



November 1996 Contemplation Theme

Gratitude

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

It is so appropriate that the Holiday Season begins with a day of Thanks. We can get so lost in the gift-giving and all the preparations for the big December Day, that we rarely stop to appreciate what we already have. More than merely “appreciate,” this is a time to feel and express gratitude. To express your thanks is one of the easiest ways to melt your heart. To feel grateful is to pause in a moment of sweet surrender. This surrender is an essential part of yoga. More importantly, it is an important part of life.

Everyone longs for the experience of surrender, whether through seeking a soulmate or by learning to scuba dive. That experience of overwhelm is an extraordinary letting go of all the tricks we usually use to isolate ourselves. Yoga says, “Just let go!” Let yourself be overwhelmed by the beauty of the moment. Give over to the majesty of the space between the ticks of the clock.

Gratitude is one of the best ways to do this. Begin with saying “Thank you” to your own body. It has carried you so far and given you so many experiences. Even if it is not perfect, look at what it does for you every day. So often we have only complaints about the body. We focus on the spot that hurts, or complain that we don’t look like the model in the magazine. It is a foreground-background thing. Shift your gaze from the ache or pain to the background: the whole rest of your body. Like when you are at the beach, you can watch a sailboat cross the horizon, or you can widen your gaze to include the whole scene with the ocean, sky and boat. Widen your awareness to your whole body, which includes the “problem area.” Speak out loud (or at least in a whisper) and say “Thank you” to your body. Then, look around to find something else to be grateful for, and speak up again. Do one more, so you do at least three. Once you get started, you may have difficulty stopping. It is like eating one potato chip, except it usually takes three to get the gratitude going.

Now do it again. “Thank you, body for . . . (fill in the blank).” And add two more thank you’s to the list. Notice how you feel.

This is yoga for the mind, mental asanas. Practice daily and it will change your life. I will close with three of my own:

- Thank you, body, for all the bliss (and all the lessons).
- Thank you to the one who has given me this body and this life.
- Thank you to you, the reader, for giving me the opportunity to offer myself, through yoga and through these words.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the Sanskrit character 'Om'.