



December 1994 Contemplation Theme

Receiving the Gift

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

I was an achiever. From my childhood, I understood that performing well offers its own rewards. I tackled many tasks in life, mastered many skills, and tired of them just as quickly. Nothing held my interest, but my ability to propel myself forward was reliable. Ultimately, I propelled myself right into yoga.

Fortunately, my habitual style paid off. I worked with my body thoroughly. I could show off with some impressive yoga acrobatics. I began to memorize sutras and learn to play the musical instruments used to accompany the chanting of Sanskrit texts. I worked hard at transformation and made a lot of progress. My Guru told me that transformation was like a bird with two wings: self-effort and grace. I knew self-effort. But I did not understand the part about grace.

I was living in the ashram (residential yoga center), studying at the feet of a Master. It was like being in the ocean while claiming that I was not getting wet. That was simply an impossibility. Every step of the way I was surrounded by grace. However, I never recognized it until I ran into my familiar brick wall. My self-effort frequently stranded me at a brick wall inside. Then I would begin to pray. Always, the answer came. Always, the grace was there. It took me a long time to see it when I was not in despair. It took even longer to learn to trust it.

Now, I know grace fills everything I do. It is a primary element of Svaroopa Yoga. All you have to do is get into the asana correctly, stay in it, surrender to the pose and then grace offers you something more. That something more is svaroopaa, your own essence. It is given to you by grace. Without that, a pose is just more yoga acrobatics.

The asana is the way you position yourself to receive the gift of grace, which is freely given. You do not have to be good at the pose. You do not even have to be a worthy person. You do not even have to work for it. All you have to do is realize you are already in the ocean. You are getting wet with the flow of grace that surrounds and supports you.

There is also self-effort. My habitual style continues to be that of an achiever, but now my effort is applied toward finding and following the grace. Self-effort is best applied when you are looking at the grace. Get in position. Look for the grace.

Namaste,