



October 1996 Contemplation Theme

Contentment

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To practice contentment might make you a disruptive element in our modern world. Yoga names contentment, *santoshā*, as a primary practice. But, the everyday influences of society propel you to an endless stream of desires. All you have to do is watch one television show, and your “Discontent Factor” increases. It is not the shows themselves as much as it is the ads. They are exceptionally effective at stimulating your desires, which makes you more and more dis-content. Yoga makes you content.

I remember the first time I felt content. I was sitting in my bedroom in a yoga ashram (residential yoga center), and I realized I felt strange. Something was missing on the inside. Something familiar was gone, and I did not feel quite like the “me” that I had known for so many years. But I did not know what it was. I cast about, looking for what was missing, and could not find it. So, I tried instead to describe to myself more specifically how I was feeling. Finally, I realized that I felt content. That scared me!

While it felt so good to feel such deep contentment, I instantly felt fear that I would never strive for anything again. I realized that all the activities of my life had been motivated by a deep discontent, and now it was gone. It seemed that there was no reason to do anything, ever again.

It took days of feeling contentment before I realized that I could (and would) still do everything there is to do, but it would be for a different reason. I became free from need, at least for a short time. Everything I did was done out of joy; there was not even a twinge of need in it. It did not matter if what I was doing “succeeded” or “failed.” It was fine either way.

The ancient sages describe contentment as a high attainment that arises spontaneously through continued yoga practice. They also recommend contentment as a practice, schooling your mind and applying your will to foster an inner contentment no matter what is going on around you. This is definitely different than the way society directs you. If you want to be a revolutionary, practice yoga. If you want to change the way life is lived in this modern age, practice yoga. At least your life will change — and maybe the world around you will, too.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rama'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Above the name, there is a small, simple line drawing of a heart with a small '31.' written inside it.