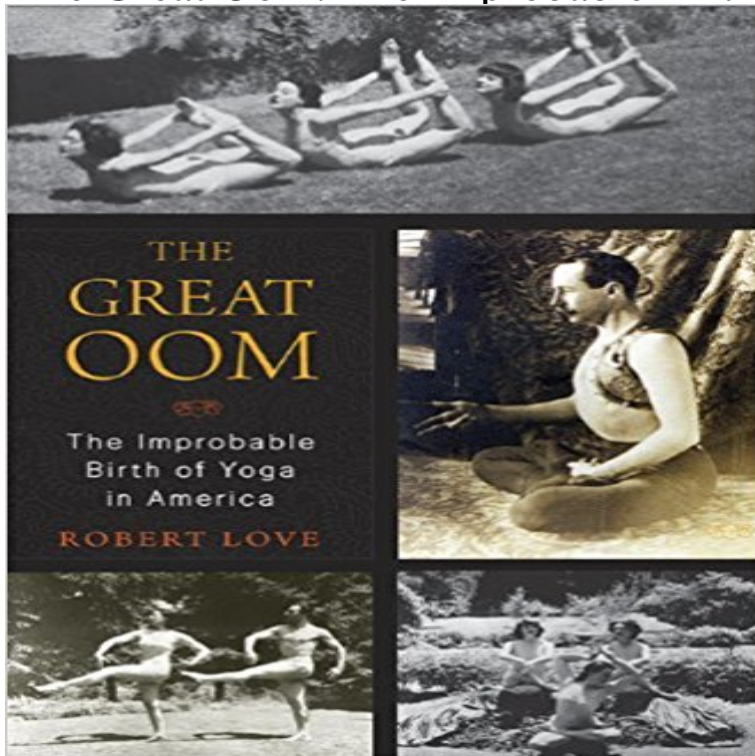


The Great Oom: The Improbable Birth of Yoga in America



The amazing story of how yoga came to America-and the charming rogue who made it possible In Jazz Age New York, there was no place hotter than the Clarkstown Country Club, where celebrities such as Leopold Stokowski mingled with Vanderbilts, Goodriches, and Great War spies. They came for the clubs circuses and burlesques but especially for the lectures on the subject at the heart of the clubs mission: yoga. Their guru was the notorious Pierre Bernard, who trained with an Indian master and instructed his wealthy followers in the asanas and the modern yogic lifestyle. Robert Love traces this American obsession from moonlit Tantric rituals in San Francisco to its arrival in New York, where Bernards teachings were adopted by Wall Streeters and Gilded Age heiresses, who then bankrolled a luxurious ashram on the Hudson River-the first in the nation. Though todays practitioners know little of Bernard, they can thank his salesmans persistence for sustaining our interest in yoga despite generations of naysayers. In this surprising, sometimes comic story, Love uncovers the forgotten life and times of the colorful, enigmatic character who brought us hatha yoga. The Great Oom delves into the murky intersection of mysticism, money, and celebrity that gave rise to the creation of one of Americas most popular practices and a fivebillion-dollar industry.

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