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Category : July 1990
Published by Anonymous on Jul. 01, 1990

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"We are showing yoga as an art and science of living," 91-old-Mataji Indra Devi told me at her April yoga conference in Buenos Aries, Argentina, where this popular teacher of Hollywood stars now makes her home.

"Practicing yoga postures without the backing of yama [moral restraints] and niyama [spiritual observances] is mere acrobatics. The qualities requested are discipline, faith, tenacity and perseverance. In this congress we have teachers and students share thoughts on yoga and remember always its fundamentals," she said.

Ten years ago in this 96% Catholic country even talking publically about yoga was barely possible. It was considered an occult science, an unknown religion or even something from the devil. For example, in 1982, I worked for an organization called "Fat Anonymous" which helped people lose weight. In a short time, I realized that the medical and psychological treatments weren't sufficient to aid the patients and suggested to the staff that they incorporate hatha yoga in the rehabilitation plan. Although the benefits were understood, the doctors were frightened off because the institution was under the scrutiny of the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, yoga has today spread across this country, thanks to the benefits it carries and to is own truth. Doctors now not only recommend yoga, they are looking into the Hindu Ayurveda medical systems as well.

Mataji's long-time personal friend, Swami Satchidananda of Yogaville, Virginia, was the conference's guest of honor. Nearly five hundred people participated in workshops such as people participated in workshops such as "Pranayama and the Door of Consciousness," "The Art and Sport of Yoga," "Symbols of the Chakras" and

"Yoga for Down's Syndrome Children." In addition to Mataji's Foundation, participants included, among others, Argentina Association of Yoga Teachers, European Union of Yoga Federation, the Uruguay Association of Yoga, Institute of Classical Yoga of Brazil and Brahma Kumaris.

The conference took place April 20th and 21st at a large school rented for the purpose. Mornings began with guided meditation, followed by the workshops with breaks for gourmet vegetarian lunches and dinners. The event's young organizer, David Liftzyc, said he got the idea the Congress of Yoga held in 1987 in Montevideo, Uruguay. "I asked, why could we not do it here? In the last three years the number of yoga adepts had steadily increased.

Our task is done without technology or money, yet, participants are happy. I would never have imagined this success."

The participants I met each had a different story to tell of how they found their way to the practice of yoga. Mrs. Mayte Fernandez de Bobadilla, president of the Argentina Association of Teachers. I was a dancer and in the moment of my practices I got subtle vibrations and marvelous feelings inside me. I did not know that divinity is hidden in my soul, but I found explanations about in Hinduism." Marta Sucheli, a 38-year-old yoga student remembered when she "went to the doctor because I had a great pain in my back, but he could not solve my problem. I began to do asanas and it disappeared, and my bad character too is getting more tranquil. Now I enjoy life. I am not afraid anymore." Her friend, Monica Aguilar, 37, said, "I got the same impression. I did these exercises looking for something new. Since the first class I have felt very well, plunging into an infinite peace, a source of joy and light without end."

Horacio Guido Purcaro, 40, credited yoga with making him a calm, tolerant and successful person. "I realized yoga is a very serious science." A near-fatal car accident affirmed 42-year old Daniel Sbampato's faith in his yoga practice. "Even though we could have died, I became serene, calming my wife and orienting my mind to God. It is very positive for me. Earlier in my life, I couldn't have done it."

Maria Esther Defisella practiced yoga as a child, but it wasn't until she studied with Mataji that she understood that the obstacles, trials and tribulations in the path of

yoga can be removed with the help of a guru.

Mataji summed up for me both the means and goal of yoga: "It is the dedicated votive offering of man who brings himself to the altar, alone and clean in body and mind, focused in attention and will, offering in simplicity and innocence not a burnt sacrifice, but simply himself raised to his own highest potential."

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