



## INTRODUCTION

Babies are born yogis.

At every stage of development, they naturally curl and bend into a variety of asanas that would make a master yogi green with envy. When learning how to crawl, they arch their torsos up into Cobra. And just before they walk, they spend weeks crossing rooms in Downward-Facing Dog. Even while sleeping, they unconsciously tuck into the aptly named Baby Pose.

These poses build coordination and strengthen the muscles necessary for babies to grow. Yoga is an innate exercise on a child's journey to becoming vertical, as it is our conscious practice along a journey to self-realization. Whether it's flexibility we strive for or deep, deep focus (there's no one more present than an infant gazing into her mother's eyes), yoga helps us regain what we were born with and what we gradually lose as we age.

Noticing that a baby naturally performs yoga is one thing; getting these poses to occur in front of a camera is quite another story. The photographs in this book are captured moments: natural and candid fractions of a second when the lighting, expression, and pose

all work together. Most images reflect poses and moves that were completely spontaneous; the only staged element was the placement of the yoga mat in the proper light.

In shooting the photos for this book, an enormous amount of patience and perseverance was required. The payoff to this waiting and the many rolls of exposed film were these wonderful and lyrical moments that could never have been anticipated. On the second shoot with Myles, he suddenly fell into an amazingly tight Backbend Pose, which his mother had never seen him do before. He promptly twisted into two more Backbends before running off to play.

Zane, the baby performing Mountain Pose, was crawling around the deck of a house when he suddenly stood up, raising his arms into the air in exultation. His parents squealed, because this was his first time standing. That  $\frac{1}{125}$  of a second, that little slice of magic never to be repeated, is just one of the many moments forever captured within these pages.

Because the age-old spirit of yoga inhabits babies so completely, we have reached back into many ancient yogic texts, from the original yoga treatise, *Bhagavad Gita*, to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, to find passages that illuminate and complement the mood of the photos.

The accompanying text is also culled from modern writings such as the works of B.K.S. Iyengar. Whether written in 500 BC or today, meditative or exultant, playful or quiet, these words are intended to open our eyes to the depth of spirit that exists in our children. They are not only yogis, they are our gurus as well.

This collection mirrors the sequence of a Sun Salutation, which is traditionally performed at the beginning of the day. We hope that as you travel through the following pages, these baby gurus—these born yogis—will carry you a little further toward enlightenment.

—SUSIE ARNETT AND DOUG KIM