



March 2000 Contemplation Theme

Capacity

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You have a habitual mood, which you can think of as psychological homeostasis. It is a set-point to which you revert when you're not paying any attention to how you feel. Yoga changes your set-point along with changing your body. Many people are surprised to find they feel better after their first 90-minute yoga class than after a full night of sleep. Most importantly, this feeling is not merely a physical improvement, but a change in your mood, attitude or emotional state. But you must ask yourself, "how long does it last?" When your habitual mood begins to take over again, along with the too-familiar physical tensions, you can simply do more yoga, and you feel wonderful again. The good news is that, as you continue doing yoga, your set-point changes. Then the question becomes, "How good can you allow yourself to feel?"

One day I was walking through our Namaste Department (our reception area) and a man stopped me, "Do you remember me?" He reminded me of his name and then I recognized him, "I haven't seen you for a couple of years!" He confessed, "Yes, I was taking classes twice a week for over 6 months and then I stopped. I been gone for over 2 years, but I want you to know that now I'm back!" "What happened?" I asked. "I didn't realize it at the time," he said, "but I stopped because I couldn't allow myself to feel that good. I felt better than ever in my whole life, but something in me couldn't allow that. So I stopped, and I started feeling worse and worse. After 2 years, I realized that I want to feel that good. So I want you to know that I'm back! You'll see me again, twice a week every week!" We laughed together and I welcomed him back. He came regularly for two or three weeks, and then stopped again. It probably won't take him 2 years to figure it out this time, and he'll be back again – soon, I hope.

What is your capacity? How good can you allow yourself to feel? Some people carry the equivalent of a thimble with them and, when it is full, they are happy. Anything more won't fit in the thimble, so it overflows. The overflow is expressed in tears or laughter, or by depleting yourself through intense personal interactions, or as a sudden burst of activity. One woman told me that she couldn't come to evening classes because she was unable to go to sleep when she went home. She felt so energized that she would clean her house until midnight. I told her, "You've got a thimble, and it's filled to overflowing. You need a larger capacity. Buy a bucket!" Increase your capacity to contain that energy without feeling like you have to deplete yourself again.

As you learn to relax the tensions in your body, both in the outer layers as well as in the core, your capacity expands. It's as though the tight areas in your body are the edges of your container. As they melt, your thimble becomes a bucket. Then you exchange the bucket for a bathtub. What's larger than a bathtub? What do you want your maximum capacity for joy to be? Yoga calls it the ocean. Expand your capacity until you find your set-point in the ocean of consciousness, and you will live in the continuing joy of your Self.

Namaste,