

Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

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HANUMAN

Son of the wind, the breath, spirit of life, emblematic of devotion; he is the bridge between individual consciousness and universal consciousness. Sometimes this seems very abstract to me. But part of his being depicted as a monkey says to me that what he stands for is supposed to be very accessible.

With that in mind I feel empowered to take the story, told in the Ramayana, of his leap across the whole ocean, as an allegory for the leaps we make all of the time in our lives. There are, for me, moments when beyond all reason, story or logic I find myself able to do things in a different way than ever before; free of the conditioning and memories, the fears and expectations that usually bind my thoughts and actions.

The Ramayana, the mythic tale of Ram and Sita, tells of their separation and reunion after many extraordinary feats of

bravery and sacrifice. One of these selfless acts is Hanuman's leap across the ocean to get the magical herbs that revive Ram and his brother Lakshmana. In class we have heard that Sita can be understood to represent individual consciousness while Ram represents universal consciousness. When Hanuman leaps to the mountain top and looks about him for the healing herbs, they hide from him. The healing acts and thoughts that come from Stillness can hide from me when I need them the most. Frequently these transformed ways of acting in old circumstances seem totally inaccessible. But, Hanuman, on his mission to save his beloved Ram, doesn't get caught up in the search for the exact right thing, way, action. He grabs THE WHOLE top of the mountain and carries it back to Lanka to be sorted out later. He is the breath, the spirit that can lift us above circumstances, transport us in space, reunite us with something bigger.

Recently I was at a conference devoted entirely to challenging those of us with white skin privilege to work collaboratively with youth to dismantle the system of privileges that give unearned benefits to some groups at a cost to others. I was supporting a group of young people to give a presentation that I had helped to create. It was very complex in both the concepts and the delivery. It required integrating complicated material with unpredictable responses from the audience, most of it to be performed by the young people.

They had very limited experiences outside of the streets of their inner city neighborhood and none at all presenting at a National conference.

Of course they had had many chances to practice before the day of the presentation but these had been consistent with young men resisting and struggling with life, maturity and profound issues with authority. You get the picture. They went kicking and screaming into every rehearsal. Low and behold, with a minimum of coaching, on the day of the presentation they were transformed and it went beautifully. The young men totally trusted their ability to deliver the experience in an authentic way. They thoroughly understood, not from an academic or intellectual perspective, but from direct experience what they wanted to convey to the audience and had no doubt that they could do it. Their only concern was that not enough of the attendees at the conference had heard about what they were doing and wouldn't know to come to our workshop.

I should have known they would pull it off. And, as they *had* done small parts of it in other venues over the previous months, I did have a lot of confidence in them.

What was surprising to me, in retrospect, was how well *I* was able to support them and not get caught up in my ego-*I, me, mine*. Often when doing something new where others will be watching and judging I have been stunted, kept small and uninspired by too much focus on what others will think of me.

For instance, during my first experience 'performing' before a group of my peers

as a new therapist, I was interviewing a family in front of a one-way mirror with the rest of the agency's staff observing me. I remember saying to myself 'Well, Judith, if you don't run out of the room crying before its over, we'll call it a success'. But at this conference, I could not use this time tested strategy of setting ridiculously low expectations. We were trying to deliver a powerful experience of the ways that multiple forms of oppression structure all of our lives, but most especially those who are young, poor, and of color. This was something much more important than my image of myself or the opinion of my peers and superiors.

And that is what saved me. At the time I was so engrossed in supporting them in putting together the workshop that I did not think about what others would think of *me* for a moment. I had a little flutter of worry that no one would come and that the young people would be disappointed. I tried to prepare them by framing this as just another practice for our next 'gig'. But my worries were unfounded. The young men had attended other workshops over the course of the conference and felt, accurately I think, that what they had to offer was a much more powerful experience. So, they told everyone about their workshop and invited them to come.



It seemed to me that this was not out of ego or a grandiose impulse to perform and be seen, but because they genuinely felt that their presentation would make a

difference. It was designed to provide a powerful experience of what their lives were like and how *all* of our lives are intrinsically linked, thru oppressive structures, to lives of privilege; gender privilege, white skin privilege, heterosexual privilege, and economic class privilege.

And people came. Who knows why; grace, boredom with dry academic workshops, curiosity about these energetic young people and their enthusiastic self confidence, a premonition that what they would learn would be more inspiring than all the words *about* how to collaborate with young people to transform the oppressive structures of society. They came and as one of the young men said, he knew they got something because they got so involve. They also gave the group wonderful evaluations. These participants saw that what they were given was a direct experience of liberating and transformational collaborations between diverse groups of people.—the very thing the conference was designed to promote. And that was my ‘leap’ into a selfless moment because I had come to love what we were doing and was focused on something much bigger than anything in my life.



Back to Hanuman. Before he makes the leap, he imagines himself in the demon city and fills up with the power of his intention to reunite Sita with Ram.

" In the strong sea currents lived the old Rakshasi, Sinhika. She swims to the surface and grabs Hanuman's shadow.

*In the air Hanuman felt himself being dragged down and held back. Sinhika stood on the water holding Hanuman's shadow in her claws and looking at him with tiny red eyes. She opened her ugly mouth and bared yellow scaly teeth, and started to pull at his shadow. Hanuman tells her to watch out, he is in Rama's service and his kingdom is **all the world**. Sinhika says, "You will never escape me!" Seeing how big Hanuman was she opened her mouth really wide. Quickly Hanuman became as small as a thumb and flew down her throat. He crushed her heart with his sharp fingernails turned and darted up out of her ear."*

For myself, for this one time, I was committed to an intention bigger than myself, This hooked me to something larger. I was not ‘dragged down and held back’. The small self shrunk to something so small that it could go inside and crush the heart of all my self centered doubts and fears.

Asana of the Month:

Conscious Cooking



CHAI CHAT Dear Yogis and Yoginis,
Spring is here. You know how I know? I
get goo-goo-eyed during this season and
hours later find myself still staring at
tree buds; cold cup of chai still in my
hands. All that to say- “Folks-what’s
been happenin’!” Shame on me, I
haven’t been coming to class.

A robin did nest on my shoulder and
whisper in my ear but bad news is I
don’t speak Robin. Luckily I do speak
Chic~a~dee~dee~dee. Here’s what the
chickie told me...the birds and bees are
at it Big Time. However, like most hot
new romances, the wraps are still on
(symbolically if not other ways) and my
lips are sealed.

Those closest to me are suggesting I be
more productive this summer. They are
nudging me to drop my subscription to
People magazine and have been leaving
me articles on sun exposure and the
ozone layer. I am thinking of filling the
position for SRY studio cleaning twice a
week. What do y’all think? I would
seriously consider it except for my
manicure. (In all seriousness folks-this is
my corny pathway to letting those
interested know to call Sandy and
arrange an interview).



On more interesting pathways, Kirin will be gallivanting and sharing her wisdom of Shree Vidya Teachings in Rome, Italy in April, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, Pa in May and Kripalu Center Lenox, Massachusetts in June. If you are wondering, I did offer to carry her chai or at least hold the melting chocolate gelato while she addresses her students. She declined.



Maybe Denyse can use a hand with her luggage? Hmmmm, thinking out loud, that won't work for me; I get seasick. It does sound like an enviable trip though. Denyse is going to Belize on her family's chartered sailboat for several weeks. I might not be the best guest but I'm sure she'll find someone better suited to accompany her.

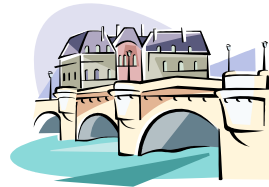
For anyone interested. I just googled the spelling of 'gallivanting' and although I couldn't find a dictionary definition, I did find a special coffee blend called the Gallivanting Goat. Speaking of coffee and travel, Mark Leenhouts recently returned from a trip to Ethiopia. Now

there's a place to get a great cup of coffee.

Talking about getting Googled. Vivien Cosner found herself googled in Chai Chat. Now that's 15 minutes of fame if I ever heard it!

And as usual, Jan will be either coming or going to Paris. Hmmmmm gets me thinking, maybe Kirin will be taking the teachings to France and Jan could don a beret and distribute flyers at Les Champs-Elysees?

Speaking of Paris, I hear they don't celebrate Easter with egg hunts like we do here in the good ol' USA. You know why? Because in France, one egg is an 'oeuf' (Did you like that yolk?)



Chai Chat Lady

Upcoming Events/Announcements

**Kirtan with Michelle Clancey &
RaeAnn Banker**

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.

Basics Enrolled Class

Sundays, Ongoing Sessions
4:00-5:30 pm

Meditation with Pam Mulcahy

Tuesday nights, 8:15-9:30 pm , *no charge!*

Prenatal Yoga with Yvonne Stuck

Saturdays, 8:45-10:00 am
Ongoing Sessions

Yoga as Therapy with Bonnie Pariser

Session One, April 23, 12:45-3:45 pm

Yoga as Therapy with Bonnie Pariser

Session Two, April 30, 12:45-3:45 pm
(Geared toward yoga teachers)

Inner Dance with David Pittenger
Saturday, April 15, 7:30 pm

Precision and Grace: Iyengar Method
With master teacher Christine Stein
May 5-7

**Vinyasa Fundamentals with
Natasha Rizopolous**

June 9-11

Key Elements of Spirituality
with Kirin Mishra
Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA
May 15-19

**A River Flows – Immersion in the
Saraswati Method** with Kirin Mishra
Kripalu Center, Lenox, MA
June 25-June 30



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