



April 2000 Contemplation Theme

Yoga is Skill in Action

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

I sat and watched the Guru in the big chair at the front of the room as someone approached with a photo in hand. I knew that this Guru usually gestured to a nearby assistant and had them use the rubber stamp that had been prepared for this purpose, since there were several hundred more people still waiting in line. Instead, she took the photo and a pen. She turned her full attention to the photograph and signed her name with a focus and in a meticulous way that I had never observed in anyone doing anything ever before. It emblazoned itself into my memory, and arises often inside even ten years later.

Several weeks later, I found myself doing some late night desk work. I was hurrying through the last thing: to address several envelopes. Suddenly, I remembered how she had signed that photo. I decided to address the envelopes the same way. I wrote the first word with my best penmanship, beautifully, meticulously and with great focus. By the time I was halfway through the next word, I was in bliss! I found I could address all the envelopes this way, and even pick up my keys and drive home in this way – and each thing I did added to my ecstasy. Then I understood this line in the BhagavadGita, “*Yogah karmasu kaushalam, Krishna uvacha*” – Yoga is skill in action, Krishna says.

Do every action to your best possible ability. This does not mean that you have to be good at every thing you do, but merely that you do it as skillfully as possible. Pour yourself into each action, fully and completely. When you do things halfway, then you are only half present. The one who misses out is yourself. You miss out on the Self! By pouring yourself fully into each and every action, you become fully present – and your own presence is “the bliss of consciousness itself.”

This is not the same as doing things well so that others will notice. Then you are focusing on the response you might get, whether from your spouse, your customer or boss, your friend or family member. You are waiting for their response so you can use it to construct a sense of self – an externally constructed sense of self. This is not “skill in action”, even if you are performing your task skillfully, because everything is focused on the response instead of on the action itself.

Every action has an inherent perfection. The slow motion replays of football players falling onto the ground show this surprising beauty and grace, almost like dance sequences. Something as simple as unlocking the door, getting into your car, placing your key in the ignition and starting the engine can be done as “skill in action”. You will notice a difference. Amazingly, it doesn’t even take more time to do most things this way. But you may find you have less of a need to rush around. Time may take on a quality of timelessness, and life may develop a quality of dimensionality that you are used to finding only in your meditation or your yoga practice. That is because skill in action is yoga.

You do get to practice this technique when you are doing Svaroopa Yoga™ poses. The care and attention you cultivate when you are doing the physical practices are a powerful form of training for how to live your whole life. The opening of your spine draws your attention inward to help you explore the dimensionality of your own being. Then you learn how to take this quality into your whole life with you – yoga is skill in action. Try it!

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature, there is a small heart symbol with the initials 'S.B.' inside it.

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