



May 2000 Contemplation Theme

## Commitment

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

“My boyfriend calls it the ‘c’ word,” a student told me recently. Commitment. You get nothing without commitment. It’s even becoming popular in the work world again. A few years ago, the best way to get ahead was job-hopping. Now professional advisors recommend you make a commitment to one job for 3-5 years in order to maximize both your personal development and what you offer your employer.

Commitment means you do it, even when it is hard to do. No “fair weather friend” – you are reliable, consistent, dedicated. I think the best model for commitment is being a parent. My commitment to my children (though they are now adults) is absolute, and always has been. In those early years, it sometimes meant I had to go without sleep in order to meet their needs. Later, it meant I had to give up things I wanted in order to provide for them, whether it was meeting their genuine needs or fulfilling a reasonable number of their desires. I did it. And I got as much as I gave – actually, I got more than I gave. The process of committing myself changed something in me.

Yoga says that you must pair commitment with letting go. There must be a total dedication that has a quality of lightness to it. This type of commitment does not come from a deep unfulfilled need or an insecurity that impels you into fanatical behavior. Whatever you commit to, you follow through on it completely, without depending on its outcome to go a certain predetermined way, because any sense of dependency sets you up for a fall. You do your very best (yoga is skill in action) and then you let it go – like making a paper airplane. You make the best one you can, learning from all your prior attempts, even studying the diagram you found on the Internet. You throw the plane into the air at the best possible angle with just the right amount of force. Then you laugh when it crashes (or flies into the sky!).

This combination of commitment and letting go applies to the practice of yoga also. But you have to sort out which is which! Some people encounter challenging times and let go of their twice-weekly yoga classes or their at-home yoga practice. They call it “letting-go” – when what they really need to be letting go of is some other less valuable activities.

Yoga doesn’t work unless you do it. It’s like your television – it only works if you turn it on. Your commitment to the practice is what gives you the ability to let go in every area of your life, so you can laugh at whatever happens. You might even find that you have to laugh at how your yoga poses look – but you still do them anyway! This is the perfect combination: commitment to doing your yoga practice and simultaneously letting go of how you think it should look. You may even have to let go of how you think the process should go. Sometimes you progress smoothly from one stage to another, and sometimes it is “two steps forward – one step back”. Still you show up and do it.

Commitment to yoga is actually a commitment to your own future. Continuing your yoga practice will guarantee that your body does not age like the average person. You will become progressively healthier and happier than anyone who isn’t doing yoga. But the real payoff happens deeper inside – your sense of self plumbs the deeper dimensions of reality. Yoga promises you a progressive unveiling of the light of consciousness within. Now that is something worth committing yourself to!.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the number '30'.