



January 1999 Contemplation Theme

Change & the Changeless

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

Whatever happened to New Year's resolutions? Everyone tells me, "Oh, I do not make them any more." Why not? Are you so perfect that there is nothing you need to change? It is important to have a point in time, so you can make an appraisal of how you are doing. It is even more important to resolve to improve, and then act upon that resolve.

Change comes in many forms. You can choose it, or it can be forced on you. When your employer "reorganizes" your job out of existence or your spouse decides upon a new lifestyle, you undergo a lot of change. Simpler changes are imposed on you all the time, like when your favorite brand is no longer available, or they rewrote the weekly television schedule. Perhaps your yoga teacher switches class to a different day and time. These externals compel a change, whether you wanted it or not. When students tell me about the experiences that helped them become who they are now, they usually talk about something they resisted when it first arose. Change is inevitable, and it impels you into needed personal growth.

Change can also be created through your own choice. You can be the employee or spouse leaving the relationship. You can decide to change your eating habits or to become more regular in your yoga practice. The choice to change comes from two types of motivations: novelty and commitment. Some people keep their life interesting by constant change. Life is boring without something new and interesting. I know this one well because I spent twenty years practicing it before I found yoga. In fact, yoga was one of the things I tried in my endless search for something new and satisfying. Yoga surprised me by becoming progressively more satisfying. It ended my dependency on the "new and improved" activities to animate my life.

New Year's resolutions are about choosing to change through clarity and commitment: to see yourself in a moment of clarity, and to commit to give birth to the changes in yourself that you choose. To give up on making resolutions is like giving up on yourself. To give up on making resolutions is to choose that changes will be forced upon you, because life will not let you resign from the process of growth and transformation. In fact, each of the steps in your process of personal growth brings you closer to the experience of what yoga calls the Changeless. This is the essence of your being, which creates the continuity of the sense of "I" throughout all the changes. But, we'll discuss more about that later...

What are your resolutions for the New Year? What will you choose to change? .

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the Sanskrit characters 'Om' and 'Namah'.