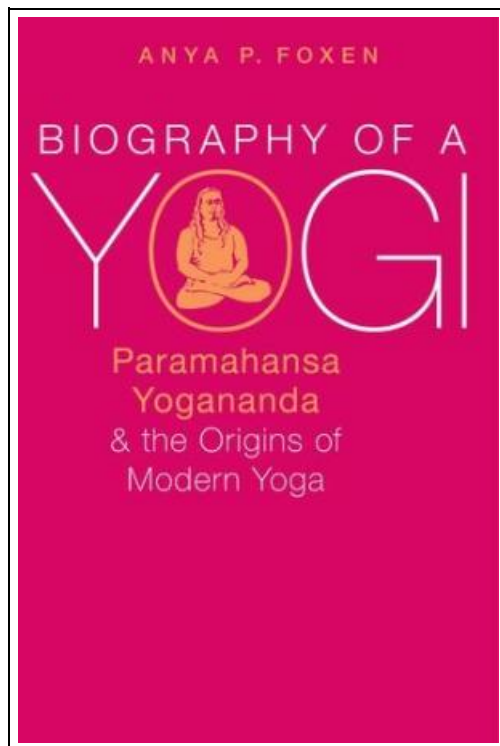


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Reviews

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BIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI: YOGANANDA AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN YOGA (HARDBACK)



Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2017. Hardback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. With over four million copies in print, Parmahansa Yogananda's autobiography has been translated into thirty-three languages, and it still serves as a gateway into yoga and alternative spirituality for countless North American practitioners. This book examines Yogananda's life and work to clarify linkages between the seemingly disparate aspects of modern yoga, and illuminates the intimate connections between yoga and metaphysically-leaning American traditions such as Unitarianism, New Thought, and Theosophy. Instead of treating yoga as a stable practice, Anya P. Foxen proposes that it is the figure of the Yogi that give the practice of his followers both form and meaning. Focusing on Yogis rather than yoga during the period of transnational popularization highlights the continuities in the concept of the Yogi as superhuman even as it illuminates the transformation of the practice itself. Skillfully balancing traditional yogic ritual, metaphysical spirituality, physical culture, and a flair for the stage, Foxen shows, Yogananda taught a proto-modern yoga to his American audiences. His Yogoda program has remained under the radar of yoga scholarship due to its lack of reliance on recognizable postures. However, as a regimen of training for the modern Yogi, Yogananda's method synthesizes the spiritual and superhuman aspirations of Indian traditions with the metaphysical and health-oriented sensibilities of Euro-American progressivism in a way that exactly prefigures present-day transnational yoga culture. Yet, at the heart of it all, Yogananda retains a sense of what it means to be a Yogi: his message is that the natural destiny of the human is the superhuman.



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