



September 1997 Contemplation Theme

Longing for Liberation

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

I always loved to sing the blues. It was the only way I could express a deep, unnamed yearning that had been there all my life. There were no other words for it until I found yoga. Yoga calls it *mumukshitva*, which means the longing for liberation. It was a constant companion through all my life. Now I call it a friend, but for many years it seemed to be the root of all my suffering. Everything I did was an attempt to get rid of it. Joseph Campbell told Bill Moyers in a television interview, "Everyone experiences it, but not everyone acts on it." When I heard this, I was shocked. My immediate response was, "How can you not act on it? It's so painful!"

We all experience this longing. From birth to age two, we learned how to handle our body, including how to walk and talk. From age two to seven, we asked and answered the question, "How do I handle the objects in the world?" We mastered how to butter toast, draw on paper, etc. From age seven to puberty, we explored how to interact with others in games, in groups, as friends and as enemies. At puberty a new question arose, "Is this it? Isn't there something more?" This was the beginning of the spiritual quest, and the source of adolescent angst. Our society avoided this question and all its possible answers, so we were left in a painful limbo. We tried the old things more intensely: more things to do with our bodies (sports), more things to do with objects in the world (shopping, music, etc.), more things to do in relationship (social activities). The more adventurous (or the more desperate) of us tried out some answers that were taboo. "Sex, drugs and rock-and-roll" are a dead-end street, but sometimes you have to try every avenue.

This feeling is a spiritual longing, a deep desire to know the truth of your own being. You have been taught to repress this spiritual longing through abusing your body, climbing the corporate ladder, and the unending crusade to maintain your fading youth and beauty. Yoga says that this longing is the life in you. Unless you fulfill this longing, you will always feel only partially alive. Yoga not only acknowledges and names this feeling, but it has thousands of ways of fulfilling it. This is why the first line of Master Yoga's three-fold statement of purpose is, "cultivating our innate yearning for transcendence."

In every yoga class, you will get to stretch, breathe and relax. You need never go any further. Yet, this begins to feed you at some deep nameless level. When you leave you feel like yourself again. I invite you to contemplate the inherent yearning that has been there all your life long. Look into it, and you may find your true Self.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rama'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small heart symbol above the letter 'a'.