

The Big Yoga Expo 2003

By Carolyn Reynolds

The big Yoga Expo 2003 in Los Angeles is underway as this is being written. Bikram Choudhury is the executive producer. If you read the article about him in Yoga Journal a while back, you will remember a picture of him in front of his expensive automobiles. Bikram likes a show. The Yoga Expo promised to be a show. There were three hundred and fifty exhibitors. That is **350!** The exhibits were of “food, supplements, yoga and fitness apparel and equipment, stunning outfits and accessories from around the world.” There was a daily fashion show, the world’s largest yoga class and a yoga competition for the coveted India’s Ghosh Cup.

The classes included Yogastics, Solar Yoga, Hypno-Yoga, Arhatic Yoga, Atma Yoga, Intuitive Yoga, Tantric Partner Yoga, Amrit Yoga, Transformative Yoga, Emotional Yoga, Yoga Neuropathology, and Yoga to Bring Balance to Your Business Yoga. Whew! Are we the best entrepreneurs on earth or what? Fortunately, such programs as *Asana, Pranayama and Meditation as a Seamless Practice*, *The Heart of Yoga: Asana, Pranayama and Chanting*, and *Yoga Philosophy 101* were to be found amongst the more glittery stuff. Not glittery but authentic.

Paramahansa Yogananda was an incredibly authentic yogi whose book, Autobiography of a Yogi, still sells many copies. The Self-Realization Fellowship is his legacy that keeps his teachings alive. His younger brother was Bishnu Charan Ghosh. It appears that Ghosh was as interested in yoga exercise and physical education as Paramahansa was in self-realization. Ghosh’s son, Biswanath Ghosh is the current director of Ghosh College in Calcutta. Bikram was Ghosh’s student. Bikram’s School of Yoga teaches a series of 26 postures that are to be practiced in a specific sequence in a heated room. It is very good for the body. The endocrine system, the lymph system and the muscular system are all heated, softened, stretched, strengthened and rung out. There is plenty of sweat to wash away the toxins.

When Georg Fuerstein, a recognized yoga scholar, said that yoga in the United States is “a mess,” it seemed a strong statement. What better door to Yoga would the American be prone to enter? Hatha (the practice of postures in delivery modes that can appeal to a wide range of personalities) seems the most appropriate for us. Once in the Hatha door, the yoga practitioner would find the most all-encompassing mind-body-spirit philosophy/psychology available. Wouldn’t she? Maybe. Maybe not. At least she would have been hard pressed in LA at the big Yoga Expo 2003 to sift through the glitter to find the authentic diamond.