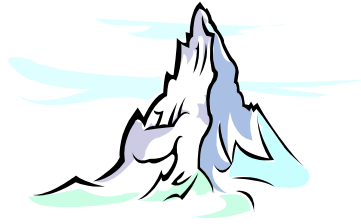


Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

Vol. 2, No. 4

April 2004



Theme of the Month

Ramayana

The Ramayana is an ancient epic myth, exciting, moving and fun to read. It also has encoded within it a sacred yogic text that lays out the deep mystery of the human condition and the road to spiritual awakening .

It is the story of a prince and princess, Ram and Sita, betrayed at court and then separated from one another through the evil deeds and deceptions of a powerful demon. They are finally reunited through the magical intervention of an unlikely hero, a mischievous white monkey, Hanuman, whose love for his prince knows no bounds.

Every child in India knows the Ramayana by heart by the age of five. Beyond a good story with many philosophical and historical references it celebrates the joy of living life fully awake. It shares the sweep and grandeur

that Westerners associate with the much younger Oddysey of Homer but the Ramayana still lives woven into the daily lives of the Indian peoples. A powerful theme that runs throughout the story is that all is one, without hierarchy or separation; that there is good in the most evil and bad in the best of us, that we cannot see what things mean until the end because all of life is an illusion but the meaning is there to be read in the living of life.

When we are fully awake we are in touch with our unique embodiment as an individual at the same time that we are fully aware of our relationship to the Whole. We know, beyond thought, that we are one and all of it at the same time. In that state of awareness we act from a place of knowing. On one layer of the story, Sita represents the individual consciousness separated from her beloved Ram, the universal or absolute, through illusion by an evil demon. But even the demon has a positive role to play. Without his intervention the couple could not be separated or express the joy of reunion. And ultimately he too is seeking reunion with the divine. But that is deep into the tale. In the story it takes the inspired act of Hanuman, the monkey son of the wind, to reunite Ram and Sita.

To be fully awake in the moment is the work of a lifetime. An athlete practices daily so that his reactions will be completely natural when faced with the

moment of competition. In a similar way, meditation is practice in controlling the breath so that the 'monkey mind' which has all the right moves, can be embedded in the stillness and the universal acting from spaciousness as opposed to reacting out of habit. When we sit in meditation we allow ourselves to be taken into an experience of the universal. It is an act of vulnerability, a leap that takes us from one state to another. The shift can not be grasped or controlled but is a gift of grace that transforms our experience of being an individual into one of spacious awareness. As we watch each thought arise and allow it to dissolve rather than following it and building a whole story around it we create the template for slipping into the spaces between thoughts.

Hanuman is the link between Ram and Sita. He locates her when she has been imprisoned in the fortress of the demon and comforts her by assuring her that Ram will come for her. He brings her the symbol of Ram's devotion and challenges the demon to return her. But, although he could, he does not save her. His mission is to create the possibility of reunion with Ram, to be the intermediary, not the *doer*. Similarly, the breath carries the life force but is not the life force. Hanuman is the vehicle of grace. He is the mind, the son of the breath.

The demon represents the destruction of the natural order of things, the illusion of separateness that clouds our experience of radiant joyful, undefended bliss, our natural state.

Without any filters we can act, without hesitation or doubt. We are free of the ties that bind us to our story, our

identity, and can see each moment with fresh eyes but with the grounding in the wisdom of knowing all of it. This doesn't mean we are free of pain or calm all of the time but we are suffering each thing for itself without the burden of projection or resistance.

Resistance to what *is* creates most of the pain we experience. Watch a one year old learning to walk. He doesn't have a monologue in his head that asks, 'why should I have to be doing this?', 'why didn't someone teach me this earlier?', 'shouldn't someone be carrying me now?', 'I don't deserve this tsorris.' or, one of my favorites, 'this is *so* beneath my dignity!'. When I am doing housework, it is often accompanied by this very litany. My daughter, who professes to enjoy housework, seems to view it as if it is no different than the things she chooses to do for pleasure, while I struggle every minute, resisting to the bitter end.



The Ramayana is about trust, trusting oneself, without knowing or understanding but standing in a faith that transcends the rational mind's need to reduce life to predictable concepts, to control and certainty.



Once when I was a young woman on my first real job, I was assigned the task of leading a group of teenagers up Mt Washington, the tallest mountain in New Hampshire. At that time my idea of athletics was going up the Lord and Taylor escalator in very high heels. Needless to say I was quite nervous about the prospect of a vertical hike. At the bottom I conferred with my co-counselor, also not much of a jock. After some consideration we agreed that flinging ourselves onto the ground and writhing with cramps was probably not the best way to engender respect in our charges. So up it was. As I contemplated the ascent I had a moment of inspiration. I realized that whether I straggled along at the end of the line, complaining and cataloging my aches and pains, or sprinted up to the front of the line, charging ahead, I would climb the same number of steps, at the same pitch. Depending on which choice I made, I knew that what **would** be different was my experience. The idea of choosing what is, is subtle but powerful. It is not fatalism or resignation nor the ever popular Pollyanna of my youth. But it can often empower one to take on battles or seemingly impossible tasks that would otherwise seem overwhelming or futile. It is about being awake to what is and not muffled with thoughts of what is not or judgments and evaluations that steal

our attention from the living of the present. As I think about that moment of clarity I could call it a Hanuman leap. Where did that wisdom and insight come from? Certainly not from any earlier experience, at a conscious level or the teachings of my elders. It was the natural knowing that we all possess that enabled me to see the choice.

Back on the mountain, I found that after the first few minutes my legs actually got into a rhythm and the feeling of pain subsided to a dull ache and then completely disappeared. My girlfriend made the other trip, dragging dispiritedly in the rear, stopping to vomit several times, resisting every step of the way. What I discovered on that trip was a metaphor for many situations in later life, not all of which I met with such wisdom. But I was never quite as blind to the choice I had.

There are many hidden teachings and profound poetic messages in the Ramayana. Read it for the exciting story, for the profound explication of the human experience, for the poetic imagery and language and, of course, for the yogic teachings. It is worth reading again and again.



Asana of the Month Hanumanasana



By John Fagan

In yoga we are constantly challenging our perceptions and ‘knowns’. Often, when we come to know something, after a time, we begin to forget it. As we become accustomed to it and no longer pay much attention to it, it becomes just part of the way things are. Most of us have forgotten the beauty and magic of walking a very long time ago. We probably don’t even have any true memories of that learning experience or how exhilarating that process was. As we explore the mechanics of Hanumanasana we see that it really is just one amazingly long stride. But if you have ever witnessed someone in Hanumanasana you realize that is also so much more than just a really big step. There is a beauty and grace that flow from this asana. It radiates strength and command. And the mind conjures up images of flight and freedom.

Many asanas lead us to twist our understanding of the world around or even turn our notions upside-down. Hanumanasana drops us into the known and asks us to explore what we take for granted with 100% of our attention. We are guided to rediscover the full potential

latent in every moment. Not by dragging or fighting our way through the limitations of our conceptions, or by breaking them down one by one will we experience the spontaneous joy and freedom of Hanumanasana.

Hanumanasana points us to knowing that we can soar right over them. And why not? We created them in the first place. Hanuman’s leap, as the asana is often called, is a leap of faith.

In the beautiful epic the Ramayana (rah-my-an-ah) Hanuman, with his controlled and focused mind, is able to accomplish great feats. With his absolute faith in service to the highest good he is able to drop any preconceived notions of how far a monkey can jump and effortlessly sails across the sea to bring news to his Lord’s beloved. In taking this leap of faith Hanuman releases the bonds of ego (fear) and self-limitation which drag us down and rediscovers his true strength. He remembers his Self.

Taking That Leap:

Hanumanasana is an advanced pose. As with all asanas please practice under the guidance of an experienced teacher. For more entry level students skip down to Anjanaya asana

Make sure that the body has been sufficiently warmed up. (building heat, stretching hamstrings, opening hips, and tops of thighs)

Make sure to have plenty of props for support nearby (blanket, bolsters, blocks)

Moving off your mat (we actually want to be able to slide the feet in this pose) start in a high runner’s lunge

Raising the head and heart transition into parsvottanasana (pyramid)

Soften the navel center and slightly soften the back knee

Rise up onto the heel of the lead foot

As you push down and away with the trailing foot slide the lead foot forward

Make sure to have blankets or other props under the pelvic floor if you need them. (it is better to have too much of a prop underneath you than not enough you can always remove some of the extra)

Keep the hips squared forward

When you have reached maximum stretch for your legs for the day soften and relax.

Relax everything not being used to support this pose

Bring the hands along the hips

Spread the collar bones wide while opening the heart and make it an offering

optional:

Lengthen the neck and allow head to drop back

Sweep the arms up and overhead

option 2:

Come forward over the lead leg (as if in a seated forward bend)

Remain here for several breaths; it takes a good deal of preparation for most people to get into this pose so, if it is manageable stay with it and savor

Repeat on the other side

Beginners Anjanaya asana

Start in a high runners lunge

Lower trailing knee to ground coming to a low runners lunge

make sure that the lead knee is directly over that foot's ankle (you want a nice

90 degree angle here. this is very important for the safety of the knee)

Activate the trailing leg, tightening the thigh and buttock (we want to support the lower back throughout the entire asana)

Hook the thumbs and, on the inhale, reach up and arch back (keep the navel soft and try not to push the abdomen out) you can pause here letting the head drop back comfortably (don't squeeze it between the shoulders)

option 1:

Release the hands to the lower back, fingers facing up, open the collar bones wide and as you sink the hips down offer the exposed heart up

option 2

Release the hands down along side the hips, reaching the finger tips to the ground.

Again open the collar bones wide allow the head to drop back and offer the heart up.

To release

On the inhale, sweep the arms up and overhead (if you released them)

As you exhale, release the hands along side of the lead foot coming to a low runners lunge.

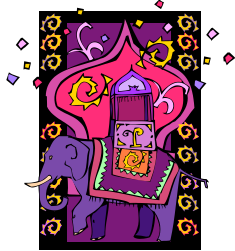
Repeat on the other side

As with all asanas described in this newsletter, please practice under the supervision of an SRYS instructor.

Yogis in the World

This space is one in which you will get to know the people who practice with you at SRYS and how their yoga practice is manifesting in their lives.

By David Pittenger



It was December 31st as we arrived in Bangalore Southern India. We drove to some flats that had been offered to us to stay in by the family of one of the dancers in our troop. We were supposed to stay at the Vivekananda Ashram, but it being New Years Eve everybody wanted to stay in the city and celebrate. I've been to many New Year's celebrations and decided I'd rather get out into the country for some fresh air and took a bus to the Ashram. It was very refreshing to see the countryside after nearly two weeks of city life. The greenery was just what I needed. The road to the ashram was a very narrow one that was more pothole than road. The ashram was beautiful. The first building I could see before we entered through the gates was in the shape of the OM symbol. There was a big statue of Saraswati in front of it, so I felt right at home. I was given a very modest room to stay in that had a cot, a desk and of poster of Swami Vivekananda in which was this inspirational quote : Arise, awake and stop not until the goal is reached. With the look of benevolent

assuredness on his face I was inspired to get up at 5AM the following morning for Meditation. Besides, I was very happy to wake up out of the dream I was having of being chased by a giant Cobra possibly inspired by the giant statue of Shiva that was directly across from my room. Sitting cross-legged in meditation with a cobra coiled around his neck, this Shiva was a site to behold.

After the morning meditation I went to check out the ashrams large ayurvedic clinic to see if I could get some relief from my three-week-old sinus infection. Sure enough I found a woman there who taught me some kriyas (cleansing practices) to do in certain asanas to help open my sinuses. That was the beginning of the end of my sinus cold. The best part of being up so early was that I got all this done and still had time to go to the Ganesha Temple for sunrise puja. This temple was an open air gazebo that held a small murti of Ganesha. It was already crowded when I arrived so I took a seat on the hillside and listened to the mantas and songs of praise as the sun came up. Watching this slow painting of a vast green vista emerge from the darkness and then this warm orange disk arise above the tree line gave me a feeling of connection to this planet and our universe. Seeing the sun's light and feeling it's warmth on my face reminded me of what a gift I receive every day in just being present in my life. Taking time to honor this gift every day is for me the only way to live my life in harmony with the higher truths and mysteries of life in which I am a very small player. This is how I was feeling as I went to offer flowers to the stone statue of Ganesh. This deity is in the form of an elephant to suggest the vastness and grandeur and unimaginable nature of the formless powers that

govern and order our universe.

Since life is dynamic, not static, I was right in the middle of these ritual offerings when, wouldn't you know it, my old self-consciousness crept back in. I suddenly thought, "I hope I do this right and don't mess up"- self doubt. So the universe decided to play a little joke on me. At just that moment Gurugi called the head Brahmin's cell phone and he handed it to me as I was circling in procession at the puja. "OH NO" I thought, "every one is going to think I'm just another American capitalist who can't be in the moment long enough to complete the puja before busying himself with worldly concerns". Of course, in reality everyone was so engrossed in their own ritual and in the moment that they paid no heed to me on the phone and I was left to see the joke of it. In fearing I would be thought less of for talking on the phone and not being in the moment I pulled myself out of the moment. My mind does this endlessly unless I'm doing a regular meditation practice.

I left most of my practices and favorite sanskrit texts behind when I came to India. I thought it best to be a blank page for this experience. However the Mantra Kirin had given me came in very handy in Hyderabad. After I had been in India for a week I had seen how each member of our group would get sick. It started with something eaten, usually something greasy. Then nausea, vomiting and all the rest. I offered the mantra practice to one of the girls who was very sick and she said she felt better right away. Then I felt the sickness coming on one day. I felt heavy all over and weak. I got the shakes and started to get nauseous. I lay down and started to

panic because for me vomiting usually leads to a visit to the hospital. Then I remembered the mantra and started doing it. Within 20 minutes I felt fine and was ready for lunch. This sort of thing has happened to me many times when working with mantras, but I'm still amazed by it.



After less than one day at the ashram I decided to return to our troop. The Ashram was just the breath of fresh air I needed, but it wasn't what I was looking for and I missed the companionship of our group. So we headed back to the city, but stopped for some mazzza's (Mango juice) on the way. I wandered away from our group to explore the little village we had stopped in and found myself being pulled into a temple by a very excited Brahmin. It turned out to be a Saturn temple. I had never seen a planet depicted in the form of a deity before. He was dark and had a mustache. The Brahmin then gave me a long lesson on the science of yoga. He was very knowledgeable but I knew the group was probably worried because I had been gone for so long. I made my offering and headed back to the bus.

Our last show in Bangalore was at the flat where we were staying. The family turned their open air garage into a nice little performance space and we danced for the family and friends and who ever wandered by. It was great. Next was Deli our last city on the tour and my favorite experiences in India.

CHAI CHAT

Om Shanti and Hello!
Chai Chat April 2004

Hello to you all. I'm thinking about changing my name to Tropicana. I have received requests to make this column juicier. I'll work on it!

What a delightful surprise to see Shelley Uhler at Kirin's Ganesha workshop. A graduate of SRY Teacher Apprentice program, she now lives in Washington, D.C. and decided to drive down just to do the workshop. A gracious and kind person, she arrived with Prasad in hand.

SRY welcomes back Barbara Brodsky. On sabbatical in Cambridge this year, you might catch her riding on the canal with Judith Lockard, or in asana or TSS class before she returns back to Britain.



Home on a different range, Michelle Speckler now resides in Montana and is in specialized training to herd cattle on horseback. Way to go, Cowgirl...Cowwoman...Cowperson?

Sara Carr has returned to PA after giving it a go for a year in Michigan. She can be seen in most morning asana classes while awaiting the birth of her first grandchild.

Speaking of grandmothering, Kathy O'Neil quotes her pregnant daughter

describing herself as "cranky and cooked." Kathy hopes that the thermometer doesn't register Ready to Serve until the O'Neil's return from their vacation in Orlando.



Speaking of babies, rumor has it that John Fagan was seen at CVS stocking up on rubber gloves and baby bottles in preparation for the new litter of lambs. Actually a wise girl recently reminded me that rumors don't have to be true, that is why they are called rumors. Thanks Miss J!

Kirin, Paul, Ashley, Holly and Juliette are just back from a holiday in Hawaii, David Lewis recently returned from a dreamy trip to Cambodia and Thailand, Judith Lockard has returned from a trip to Turkey with a hand full of carpets and a heart full of Moslem Call to Prayer. And of course, Jan is either coming or going to Paris. (see her yummy recipe in Conscious Cooking-surprisingly unFrench)

We haven't seen much of John Barbati. Always generous with his time, one of my informants tells me he is currently serving on the board of Buckingham Organization for Rural Preservation.

Anyone have a pair of Welly's to donate to Bill Cole-Kiernan? Risking life and limb power washing the eaves of the barn in the Berkshire's, he hasn't perfected keeping his shoes dry.

If you do not have the good fortune to know Kathy Papa, put that on your To Do list. This ebullient woman has many talents, among which is Ayurvedic bodywork. I find her Sivam Yoga spa in Cherry Hill is almost as delicious as a cup of my chai.

Gotta go and watch the grass grow. Until next time enjoy the enfolding of spring, the little treasures life provides, and a cup of chai.



Conscious Cooking

By Jan Seminack

As a true Libra I have the need for balance in all aspects of my life as anyone who knows me well will attest. With an increasingly busy schedule, frequent trips to France, my business of importing French fabric products as well as various family and social commitments-it is my yoga practice which helps to bring it all together. I am very grateful for the fact that I live so close to the SRY (a mere 5 minutes) where I can take advantage of the wonderful classes that benefit me so much. The French have a term, “se ressourcer” which literally means to return to the source, to get to the root of it all. This is exactly how I view my yoga practice. I come to the center to draw source both physical and spiritual nourishment from the source, which helps me to find the balance and harmony that are so essential to my nature.

Speaking of nourishment, I am contributing a favorite recipe of mine-“Power Biscotti”. PB’s as we call them, are frequently requested by my daughter when she is low on energy and in need of a pick me up. As for myself, I love to relax with my favorite French magazine “Le Moyen Age” (the Middle Ages), a couple of PB’s and a cup of hot tea or steaming cappuccino. Oh, la la, c’est si bon!

Wisdom of Directions

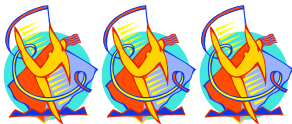
Dancing Spaciously with our Emotions

Learn this ancient system of wisdom and immediately transform your ability to meet emotions, effect profound changes and significantly increase your vibrancy in every interaction

Saturdays May 15th & 22

(one may attend the first day only or both days)

This transformative and enlightening 2-day workshop delves into the sacred Mandala of the Dakinis, the mythological Sky Dancer’s who protect, educate and guide yoga practitioners. The Mandala reveals a practical, tangible system of working with emotions that applies to everyday life.



POWER BISCOTTI

Peanut butter takes the place of butter, adding flavor as well as protein and B vitamins

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup sugar
3/4 tsp baking soda
1/4 tsp salt
1/3 cup chunky peanut butter
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 large eggs
2 large egg whites
cooking spray

- 1) Preheat oven to 325 degrees
- 2) Lightly spoon flour into dry measuring cups; level with a knife. Combine flour, sugar, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Combine peanut butter, vanilla, eggs, and egg whites in a medium bowl, stirring well with a whisk; add to flour mixture, stirring just until blended.
- 3) Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface; shape dough into a 10 in. long roll. Place roll on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray; flatten to 1 in. thickness. Bake at 325 degrees for 35 minutes. Remove roll from baking sheet; cool 10 minutes on a wire rack. Reduce oven temperature to 300 degrees.
- 4) Cut roll diagonally into 18 (1/2 inch) slices. Place slices, cut side down, on baking sheet. Bake at 300 degrees for 20 minutes. Turn cookies over, bake an additional 15-20 minutes (cookies will be slightly soft in center but will harden as they cool). Remove from baking sheet and cool completely on a wire rack. Bon Appetit!

Honoring Diversity

Teaching to Reach All Students

A workshop for Educators and School Based Counselors

May 14, 2004
9 -3 pm

Echo Hill Lodge
Clinton Township, NJ

What does it mean to honor diversity within a multicultural classroom? Join us for a full day, interactive workshop designed to provide school staff with an understanding of multicultural education. We will gently guide you in a process of self-examination and self-assessment through the use of engaging, participatory activities. We'll offer opportunities for mindful listening and facilitated discussion. Our day will conclude with an opportunity for participants to begin integrating their newfound understanding into their current approaches.

Cost: \$100, includes breakfast
Please call Erinn Auletta
609.397.5765 for more information or to register.

Cirque du Solebury

**May 16th
5:00p-10:00p**

Fantasy Circus

Live Music, DJs from NYC,
entertainment, great food and
drink, silent auction, live auction,
prizes, raffles

Proceeds go to **FACT**
Fighting AIDS Continuously Together

Carousel Farm
5966 Mechanicsville Road
Mechanicsville, Pa.

For tix/info:215-598-0750

Barbara Cole-Kiernan, L.C.S.W.

YOU ARE THE GIFT!

Move beyond your history and life
story into being **PRESENT**

26 years experience in spiritual and
yogic approaches to psychotherapy.
Individual, couples, health crisis and
bereavement, dying coach, and trauma
work using energy psychologies.
Lambertville Call 732-572-2424.
Most insurance accepted.

Sublet: *Charming* furnished
apartment in New Hope Available
up to one year beginning in Mid-
August. \$650.00 per month plus
electric. *Just 3 minutes from*
Saraswati. If interested please call
(215)862-1485. Om Shanti

Business of Being The Intersection of Business, Leadership, and Wisdom

*Live and Work where your Passion
Meets the World's Needs*

One-on-one ongoing relationship
with a certified spiritual director

in a format adapted to the client's needs
and schedule

*Problems cannot be solved at the same
level of consciousness that created them*
Albert Einstein

The Fruits of this challenging work often
include; growth in clarity, creativity, energy,
sense of purpose and meaning, and
courage, patience, tolerance for
uncertainty, embracing the mystery, self-
acceptance, and compassion

www.BusinessOfBeing.com
609-397-2122

Upcoming Events & Announcements

Check lobby for flyers and details!

Chanting the Chandi
with Jonathan Labman
3rd Thursday each month 7:30-9pm

Enchanting Meditation
with Jonathan Labman
4th Thursday each month 7:30-9pm

Kid's Yoga ages 8-12
with Michelle Clancey
Every Thursday 4:30-5:30pm
Beginning April 15th

Honoring Diversity
with Erinn Auletta
Friday May 14th, 9:00am-3:00pm

Wisdom of the Directions
with Kirin Mishra
Saturday May 15, 22 12:00 – 5:00pm

Kid's Day
With Saraswati teachers
Saturday May 1st 8:30am-1:00pm

Kids - working with conflict
with Naomi Drew
Saturday May 1st 12-1:00pm

Meditation/Satsang
with Kirin Mishra
2nd Thursdays of the month 7:30-8:30pm

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

SARASWATI RIVER YOGA

415 South York Road • New Hope, PA 18938 • 215-862-4520 www.saraswatiriveryoga.com

CONNECTING TO THE INNER RIVER OF BLISS, WISDOM AND CREATIVITY