



April 1999 Contemplation Theme

## Action & Motivation

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Wisdom without action is delusion. Wisdom is the combination of experience and understanding together, so there must be action to acquire wisdom. You cannot have experience without engaging in action. Yet action does not end with merely acquiring a large number of experiences. One who becomes truly wise continues to perform actions, but with different motivations. Then all actions (and all of life itself) become a living yoga practice that leads to wisdom. You get there by examining your motivations.

There are three primary motivations underlying most people's actions: protection, relationship, and recognition. Each is actually an attempt to construct a sense of personal identity. But any sense of personal identity that you are able to construct will not last, because it is constructed rather than being inherent. The practices of yoga help you discover the underlying sense of self that has always been there. It currently supports you (behind your mind). It will never cease to exist. Your discovery of this deeper dimension of your own being is the most satisfying experience of your life. However, the constructed identity is a superficial sense of self and is dependent on your own effort to create and maintain it.

For example, you may decide to improve your performance at work. This decision could arise from one of many different reasons: so that you can keep your job when the layoffs come (protection), because your boss is trusting and relying upon you (relationship), or to gain a raise or promotion (recognition). These are called self-motivated actions, because they are motivated by the desire to construct a superficial sense of self. Self-motivated actions bring karmic backlash. Plus, they are never fully effective.

The practices of yoga provide you with increasingly powerful tastes of your own essence, which make you more and more free from the need to construct a superficial identity. The old motivations dissolve away, until action seems no longer necessary. However, if those with wisdom ceased all activity, the world would be taken over by fools. More importantly, true wisdom always brings compassion along with it, so the wise ones continue to serve others through action. These actions have no ulterior motives hidden within them and are fully effective in the world.

If you examine your motivations, you can turn all your actions into a living yoga practice that leads you to true wisdom. Observe yourself for the next few minutes. See why it is that you do what you do. You may be able to engage in the same activity you had planned, but in a different way — without the motive of constructing a superficial identity. This yoga practice can give you an immediate sense of great freedom, accompanied by a joyful boundlessness of being. This can be extended indefinitely by merely continuing this simple practice of examining your motives for action. If you forget this practice and get caught up in the self-motivated actions again, a yoga class will make all the difference in the world, and make it easier for you to return to yoga's path of action. Do more yoga.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the Sanskrit character 'Om'.