentieth century’s most fascinating and fearless iconoclasts, but a celebration of female freedom and everything it can bring: an appetite for adventure, fearlessness in the face of challenge, and, most important, discovery and assertion of self.” —Anna Holmes, founding editor, *Jezebel*

“Goldberg’s account of Devi takes the reader through three chronicled, influential centuries of the yogi, actress, and fearless voyager's life which will leave you with a better understanding of how westernized Yoga differs from its roots—plus a deep respect for the iconic Devi’s ruthless dedication, and a major dose of inspiration to get you on the way to your next blissed-out savasana.” —*Nylon* (Summer Books Preview)

“[A] terrific new biography. . . . As Michelle Goldberg capably illustrates in *The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West,* yoga has always been a bizarre blend of Eastern and Western tradition, particularly in the U.S. . . . As spectacular a figure as Devi obviously was, Goldberg wisely devotes a lot of her book to yoga itself: the development and popularization of not simply a physical activity, but also a philosophy. For anyone interested in the practice, *The Goddess Pose* offers an irresistible story of yoga’s unlikely and, yes, even audacious origins.” —BookPage

“In *The Goddess Pose,* Michelle Goldberg brings Indra Devi, a complicated and incredible woman, to life in Technicolor brilliance, as she bops, Zelig-like, through some of the most important events of last century—from the Russian Revolution to the rise of Nazism, to the JFK assassination. I’ll never think of yoga the same way again—and neither will you. Even if you’ve never uttered the word ‘namaste,’ you won’t be able to put this book down.” —Susannah Cahalan , *New York Times* best-selling author of *Brain on Fire*

“Whether you’re a student of yoga, a history buff, an armchair adventurer, or just a reader in search of an unputdownable story that happens to be true, you’ll love this fascinating biography of one of the twentieth century’s boldest, most influential women. Michelle Goldberg gets us as close to unveiling the mysterious Indra Devi as anyone is likely to get. Brava!” —Katha Pollitt, author of *Learning to Drive: And Other Life Stories*

“Michelle Goldberg’s masterful engagement with her astonishing subject—and with the diverse political, spiritual, and physical worlds she inhabited—is evident on every page of this terrific book. *The Goddess Pose* is a surprising adventure from beginning to end.” —Rebecca Traister, author of *Big Girls Don’t Cry*

“Fascinating and groundbreaking. . . . Inspired by her interest in yoga, journalist and author Goldberg gives us a highly readable biography of the so-called ‘first lady of yoga,’ an eccentric personality who has also been called a female Forrest Gump because of the wide-ranging nature of her experiences. Born Eugenia Peterson in czarist Russia, the self-proclaimed Indra Devi (1899–2002) reinvented herself many times over as she traveled throughout Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the United States over the course of her century-long life. . . . This painstakingly researched book is more than mere biography, however. It helps readers to understand where yoga, as we practice it in the West, came from and how it differs from its roots. . . . Highly recommended for general readers and cultural historians alike.” —*Library Journal* (starred)

“Most stories of yoga’s journey to the United States have a male protagonist—but not this one. . . . The book tracks [Devi’s] fascinating path through multiple countries (China, Mexico, Argentina), two marriages, and Hollywood fame as a teacher to the stars. Devi lived fearlessly until her death in 2002 a age 102, but her story and influence live on in this can’t-miss memoir.” —*Yoga Journal*

“Goldberg fluidly explores the extraordinary life of Indra Devi (1899-2002), the woman who helped

transform the ancient Indian discipline of yoga into a worldwide phenomenon. . . . [Her] book, which uses material she uncovered about Devi on four continents, is not only thoroughly researched; it also offers insights into a magnificently elusive figure, the culture she loved, and the yogic practice she bequeathed to the West. Fascinating reading about an intriguing woman." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Investigative journalist Goldberg, by dint of ardent research, adept synthesis, and narrative pizzazz, tracks her chimerical subject around the world to chronicle Devi's intrepidly improvised, nomadic, and seemingly charmed life with awe and skepticism. . . . Throughout this whirlwind biography, Goldberg provides fresh and enlightening insights into the evolution of modern yoga while Devi, who lived to be 102, forever at the 'spinning center of thing,' shimmers provocatively in her 'almost supernatural' charisma, ambition, contrariness, and resilience." —*Booklist* (starred)

"Curious about the roots of yoga, journalist/author Goldberg began digging for clues to the connections between the yoga of India and its Americanized version. She came across the obituary of 102-year-old Indra Devi (née Eugenia Peterson), often called the First Lady of Yoga. This fascinating biography delves deeply into Devi's life (she was born in Latvia in 1899 to a family of Russian aristocrats) while chronicling a wider history: Devi, a Zelig-like figure who was a student of the legendary sage Krishnamacharya, seemed to show up wherever the action was. Her life story, which touches three centuries (she died in 2002), goes from the Russian Revolution, Weimar Berlin, the Indian independence movement, and Japanese-occupied Shanghai to Hollywood, Vietnam, Mexico, Argentina, and Panama, where she was spiritual advisor to Noriega's second-in-command. Goldberg painstakingly renders the details of Devi's kaleidoscopic journey and also explores the underpinnings of her outlook. . . . Though the text will be of particular interest to practitioners and teachers of yoga, this sparkling tale of a remarkable trailblazer should enlighten and inspire every reader." —*Publishers Weekly*

About the Author
Michelle Goldberg is a journalist and the author of *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism,* a *New York Times* best seller that was a finalist for the New York Public Library's Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism, and *The Means of Reproduction: Sex, Power, and the Future of the World*. A senior contributing writer at *The Nation,* she has also written pieces for *The New Yorker, the New York Times, Newsweek, The New Republic, Glamour,* and many other publications. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and children.

www.michellegoldberg.net

INTRODUCTION

I NEVER WOULD have started doing yoga if there had been aerobics in the Himalayas, but I was desperate.

The few times I'd taken yoga classes in college, my failed attempts to relax redoubled my anxiety. Each pose was a reminder of the lifelong inflexibility that had often mortified me. When I was a little girl, a sadistic ballet teacher barred me from a holiday party because of my terrible splits. In elementary school, I dreaded being forced to sit "Indian style," because it left my hips and back screaming. Later, trying yoga, my awkward efforts to keep my legs and back straight while touching my toes and my inability to do even a half lotus only left me tense and humiliated, convinced that the practice was best for those who were already calm, willowy, and graceful.

Besides, while I'd been captivated by India's kaleidoscopic religious richness during months of traveling, I was wary of anyone purporting to peddle enlightenment to credulous Westerners. On my first trip to the

country, a short backpacking sojourn in the late 1990s, I'd read and loved Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola*, a wry Indian look at the Western spiritual tourists who flock to the subcontinent, and the enterprising Indian sages who've risen to meet the demand. "As our home industry expands on every front, at last it is our turn to mass market," she writes. The hippie spiritual scene interested me as a journalistic subject, but I certainly didn't want to participate in it. I wasn't sure if I could even chant "Om" with a straight face.

Yet, I needed exercise. Living in McLeod Ganj, a mountain village just outside the city of Dharamsala, where the Tibetan exile movement was headquartered, I was sick of hiking. My husband and I—we'd eloped the previous year, when I was twenty-four and he was twenty-eight—were about six months into what would be a year-long trip through Asia. Prior to our departure, he'd worked at an Internet start-up. When he cashed out his stock options before they bottomed out in the crash of the late 1990s, we became Internet thousandaires, with a sum in the low five figures that seemed, at the time, to be a fortune. Both of us loved to travel. Putting all our stuff in storage, we flew to Ho Chi Minh City.

After three months bumming around Southeast Asia, we went from Singapore to the tip of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, then west to the relatively idyllic state of Kerala, where, while lying on a beach, we were approached by movie producers looking for extras for an Indian musical. They were shooting a scene in an ashram, and since no Indian ashram is complete without a handful of flaky Westerners, they asked for our help. Delighted, we agreed. On set, we met a thirty-two-year-old Argentine devotee of the real-life guru Sai Baba, about whom I'd long been curious. His followers believe he's God, and I'd seen his face, beaming beneath his surprising Afro, on stickers and trinkets for sale all over the country. A former medical student, the Argentine had given up her studies and her Buenos Aires apartment after dreaming that Sai Baba summoned her to India.

Later, as we snaked our way north, we visited her at Sai Baba's enormous Prasanthi Nilayam ashram, in a barren corner of Andhra Pradesh, one of India's poorest states. The ashram boasted a shiny planetarium, two hospitals that treated patients for free, a college, a music school, and a brand-new airport for wealthier devotees with private planes. Around the edges, luxury apartment buildings were replacing mud huts. Rather than requesting two of the ashram's ten thousand beds, we checked into a nearby hotel. Every afternoon, a loudspeaker piped in music praising the guru. When I bought a pen at a local shop to take notes, it had Sai Baba's smiling face on it.

There was an ambient spiritual hysteria at Prasanthi Nilayam. At dinner one evening, a devotee we'd become friendly with pointed out an Austrian woman tugging her listless seven-year-old son behind her. She was in the midst of a spiritual crisis because she'd had a dream in which Sai Baba instructed her to abandon the boy and live on the streets as a beggar, and she didn't know if she had the "strength" to do it. As far as I could tell, no one at the ashram was stepping forward to discourage her.

I also heard rumors of sexual abuse and was shocked to meet old hands at the ashram who accepted these stories as true, though they interpreted the molestations as part of Sai Baba's divine mission. One man, an American ex-motivational speaker, thought they were part of Baba's plan to spread his message. "Probably more people are going to know about you if there are allegations that you're a pedophile than if you say God is incarnated on earth," he told me. I ended up writing a story about all this for *Salon*. It didn't leave me any more eager to find a guru.

Arriving in McLeod Ganj, weeks later, my husband and I saw a flyer seeking volunteers to teach English at a school for Tibetan refugees. After months of lassitude, we were thrilled and relieved at the chance to be useful and threw ourselves into the work. Settling down for several months in the sweet, peaceful little town, blessedly cool after months on the roasting plains, I realized I needed to get in shape. Most travelers who

wander around India on the cheap lose weight, but I have an iron stomach, as well as a weakness for nan and paneer tikka masala. There was a three-hour ashtanga-based yoga class that met early every morning in a gymnasium near the center of town, and I signed up for it.

It was excruciating. I didn't know it at the time, but ashtanga was initially based on exercise routines developed for teenage boys. The jump-backs we did between poses—like squat-thrusts followed by half push-ups—were channels for an animal energy I'd never possessed. The contortions required for binding poses were out of reach, the inversions terrifying, and I still couldn't do a split, but I kept going back, at first because I wanted to lose weight, then because my friends in town were also going, and finally because it left me feeling fantastic.

A lot of the credit goes to my teacher, Vijay, a Gumby-limbed South Indian who could toss his ankle behind his neck as casually as if he were flinging a scarf. Vijay had very few pretensions. Once, catching me smoking a cigarette, he plucked it out of my fingers—and then started puffing on it himself. "Vijay, what are you doing? You're a yogi!" I cried. "Michelle," he said to me with a gleam in his eye, "I'm not a yogi. I'm a businessman." I appreciated this sort of candor.

Before I left India, Vijay said to me, "Smoking won't interfere with your yoga, but yoga will interfere with your smoking." This turned out to be true; a year later, I quit. By then, my husband and I were living in Brooklyn. I was working as a journalist and writing about politics, which often left me knotted and angry. Yoga became a refuge. Sometimes I practiced four or five times a week. In the ritual and community of classes, I began to sense some of the consolation that others find in religion. Though still not a believer in anything supernatural, I felt the benefits of stepping outside the rush of ordinary life and trying to attune myself to a higher state of consciousness, however inchoate and fleeting. The discipline of paying attention to the habitual way your thoughts unfold, to the familiar grooves of your mind, seemed like cognitive therapy, but cheaper. I loved that I could find psychological solace and a workout at the same time.

I would never be lithe or supple, but I learned to do things with my body that I hadn't thought possible. Occasionally, I would even feel that there was something positive in the tedious loathing I'd always felt for my never-skinny frame, since without that loathing, I might never have taken up yoga in the first place.

But while I loved yoga, I also wondered about it. The claims made for the curative powers of certain poses—the idea that one specific arrangement of limbs could treat depression, another fight headaches or PMS—seemed almost magical. I cringed at the way some of my American teachers romanticized India, a country that, for all its religious magnificence, can also be a place of staggering brutality. And I knew that despite descriptions of postural yoga as a quintessentially Indian discipline, the sweaty, fast-paced style I was practicing in New York was hard to find outside of tourist enclaves on the subcontinent. Everyone in my yoga class back in McLeod Ganj had been from the United States, Europe, Australia, or Israel. Vijay told me his own teacher had been a Frenchman. The Indian yogis I encountered, by contrast, tended to be dreadlocked mendicants practicing torturous physical austerities—standing on one leg for days, sleeping on a bed of nails—that seemed a universe away from anything one learns in a modern yoga class.

Among Western yogis, the standard explanation for the relative scarcity of their style of yoga in India is that most Indians have lost touch with their heritage. Still, I was curious what exactly the connection was between the ash-covered sadhus I'd seen contorting themselves on the banks of the Ganges in Benares and the invigorating stretches, lunges, twists, and handstands I practiced first in McLeod Ganj and then in ninety-minute sessions on a rubber mat in Brooklyn. I started looking around for a book or an article that would explain it. And at some point, I came across the *New York Times* obituary for Indra Devi.

“Indra Devi, the daughter of European nobility who introduced the ancient discipline of yoga to the Kremlin leadership, Hollywood stars like Gloria Swanson and even students in India, died on Thursday in Buenos Aires,” the obit began. “She was 102.” The piece explained that she’d learned from the same guru as B. K. S. Iyengar and K. Pattabhi Jois, yoga masters I’d heard about from serious students in India. It described her life as a Berlin cabaret performer and an actress in early Indian cinema. According to the obituary, she taught “what was thought to be the first yoga class in modern China” and wrote the first book on yoga by a Westerner to be published in India.

In Indra Devi’s story, I thought, I’d find the answers I was lookingfor. So I began to trace the path of her strange, occasionally inscrutable, and often epic life. As I’d hoped, that life does indeed give us a way to understand where yoga as we practice it in the West came from, showing both its links to an ancient Indian tradition and its wild discontinuities. It reveals how the discipline has been shaped by long dialogue among India, Europe, and America. In a strange way, following the serpentine tale of Devi’s life and teachings resolved whatever anxiety I had had about modern yoga’s authenticity, because it showed that there’s never been a pristine, eternal tradition to corrupt.

The narrative of Devi’s life, however, is much more than the story of yoga in the West. As I dove into it, I felt that I was discovering a secret sideways history of the twentieth century. Devi was a Zelig-like figure, an esoteric female Forrest Gump who seemed to show up wherever tumultuous world events were unfolding. Her story moves through the Russian Revolution, the cabarets of Weimar Berlin, the Indian independence movement, the World War II Japanese occupation of Shanghai, and Hollywood during its 1950s heyday. She pops up, somewhat randomly, in Dallas when JFK was shot and then in Saigon when the Vietnam War was raging. That ashram I visited in Andhra Pradesh? It turns out that she was the one who spread Sai Baba’s fame across the West. She crossed paths with Gandhi, Greta Garbo, and John Lennon. As spiritual adviser to Manuel Noriega’s second-in-command, her name appears in most histories of the U.S. invasion of Panama.

It’s an astonishing story, and once I started trying to write it, I realized why no one had told it before. What source material exists is scattered in archives, old newspapers, government files, and friends’ houses all over the world. Some is in English, but some is in Russian, Czech, German, Polish, and Spanish, and the last is the only one of the languages in which I have any facility. Devi published several books, including, when she was one hundred, a Spanish-language memoir titled *Una mujer de tres siglos*, or “A Woman of Three Centuries.” Her autobiographical writing, however, is highly selective, full of large gaps. In her memoir, there are fewer than eight pages about her eight years in China. Some important incidents are ignored entirely.

In parts of this book, I had no choice but to use Devi’s own version of events as my guide. But I also dug up old letters and mentions of her in out-of-print books. I obtained her confidential FBI file—J. Edgar Hoover, not surprisingly, had his eye on her—and the service record of her diplomat first husband. I hired a researcher to help me navigate archives in Riga, Latvia, where she was born, and in Berlin. In addition to those countries, I traveled to India, Argentina, Mexico, and Panama. I spent a lot of money on professional translators, sometimes not knowing whether the material would be useful until after I read it in English. Even after all this, lacunae remain. Most of the people who knew Devi in life found her, on some level, ungraspable, and she remains elusive in death.

This is partly because she had so many identities. Again and again, she would build a life for herself and then discard it when it no longer suited, moving on with no discernable effort or regret. You can see her talent for rebirth in how often she changed her name. Born Eugenia Peterson, she was also known as Eugenie and Jane, and later Indira and Indra, all in combination with various surnames. For her, constant openness to change was a spiritual precept, though it also marks her as a very modern sort of celebrity. (In the pages that

follow, I will refer to her as Eugenia until she arrives in Hollywood and officially becomes Indra Devi.)

Many people who knew her spoke to me, including two close friends who themselves had tried, unsuccessfully, to write the story of her life, and who generously shared everything they'd learned. (A writer named Natalia Apostolli was finally able to produce a Spanish-language biography of Devi in 1992. Titled *Una vida, un siglo*, or "One Life, One Century," it is based almost entirely on Devi's stories and recollections.)

Some of those who loved her and who helped me will be disappointed in this book. To them, she was nearly divine. I see her as a complicated, audaciously modern, sometimes inspiring, and sometimes maddeningly irresponsible woman, not as a spiritual exemplar.

Indeed, the more I learned about Devi, the more I doubted that her ethic of nonattachment, an idea often bandied about in yoga classes, was truly compatible with passionate loyalty to other people. In "Reflections on Gandhi," published a year after the Mahatma's assassination, George Orwell writes, "In this yogi-ridden age, it is too readily assumed that 'non-attachment' is…better than a full acceptance of earthly life…If one could follow it to its psychological roots, one would, I believe, find that the main motive for 'non-attachment' is a desire to escape from the pain of living, and above all from love, which, sexual or non-sexual, is hard work." This opinion is reductive, but after spending years researching Devi's life, which is in many ways a triumph of nonattachment, I don't think Orwell was entirely wrong.

Yet yoga remains as important to me as ever. My yoga classes even helped me deal with the doubts about yoga that occasionally emerged while I was writing this book. I think this is why the practice is such a comfort to secular urbanites like me—it's a technique, not a faith. You don't have to believe in anything, even yoga itself, to find joy and solace in the conscious joining of breath and movement, or relief in slowing the whirling of the mind. You just have to do it.

Devi played a huge role in teaching the world to do yoga. For that, I'm not only fascinated by her, but also grateful. She, more than any cave-dwelling ascetic or Brahmin sage, is the godparent of a practice that has had an enormous impact on contemporary culture as well as on my own wholly worldly life.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eunice Buckley:

Inside other case, little persons like to read book The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West. You can choose the best book if you want reading a book. Given that we know about how is important any book The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West. You can add know-how and of course you can around the world by way of a book. Absolutely right, due to the fact from book you can learn everything! From your country till foreign or abroad you can be known. About simple thing until wonderful thing you can know that. In this era, we can open a book or maybe searching by internet gadget. It is called e-book. You should use it when you feel bored stiff to go to the library. Let's examine.

Frank Botelho:

What do you in relation to book? It is not important along? Or just adding material when you really need something to explain what the ones you have problem? How about your time? Or are you busy man? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have extra time? What did you do? Every person has many questions above. They have to answer that question simply because just their can do which. It said that about book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is proper. Because start from on pre-school until university need this kind of The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West to read.

Melinda McKinney:

This The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West are reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The explanation of this The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West can be one of the great books you must have is giving you more than just simple looking at food but feed an individual with information that perhaps will shock your previous knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it everywhere and whenever your conditions in the e-book and printed types. Beside that this The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West giving you an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you trial run of critical thinking that could it useful in your day pastime. So , let's have it appreciate reading.

Mary Craine:

Hey guys, do you wishes to finds a new book you just read? May be the book with the headline The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West suitable to you? The book was written by popular writer in this era. Typically the book untitled The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the Westis the main one of several books which everyone read now. This book was inspired many people in the world. When you read this book you will enter the new way of measuring that you ever know ahead of. The author explained their concept in the simple way, therefore all of people can easily to recognise the core of this book. This book will give you a great deal of information about this world now. To help you to see the represented of the world in this particular book.

Read The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg for online ebook

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg books to read online.

Online The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg ebook PDF download

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg Doc

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg Mobipocket

The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg EPub

W340MUSVFP8: The Goddess Pose: The Audacious Life of Indra Devi, the Woman Who Helped Bring Yoga to the West By Michelle Goldberg