



November 1994 Contemplation Theme

The Yoga of Self-Inquiry

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

Do you ever hear yourself saying, “What did I do wrong?” “Why is this happening to me?” “Here we go, again.” “When am I ever going to get the lesson?” This is a form of self-inquiry, but not yogic self-inquiry.

Yoga describes your “edges,” the ways in which you are not aware of your true nature, as divine and perfect consciousness. There are places in your life where you experience that fullness of your own being, and places where you do not. You draw back from certain things, have attachments to others, and resist or deny others. You even go around in circles, repeating the same patterns throughout your life. Many would call this “human nature.”

Yoga redefines human nature as divine, perfect consciousness. To know that inner Self means you will melt all your edges, like an ice cube melting into the ocean of consciousness. The yoga practice of self-inquiry (svadhyaya) makes you able to inquire into your true human nature — your divine nature.

Everyone is doing self-inquiry, badly. Everyone is talking to everyone else about all their problems and all the things they do not like. Television is full of it. So are the movies, our music and magazines. If you did not focus on those things, what would you have to talk about?

In class, the yoga poses evoke the experience of your own true nature, svaroopo. This is why we call it Svaroopo Yoga. We use your body to give you access to that level of your own being, as your first step in svadhyaya (self-inquiry). This avoids the pitfalls of your usual mode of circular analysis and self-judgement. The body never analyzes or judges. It only experiences.

First, you learn to use your body as the point of focus. You are really learning how to use the beam of consciousness that streams through your mind in a new way. That light of consciousness is like the rays of the sun, but you’ve been using it as if you were a firefly. Directing this beam of your awareness to (and through) your body has a salutary effect on your body. More importantly, it gives you the tools to go to deeper inner levels, in order to look at your mind, your heart and your life.

We offer contemplations at the end of every class as further training in svadhyaya. They give you a way to deepen your understanding of yoga and of your life. They also help you take yoga into your world in a very tangible way, so your yoga practice begins to fill your whole life, and overflow to change the world.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the initials 'R.B.'.