



August 2000 Contemplation Theme

Vitality

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

If you want to understand vitality, spend the afternoon following a 3-year old child around. Where does that inexhaustible energy come from!? You were actually like that once yourself. Now, if you keep yourself going all day long, it is probably caffeine that is your fuel – or maybe sheer adrenaline. This is not vitality, and it ends in exhaustion – not a good-feeling tiredness but nervous exhaustion and feeling mentally drained.

So you come to yoga class or do some practice at home, and your cup runneth over. The energy of life itself fills you to the brim, and maybe even overflows in easy laughter with yoga-friends after class. You take this vitality into your life, but your activities and relationships seem to drain you again. So you need another yoga class. This is a repetitive cycle, but at least you have a way of filling yourself up again.

However, yoga says that energy is limitless. Your supply is not limited. In the beginning of yoga, you fill your cup each time you practice. But something more begins to happen. Yoga practice, especially the experiences of deep inner absorption, connect you into the source. Then you no longer merely carry a cupful of energy. When I first experienced this, it felt like I suddenly had an umbilical cord attached to a fire hydrant, drawing the energy from an inexhaustible source. It is impossible to deplete this source, though you are able to cut yourself off from it. You learn to live in a way that keeps you connected.

It isn't your physical activities that are so draining – it is your thoughts. You go each day to the same job and then home again. You deal with the same family members. But yoga changes the way you see them. Instead of being unhappy with the way things are going, your mind begins to see the best in every situation. Old negative thoughts disappear, and you begin to savor memories of the sweetest moments of your life. Worries about the future drop away so you can notice the beauty in the moment. The Katha Upanishad promises that your mind becomes your best friend instead of your worst enemy.

When your mind is beautiful like this, then your body doesn't tighten up. Consider how much energy it takes to sustain constant muscular tension. That energy can be used for other things when your body is always open and relaxed. Consider how much energy is wasted in reviewing the unchangeable past and the unpredictable future, when you could be vitally alive and present in the moment! Rumi says, "You have the energy of the sun in you, but you keep knotting it up at the base of your spine."

Yoga practice becomes not merely a way of recovering from the drain of the day, but a way of opening to the inner source of life itself. There is a fountain of life filling you from the inside, if you just quit clamping down on it. Begin at the tailbone in order to open it up again. Then do it again. You will discover how to live in an entirely new way – always open. Your mind will be your friend. The energy of life itself will pour thorough your eyes and heart, and fill into your relationships and your life. And you may discover that yoga offers even more...

Do more yoga!

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama', with a small heart symbol above the 'a'.