

CRAZY WISDOM BOOKSTORE & TEA ROOM

By Lani Kwon Meilgaard

This ongoing column features new (during the past year) practitioners and holistic businesses, new offerings by established practitioners and holistic businesses, as well as upcoming events within our Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti and surrounding area Mind-Body-Spirit community.

Jasprit and Teresa Singh.



RussaYog® is a groundbreaking form of yoga, using jute ropes firmly attached to studio metal beams secured to a wooden structure (or a portable metal frame). It was created by University of Michigan Engineering Professor Jasprit Singh and his wife, a lifelong yogi, Teresa. The RussaYog® Yoga Studio, located at 215 South State Street (2nd floor, above the Totoro Japanese Restaurant), has been open for four years now, but their teen classes (ages 11 to 16) are brand new and were offered for the first time in Fall 2007.

RussaYog® practice includes four basic elements: 1) bal-lila, quick movements, literally meaning “child’s play or dance/drama” in Sanskrit; 2) veer-lila or “warrior dance/drama,” incorporating asanas, traditional yoga poses, using the jute ropes for added balance and support; 3) garabh-lila, “birth

dance/drama” or breathwork, encouraging self-awareness; and 4) nirvan or “merger dance/drama” where recovery takes place. “The idea is to be calm in the midst of stress,” Jasprit said, in an interview conducted at the RussaYog studio. “It’s safer to have something to hold onto, and the ropes are like a partner.” Jasprit originally developed the jute rope yoga practice growing up in India while watching his father’s yoga and meditation practice. The studio itself is cozy and functional. There are colorful, interlocking rubber squares like you might find in an elementary school on the floor, framed posters of dancers and athletes lining the walls and a changing area and shelf for holding shoes at the entrance to the studio. I was honored to observe and participate in the teen class with eight youngsters. Jasprit, a sinewy, tall man in his fifties, was at the front of the room and would first demonstrate poses or ask questions which his students eagerly answered. Teresa, lithe and lean, was near the back of the studio and would correct students’ postures. The students particularly seemed to like the bal-lila or active parts of the class, but they had also mastered the asanas and, as a former teacher myself, I was impressed by their ability to breathe deeply and get calm and centered. “Try to listen to your heart,” Jasprit instructed gently, and the students would close their eyes, place their hands on their hearts and breathe. After class the students enjoyed juice or chocolate milk and a healthy snack like graham crackers. RussaYog® also has classes and private lessons available for adults, as well as an instructional DVD and portable, lightweight “yoga trees.” They also offer summer retreats in Santa Barbara, California and regularly host vegetarian potlucks, featuring nutritious and delicious Indian dishes, for their students. “It’s been great fun. I’ve met a lot of very interesting people,” Teresa said. “We can modify poses to suit any ability and any age, and an exciting development is that RussaYog is branching out in new directions and offering a teacher training in the near future.” Contact Jasprit and Teresa Singh at (734) 604-0741 or talk@russayog.com or see www.russayog.com.