

# Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

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## Theme of the Month



### Sri Ramana Maharshi

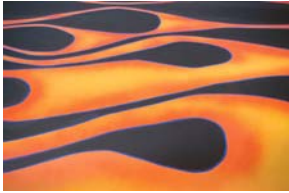
In 1896, at the age of 16, Venkataraman, later known as Ramana Maharshi, left his family. He wandered for another 16 years making his way to Arunchala, a mountain in South India. He had thrown away all of his money and his possessions and rested entirely in an awareness that his real nature was formless, unalloyed consciousness. His absorption in this awareness was so intense that he was oblivious of his body and the world. On the mountain insects chewed away portions of his legs and because he was rarely conscious enough to eat his body wasted away. After two or three years in this state he began a slow return to physical normality. But his awareness of himself as consciousness remained continuous and undimmed for the rest of his life. He

had realized, by direct experience, that nothing existed apart from an indivisible and universal consciousness which was experienced in its unmanifest form as beingness or awareness and in its manifest form as the appearance of the universe.

After a few years his inner awareness began to emanate as a spiritual radiance. People began to gather on the mountain and although he remained silent most of the time he became a teacher of great renown. Instead of giving talks or instructions he emanated a silent force which stilled the minds of those around him. In later life he did speak more frequently but he always maintained that the silent flow of power represented his teachings in their most direct and concentrated form.

The words to set us up for unalloyed consciousness are *precision* and *curiosity*. Once again if we turn to asana it may point us in the direction of how to apply this. If I am precise in setting up a pose and then focus on how it feels, what it is and not how I am doing it or comparing or judging my performance, but am curious about what is happening right now I have attained the state of yoga. This at once seems impossible

and too simple. 'Is that all?', one wonders.



Well, yes and no. To get beyond the mind's analytic function, while remaining engaged and interested, is no mean feat. Ramana Maharshi did not give specific instructions. He recommended meditation as the best preparation, but he pointed in the direction of getting beyond the *I me mine* perspective. In response to virtually every question that was asked of him he responded by asking some version of "Who is asking the question?"

This operates like the zen koan's we have heard about. It confounds the mind and throws the listener into a state of utter confusion, destabilizing the linear mind and catapulting us into a mini experience of emptiness. It presupposes the existence of something beyond *I me mine*.

Once, many decades ago, I had a profound experience, a tiny spark of what I think that Ramana Maharshi is alluding to. It was so mundane and evanescent that I hesitate to mention I will only do so because, in spite of its triviality, I have remembered it all of these years as unique in my experience. I also have the temerity to talk about it because it happened at the culmination of a powerful, prolonged experience designed to create just the awareness of consciousness that Ramana Maharshi's students describe. I had participated in a

10 day intense workshop with exercises and 'ordeals' that were set up to catapult people out of their ordinary experience and reveal to them the ways in which their minds and bodies controlled them. It was structured in such a way as to provide a direct experience of freedom from this imprisonment-in other words Bliss or Realization of Self, as the Hindu's describe it.

On the second to last day I was getting into my car to go home, already filled with a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment 'about' many of the things that I had discovered about myself. I won't go into them now but they were pretty profound at the time and have stayed with me at the level of very good transformational experiences, changing who I have become since then. And then I had an experience of another kind altogether. I was aware of being aware of a spot behind my left knee. And something about that awareness was completely fresh and direct. I was not thinking about the spot, I was simply aware of it for no reason. I had no idea why this was even important but I knew that I had touched something that was beyond my ordinary sense of self. That was it! Nothing more. But I was sure that something different had happened for which I had no words or concepts.

It was years later, after coming to SRY and immersing myself in the teachings we get so abundantly in every class and workshop, that I got an inkling of what was interesting about that moment. I had never, since being a self conscious adult, had a direct experience that was not structured by the mind. It is my best description of unalloyed consciousness, although if I truly understood Ramana Maharshi's teaching it is probably like a

quickly dying spark compared to a never dimming bonfire.

Still, to know what is possible and to have touched it even ever so slightly gives me the courage to keep putting myself in the way of great teachings.



\*For a good source of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching see: *Be As You Are, The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* ed., David Godwin



**reel justice** presents:

**WALMART**

*The high cost of low prices*

*SATURDAY January 28, 2006*

*FREE  
And Chai, too!*

*Doors open at 7p*

## **YOGI saints and sages**

*In this column we will feature articles about people who inspire us to continue on this path of awakened skillful action.*

**Bill Cole-Kiernan**

**Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844 - 1900**

I selected Nietzsche because he is such a powerful example of how philosophy challenges many of our traditional beliefs. He is brilliant at upsetting his readers. He often writes in an aphoristic style, and I remember being particularly struck by one of his aphorisms. He said: 'Enemies of Truth: Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies.'

Whoa! I said. Aren't we supposed to have strong convictions? Isn't being a person of principle what we all are striving for in our lives. How can I be considered responsible and accountable if I am not willing to stand by my principles and what I believe to be true? Didn't Socrates die for his principles? The questions went on and on as I questioned Nietzsche's claim. I tried to let it go, but I kept coming back to his nettlesome words.

Nietzsche is one of those needling, cut to the quick, go for the jugular kind of thinkers. He shakes up all our conventional wisdom. I knew that I could not simply dismiss him, no matter how at odds he seemed to be with my convictions. And then it struck me. My convictions were what kept me resisting his claim. To whatever degree, he might be speaking the truth, my convictions were blocking my access to that truth, and then I realized what he meant.

A conviction that is held so strongly that it cuts us off from experiences that can challenge the conviction we hold is indeed a dangerous enemy of truth. When we align with a conviction in an absolute or rigid way, in a way that closes us off to contrary information, we are shutting ourselves off from the impact and value of further experience. For, although what we know is

always limited by our experience, our experience is ongoing and ever new. As such, new experience can open up unforeseen possibilities. William James, a 19th/20th century American philosopher, puts it bluntly: “Experience, as we know, has ways of *boiling over*, and making us correct our present formulas. . . . We have to live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood.” I finally understood Nietzsche. He was telling me not to absolutize my convictions, but to carry them lightly. In a changing world, such premature rigidity may cut me off from a wiser, more fruitful, or more deeply grounded insight. It was a struggle for me to surrender to Nietzsche’s insight, but once I understood it, I had to accept it. This is often the way of philosophy; it challenges us to expand beyond whatever limits we have decided are enough for us. It breaks us open and takes us to new places, offering us richer insights and a deeper understanding of what we thought we knew.

Nietzsche continually throws down the gauntlet in front of us. There are many ideas where he presses us to move beyond our comfort zones, but I will address two in particular here. The first is what has often been called the notion of the “superman” in Nietzsche. This translation is misleading because Nietzsche uses the German word *ubermensche*, which translates more accurately as the “overman.”

Behold, I teach you the overman.  
The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman *shall* be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of other worldly hopes.

Nietzsche had little patience with philosophies that denigrated the world we find ourselves embedded in. He was deeply affirming of nature and included us as part of that domain. Having located us thus



Nietzsche then develops the core of this idea which is that to be fully human requires that we constantly transform ourselves; that we move to new levels of insight and competence, new levels of action and commitment. In short, Nietzsche is forcing us to recognize that we are embedded in constant change, that we operate from a perspective, and that we settle for finalities at our peril. He says in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

But the worst enemy you can encounter will always be yourself; you lie in wait for yourself in caves and woods. . . You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes!

The challenge is to avoid complacency in our lives, to recognize that the ubiquity of change requires us to live within those changes, that life emerges out of change, not to end the change, but to take the changes to yet new challenges and new paths. In this vein of being in the world, Emerson says,

I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and future worlds. What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and gait of the body; show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest

spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, these suburbs and extremities of nature.

We build out of our everyday experience. Dewey said it about as succinctly as it can be said: "Every end is a new beginning." We don't change to end change; it's change all the way through and all the way down. If we could learn to resonate with that change, what transformations could we bring to our lives?

The second idea of Nietzsche that has always particularly struck me is what he has called the "myth of the eternal return." This is what he says about it:

*The greatest stress.* How, if some day or night a demon were to sneak after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you. 'This life as you now live it and have lived, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything immeasurably small or great in your life must return to you - all in the same succession and sequence - even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over and over, and you with it, a dust grain of dust'. Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or did you once experience a tremendous moment when you would have answered him, 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more godly.' If this thought were to gain possession of you, it would change you, as you are, or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, 'Do you want this once more and innumerable times more?' would weigh upon your actions as the greatest stress. Or how well

disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?



What I hear in Nietzsche's words is can we be here now? Can we so embrace this present moment of our life such that we can act without looking back, without regret, without guilt? Can we rise to a level of presence of ourselves in the world, such that we could will our action without ever wanting to take it back? Can we choose so fully that we could bear for that choice to return forever and ever never to be relinquished or reworked? I don't know if Nietzsche meant the "eternal recurrence" literally, but I do think he was challenging us to play for very high stakes in our lives.

It is a cliché of our times that we are supposed to "be here now," that we are supposed to embrace the present moment. If you listen to Nietzsche in this matter, the stakes of being present are extraordinarily high, and, of course, they are. It is not so much whether this moment will return again and again. That is not the challenge. The challenge is that this moment can only be lived once. What we do, what we say, what we think, what we feel, and from all that who we are can never be taken back.

I can't unsay the hurtful comment. I can't take back the thoughtless injury to someone. I can't undo my griping and grumbling, my weakness and fear, my anxiety and loss. All of it, once it is, it is. This is Nietzsche's confrontation to us. We live now, always.

Perhaps, the only salve for that indelible wound is in the next moment. I can choose differently if I chose badly before. I can't undo, but I can recreate and rework and transform in the moments to come.

The final catch, however, is I don't know how many more moments I have. Do you?



## Conscious Cooking

Bonnie Pariser

This yummy soup was a contribution made to support the long and intense hours of teaching during the Yoga Teacher Intensive this Fall. It comes highly recommended and was greatly appreciated by said teacher. I know that it will warm you all in the chilly months ahead when we are missing both the sun and our wonderful leader.

2 med. Butter nut squash  
olive oil  
1 onion  
1/2 inch fresh ginger  
1 cinnamon stick  
5 cups veg. broth  
1 15oz can coconut milk  
1/2 tsp nutmeg  
1/2 teasp. ground coriander  
1 12/ tsp minced jalapeno chili (optional)  
salt and pepper  
cilantro leaves or saffron for garnish

peel and cut squash into chunks.\*\*  
heat oil, add chopped onions and some of the squash, allow to brown.  
add veg broth, remaining squash, ginger, cinamon stick and bring to boil.  
turn down to simmer and cook till squash is soft. remove cinamon stick  
and puree soup (can leave it a bit chunky if you like). return to simmer  
and add salt and pepper, nutmeg, coriander, jalapenos and coconut milk.  
garnish with either cilantro or saffron.

\*\*Roasting the whole butternut in the oven can be done to avoid the difficult peeling of the squash, just scoop it out once its done,

you can brown the onions a bit on their own. I have found this to be sweeter. To roast, you cut the squash in half, place in a pan cut side down with some water in the pan and roast on 350 or so till soft and squishy.



## CHAI CHAT

Hello and Happy Holy Days.

'Tis the season.



That may conjure certain images for you but I wonder if you know what it brings to my mind. Let me give you a hint. What are your associations with cones? I bet ice cream, right. Not me. My association is the orange traffic cones that neighbors leave in the street to secure their spots. Here I was, driving home from a late night at bingo and there was no place to park. Not only orange cones, metal folding chairs and garbage cans, as well, cluttered the no-longer-empty spots. This is what I don't get. I shoveled out my spot and believe you me; it was no easy task getting that Hummer out. *So do the math*, if everyone driving around has gotten out of a spot, there are enough spots to share, right? Next time I'll take a cab.

Do you think I should start a 'pet peeve' column? What bugs you? I certainly have no pet peeves about this community. It's my favorite place to be. Walking in late a few weeks ago, I almost bopped another woman with my mat. A gracious yogi, she told me she was late coming because she needed to drop her daughter off at school and then drive 40 minutes to get to class. I am amazed at what our students do to get to SRY.



Speaking about our amazing students, there is Sheila. She not only travels the good part of an hour to come to classes, occasionally she gifts us with her music. Once during Shavasana I felt elevated to a celestial plane with Sheila's flute music. She gifted us at Kirin's Spanda Karika class by serenading us there as well.

Judi Barton continues to make beautiful music in Hollywood and recently booked a part in a new Diane Keaton movie and even has a scene with her Shero. The movie is called "Because I Said So." With a title like that, it could have been written by my grandmother.

Ruth Nicolich hasn't been around too much. I can make a fair bet she's home baking Christmas cookies. I doubt she's away because she recently returned from

a long trip to Austria and Germany accompanying her husband who presented a paper on the ozone layer. Speaking of traveling, move over Jan. You'll have to share the frequent flyer references with Denyse. She and Kaya are back in Oregon for a long relaxing holiday visit. And very soon... Jan will be either coming or going to France.

As for me, I am getting tired of being profiled at the airport. I get stopped at the metal detectors every time. I don't know why me. Doesn't everyone carry cans of hairspray, mace and nail clippers when they travel? Speaking of profiling, a friend just invited me to a seminar on Know Your Rights with the FBI. This is what I've got so far: don't invite them into your house and be sure to hold their ID badge in your hand. Next week she's teaching a seminar on subversive fruit squeezers at the Giant.

Well folks, this season has exhausted me so I'm off to my spa. Which reminds me. Our SRY neighbor Nurture Spa was elegantly designed by our yogi Ernie S. Good going!

As they say, see you next year. Best wishes for the best chai of the season and remember: **You're the gift!**



Chai Chat Lady

## Upcoming Events/Announcements

### **Kirtan with Michelle Clancey**

4th Thursday of every month  
8:15-9:15 pm (no charge!)

### **Saraswati Vidya, The Wisdom**

**Teachings** with David Pittenger  
Starts Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of  
the month, 12:30-3:30 pm.

### **SARASWATI RIVER YOGA TEACHER TRAINING INTENSIVE WITH KIRIN MISHRA**

Transform your Life Today  
INTENSIVE 2: CORRESPONDENCE  
150 hrs. towards Y.A. certification  
INTENSIVE 3: SPRING 2006  
200 hrs. towards Y.A. Certification

### **Kirtan with David Newman**

Saturday, January 7, 7:30 pm

### **Meditation Workshop for Beginners**

with David Pittenger  
Sunday, January 15, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

### **Ayurveda for Woman**

**with Paula DiGregorio**  
Ayurvedic Women's Health in the Wise  
Earth Tradition, January 21, 1:00-5:00  
Ayurvedic Nutrition in the Wise Earth  
Tradition, January 22, 12:30-6:00

### **Hip Openers with Kirin**

Saturday, January 28, 12:30-4:00

### **RESTORATIVE YOGA with RaeAnn Banker**

Sunday, Feb. 12, 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm

### **Saraswati Day Mini- Retreat with Kirin Mishra,**

Thursday, Feb. 2, 7-8:30 pm  
Friday, Feb. 3, 12:00 – 4:00 pm  
Saturday, Feb. 4, 12:00 – 4:00 pm  
This is our 4<sup>th</sup> annual event that honors  
Saraswati - a day to harness and activate  
creativity, wisdom and bliss.

### **5 Key Practices for Women with**

Denyse Corelli,  
Saturday, March 4, 12:30-3:30

And for those of us who yearn to deepen  
our experience and spend more time in  
practice and study w/ Kirin. Here's the  
opportunity to invite those friends who  
live too far from SRY to join in a fun  
retreat together and finally see what  
we've been raving about!

Feb. 13-17

**ACTIVISM AND CONTEMPLATION**  
A workshop retreat at **Pendle Hill**  
Quaker Center in Wallingford, PA

May 15-19

**Pendle Hill**, Wallingford, PA  
**KEY ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUALITY**

June 25-June 30

**Kripalu Center**, Lenox, MA  
**A RIVER FLOWS - IMMERSION IN  
THE SARASWATI METHOD**

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### **SARASWATI RIVER YOGA**

415 South York Road • New Hope, PA 18938 • 215-862-4520 [www.saraswatiriveryoga.com](http://www.saraswatiriveryoga.com)

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