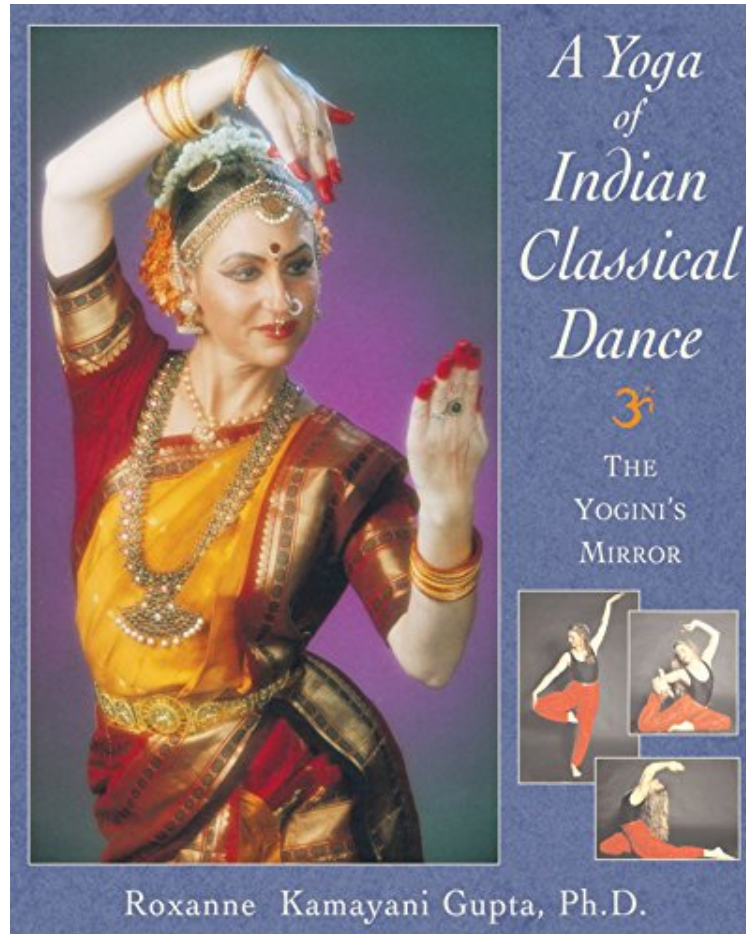


## A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance: The Yogini's Mirror

Roxanne Kamayani Gupta

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**Roxanne Kamayani Gupta : A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance: The Yogini's Mirror** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance: The Yogini's Mirror:

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A wonderful bookBy A CustomerThis book is a wonderful multifaceted combination of exercise instruction, artistic photography and the author's narrative of her experiences with Indian culture. I recommend this book for anyone interested in accessing and better understanding India's living traditions.3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Three in oneBy A CustomerThis book is beautifully packaged, and Ms. Gupta links Yoga asanas and classical Indian dance, something so obvious, and yet the dance masters fail to do this to any extent in the present-day Indian classical dance training. The Yoga portion of the book consists of basic gentle yoga asanas, with photos of the author doing the asanas, good especially for beginners, but a video to accompany the book would have made it more complete and easier to follow (though, as photos go, it's as good as it can get without a video). It's a memoir and a journey of the author's first trip to India and how she, as an

American, got interested in the East. It is full of hundreds of photos, large and small, of the author who shares her earthly and sometimes not-so-earthly experiences in words and pictures, making it a book on yoga, a biography and an introduction to Indian classical dance. 18 of 21 people found the following review helpful. The first book of its kind By K. Palani It is indeed the first and - so far - the only book that attempts to introduce - to the western readership - the spiritual aspects of the classical Indian dance form of Kuchipudi. So, is it about Natya Yoga? The author is clearly not a Bharata Muni, Abhinavagupta, or even a devadasi or a Siddhendra Yogi, but is obviously a very intellectual (and often a bit too philosophical) lady and made the book easily understandable for the non-Indian readership. I have never watched Roxanne Kamayani Gupta dance, but, to judge from her book, she is (and has never been) not a contemporary Kuchipudi star like Varsha Ramesh who, true, cannot boast of a PhD and is too young to understand the western mentality. To have some idea of what is inside the book: I. Intro (Understanding Yoga and Indian Classical Dance) 1. Discipline and Desire (My Initiation into Indian Spirituality) - page 82. Dance of the Gurus (Meetings with Remarkable Men and Women) - page 323. Stillness at the Center (The Yoga of Indian Dance) - page 514. The Dance of Yoga (The sixty-Four Yogini Asanas) - page 595. Yoga of the Emotions (Spiritual Dimensions of Indian Dance) - page 1506. The Dance of the Yogini (Tantric Dimensions of Indian Classical Dance) - page 1627. Yoga of the Elements (Nature, Culture and Spirituality) - page 173 Half of the book is dedicated to the asanas but gives hardly anything beyond the instructions for the physical body. So, where is the Kriya Yoga element here then? The author fails to establish the connection between the asanas and the classical Indian dance. Of course, nobody in India performs the yoga asanas in those kind of tights - sitting in a garden on a deer skin. And nobody in India understands what is "Yogini Asanas". Yoga Asanas is what is known. There is a bit too much of the romantic American feminism here. Roxanne does not know why the founder of Kuchipudi, Siddhendra Yogi, taught it only to men... So, why? And - my god! - "Tantric Dimensions" are of course in line with the popular western (sex-obsessed) interpretation of the Left Path of Tantra. Roxanne believes that "since the advent of the birth control pill women's sexuality no longer inevitably results in pregnancy...". Roxanne could never explain why the original devadasis were celibate and why nobody was allowed to watch them dance in the temples' shrine's. Explaining it would hurt the pride of the sexually active (majority) part of the potential readership in the USA, of course. It would be shocking for them to read something like the Irumbai legend portraying the devadasi Valli. After reading Roxanne, an average American woman may be lead to wonder if the ancient devadasis, indeed, used to pull condoms over the lingams in the temples! As for "Yoga of Emotions" section, there are full-page photos of Roxanne attempting to demonstrate the navarasas. While some of the expressions are ok, others (such as Raudra, Sringara, Vira, Adbhuta) are not clearly expressed. Roxanne should better learn what real expressions should be by, for example, watching the DVDs of Sri Devi Nrithyalaya's virtuosos. Ok, all in, if you were not brought up in India, the book is a must-read for all those interested in the yoga side of Kuchipudi. Even if 2% of the book gives you some kind of answer to the question, "Where on earth is Yoga in Kuchipudi???", these 2% are worth gleaning from reading the entire book. I am quite satisfied with this book's price. P.S. Since the time this review was written, there appeared a few interesting DVDs on Natya Yoga that make a far more successful attempt to reveal the esoteric Natya Yoga side of the classical Indian dance.

The yoga and classical dance traditions of India have been inextricably entwined for millennia. The exacting hand gestures, postures and movements of Indian classical dance can only be achieved through yogic concentration. Conversely, the esthetics, symmetry, and dynamism of dance enhance the practice of yoga. These two traditions, so complementary and essential to one another, are united and explicated for the first time in *A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance*. Twenty-five years ago Roxanne Kamayani Gupta embarked on a journey of dance and yoga, yearning to unlock their mysteries and discover their common origins. As a twenty-year-old student from America she was miraculously and mysteriously absorbed into Indian culture, became a Hindu, and began an odyssey so unusual and unique that the reader will be enchanted by its telling. Choosing the path of the dancer, Roxanne Gupta accomplished what no Western woman had done before: being accepted and trained by Indian masters and then performing in the Indian classical traditions--from the palaces of maharajas to the arts festivals of Europe and America--while at the same time achieving a doctorate in the anthropology of religion and being initiated into a number of yogic traditions. Having mastered the classical form of Kuchipudi dance and studied with teachers of the hatha and kriya yoga traditions, she brings together these two great streams of consciousness and practice. In this tantric approach to yoga and dance, expressed through the body and through a yoga of emotions, we see the traditions embodied in a manner that embraces the totality of the human experience. The result is the dance of the yogini, the sacred feminine initiatrix who dances with one foot in nature and the other in the realm of the gods. With extensive photographs of innovative yoga routines, Roxanne Kamayani Gupta distills her experience into techniques for yogic study certain to assist students of all levels to achieve a dynamic, beautiful, and graceful practice.

From *Library Journal* Yoga teaches us that everything placed before the mind is a mirror. American-born Gupta (who holds a doctorate combining aspects of cultural anthropology with Indian religious history) has written a captivating personal narrative of her journey to India and the arduous training to become a performer in the Kuchipudi style of

Indian classical dance. This unique story is a blend of autobiography, philosophical reflection, and firsthand insight into Indian culture and the performing arts. Also a yoga teacher, Gupta has included a chapter presenting 64 illustrated postures, creatively synthesizing the dual disciplines of traditional hatha yoga and sacred dance. Her explanations of Indian dramatic theory and discussions of yoga and dance in historical and religious terms are clear-cut and informative. The text is amply supplemented with photographs of Gupta performing in authentic dress. Highly recommended for larger public libraries and for academic libraries, especially those building collections in the performing arts, religion, or Eastern culture.-Deborah Anne Broocker, Georgia Perimeter Coll., Dunwoody Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A captivating personal narrative. This unique story is a blend of autobiography, philosophical reflection, and firsthand insight. [Gupta's] explanations of Indian dramatic theory and discussions of yoga and dance in historical and religions terms are clear-cut and informative." (Library Journal, April 15, 2000)"Fascinating work. One of the outcomes of her creative tantric synthesis of dance and yoga is a series of 64 innovative yoga exercises that are photographed and presented in detail in this book." (spiritualityhealth.com)"An exquisitely presented, magnificently related story. Gupta evinces a fascinating appreciation of the many great dancers with whom she trained in the practice, drama, and philosophy of Indian classical dance. Glorious, original and inspirational book." (Spirit of Change, Nov/Dec 2000)"A very interesting read." (Dance Magazine, March 2001, Vol. 75, No. 3)From the Back CoverYOGA The yoga and classical dance traditions of India have been inextricably entwined for millennia. The exacting hand gestures, postures, and movements of Indian classical dance can only be achieved through yogic concentration. Conversely, the esthetics, symmetry, and dynamism of dance enhance the practice of yoga. These two traditions, so complementary and essential to one another, are united and explicated for the first time in A Yoga of Indian Classical Dance. Twenty-five years ago Roxanne Kamayani Gupta embarked on a journey of dance and yoga, yearning to unlock their mysteries and discover their common origins. As a twenty-year-old student from America she was miraculously and mysteriously absorbed into Indian culture, became a Hindu, and began an odyssey so unusual and unique that the reader will be enchanted by its telling. Choosing the path of the dancer, Roxanne Gupta accomplished what no Western woman had done before: being accepted and trained by Indian masters and then performing in the Indian classical traditions--from the palaces of maharajas to the arts festivals of Europe and America--while at the same time achieving a doctorate in the anthropology of religion and being initiated into a number of yogic traditions. Having mastered the classical form of Kuchipudi dance and studied with teachers of the hatha and kriya yoga traditions, she brings together these two great streams of consciousness and practice. In this tantric approach to yoga and dance, expressed through the body and through a yoga of emotions, we see the traditions embodied in a manner that embraces the totality of the human experience. The result is the dance of the yogini, the sacred feminine initiatress who dances with one foot in nature and the other in the realm of the gods. With extensive photographs of innovative yoga routines, Roxanne Kamayani Gupta distills her experience into techniques for yogic study certain to assist students of all levels to achieve a dynamic, beautiful, and graceful practice. ROXANNE KAMAYANI GUPTA is a scholar of Indian culture and comparative religion, a teacher of hatha and kriya yoga, and an initiate of the Sri Vidya tantric tradition of goddess worship. She holds a doctorate in Anthropology of Religion from Syracuse University and is currently Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania.