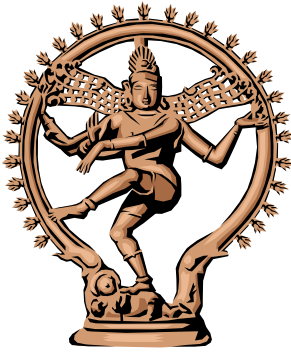


# Saraswati River Yoga Newsletter

Editor: Judith Lockard

Vol. 4, No.5

MAY 2006



## Theme of the Month

Pratyabhijna-hridayam

### The Heart of the Doctrine of Recognition;

Consciousness is the most intimate experience of life, the essence of life itself. Among the many spiritual traditions born and developed in India, one ancient philosophy - Kashmir Shaivism - has explored it completely. The *Pratyabhijnahridayam* is a very important universal doctrine, a principal text of Kashmir Shaivism

At SRY we are privileged to be exposed in every class and workshop to the teachings of Kashmir Shaivism, It is an esoteric field usually accessible only to a few scholars and other specialists. These teachings hold that salvation is a realization, a *prise de conscience* of the true nature of one's own existence and that of all other beings as existing in God. Further, that it

is possible to achieve salvation while remaining in the common human condition, the state called jivanmukti, liberation while living. The description of realization is a process of recognizing or remembering one's true nature, the inner Self, full of supreme bliss and love.

Recently the word humility has been coming up a lot. It's one that has very little panache in our work-a-day world. But I think it is one that points to the freedom that recognizing who we are, in the Yogic Kashmiri Shaivism sense, is all about. Humility, I am coming to think, is about getting beyond the ego. And ego is *anything* that I identify with. It is anything that I conceive of as my self, from the ideas I have about the kind of person I am to the roles I play in the

world to the qualities I sometimes think are my personality or essence. In other words anything other than a knowledge that I am no thing or way other than part of the divine whole. Its not that I have or even hope to achieve a total state of living in that realization but I think we all have glimpses of what that would be like.

Ego. When I am measuring my self in the world-I'm this way or that way, I'm such and such , I'm like this or that, I am in the illusion that this is real. At some level this is suffering. Sometimes that feels like real pain. Sometimes it's just the garden variety pain of thinking I'm separate from the universe, which can even feel good, especially if I have been feeling lonely or sad and someone comforts me or makes me laugh or says they love me. But it is still suffering as it is still living by measuring my self instead of being.

I remember being surprised when I discovered that playing small and being falsely modest was as much an ego trip as being grandiose and boastful; that true humility was being just exactly who I was; as competent and inadequate, attractive and ordinary, ignorant and accomplished as I was; neither more nor less. Of course I first learned this by noticing *someone else's* lack of humility. A woman I was working with was being extremely self deprecating and I began to think that her focus on her inadequacies kept her unavailable to the gifts and abilities she had to offer and that. And it occurred to me that her behavior was as self centered and distorted, although much more socially acceptable, as the antics of the obnoxious braggart who regales you

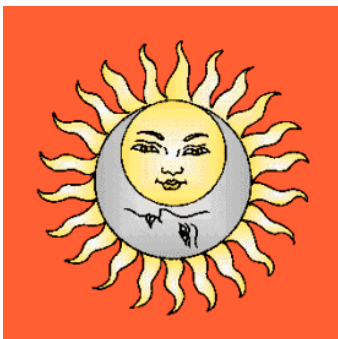
with his stellar qualities and accomplishments.

So back to the recognition of Self. A small but powerful way of thinking about this is the way I have come to understand being real, as opposed to living in the illusion of who I am. If I imagine myself completely stripped of all concepts, the scaffolding that we hear of in class, then there is nothing to measure. If I am everything and everything is divine than this play that we are all in together is a game of measuring and comparing that has no reality. When I am miserable and trying to figure out how to get what I want or how to solidify my good opinion of myself, or rushing from place to place not *being* anywhere, I am fully taken in by the illusion, believing it and suffering. When I am content I can imagine those concepts kind of slipping off of me like a silk bathrobe and lying in a formless heap at me feet. That is bliss.

The first time I remember catching a glimpse of this was when I was teaching children in a small alternative parent co-op in Plainfield NJ. I was learning about what was then called New Math and teaching it to the children. It involved using small wooden rods and then doing what appeared to be very complicated equations but were in fact very concrete and creative ways to understand basic numerical concepts. A parent stood up at the first board meeting and praised me and my curriculum to the skies. Of course, I basked in his words. He ended by saying how thrilled he was to see his daughter learning Algebra, which of course she wasn't! I had a moment of total confusion because I had loved the praise but it was based on a completely false premise.

At the same time what I was teaching was terrific but was not anything I could take credit for as I was barely grasping the methods and concepts myself. In my pleasure at doing something so important but being aware that it was nothing to do with me I was able to stay suspended, for a moment, in not 'measuring' the truth, meaning significance or possible future credit I could obtain from this. I have always remembered that moment because it was unique and, also probably because it was a micro precursor of something much bigger-a moment of being totally without personal value yet the site of something awesome.

Of course this is vastly different and of a much more mundane order than the recognition of which the Pratyabhijna hridayam speaks. But it is a distant shadowy template for living suspended with out measuring a separate self and being totally in the flow of the power of creation. I lost my self for an instant without a sense of losing anything. This is, I think, what is spoken of when we hear of becoming a vehicle for the power of Shakti.



### **Asana of the Month:**

Asana of the Month Dhanurasana /  
Urdhva dhanurasana:  
Bow pose/ wheel pose.

In looking for ways in which to write about the asana of the month a quote from Gandhi would pop into my consciousness. "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." I've always loved this statement. It is so simple and also so profound. On the face of it you might think Yes! I can and will be the change I want to see in the world. However in being that change we will all find there are many obstacles, chiefly among them ourselves. I'm not sure if it was the asana of the month or the subject of the month or maybe how I see that they relate that kept pulling this line into my stream of thoughts.

What would it take for us to be the change we want to see in the world? We would need to let go of the defenses of ego and become present to the moment. Why present to the moment? To be true to our true nature we must be in harmony with the flow of the universe. The universe is constantly moving and dynamic nothing is static even that which appears frozen or solid is in a perpetual state of vibration. Tantrikas say to be in harmony you must be like the universe dynamic flexible responsive and creative.

Our egos build a world-view that is static unchanging not flexible, reactionary. If we can loose the learned fears, we can open the heart to the unknown and ever shifting. We can learn to embrace the possibility of change.

Our true Self is that same Self that created the world. This is the seed of all yoga understanding. What we learn from yoga is that the body mirrors the mind and mind mirrors the body, changing one can lead to profound changes in the other.

What links these two together, the body and mind, with the Self is the breath; what separates them is the ego.

The Ego is constantly supporting and defending its existence. It does this chiefly through intellectualization. In defending its own existence the ego seeks to control its environment. As we identify more and more with the egos we construct we slowly begin to isolate and close down the parts of our being that are not directly under the influence of the intellect. As we isolate the emotional centers of our being our bodies take on a posture that reflects this state of being. Often what we come to see is a heart center that is always being protected, defended, closed off, sheltered, not vulnerable. We learn not to take emotional risks. We become sadly isolated and lonely. Not connecting with life we often fail to see that on a deep level we have chosen this. As we continue to keep the emotional centers isolated and closed down the ego is never seriously checked or challenged in its worldview.

Through the practice of yoga we begin to smooth out the anxieties of mind giving us the space and possibility to see options beyond the limited worldview of the ego. With the mind naturally calmed through the use of breath we can begin to open up those closed down spaces in our bodies and our consciousness.

Because of the interrelationality of Self, body, mind, and breath we can use the body to mature the ego. Maturing the body is predestined, nothing we can do can stop it. The body is inherently part of the material world, like everything else in the physical universe it comes into being, grows, matures, and finally decays. Although the ego is not strictly a part of nature it also possesses elements of consciousness, or at least a reflection of it. Because it is somewhat independent of nature there is no physical law that automatically matures the ego. As a construction of the mind it is up to us to grow or mature the ego through our own will power.

One of the ways we can begin to challenge the supremacy of the ego that closes the heart down is to physically and deliberately open the heart center up. Dhanurasana is supreme for doing this. All backbends by their very nature open the heart but in Dhanurasana we open the heart while having the center of the body's heart-mind rooted directly into the earth. As the emotional core of the body connects directly with the vast equanimity of the earth the mind is in a better position to move from ego centeredness to being centeredness. Many backbends drop us into the uncertainty of the unknown without our usual forms of support; metaphorically we are bound to where we are going. In Dhanurasana we do not have that blindness and we are further bolstered by the direct connection between mother earth and ourselves at that point of original nourishment, our navel center.

In Dhanurasana the hands, which usually bring us the world, take hold of the feet and offer them up. With the heart mind rooted into the earth and the hands making an offering our mobility we are surrendering our restlessness and wandering. We become simultaneously immobile and infinitely mobile as we connect to the vast ever-moving ever-changing universe. We agree to be with whatever arises or whatever falls and we do so with an open heart and open eyes.

If we can break the conditioning of habitual fears, boldly face the uncertainty of the future with an open heart and open eyes I believe it is then that we approach the heart of realization.

How to practice Dhanurasana;

The instructions for practicing urdhv dhanurasana will not be listed in the article.

As always please practice with a qualified instructor and always make sure that the body is sufficiently warmed up before practicing and holding backbends.

Lie flat on your stomach. Both men and women should have their feet hip width apart.

Bring your chin or more ideally the forehead to the ground.

Exhale all of the air out, soften the navel center, tighten the buttocks and move the direction of the energy in the legs toward the core of the body.

Bend the knees, reach back for heels toes or ankles. Make sure the navel center remains soft and receptive.

If you cannot reach the heels you can make use of a strap, towel or even shirt, wrapping the strap around your feet where the tops of the feet meet the shins.

Keeping the buttocks together as you inhale raise the head, heart, feet and knees off the ground. Gaze forward or, if possible slightly up. Do not thrust the head backwards between the shoulder blades. The neck should remain swan like. This is a pose of generosity of breath. Transform your body into a vehicle for Saraswati. Saraswati who rides upon the breath who rides upon a swan make the neck lengthen make it swan like.

Remember to keep the navel soft and receptive. Drop the kidneys deep into the body this will cantilever the legs moving them up.

Continue to breath deeply as you continue to relax into the pose more and more.

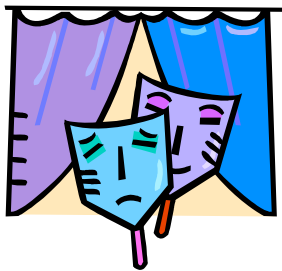




## CHAI CHAT

Greetings, my dear friends. Ah, I am so excited that iced-chai season has finally arrived. How are all of you? This is certainly the most traditional vacation season and I await hearing and writing about many adventures. As for me, I look forward to my annual trip to exotic places for new and exciting chai spices.

So many wonderful associations with this season, fireworks, ice cream at Princeton's Bent Spoon, outdoor dining (which reminds me, rumor has it that we might soon have café tables and chairs outside Jamie Hollander's patio), and summer stock theatre.



Speaking of theatre, Bonnie Pariser's husband Andy Wander has been hiding a secret talent behind his adorable eyebrows. Apparently he was the buzz star-performer at his community's play.

Beloved SRY director, Kirin Mishra and companion recently traveled to New York's famous Town Hall to hear political activist, writer, Arundhati Roy and poet, activist Eduardo Galleano speak about important world-issues of social justice. As it turned out, Kirin might have chosen a better accompanist. Apparently her star-struck friend was more interested in where they were sitting and the 'who's who' of the audience than who appeared on stage.

Rumor has it that the friend gathered signatures of Lisa Bonet, Marisa Tomei and Democracy Now's Amy Goodman's mother who sat directly in front of them.

John Barbati and Lissa Gabel will make their usual visit to John's family near Cape Cod, and this summer they add a new destination: Vancouver... (or is it the Pacific Northwest of the USA)? I apologize for my lack of precision; it must be my morning caffeine fog. I willingly stand to be corrected. Please take this as an invitation to send additions or corrections and to join me as ambassador of mat-chat.

Still on a traveling theme, our wonderful editor Judith Lockard recently presented at a conference in St. Louis but missed going up in the Arch by 10 minutes! Still using my favorite new word from last month, she's a regular Gallavanter herself; just returned from a trip to Sweden and in June presents again at American Family Therapy Association conference in Chicago.

When you can't find John Fagan, look for him in his meditation hut.

This beautiful Haven, which he built last fall with a little help from his friends, overlooks a wonderful pond. Needing no meditation gong to announce the close of his practice, he has the honking of all the geese. Nature lover that John is, a cheetah was drawn to greet and blessed him on his recent vacation to South Africa. Ask to see his photos.

Sources have told me that Joy Stockey will not yet be found in her usual summer gardening activities. These days, she is engaged in co-creating and executive directing a wonderful online magazine Wild River Review. In addition, Bill Cole-Kiernan writes a monthly column as guest philosopher.

A warning: Speaking of my 'sources', sometimes those closest to you might be my greatest spies. Apparently Sandy Trebendis didn't make it to Basic Enrolled class a few months ago because she had danced so hard

the night before she was just plumb puckered out.

Let's all raise our Chai to celebrate a new arrival! Erinn Auletta is proud mamma of baby Henry, born a few weeks ago at 3 am. He was 8lbs 6oz and 20 1/2 inches long and although I haven't met the new angel yet, I hear he is absolutely wonderful. And Yvonne Stuck, you will be very happy to hear Erinn is telling everyone your pre-natal classes were helpful & wonderful, and she is looking forward to joining post-natal soon.



If I wouldn't miss all of you so much, I'd apply to Positive News at [www.positivenevus.org](http://www.positivenevus.org). What a paper! This free newspaper reports news from around the world in the areas of sustainability, social equality, education and happiness with a clear message that 'another world is possible.'

I'll rush off now I think I see Madonna. Until next time, traveling mercies and enjoy chai made with the sweetest ingredients, love.

Chai Chat Lady.



## ***Conscious Cooking***

*By judith lockard*

Here is a fresh, tasty salad to bring to your next party. It looks pretty and has interesting textures.

### **Ingredients:**

1 bag Baby spinach  
1 head Romaine lettuce  
2 pint containers of cherry tomatoes  
One medium daikon radish (both Clemens and Giant sell them now)

### **How to make it**

Mix the greens. Peel the radish and cut into small bite sized pieces.  
Slice the tomatoes to make them easier and less messy to eat. Serve with a light vinaigrette.

## 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  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month  
12:30-3:30 pm.

**Yoga 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

**Gentle Yoga**

Tuesday and Thursday Nights, 6:45-8:00 pm

**Kids Yoga**

Thursdays, ages 3, 4 and 5, 4:30-5:30 pm  
Fridays, ages 4-9, 4:30-5:30 pm

**Yogini Path: A Retreat Weekend for Tantric Studies with Kirin Mishra**

June 3 and 4, 11 am – 4 pm

**Kirtan with David Newman**

Saturday, June 17, 7:30 pm

**Inner Dance with David Pittenger**

June 24, 7:00 pm

**A River Flows – Immersion in the Saraswati Method with Kirin Mishra**

**Kripalu Center, Lenox, MA**

June 25-June 30

**Revealing Your Light: The Path of Yoga Wisdom with Diego Del Sol**

July 8 and 9, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**5 Key Practices for Women with Denyse Corelli**

July 22, 12:30 – 4:00 pm

**Full Body Massage with Carrie Robb**  
**A Two-Session Workshop**

July 29 and August 5, 12:00 – 4:00 pm

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