



celebrating



years



photography by diego del sol

## diego del sol by nirmala nataraj

### the art of vitality and power

There's a basic principle of yoga which affirms that one's life and one's work should be aligned in total harmony and integrity. It happens to be a principle which Diego del Sol is quite familiar with.

A teacher whose accolades include a 2004 mention as Best Yoga Instructor in San Francisco magazine, del Sol's eclectic approach combines every possible style of yoga, and also includes meditation, sound exercises, and Tibetan rituals. Now based in San Francisco, del Sol was born in Argentina and moved to the United States at the age of seven. The experience of being immersed in two different cultures at a young age gave him a keenness of

observation and passion for studying human nature that would soon lead to more. "At a young age, I realized that we have an innate ability to know what makes us feel good, and all the bells go off when that's right," says del Sol. "I always saw that if we were really aligned, we could have that experience of joy, vitality, wholeness."

Diego discovered the yogic path at the age of 19, when he was taking meditation classes in the Boston area. "I had already been doing work with art, creativity, healing, and energy, and something told me to try yoga," he says. del Sol eventually stumbled upon the *Sivananda Companion to Yoga*, a classic

guide that comprehensively delves into the yogic lifestyle. "I still recommend this book to everyone, and it remains a beautiful presence and essence in my life," says del Sol, who began his practice with an intensive two-week study of the postures in the book.

"There are thousands of techniques in yoga, but it's like a dance rather than a static set of postures," says del Sol, who to this day refrains from pigeonholing his brand of yoga as belonging to any one school or particular style. "It doesn't stop when you stop holding your pose – it's about slowing down and coming to a space of wisdom that gets you out of the holding patterns and onto this endless path."

Diego began sharing this newfound knowledge with his friends shortly after beginning his practice, sometimes referring to the teachings as yoga and sometimes not, depending on how receptive his audience was. Since then, he has always espoused the yogic principle of "teaching to who's right in front of you. Yoga is for everybody, and it's the most natural way to wake up our highest qualities – but the practice should always adapt to the person, not the other way around."

After studying literature at Brandeis University and obtaining his Master's degree in Education from the University of Vermont, del Sol worked in a variety of occupations: as a high school English teacher, soccer coach, Montessori teacher, and instructor for the Outward Bound School. del Sol's passion for experiential education and the healing arts ultimately moved him to Miami, where he decided to teach yoga. After two and a half years in Miami, del Sol moved to San Francisco, where he rapidly became a staple of the city's yoga community through his classes at Yoga Tree.

"Teaching yoga was a way for me to speak more directly to the spirit by working with receptive participants," says del Sol, who had introduced yoga to his high school students in the past. "I discovered that I could be a guide to get people into a space where they could feel their own magic and power. It's the most rewarding job I can ask for, because people associate that goodness they feel with me!"

Diego always encourages his students to cultivate a practice away from the classroom setting, even if it's simply ten minutes of breath work per day, in order to be connected to their natural vitality and power. He also asserts that "humor is a great way to get ourselves out of the internal chatter that keep us from accessing the wisdom within. Patience is important

too. It's not about doing the posture the same way as your neighbor. Some people don't even do the postures because they're afraid to fall. But putting in the effort is more powerful than 'getting it right' – if you have to fall, then fall!"

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*A Poem by Diego del Sol:*

To all great teachers who live forever  
Because they live for the soul

Today we breathe your sweet essential  
Patient nature. Vitality's nectar!  
Steady force of fire nourishing  
Heart eternal rose.

This burning star is the light of truth.  
This radiant glow, magnificence fulfilled.

There is no other,  
We are a precious part  
of One miraculous game.

The sounds of your name...  
Go on repeating themselves  
In night temple fortresses.

And deep in the womb  
Of softness, a sacred listening...  
Where songs of wisdom  
Move in.

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me to speak more directly to  
the spirit