

Finding Hanumansana

At the beginning of each year I think about what I'd like my body, mind and soul to explore through a quality of intention. I chose this time not only because it is the beginning of the calendar's new year, but my own as my birthday also occurs at this shift; at the beginning of the season of light. I use the first few months generally to feel out my intention: Does it fit? Do I feel ready? Is there an enticing resonance? Then I leap in. It becomes a sort of mantra that I reflect on with meditation and yoga practice, a lens through which I view my interactions with myself and the world around me and I do my best to stick with it throughout the year with varying degrees of success depending on what life brings. This is also a time where I chose a pose that I have felt a struggle with, that I want to become friends with. This year I have the oddest sense that the pose and I chose each other, with great thanks to my heart, my son.

First I wanted to approach this year as a gift to myself, devoted to a path of deep love and acceptance. I felt that this is what I must do if I were to begin the final journey of breaking with the powerful challenges of my early life. Second and most importantly was the manifestation of devotion as a mother to my amazing wonderful monkey boy, my son Milo. I didn't want my past to interfere with being a totally devoted mother. Without being conscious of the first, the second would be clouded, and without the second the first may not have come to be so rich and deep. Also included in this has been a renewal of my commitment as a student and teacher of yoga. So devotion would be my year's theme, its song.

As many of you know devotion and Hanuman pretty much go in the same sentence. In one telling, Hanuman was a great companion to Ram in the story of the Ramayana. His tremendous devotion was expressed in many ways; revealing tremendous love and absolute dedication, love and dedication that I so desire to embody on many levels. His pose represents the great leap that he made to serve his friend in a time of need, with total faith, love and dedication, i.e. devotion.

First I warmed up to the new year with very deep, slow warm practices, trying to break up some of my fears about bringing a pose into my regular practice that I had heretofore thought of as what other people do. Each time I would come back to the reason why I wanted to practice; devotion, nothing less than blowing my heart wide open. Wow, could I do this fully with all the aspects of my life that I wished? I left it to time to reveal and stayed fast.

Gradually I began to “take on” the pose. That very quickly changed. How could I take on devotion, the deep devotion I sought to feel and embody would have to arise from the deep opening of my heart, not to mention my hips, thighs, back yikes. Then it began to happen.

Sometime around May I started to have these deeper and longer practices. They were quiet and unfolding. I had been practicing hanumansana with all my tools and props regularly, but some things were still being unveiled and I was starting to feel Hanuman. I was getting closer to the pose, not only because my hamstrings, quadriceps, deep hip rotators and flexors were becoming more pliable and powerful, but because I was feeling something deeper. Through the muscular and organic qualities of the practice there was a powerful letting go and embracing that was stirring sensitivity; a welling of emotion, love and felt devotion. I would find myself laughing and tearing up within the span of my practice; compassion and understanding abundant. It was an amazing feeling.

Through the subtle movements of the pose, the spiraling in of the back thigh, the widening and opening and the deep rooting into the earth I was rediscovering the joy and beauty of the practice, that not only helped me feel my openness in my heart as a teacher and student, but as a mother and friend to my son and myself. Devotion has so many aspects as you go deeper, just as the pose was revealing through both the physical and energetic play. It’s not easy, but it’s honest and tremendously rewarding.

To feel so at peace after my practice was such a tremendous gift on all levels of my life. I was finding myself making better decisions about what I wanted to be doing with my time and mental energy, especially in relationship with my son and partner. Consequently I was able to teach and practice better not having so much worry about my son and my parenting. I made a lot of discoveries about what burdens I still carried with me from life that in no way resembles my current experience. My time in my practice was a rich and very powerful gift to everyone important around me.

Since the deep openings just before mid year I have run into several obstacles. I’ve had to redirect several times. The joys of parenthood can wreak havoc on the body. My shoulders are a mess; my left because occasionally I still carry Milo, wanting to be close, face to face as we walk and talk; my right because he likes to curl up next to me on my right with his head on my arm as he sleeps. My back,

oh my aching back. It comes and goes as an issue. Then I have other stuff that I've been working on for a long time that I've learned new skills on healing.

But is hanumansana still there for me? If anything, I would say more so. I don't get to practice the pose every day, but I practice the essence of the pose, the beauty of the pose. It's now a part of my being. I haven't 'progressed' much in the past couple of months, but unlike before, I smile in recognition of the heart of the pose inside of me. It's no longer a pose other people do. I visit it regularly like an old friend that understands that I need a little space to work some other things out before we can hunker down together again and share deep feelings and thoughts. I find hanumansana in every pose, testing my commitment with a loving embrace as a fierce friend each day slightly different; playful, serious, mischievous, encouraging. Hanumansana has shown me how much we all carry the water of life, the current that captures the breath reminding us of our closeness with our hearts, our loves and with the divine, allowing us to never feel alone in the journeys that we chose and that chose us.

At the beginning of the year I was clear with myself, I was not going to expect that I would come to the pivotal resting point in the pose with both thighs down and arms extended in celebration. I didn't know where I would end this year and I still don't. As I write this there are still two full months ahead of me and the journey with hanumansana is, I suspect, one that I will be on for the rest of my days if I can help it.