

Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

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Theme of the Month

Saraswati

Once upon a time there was a princess who lived beside a wide lazy river in a shallow valley. Actually, she was not so very special in the way that we usually think of princesses. Everyone who lived in her village was *someone's* princess. But she was quite as beautiful and just about as good-hearted and clever as the other princesses in the land. As she grew and matured, she became interested in the way the universe expressed itself and in what her place in that event was.

As a young princess, she knew that she had been named for the spirit of creativity. At first, she thought this meant that she should produce beautiful things that would awe and impress people. As she gained in experience and wisdom

she began to understand that creativity had more to do with a way of being in the universe than with a product or even an action. She learned much about the energy that enabled her to make choices that were aligned with the beauty, peace, and truth of the divine universe. Not that she could always make them. But more and more, she seemed to be in harmony with what was true.

Then one day she stumbled upon a case of injustice. The more she looked upon it and the more she examined and analyzed it, the more she felt compelled to be the voice of equity that would expose this injustice. Every day she looked again at how the unfairness was playing out, how the wicked were getting away with their perfidy and how others were being fooled by appearances.

Now the princess was no fool. Therefore, she was suspicious of herself. As each day passed and she built and rebuilt her edifice of righteous indignation, she was reminded of other times when she had been right and what it had cost her.

Once she had told many people, some of whom were not ready to hear it, the truth of her right opinions. Now she was sad that she had been focused on getting the results she wanted and had not considered her audience. Another time she felt compelled to stand for what she saw as Truth. Others in the court, some very close to her, were angry and felt

misunderstood. And then they thought that they had to choose sides.

This time she had decided to keep her own counsel. She watched the ebb and flow of the thoughts. It was like being in a wind storm. She felt buffeted by rage. There were quiet moments when she felt that the old adage 'What goes around comes around' could sustain her; that she could just wait and watch.

Gradually, as storms do, her righteous anger subsided. She thought she was almost done with it. But then she heard a voice, a low whisper 'But what about Justice? Who is going to stand for truth?'

'Not me, this time' she said, 'Let others find the way. I just want to be a follower for a change'

Time passed. She was crowned queen and had little princesses and princes of her own. One day she learned that one of the princes was in trouble. She discovered that he was living in the castle of her ancient enemies, people who had hurt her subjects and said terrible things about her.

She knew she had to go there and face the dragons. She did not know why she was going or what she would do but she knew that she must go. She sent a message to their castle and asked if she might come to call upon them.

Grudgingly, they said that she could.

She dressed in her simplest gown. She harnessed her swiftest steeds to drive her carriage and crossed the moat into their fortress. There, in the farthest seat from her son, she sat at their long, candlelit table. They repeated the calumny that had been spread about her. In it were grains of truth and she nodded as they related the stories, "Yes, that happened. Yes, I said that, Yes I was there. No I

didn't stop that from happening. I wish that I had."

In the end she asked what she could do to make her son's time there easier for them.

They dismissed her without courtesy and she left the castle.

She did not know why she had gone. She had had no strategy. But she had known in a deep place that she had to enter their world and to meet the darkness. She left without knowing what had happened. A week later her son rode into their courtyard, dismounted from his horse and asked her if he could come home.

A long time later when she was telling her great grand princesses the story, she stopped at this point in the tale. Suddenly she laughed, a beautiful warm delicious laugh. It rolled out from her belly into the world. It tore down the carefully erected building of her anger. It scattered the shreds of her opinions and allowed her to be in tune with it all.



Poem

By Tiffany Stadler

Thoughts can't invite us somewhere
we live in them anyway
Yet Wind can brush it all away

She says 'see what's here'
see what's been
You think you've seen it all?
Well listen...

Somewhere there are bells chiming
and chains jangling
clouds parting from engines
A bee said 'here I am, but I won't hurt
you'.

You think you've heard enough
Well open...

Not just eyes but hearts
it breaks, watch it crumble then
and fall gaining speed
with rocks and debris
by erosion
Yes many hearts have gone this way.

We may cry at the loss
'Heart come back and serve me'
Yet it has a greater duty
a higher power to serve.

We may close our eyes
but this still goes on
sometimes we become brave enough to
stand
at the edge
look down
see our hearts falling
getting seemingly smaller
dissolving

Only to be bathed by streams
cradling falls
engulfing pain and suffering
swallowing fear and dissolution
cleansing hurt and despair.

We wouldn't know unless we broke
We wouldn't know unless we looked
over the edge
to see reflections from above.



On December 10th Ashley Glidden and her mother, Kirin Mishra organized a holiday event for Amnesty International inviting the SRY community to send greeting cards to and letters of support for prisoners of conscience around the world They were sent from SRY. Gayle received this letter from Amnesty International this week:

Dear Gayle

I just wanted to pass along a success in one of our Indonesia letter-writing actions. Below is an update from our Urgent Action Network.

Thanks to everyone who wrote letters on this and every other Write-a-thon case.

Happy Holidays,
Chip Hossfeld, Amnesty International
USA
21 December 2004

Further Information on UA 321/04
Fear for safety/intimidation

INDONESIA:
Suciwati (f)
Activists with the human rights
organization Imparsial

The Indonesian police have now taken action to give adequate protection to Suciwati, and she and the staff of Imparsial have received no further threats.

Suciwati's husband Munir, who was one of Indonesia's most prominent human rights campaigners, died on a flight from Singapore to the Netherlands on 7 September.

On 20 November a decapitated and dismembered chicken was sent to Suciwati at her family home, together with a threatening note, and another was sent to her at the Imparsial office three days later. A Dutch autopsy had recently revealed that Munir had died from arsenic poisoning, so the threat to Suciwati was highly credible.

An Indonesian police investigation into Munir's death is now in progress.

No further action is requested from the UA Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.



Asana of the Month:

Savasana



By John Fagan

Who doesn't love Savasana? It's like getting a reward for treating yourself well. Sometimes I almost hear myself wishing it was always Savasana as the asana of the month. But then I realize that at this point in my development I am still looking for that sense of contrast to really appreciate experiences. It's funny how we set down obstacles on our own paths and then spend lifetimes trying to figure out where they came from and how to get past them. If the goal is to dissolve this sense of separateness why do I continue to reaffirm it? Why do I look for this contrast? Is there a need that is being satisfied or merely a pattern being repeated? To understand how Savasana is related to this we need to look at what we are doing in the asana portion of class.

Savasana is not merely a treat we get at the end of the class. One could look at Savasana as the most important and transformative asana we do. In that light we can see the hour and twenty minutes of asana as a preparation for Savasana. What then is the relationship between

the rest of the class and Savasana that makes Savasana so vital? When we start the class we start off with some chanting. The effect of this chanting on the body is to warm it up and get the subtle energies vibrating, moving. As we move into the asanas we continue to build heat. This is important because energy flows more freely and quickly where there is heat. What the physicists have been saying anew is what the yogis have been saying for thousands of years; that the entire universe is made up of vibration. Some of these vibrations we can recognize as physical sensations on our skin, some as sound, some as light. Some we don't necessarily see or comprehend as vibration. For example: a moment in time. It is too much for the mind to comprehend all the vibration that goes on in a single moment so we often don't see our experiences as an infinitely complex arrangement of vibrations. Although a thought may be easy to comprehend as vibration: what about a memory? Certainly while we are remembering it, it can be understood as vibration but what is it when we are not actively remembering it?

Everything in the universe vibrates! The yogis have been saying it for thousands of years. But what is it that vibrates? Energy prana, or we could call it life force, or even consciousness. We are at any and every given moment an expression of the total dynamic energy of the entire universe. It is this dynamic property of the energy of the universe that brings us back full circle to the question of asana and it's relationship to Savasana.

As we encounter the moments of our day we resonate with some of the energies and "see" those events. Other energies

we don't resonate with and they become the background the "unseen". Of the "seen" there are some that we accept and although the event may pass, it leaves an imprint on us in the form of memory. The energy of this memory is more or less unrestricted and free to flow sometimes surfacing to the conscious. But there are other seen events that we cannot or do not accept. Because we cannot or refuse to accept this energy it is not free to circulate. We take this energy and we freeze it. And like frozen water that can be sharp and impaling or, under the correct conditions, instantly liquid and menacing, this frozen energy can be dangerous. What we are doing in the asana portion of class is in the safety of a controlled environment we are actively seeking out these patterns of frozen energy. When we encounter them without reactivity we can start to unfreeze them. So the object of the asana portion of class is to liberate frozen energy. But, because energy, like water, will always flow down the path of least resistance we need to complement this freeing up of the energy with something so that this energy doesn't get restructured back into its frozen groove. We can look at the energy of an experience as a flow of water. The story line, or the concept we create around it, (especially if the intensity of the actual event was more than we THOUGHT we could bear) we can see as a sort of channel or walled in path. Every time we reaffirm the story we build the walls a little higher. Soon enough even if we can unfreeze the energy it is so entrenched within the story that we cannot release the energy and so it just gets buried and refreezes again. And here finally comes the beauty, the power and the transformative power of Savasana. As we have just spent the last

hour and some minutes heating the body up opening into deep closed down places we have freed trapped and frozen energies, energies that belong to the universe as a whole and not just to us. We then set our selves up for Savasana, deep relaxation. In Savasana it is important to keep that energy fluid so we need to keep the body warm. As we release all identity with the body and the mind the energy is free to flow around in an unencumbered consciousness. This act of releasing the identities of mind and body tears down the walls that kept the energies trapped in a particular groove. With the walls down we are given the opportunity to see, maybe even for the first time, the actual event; to see it without the storyline or the concept. And with that nonjudgmental observation we can allow the experience to be what it is and when it passes we can let it pass.

How to practice Savasana:

~Lie comfortably on your back, you may put a blanket or bolster under your knees to help further relax your lower back.

~Cover yourself with some extra clothing and a blanket. If you have something to cover your eyes do that as well.

~Your arms and legs should be at about a 45 degree angle from the center live of your body.

~The backs of your hands should be against the ground and your fingers should slightly cup.

~Deeply relax your body letting go of any and all muscles.

~Deeply relax your mind letting go of any identities (name, gender, occupation just to name a few)

~Release any emotional tension If you do not feel you understand how to do any of this simply give yourself an autosuggestion to do so. I am relaxing my.....

~Bring your inner gaze to the third eye center and feel the breath here.

If you have been working with a mantra throughout the class it is time to let that go as well.

~Release all control of the breath, but, continue to be aware of the breath.

~At any point you become aware that you are no longer aware of the breath, simply return your awareness back to the breath. It's that simple. Anything else you do will be furthering your identity with the mind so just let it go.

Cinemasana



By Juliet Glidden

What's a yogi to do? No Lord Of The Rings or Harry Potter to look forward to this Holiday season. Thinking a good fairy tale might do, I set my sights on "Finding Neverland" but I became too busy with finishing up the school term to get to the movie theatre.

So, this month I am reviewing a DVD, a new rental release: King Arthur.

I love this movie; it has become one of my personal favorites. It has a wonderful and new retelling of the legendary King Arthur. It shows a completely different theory with different character developments. Most theories focus on the unsheathing of Excalibur and the love story between Arthur and Guinevere. This one is far more interesting.

This story will intrigue you with its freshness and complexities. It is based on new historical evidence.

Instead of being portrayed as a spoiled simpering weak woman, this Guinevere is a priestess and a mighty warrior. Knowing a little of the history of pre-Christian Britannia this seems more likely.

Arthur is a complex character caught between worlds, philosophies and loyalties. Merlin is treated with respect, for a change and you will enjoy the nobility of Lancelot.

The acting is sensational, the scenery is breathtaking and it is action packed. You will like this if you like war movies, historical movies and myths.

Conscious Cooking



By Kirin Mishra

My fondest childhood memories are of food. My mother's cooking was unparalleled. She was a talented Indian cook and later branched into Chinese, Thai, Italian and French. She did all this without cooking lessons or cookbooks. She had an amazing gift to taste and smell. With that alone, she could reproduce any dish from any restaurant with excellent results. She knew exactly what the ingredients were, in what order they were added, how they were combined and intuitively duplicated and often improved the dish.

Unfortunately, she never let anyone into the kitchen! Her recipes for dishes that became famous throughout some states of India will remain with her and her genius too.

Not being taught by the master herself but fortunately being fed by her mastery, I started to cultivate her ability to smell and listen to food. (I never taste, as I cook everything Prasad style. But please feel free to taste especially if you are new to Indian cooking.)

My dishes are nothing compared to what was my mother's daily fare of exotic delicacies. Yet, the students who are in my teacher's programs and all advanced trainings always ask for recipes! I will never understand anyone wanting my recipes with the tastes of my mother's

cooking always lingering nearby in my memories but since I have been graciously asked many times, here are two of the simpler dishes I make. A forewarning, like my mother, I never measure so one of the reasons, I usually don't give out recipes is because I don't know how they were created! The channa recipe I give below is one I make at least every week, so I think my measurement that I approximate should work. The other recipe does not need exact measurements to work.

Channa Masala:

- ~Onions 2-3 medium to large
- ~Garlic (optional) 2 smaller cloves
- ~Cumin seeds 2 tsp.
- ~Bay leaves 3-4
- ~Ground cumin 2 TBS.
- ~Ground coriander 2 TBS.
- ~Ground red pepper 1 tsp.
- ~Cinnamon sticks 2
- ~Black cardamom if you can find it 2
- ~2 cups chopped tomatoes
- ~3 cans of 15 oz or more canned chick peas
- ~Or 3 cups dried soaked overnight, reserve liquid
- ~Ground garam masala 2 tsp.
- ~Lemon juice 2 tsp.
- ~Fresh coriander, a small bunch finely chopped

Chop three small or two larger onions. Within 5 minutes add garlic finely chopped if you are using them. Cook on medium high heat until golden brown and soft in a deep-dish pan. Add bay leaves. When onions and garlic are soft move to perimeter of pan, add a drop or two of oil if necessary and sizzle cumin seeds. Mix together and add next 6 ingredients. Stir continuously at this point. Cook for about 3-5 minutes or when everything darkens slightly and the smell is fragrant. Turn heat down, cover and let simmer 1-2 minutes until tomatoes soften a little or water cooks away a little.

Now add chickpeas with liquid. Mix together. Simmer uncovered for about 30 minutes. Check for water, add if needed. Consistency is like lentil soup, not too thin, should have gravy. When done, turn off, add garam masla. Stir. Wait a few minutes and add lemon juice and chopped fresh coriander. Add salt to taste. Pick out bay leaves and cinnamon if not accustomed to Indian food or advise those you are serving to not eat them.

Great with plain basmati, brown or lemon rice. Also, very nice eaten on its own, like a bean stew. Freezes well and tastes better the next day.

Lemon Rice

- ~High quality olive or mustard oil
- ~10-12 Kari leaves, if none substitute fresh basil, tastes different but great!
- ~Mustard seeds 1-3 tsp.
- ~Green chili (spicy) pepper
- ~Fresh coriander, finely chopped
- ~Ground turmeric 1-2 tsp.
- ~Basmati rice 1 cup
- ~3 cups of water
- ~1/2 cup lemon juice

In a large paella pan or the pan you will use to cook your rice, sizzle Kari or basil leaves in some olive oil over high heat.

Be careful, Kari leaves snap and pop, have a lid on hand. After about 3 minutes, add mustard seeds. Cover with a lid and sizzle for one minute. Once they pop (you will hear them popping), add chili peppers, fresh coriander and turmeric. Stir and cook about one minute. Add washed rice, lemon juice and water. Either turn heat down, cover and simmer for 20 minutes or so, or take off stove, cover and put in over for 20 minutes at 350 degrees. On the stove, check for water, add more if needed. Do not stir rice! In oven, simply leave it to cook. Once done, remove and serve. Never stir or disturb the rice while it is cooking, it will make the rice starchy, heavy and difficult to digest.

Om shanti
Kirin



CHAI CHAT

Hello and Happy New Year! Brrrrr it's cold out there and I keep warm by thinking about all of you. I've heard of some holiday happenings and I am sure there are many more.

Hope Blaythorne organized a ladies luncheon at the Sergeantsville Inn. From what I hear, the laughter and power of those women raised the table and perhaps even the roof.

Joy Stocke had a wonderful luncheon with her father and his dear friend at the Algonquin. A very suitable place for Joy to dine with its rich history of literary notables.

Annie Norteman and friends went to see the new Eve Ensler play in New York City, and Barbara Cole-Kiernan hosted relatives who introduced her to the origin and making of Happy Socks. Now that is something I've got to ask her about!

Speaking of Barbara, her husband Bill has just completed compiling his book record for 2004. Having begun it in 1966, he has now read 3,950 books, about 100 a year. How do you have time for yoga, Bill?

Gayle Berkery and friend Moira went skiing in Vermont last week. Although snow conditions were less than optimal, they had a fun, albeit wet time.

The skies are getting friendlier since we have 2 SRY yogis that I know of who commute from Toronto. Now that's dedication! Ernie, design consultant (this year in Canada), returns to class whenever home for holiday, while yoga and TSS student Mark, computer consultant in Toronto, returns to class each weekend. *Brainstorm*: I will introduce them and if they meet on the plane, they can liven up passengers with some kabalabhathi breathing. Doesn't my idea just take your breath away?

There were some Chai Chat threads loose in the Tantric weave last month. Perhaps I need to stay away from my annual binge of holiday eggnog and stick with the chai. I never got to ask my question of David Pittenger last month. I know you were in a January issue of Gourmet magazine dressed as a cowboy and I still ponder...Are you planning to replace Ommmmmm at the start of class with Yipeeiiiaa? , Being a true yogi, one thing's for sure; no matter how much notoriety there is from those photos, you won't get too big for your britches.



Talking about TV, here's a riddle: Which yoga teacher at SRY has a passion for watching American Chopper? For the answer, you'll have to ask his viewing companion, Austin Jarboe.

Speaking of the Jarboe's, Is it true Sharon, that you have so many guests over the holiday season, Richard has

begun hanging neon signs instead of Christmas lights?

Have you seen Ashley Glidden in the *Intelligencer*? She was the source for the Amnesty International benefit at SRY. It was a huge success with 148 letters written to Prisoners of Conscience and for the empowerment of Women's Rights. (see letter from AI on page 3)

Speaking of news-you heard it here first! Watch for the exclusive interview and photo spread of Kirin in an upcoming issue of *Intelligencer*.

Apparently there was also some confusion in last month's Chat about John Edwards helping Paul Falkenstein meet Leonardo Da Vinci. Let me clear that up. We're not talking former V.P. nominee here but John Edwards, TV personality who speaks to the deceased. For all you believers out there, I approached Paul and asked him if this tidbit was true. He didn't answer. Instead he just gave me a Mona Lisa smile.

Well folks, to paraphrase best selling author Bill Bryson, here's this month's short history of nearly everything at SRY. Until next time, wishing you the sweetest chai, the sweetest and safest New Year, and the joy of finding your name in Chai Chat in 2005.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti
Chai Chat Lady

Disaster Relief Day

Saturday

January 8, 2005

On Saturday, January 8, 2005, Saraswati River Yoga will donate all proceeds from classes to Food for Life and Oxfam.

Both organizations are actively involved with relief efforts taking place in Asia to help the millions affected by the tsunami.

Please join usall you need to do is come to class!

Upcoming Events & Announcements

**Be Sure To Check At Front Desk
For Recent Class Schedule Changes**

Yogic Arts

with Paul Falkenstein

Saturdays, from Jan 8th 10:30 -12:00pm

Community Class

With Kirin

Tuesdays 8:15-9:15 pm

Hip Openers

with Kirin Mishra

Saturday Jan 29th 12:30-4pm

Prenata Yoga

with Zaira Leal

Saturdays from January 8th 8:45-10:30am

Kirtan

With Michelle Clancey

4th Thursday of every month 8:15-9:15

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