

[At 94 , Indra Devi is Still Teaching Yoga](#)

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Maria Canepa, Argentina

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"We women must listen to our internal voice," says 94-year-old Indra Devi. "It is easier for women to do this as they are not afraid to say what they feel. We must keep both our femininity and our strength. Men," she advises, "have to descend from their pedestal, learn how to be more broad-minded and spiritual." Indra Devi is now living and teaching in Argentina. In the 67 years that she has been immersed in yoga she has influenced many lives and has contributed greatly to the spread of yoga outside of India.

Born 1899 of noble Russian blood-her grandfather was a Count-she was brought up by her grandparents. After listening to Krishnamurti in Holland, she fulfilled her long cherished dream of visiting India in 1927. She immediately fell in love with its people and customs. She met Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranatha Tagore and Pandit Nehru. On another visit, two years later, she became a film actress, having had theatrical experience in Europe. It was then that she adopted her Indian name, Indra Devi, in honor of Nehru, whose daughter was Indra Gandhi. She ended her film career at 31 to marry her first husband, a diplomat, and they settled in India. There, she learned yoga-first in Bombay, then in Mysore with Shri Krishnamacharya.

During her one-year yoga training, she carried out a disciplined routine and strict diet: rise at dawn, take a lukewarm bath, do asanas (yoga exercises), meditation in the morning and at noon, more asanas in the afternoon, then go to bed before 9:30 pm. She was allowed only to eat vegetables that grew above the earth and whole

foods-no refined sugar, flour or rice or canned foods. Her master personally taught her pranayama, control of the vital energies through breathing techniques, and told her she would teach yoga. Thanks to yoga, she realized that she could easily give up those things that were not good for her, like drinking coffee-which she was quite fond of-that she could no longer wear anything but saris, and that she was no longer afraid of anything or anyone.

In her 40's the effects of her yogic lifestyle became apparent to her and to others. Little by little she became happier, good humored and regained her youthful figure while her wrinkles were disappearing and her skin was becoming softer and firmer.

She was well known and quite influential in the USA in the decades just before the 60's. During the 40's and 50's she taught yoga to many, including famous movie stars in Hollywood. In this way she helped prepare the ground for the yoga teachers that came to America beginning in the 1960's.

She was widowed, but remarried at age 54 to a famous physician. After teaching yoga in China, India, USA (Hollywood and New York), Russia and Mexico, she made her first visit to Argentina in 1982. She settled here in 1985, after her second husband died, and now teaches the many sincere yoga practitioners in this South American country.

At 94, Indra Devi is youthful, bright-eyed, energetic, totally lucid and beautiful to look at because her beautiful inside radiates-all attributed to her long life of yoga. She is the president of the Indra Devi Foundation in Buenos Aires, which teaches yoga at two institutions.

Contact: Indra Devi Foundation, Azcuener, 7621029, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Indra Devi's Candid Words

On Husband and Wife:

"Women must not shout back when their husbands come home and shout at them for any reason. They must laugh and say, 'How nice, the way you shout.' Laughter drives shouting away. Tell your husbands any bad news when everything is calm, not just as they come through the door."

On Thought:

"Words go together with thoughts. We rarely use the full power of our thoughts and words. They can either strengthen or weaken our defences. Therefore, we must be very careful how we address others."

On Yoga:

"The solution to a better and full life is in the practice of yoga, where you can find all the answers. You can also transmit peace through yoga. I do not belong to any religion. Everything is between God and myself."

On Women's Health:

"The reversed pelvic posture has an effect on the sex glands. If women go on doing it, they will not suffer from menopause or other woman's disorders. The head stand or its alternative (head and feet on the ground) is also excellent."