



March 1997 Contemplation Theme

Service

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

To offer your service to others is one of the most powerful and sweetest of yoga's practices. However, society urges you to serve your desires. The stresses of today come from a relentless pursuit of desires, as though you can only attain true and long lasting happiness when you acquire everything you desire. Yoga says that the desires must desert you in order for you to find the happiness you seek, because the desires themselves block the source of happiness which is inside. The desires are like a black coating on a light bulb, eclipsing the light of consciousness which shines from the inside out.

You must learn to live your daily life in a different way. The health and vitality offered by the practice of yoga poses and breathing is only the beginning. Yoga reconnects you to the inner realms of consciousness to make you feel whole again. But those moments of connectedness are not enough if the activities of life draw you away again. Life itself must become "yogified." The yoga practice of service teaches you how.

Service is one of the most profound practices of yoga, and one of the least known. It has been a well kept secret at Master Yoga since we began. Master Yoga has been built on the loving service of so many, and continues to grow and thrive because of their continuing loving service. Karma yoga is one of the names given to this practice. This means that you offer your efforts (karma) without any repayment or return. This is not the yoga of exercise or meditation, it is the yoga of work. My favorite term for this is seva. Seva means "selfless service," giving of yourself unselfishly.

This used to be called "volunteer work." In our age of beepers and organizers, few people prioritize seva in their schedule. Yet, life without seva is barren. Anyone who has ever participated in creating Christmas for a destitute family, shared the daily tasks of the local schoolroom or painted the church dining hall knows the true joy that comes from simply showing up to do what needs to be done. You cannot paint your own dining room and feel the same way. Something comes from the giving of your time, effort and love that comes in no other way.

I feel that I am among the most blessed of people because I have been able to offer my work as seva for more than fourteen of the last twenty years. I know the truth of the saying, "Seva gives you everything" and invite you to find out for yourself. Find some place to offer yourself in the yoga of service.

Namaste,

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