



December 1992 Contemplation Theme

Formless & Form

By Rama Berch, C.S.Y.T., E-RYT 500

The Formless pervades and animates your form. Form is meaningless without the Formless. It enlivens you; it makes you alive. It even makes you able to enjoy being alive. When you are not enjoying being alive, you actually become less alive. In yoga, the answer to everything is to become more alive. Then, the things that seem to be the cause of unhappiness become less significant. They are more like pebbles along the path rather than boulders or cliffs. You can achieve this through the yoga practices: asana (poses), pranayama (breathing), pratyahara (turning inward), dharana (contemplation), and dhyana (meditation).

Each year you celebrate your birthday. To honor the anniversary of your birth is to say that you are glad to be alive. Are you glad you are alive? More than this, who is it that is being glad of this? Even more importantly, who is it that is alive? I recently considered these questions myself. I felt an inner presence arise strongly within me, saying so beautifully, "I AM HERE!" In that inner surge I felt the power of my own presence. I felt the real "I" that I am. I could feel this "I" which enlivens any form. This is the Formless, within form.

The Formless pervades and animates your form, your physical body. Without it, your body is dead. A lifeless body is not attractive to anyone. A student recently shared how she felt when she saw the lifeless form of her mother. She saw so clearly that the person she had known and loved was not present any more. She found it easy to give up her attachment to her mother's form, because it was meaningless without the Formless being present in it.

Moisture pervades air. Humidity is a measure of the moisture content of the air. The Formless pervades your form, but it is different than the moisture in air. The water content in the air is different and separate from the air. The Formless in your form is not different and separate from your body. The Formless produces your body without being limited by it. Think of it as the energy which becomes the atoms that create your physical body. The Formless within you creates or generates the energy that becomes your form. It can also be called "spirit." It makes you feel spirited or inspired. To live fully infused with this Reality is the goal of all spiritual paths. We begin every yoga class with Shavasana in order to focus on being fully present, so you can experience your own aliveness in its pure form/formlessness.

Asanas (poses) are a way of weaving the form and Formless together. These don't actually need to be interwoven because the Formless creates and animates your form. But your awareness of this is currently limited. This is the same as being inert, like a rock. Your body becomes stiff and hard, like a rock. It doesn't move and bend. It is not fluid like water, but becomes dense like rock. It is less alive — and so are you. This is why yoga gets you moving and bending and breathing. All the while, you turn your attention to the feeling of the moving, bending and breathing. You first extend your awareness into your form. Then you can go to the next step: you become aware of awareness itself. What is this awareness? What is this aliveness?

Yoga includes the moving, bending and breathing as a means to discover the answers to these questions and others, as well. What is the light that shines in your eyes? This is the Formless. It is this which yoga worships. The teachings of yoga begin with, "You are perfect and divine. Know this Truth, and live it." When you hear it as a beautiful teaching, it is only a theory. Living yoga means to move beyond theory and into the experience of being fully alive. Do more yoga.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the initials 'S.T.C.'.