

Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

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Theme of the Month

Sri Aurobindo

August 15, 1872–December 5, 1950, was an Indian nationalist, scholar, poet, Hindu mystic, evolutionary philosopher, yogi and guru.

He began his public life as a fighter for Indian independence. In jail he became aware that in order to achieve liberation one needed to be free from the inside as well as the outside. He popularized the concept of integrated yoga, believing that unless you brought your inner peace into action in the world it was incomplete.

This approach is very close to the teachings we receive at Saraswati. Furthermore, Aurobindo thought that integrating the divine feminine was the necessary foundation for the Supramental state that he believed was possible.

These are lofty ideas but in a way very consistent with the words we hear every week at SRY.

This month a theme that I have heard embroidered upon again and again over the years at Saraswati is calling out to me. One must *feel* in order to know in a deep and unconditioned way.

The other day in class our teacher said ‘If you are thinking about something, then you are thinking about something that you DO NOT KNOW. I had a moment of total confusion. It was so startling to me that, like a koan, it stopped my mind in its tracks. But it is not different from what we hear all the time. Thinking, knowledge, rational analysis are the ‘scaffolding’ that our minds erect in order to comprehend the world, taking it apart so as to reduce it something it (the mind) can hold. *The mind takes apart; the heart puts back together.* But that is only the illusion of understanding. Like the shadows on the back of the cave in Plato’s Republic, a pale imitation of the truth. So then what is the truth?

But more important, how do I understand the truth and employ it in the everyday way of functioning in the world. Let me go back in time to an event that I see with much greater perspective, given the benefit of SPACE; in this case the space that is provided by the distance of TIME. It allows me to know in a more total way what was really happening then. I offer this story in the nature of a microcosmic example of the larger paradigm of

SPACE which provides clarity and freedom from ego and identities.



About 20 years ago I left a work situation in a very self righteous way. I was sure from the point of view of the best of all my opinions and biases (many of which I still embrace) that what I was doing was right. It fit the ‘scaffolding’ of my beliefs about power, labor relations, collaborative initiatives, ethical treatment and many more of the concepts and values I identified as WHO I AM.

Today I see the same situation, not differently, but with greater depth and breadth-many life experiences have expanded my ability to feel into all of the opinions and personalities and roles that each of the participants played. For instance I have been the boss of a group of employees who saw *my* policies and procedures as unjust and exploitive. I have come to understand the mixed motives of many of the people whose cause I was championing so righteously. I would not do anything differently-which of course is good because it’s too late anyway. But the choices I made then were limited by a shallow and restricted view of the situation and all of its multiple human threads.

So what is it that is different? It is the way I see them, from a place of groundedness in a deeper truth than the issues and personalities that structured my seeing then. It is this groundedness, coming from stillness (as I no longer

have identities attached to this scenario it is easy to be undefended and non-reactive) that yoga potentially allows us to bring to *every* moment in our life, not just with the benefit of hindsight and experience. I am not just saying that with the benefit of hindsight and life experience I can see more deeply I am attempting to convey the experience of a qualitative shift in perspective that is similar to the difference between seeing through one’s identities and seeing from a perspective grounded in having *felt* something and without being limited by the scaffolding of one’s thoughts and identities. I offer this narrative to provide an analogy for the differential in perspective.



It is a sense of coming from a knowing, not based on any thoughts or ideas or concepts but on have deeply felt the many aspects of the situation and acting from that place of stillness and wisdom beyond ideas that I am attempting to describe. It is this space that I believe Aurobindo is talking about when he talks about the Supramental and what we learn to reach toward in our practices at SRY.

Imagine if every choice we made was based on being grounded in the sense of being *part* of everything and the vastness of *being* everything with only the thinnest outer layer of the mind being devoted to whatever strategies were pertinent to the moment?

Of course I can't imagine this, but I know from having felt feathery brushes with it; my identities have dissolved when my voice merged with others in Kirtan, I have been awestruck by a scene of immeasurable beauty, losing my boundaries and feeling myself absorbed into the scene itself.



An encounter with that space; grounded in stillness, inseparable from the divine is, I believe, the gift of Yoga practice; to move more and more to that knowing and to spontaneously act more and more from that space is the possibility that yoga offers.

Asana of the Month:

Asana of the Month Parsvakonasana (extended angle pose)

Like Trikonasana Parsvakonasana is one of those angle asanas that remind us of the balance and harmony that exists between triune forces like creation, destruction, and preservation, electron, proton, neutron, past, present, future, or, youth, adulthood, old age; inherent in the very matrix of the universe. It is an asana that challenges us to examine how we fit into the flow of the universe. At first look it seems similar enough to trikonasana; simply bend the lead knee. As we look more deeply we see that that simple act can present profound changes in our relationship to the asanas. In trikonasana we see the harmony of the entire system: a symbolic representation of the inter-relationship of the universe

or any entire system. In Parsvakonasana we observe the individual element's relationship to the whole, specifically our relationship to life. Although true of just about any asana, whenever we have that lunging movement present we are given a great opportunity to examine where our focus lies. Are we focusing on the past dwelling on how we got here, not seeing the present's potential for change, dragging the past into the future, missing the present, or, does our attention primarily follow the movement forward hoping we can keep it together long enough until the asana/life situation, changes. When we become aware of our habitual patterns of body and mind will we choose to strike a balance between remembering the past and the value of life's lessons learned while staying in the flow, finding ourselves ever fluid and dynamic?

It is this process of remembering, being, and becoming always simultaneously always now, that is the flow of wisdom. Can we make that transition from parsvakonasana to trikonasana and back and forth again and again while remaining still? This is the question of the yogi. Can we be both small and large? Can we choose to not "have" any of it but simply to be in it?

How to practice:

From adho mukha svanasana, (downward facing dog) step the right foot forward to a high runner's lunge. Take the time to make sure that the right knee is directly over the right ankle. This will give the maximum support to the knee throughout the asana. You can remain on the ball mound of the foot, or bring the left heel down and to the right: making sure that a line drawn from the center of the right heel would

bisect the left foot. This will be important for achieving the proper alignment in the hips and torso. There are several places to place the right hand or arm;

Beginner stage: bring forearm to where the right thigh and knee meet

Intermediate stage: place right hand on ground or a block to the inside of the right foot

Advanced Intermediate stage: place the right hand on the ground or on a block to the outside of the right foot.

In the two intermediate stages make sure that the right shoulder makes solid contact with the right knee.

Press knee into shoulder and shoulder into knee. Remember yoga always favors balance so make sure that the shoulder and knee move towards each other equally. Be aware of the tendency for the right sitting bone to start to move towards the right as you press knee and shoulder together. Right sitting bone should be on that line that runs from heel of right foot to arch of left foot.

Make sure that the back leg remains active and strong. Press into the outside edge of the back foot stretching the mat long between the feet.

Next take your attention to the hips. Level the hips with the right knee if possible.

Turn the left palm forward and with a long graceful inhale sweep the left hand back past the left hip and up and overhead lengthening the spine as you do so.

Exhale continue to reach the left hand straight up out of the shoulder socket using that right knee / shoulder contact and the leverage from pressing down and away with that left foot, rotate the heart center open to the sky, allowing the twist to start at the navel center and spiral all

the way up the spine and through the crown of the head. (Optional you could bring the left hand all the way overhead. If you do so turn the palm toward the ground and you gaze from under your left arm up at the sky.)

With each inhale lengthen the spine: with each exhale twist the heart center open.

Optional;

You could enter this asana from Virabhadrasana 2 (Warrior 2) reaching out with the right hand as you move the right hip under.

Conscious Cooking

*Sara Lockard (editor's daughter)
And frequent visitor to SRY)*



Sara's Spectacular Spanakopita

20 sheets fillo (phyllo) dough, thawed
2 sticks butter, melted
2 tbs olive oil for sautéing
20 oz frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed very dry
4 eggs
8 oz feta cheese
8 oz ricotta cheese
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 bunch green onions, ends removed, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
1 tsp dried dill
¼ tsp nutmeg
salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

Put olive oil in sauté pan on medium heat. Add chopped onions and green onions to the heated oil and reduce heat to medium-low. Sauté, stirring occasionally, until onions are translucent and soft. Add thawed, squeezed dry spinach to the pan and stir to combine with onions. Remove from heat to cool slightly.

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs. Add crumbled feta cheese, ricotta cheese, Parmesan cheese and stir to combine. Add cooled onion and spinach mixture, dill, nutmeg, salt and pepper.

Grease a 9" x 12" baking pan.

Unroll the fillo (phyllo) sheets. Divide the sheets in half and lay the bottom half on the inner wrapping the fillo (phyllo) was packaged in. Put a layer of plastic wrap over these sheets. Cover the plastic wrap with a lightly dampened dish towel. Put the second half of the sheets on a layer of plastic wrap.

Place the melted butter and a pastry brush on the work area next to the fillo (phyllo) sheets and greased baking pan.

Carefully separate a sheet of fillo (phyllo) pastry from the stack and lay in the greased baking pan. The fillo (phyllo) will go up both ends of the pan a bit. Brush the sheet thoroughly with butter.

Lay another sheet on top of the first and brush thoroughly with butter.

Repeat until all sheets from that half are stacked and buttered.

Pour the filling mixture on top of the buttered sheets and spread to an even layer with a spoon or spatula.

Remove the plastic wrap covering the second half of the fillo (phyllo) sheets. Separate a sheet and lay it on top of the

filling mixture. Tuck the ends down around the filling. Brush the sheet thoroughly with butter.

Repeat with the remaining sheets.

After all sheets are buttered and stacked, use a sharp paring knife to cut down through the top layers of fillo (phyllo), creating a grid with four cuts lengthwise and five cuts across, resulting in 20 squares. This will prevent the fillo (phyllo) from puffing too much and will guide cutting the fillo (phyllo) after it is baked.

Bake at 350 until browned and flaky. Check the spanakopita at 50 minutes. Depending on actual oven temperature, the spanakopita may be done or may require up to twenty minutes more. If not done at 50 minutes, check every 5 minutes or so to see if it is browned and flaky.

When done, remove the spanakopita from the oven. If serving immediately, cool for five minutes before cutting the pieces. If you are not serving the spanakopita right away, I recommend cutting it into pieces and reheating the pieces on a baking sheet in a 350 oven until warmed through, crisp and delicious! (However, it can be eaten at room temperature, it just won't be as crisp.)

Enjoy!

Notes:

- 1) I have had a bad experience with the natural foods version of fillo (phyllo) dough. I recommend the Athens fillo (phyllo) you find in the traditional grocery store freezer section.
- 2) If you are absolutely horrified by the amount of butter used, you can replace part or all of the butter with olive oil. The spanakopita won't be as incredibly delicious, but will still be tasty.



CHAI CHAT

CHAI CHAT 3/06

Yahoo Yoginis. There is no meaning behind that greeting-I just felt like alliterating. Okay, I'm also excited to see spring bulbs bursting forth their aliveness again.

Talking about flowers gets me thinking about garden lovers in our midst. I await seeing what Helen will grace our desk with as she cultivates her garden this summer.



There's a lot I could say about Colleen Crunkelton. Like the garden she loves and cultivates, she emanates an elegant presence in her stillness and natural beauty. Just as I reliably find my stand of lavender hyacinths blooming in the right lower quadrant of my field every March, Colleen can be found teaching 2 Sunday asana classes as she has done for the past 7 plus years. She is a much beloved teacher and those of us who linger over that 3rd cup of coffee on Sunday mornings might find taking her class more meaningful to the Soul, (present company included in that suggestion).

It is always wonderful to walk into class and see newcomers and long-timers mat to mat.

To you newcomers I want to say WELCOME and please feel free to introduce yourselves or linger over a cup of tea afterwards~We're very happy you are here. As for the long-timers, I must confess my heart thumps a wee bit to see John Barbati and Lissa Gabel side by side again now that their children are older.



OK, call me sentimental; my heart thumped a bit seeing Ruth N., Pam and Christine H. and David L. again. Wow, I missed y'all.

No longer a newcomer Tsana –recent SRYTAP graduate and teacher, and front desk person extraordinaire, is featured in this month's issue of Bucks County Town & Country Living Magazine. A well-known local artist did a 7-page spread of sketches/portraits of Tsana. We are so used to seeing her radiant, bubbling personality and smile, however in these portraits her beauty is shown in a more pensive pose.



Between you and me, I understand Mary K. being in more classes these days. I can turn on the snooze alarm 20 times and convince myself that tomorrow is another asana opportunity. Experience has shown me however, that the one

thing that surely gets me out for the 9:15 class is having house construction. So when are you inviting me for a meal in your new kitchen, Mary?!

I see suntans are blooming as well as flowers. Abby H. has the glow of a tropical tan and Bonnie P. and John F. may tell me they got theirs sitting in front of a yagya but I believe they were in St. Tropez. Check it out and tell me what you think. For those of you curious what a yagya is, I won't tell. Like a variation on the theme of what my father would say when asked for the definition of a word, I won't say look it up. I suggest instead, that you take some of SRY's philosophy classes or programs and find out first hand what a fire ceremony (oh shoot! I just gave it away didn't I?) means and hopefully experience it yourself one day.



Speaking of which-you can have the experience sooner rather than later. Kirin will be at Kripalu this June (25-30) and besides the wonderfulness of herself and the teachings and the splendor of the Berkshires in springtime, Kirin will be performing an authentic SRY fire

ceremony. I mean yagya. I mean homa. I mean....COME!!

I've got to check out what I heard in the parking lot. Is it true that when she found out SRY was sold out, Lesli Ann was offering double the price to anyone with unsinged pages of the Chandi?

Apparently there was a fire in the rear parking lot set off by the vacuum cleaner equipment box at the car rental place. As the anonymous friend who told me about it said, "Hot off of the Press The fire jump the parking lot and started to burn leaves...it took the fire dept 20 minutes to get here.....guess they thought David's intensive meditation before Vidya. class prompted a fire ceremony!"

You too can work with me-send me those stories folks-I can see only just so much with my own 3 eyes.

Well folks, I can smell I left the Chai on the stove a little bit too long (it can't be my vacuum because I got rid of that the day I got rid of my husband). Gotta run folks. Until next time, when you see a hyacinth, think of me.

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
1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, 12:30-3:30 pm.

Hip Openers with Kirin
January 28, 12:30-4:00

Saraswati Day Workshop with Kirin
February 2nd – 7:00-8:30 pm
February 3rd – 12:00-4:00 pm
February 4th – 12:00pm

Mat-Less Yoga with David Pittenger
February 11 – 5:00-7:00 pm

Restorative Yoga with RaeAnn Banker
February 12 – 12:30-3:30 pm

**5 Key Practices for Women
with Denyse Corelli,**
Saturday, March 4, 12:30-3:30 pm

**Yearning for Peace: Nonviolence as a
Spiritual Practice with Christa Tinari**
April 2 – Time TBA

Yoga as Therapy with Bonnie Pariser
Session One, April 23, 1:30-4:30 pm

Yoga as Therapy with Bonnie Pariser
Session Two, April 30, 12:30-4:30 pm
(Geared toward yoga teachers)

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 And for those of us who yearn to deepen our experience and spend more time in practice and study w/ Kirin. Here's the retreat together and finally see what we've been raving about!

Feb 13-17th
Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA
ACTIVISM AND CONTEMPLATION

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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