



August 1999 Contemplation Theme

## Grace

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Grace is one of the primary principles of yoga. Grace makes things easy. It is always flowing. If life seems hard to you, you have unknowingly shut yourself off from the flow of grace. Yoga opens you up to its support in many tangible ways.

The principle of support is a primary element of Svaroopa Yoga practice. Your teacher may slide a blanket underneath you in a seated position in order for you to get the most benefit. Halfway through the pose, she may remind you, "Lean your full weight into the support of that blanket." Most people do not really sit on the blanket or chair underneath them, but hold themselves up by tightening their spinal muscles. Check in with yourself right now. Are you leaning your full weight into the support underneath you? As you lean more fully into your seat, you may find that you significantly relax and can breathe more easily. Learning to lean into the physical support is a way of practicing how to lean into the support of grace.

Let down your walls. They not only isolate you from others — they separate you from the flow of grace. Learning how to relax in Shavasana is learning how to melt the walls. The progressive release of Shavasana becomes deeper and more reliable with repetition. When you have been doing Shavasana at the beginning and end of each yoga class for another year, you will slip more easily and more deeply inside than you do now. This also provides you with a deeper sense of personal center, which psychologists call "an inner locus of control." You can go into the world and into your relationships without those old walls any more, and you can experience the ever-present flow of grace much more tangibly.

Every football team has a "Receiver." His job is to place himself in the right spot on the playing field and wait for the ball. Yoga helps you position yourself in the playing field of life so that you become a Receiver of grace. It makes your mind clearer, so you can see your options. The actions you undertake become easier to do and more effective. Grace is like the moving sidewalk at the airport; each step you make takes you a little further.

Your own self-effort is an important part of grace. Keep moving in any direction, even if it's the wrong one. It is easier for grace to steer you in the right direction than to push you from a dead stop. Even the winners of the lottery have to buy the ticket. In the same way, sometimes the hardest part of yoga is just getting to the class. This makes your yoga class a perfect combination of self-effort and grace. Now all you have to do is learn to live your life this way.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart containing the Sanskrit word 'Om'.