

Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

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February 2005

Theme of the Month



Yogi Poets

The theme of this month is the yogic poets. Here is a chance to sample some of the poets we heard from and a few random comments on why yogic teachings are always given in poetry.

Last Night While I Was Sleeping

Anthony Machado

**Last night while I was sleeping
I dreamed-blessed illusion!-
a fountain flowed
inside my heart.**

**Water, tell me by what hidden
channel you came to me
with a spring of new life
I never drank**

**Last night while I was sleeping
I dreamed-blessed illusion!-
I had a beehive
inside my heart,
and from my old bitterness
the gold bees
were contriving white combs
and sweet honey.**

**Last night while I was sleeping
I dreamed-sweet illusion!-
a fiery sun glowed
inside my heart.**

It was fiery, giving off heat

**from a red fireplace, It was the sun throwing
out light
and made one weep.**

**Last night while I was sleeping
I dreamed-blessed illusion!-
that it was God I held
inside my heart**

What is it about poetry that uniquely suits it to teaching this philosophy?

Well, of course, poetry is non linear, rhythmic and transports us beyond the limits of the mind by surprising us out of our patterns of thought and assumptions, our concepts. This enables us to transcend what we perceive as reality. It confuses the categories that we carefully construct in order to navigate ordinary life.

A fiery sun glowed inside my heart

We know that the planet that is the center of our galaxy isn't inside our heart nor a fountain or beehive, in the ordinary sense. We had to expand our sense of what is real in order to grasp the poet's meaning. And expansion beyond our concepts is what yoga is about. To use a very mundane example, my nephew was telling me about a visit to his in-laws the other morning. He was quite cranky about it as he and his wife had been invited to brunch but somehow brunch had never materialized. He described several conversations he had with various members of the family, a brief trip to the Emergency Room with

his nephew who had a mishap with a softball, and then a long chat with the matriarch of the family.

As he talked his mind shifted a bit from his complaints about how disorganized and inhospitable his wife's family was and focused more on the events as they had been. After a while I asked, "Why did you go to your in-laws?"

"We were invited for brunch", he replied, swiftly descending to the narrowest realm.

"No, but why did you go? Knowing your in-laws and their Irish culinary limitations I can't image it was for the food."

"No, of course not!" he admitted. "I went because it makes Cheryl happy when I go with her."

"Why does it make her happy?"

"She wants me to like them and to know them, I guess. That way I have a picture of them in my mind when she tells me stories about them... Hmm. Well I guess then the mission was accomplished wasn't it? And, you know, now that I think about it, I didn't even complain to her on the way home, about the brunch, I mean. I think she was waiting for it. I guess I got caught up in telling her about what *did* happen."



Expectations: We're invited to brunch. Stuck with the non-appearance of bagels I, for one, can become quite grumpy. But the moment we transcend to the larger realm-'why am I here?' then there are so many more ways for things to be turning out well. (And you could always sneak into a deli on the way back from the hospital, just in case the meal never does get served). Expanding beyond our

expectations, assumptions, ideas about what should be, beyond comparing; that is yoga.

Few of us are poets. I know I'm not. But each of us has in every moment the choice to transcend to the higher realm, the lofty perch. Sometimes its not as clear as it became for my nephew but we can take the stand that IF we could see from the mountain top there would be a way that things were working out. Of course I am not referring to ignoring injustice or unkindness or tragedy and saying 'oh this must be a good thing' but also not getting caught up in evaluating it as good or bad. This, as has been said in class so many times, actually frees one for skillful action.

Confusion, another yogic art, is also a gift of poetry; surprising us out of the realm of the rational mind into the heart mind or the whole of human experience, including the mind. When we are confused out of our patterns of thought and concepts the universe expands. Then it is possible to drop into the realm of the divine. In class we frequently hear that 'the mind separates, the heart puts back together.' When you hear or read something that doesn't make *sense*, that seems as if it is confounding two separate realms, the mind is encouraged to drop its concepts, finding a way to reconcile the apparent disparities. In that instant we encounter the awakened moment.

Sometimes the whole poem is an uttering of the expression of joyousness to the universe; an echo back to it of the understanding that you and the poet are one with everything and that all there is to do is to express your joy in that experience. Then the poem teaches by

recreating in the moment of reading it
the experience that it is alluding to.

Pink Moon-The Pond Mary Oliver



**You think it will never happen again.
Then, one night, in April,
the tribes wake trilling.
You walk down to the shore.
Your coming stills them,
but little by little the silence lifts
until song is everywhere
and your soul rises from your bones
and strides out over the water.
It is a crazy thing to do-
for no one can live like that,
floating around in the darkness
over the gauzy water.
Left on the shore your bones
keep shouting *come back!*
But your soul won't listen;
In the distance it is unfolding
Like a pair of wings, it is sparking
Like hot wires. So,
like a good friend,
you decide to follow.
You step off the shore
and plummet to your knees-
you slog forward to your thighs
and sink to your cheekbones-
and now you are caught
by the cold chains of the water-
you are vanishing while around you
the frogs continue to sing, driving
their music upward through your own throat,
not even noticing
you are something else.
And that's when it happens-
you see everything
through their eyes,
their joy, their necessity;
you wear their webbed fingers;**

**your throat swells.
And that's when you know
you will live whether you will or not;
one way or another,
because everything is everything else,
one long muscle.
It's no more mysterious than that.
So you relax, you don't fight it anymore,
the darkness coming down,
called water,
called spring,
called the green leaf, called
A woman's body
As it turns into mud and leaves,
As it beats in this cage of water,
As it turns like a lonely spindle
In the moonlight, as it says
Yes.**

We explode with her in an intimate
experience of joyful oneness with
everything. Poems thrill us while they
instruct us. There is no one like Rumi to
tell us how to be human:

Daring Enough to Live -Rumi

**Face that lights my face, you spin Intelligence
into these particles**

**I am. Your wind shivers my tree.
My mouth tastes sweet with your name**

**In it. You make my dance daring enough
To *finish*. No more timidity! Let**

**Fruit fall and wind turn my roots up
In the air , done with patient waiting.**

A definition of intimacy that I have always
liked is 'meeting the deeply familiar each
time as if it were for the first time'. Poetry
enables us to meet the human experience in
this way. We hear often in class that yoga
and asana mean relationship. Poetry gives us
an intimate reminder of the relationship that
we are.



Asana of the Month:

Konasana

So here we are about two-thirds of the way through February, how many of you are saying to yourselves or friends even “I wish I would have taken the hip openers workshop at the end of last month.” By now you are probably acquainted with just how much of a hip opener Konasana is. Konasana, or compass pose, as it is often called, is a fairly challenging asana that requires a great deal of preparation. In konasana we not only have the hips being opened but also a lateral stretch, a slight twist and a leg extension, all this while we are still being mindful of our breath and smiling. Konasana is one of a few poses named after something man-made.

Compasses, whether the kind that orient us to a point in the sky, or, ones used in drawing, are designed to give us a frame of reference. As a verb it means to measure or enclose, certainly giving us that reference. Compasses help us to understand our relationship to a greater field (ones that point to the sky or in some way help to conceptualize distance) and sometimes they help to inform us of the relationship of parts to a whole. And while interestingly enough when done correctly it actually looks like a compass, we know that yoga is seldom about outer appearances. So if

it’s not about looking like a compass then what is going on here? As many have probably already noted, kona in Sanskrit relates to angle, trikonasana, parsvakonasana, badhakonasana, so is it just a coincidence that the English name is compass pose? Maybe no, the way that a compass gives you measurement is through triangulation.

In yoga the triangle is often used to relay the concept of relationship, a dynamic measure of a system. So what is it that we are measuring here? We can shed some light on that by simply looking at the asanas we must do just to get into an attempt at konasana. In order to practice konasana we must really get the hip warm and juicy; to do that we must work deep into the hips to build up heat. Because the body uses the hips as a favorite storage place for undigested memory and trauma, we can use the hips as a vast resource for understanding the patterns of the mind. As we stir up the latent energetic “fingerprints” of memories in hips we can observe the patterns and concepts that form around them in the mind. If we do this in such a way that the body is physically supported, and we don’t buy into the storyline of the mind by feeding the story we can choose to simply observe

what is going on in body and mind. It is in this observation that we get our triangulation, and with that triangulation our measure. What we are measuring here is ourselves in relation to our Self. As we begin to see our patterns, habits, and stories from the vantage point of the impersonal witness we begin to get the space required to see the difference between who we think we are, who it is our actions suggest we are, and, who we really wish to become.

Many of the asanas used to get us ready to practice konasana have a sense of humility or surrender; there is generally a bending forward or bowing down. This is a beautiful acknowledgment of these memories or energies. In bowing down we acknowledge the power they have. Many of these systems or patterns we set up at a time when we needed that protection, that limitation. We bow down out of respect because, for the most part, these patterns run outside of our normal consciousness; they have become part of “how the world is”. We don’t question those concepts so we don’t see them. We acknowledge them because we need to know them. In knowing we can free ourselves from the limitations we’ve imposed upon ourselves. We can think of konasana as having come through the crucible. Now the posture is upright. We are sitting tall and we are wide- awake. This is not from a sense of hubris or arrogance, but from the acknowledgement of knowing who we are and where we are. We are seated upright not because the work is done, but because we can finally start!

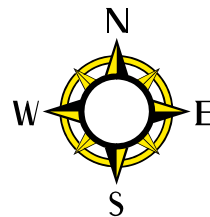
Practicing Konasana:

It is very important to do many preparatory asanas before moving into

this one. The body should be sufficiently warmed up. Make sure you warm up the spine, stretch the hamstrings and the sides of the body as well as working into the hips. Once you have sufficiently warmed up the body. Take the right shin and cradle it across the front of the body, making sure to work the thighbone deep into the hip socket.

Taking a hold of the right foot with the right hand reach the right foot back along side of the right side of the face bringing the foot close to the right ear. Continue back with the right foot until you can place the back of the right knee over the right shoulder from behind. Now taking a hold of the right foot with the left hand. (hand should be over the top of the foot so that pinky finger on left hand is closest to pinky toe on right foot. Left arm should be behind the head.)

Right hand is on the ground with the fingers pointing towards the right. Inhale lengthen the spine. Exhale stretch the right leg out and up. Rotate heart and gaze towards the sky. Remember to smile. Not only is it a ridiculously silly thing to do with your body, but whether you are consciously aware of it or not you have taken those first few steps in reclaiming who you are. And that is something to smile about.





Cinemasana

By Juliet Glidden

The Phantom of the Opera

This wonderful twist on the fairy tale, classic Broadway play, and love story comes to the Cinema. It gives you a completely different perspective on the play. You get a better understanding of it and story lines are fleshed out better, something that you could not really grasp on Broadway. The scenes are almost, if not more, captivating and beautiful. It is nice to have a fuller view of the scenes with the camera expanding beyond the limitations of the stage.

The Songs are striking and are sung by outstanding artists. The phantom's voice is so clear and resonant that its bound to be echoing in your head for the rest of the day. Christine, the main character, has a voice lucid and mesmerizing.



Their characters are more dimensional as well. On the stage it was difficult to really care about any of the characters, as they were flat. The singing and the scenes were the most interesting. Now, with the Phantom more dimensional and Raoul not so stiff, you care a little about the outcome.

The outfits in this movie are dazzling and dramatic. Each outfit possesses the

feelings and personality of the character who is wearing it. The costumes are so stunning and elaborate; each and every gown so different from the next.

Remember this is a beautiful fairy tale come to life with music and passion and then the movie will draw you in. It will captivate you and excite you. Watching this movie will make you leave your seat at the theatre to enter France and become part of the beautiful love story.



Conscious Cooking

By Annie Norteman

CARIBBEAN BLACK-BEAN AND PLANTAIN STEW

This is adapted from a Weight Watcher menu.

[Do not make this unless you have fresh cilantro, green plantains, and fresh ginger. It is not worth the effort without these ingredients. Also, it is key to roast and grind the cumin seeds yourself (place seeds in non-stick frying pan, place on high heat until fragrant, remove, cool and grind in grinder or food processor.)]

To serve 6:

2 (15 ounce)cans black beans, drained and rinsed

1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks

1 green plantain, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks

About 2 tablespoons fresh ginger-chopped or coarsely grated.

1/2 cup basmati rice

1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch piece
 1 medium onion, chopped
 1/2 cup chopped cilantro and 2 tablespoons
 for garnish-I never measure this. The more
 the merrier.
 2 tablespoons ground cumin or more or even
 much more
 several cloves garlic, minced
 salt to taste
 cracked pepper
 water-about 3 to 4 cups
 about 1 cup of diced fresh sweet juicy
 mango
 hot sauce, if desired
 olive oil

Coat the bottom of a heavy pan with oil and
 saute the onion and garlic until translucent,
 add red pepper, ginger, cumin, sweet
 potatoes and more oil if needed. Saute until
 sweet potato is slightly browned. Add about
 3 cups of water, black beans, plantains and
 salt and pepper. Bring to simmer and
 cover. Cook until the rice is soft and
 plantains are cooked, adding more water if
 needed. Taste and adjust seasonings
 periodically. When done, place in serving
 dish and top with mangoes. This is better if
 made the day ahead, but I don't think it
 should be made more than one day early.
 This is easy to make once the prep work is
 done. You can definitely be casual with
 this. I never make it exactly the same way
 twice.
 Annie



CHAI CHAT

Hello again to all!
 Gayle, knowing that I'm a sleep-potato,
 advised me never to get a puppy.
 Her pooch Brighton wakes her at 5:30
 every morning. I said 'Honey, at that
 hour, the only thing I'd sit up in bed for
 is the smell of fresh chai brought on a
 silver platter and served with one of
 Jan's Biscotti. Or maybe
 Brad Pitt, I hear he's available.'

Speaking of pups, Joyce Nagel's
 Winston (is there a British theme here?)
 is weighing in at over 100 lbs. What do
 you do when he wants to jump on your
 lap, Joyce?

An ongoing fan of the Weather Channel
 tells me we have passed the mid-point of
 winter.



Could have fooled me, but I'm not
 complaining. I'm going to
 share an old folk remedy which keeps
 me warm on the coldest of days. Handed
 down by my great-great-great
 grandmother, although sentimental it
 really works. I simply think of things
 that make me smile and it warms me up
 like a wool yoga blanket. Example: The
 image of Stefania blowing Kirin a kiss
 as she leaves class early, or
 remembering her generosity of gifting
 Joyce with her bedangled mat holder
 when replaced with a newer creation. Or,

thinking about the huge circle of healing support when one of our yogis became suddenly ill. Remembering the Intelligencer article featuring Kirin, with photos of Michelle, Naomi, Alisa, Sharon, Mary, Jan, Annette, Kathy, Bill and others. And I warm myself most thoroughly by reminding myself that the River really does flow through us.

Aggie might be tiny in size but her business makes a huge impression in the marketing industry. She has made a name for herself with some heavy corporate hitters and won an award for the outstanding marketing of Somerset ARC.

In case anyone wondered about the moving silhouettes in the small front window last week, no it's not someone practicing new asana poses. It was simply John Fagan transforming the blue room to yellow. Sort of like Crystal Gale's Brown Eyes Blue, but not quite. I'm singing the praises of Kate Appel again. Turns out that she HAS done a triathlon. More reason to give her thumbs up when you catch her in class.

I recently saw Ernie and Mark at the same Saturday morning yoga class and might have introduced them if I were willing to blow my anonymity. Oh well, some of these stories I just have to let go. (If you recall from last month's column, these two men both commuted between Toronto and New Hope to SRY).

Some of you know the film The Red Violin, well loosely related is the epic tale of the friendship between Elaine Radiss and Barbara Cole-Kiernan. It all started with a scarf. Story has it that

these two friends met years ago when the threads of a chenille scarf reached between them, entwining their hearts together forever. These days I'm not sure where the rest of her might be, but you'll find Barbara's neck wrapped beneath a silk batik scarf, brought back from Elaine's trip to Thailand.

Speaking of Barbara, no one takes her idea seriously, but BC-K has suggested SRY add cubbies in the lobby, like those used in kindergarten. Apparently she never remembers where she leaves her Merrills when rushing into class. More importantly, someone mistakenly left with her black ones on Tuesday after mini-retreat, leaving her their tad-too-big-ones.



Her tootsies send a wish-you-were-here message and hopes someone knows the whereabouts of her shoes.

Joy Stocke and Fred Young recently returned from a short but time-shifting retreat at their getaway home in Baja, Mexico. Joy says that solar power keeps the space in expansive silence. Things might be a little noisier in her Stockton home right now, as the computer and printer busily keep up with final revisions of her novel. **

Here's a scoop about Joy's husband Fred. Fred is one of 14 children, number 8 to be exact. He proudly shares the status as the oldest of the second group of siblings. In a family

of that size, kids need all the status they can muster. Katcyha and Kevin might have something to say on the subject, coming from 10 plus sibling families themselves. Hey you two, give me a boost here and leave a message at the desk. Exactly how many siblings are there in your families? And if I've left out other students from huge families, please let me know.

Talking about needing a boost, I mostly write about day students because I don't come to evening classes. All juicy gossip is encouraged and greatly appreciated. I did once think about switching to night classes, but it would just be too much wear and tear on my Tivo, recording Survivor, Fear Factor, Desperate Housewives, Wife Swapping and the other programs I live for. We all need to prioritize, right? Speaking of which, my husband is calling for me, the Apprentice is about to begin.

Until next time, warm your heart with a great cup of chai and with the knowledge that the River flows by itself.

Chai Chat Lady

Upcoming Events & Announcements

Yogic Arts

with Paul Falkenstein
Saturdays 10:30 -12:00 pm

Prenatal Yoga (Pre-registered Course)

with Zaira Leal
*Saturdays, February 26 – April 2
8:45-10:30 am*

Community Class

Meditation, Pranayama and Yoga Nidra
with John Fagan
Tuesdays 8:15-9:15 pm

Kirtan

With Michelle Clancey
4th Thursday of every month
8:15-9:15 pm No Charge!

Asana Basics Class (ABCs)

with Denyse Corelli-Nuccio
Fridays, 9:15-10:45 am
(Space is limited... pre-register or arrive early!)

Beginner's Monthly Intensive

with Chris Vissering
Sunday, March 13 4:00-6:00 pm

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



Don't forget to pick up the winter issue of the Bucks County Writer. Available now at SRYS!

Don't miss the article/interview with Kirin Mishra, written by Joy Stocke, fellow yogi, author and Editor-in-Chief of the Bucks County Writer.



**Office Space For Rent
Please inquire at the front desk.**



Movie Night

Saturday, April 2nd, 7:00 pm
Movie and discussion to make one think (and ACT). More info to follow.

SARASWATI RIVER YOGA

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