



August 1997 Contemplation Theme

Freedom

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

The goal of yoga is “Liberation.” It means you can completely transcend the normal human condition described as “Bondage.” Any time that you feel that you must have certain people or certain things surrounding you, you are bound to them. Worse than that, you feel incomplete unless you have these external validations of your identity and value. Yoga offers freedom, which means that it makes you feel complete and whole without external crutches to prop up your identity. Yoga’s goal of freedom points to a deep and profound level of human experience, which can be reached on either of two yoga paths.

On one path you can create this freedom by eliminating all your attachments. Your attachments are the people and things you rely on to create a temporary sense of self. This temporary sense of self changes when your situation changes, like when you leave work and go home, or when you go out with friends and feel like a completely different person than when you attend your evening college class. Some of your attachments may be so strong that they qualify as dependencies or even addictions, but all must be eliminated. On this path, you may even decide to change where you work and who you know. But you must be careful to not replace them with new attachments. This path to freedom is the path of renunciation. In this path you continually renounce everything that creates a temporary sense of self until you can find the real unchanging Self inside.

I confess that I prefer the other path — yoga’s path of bliss. You use yoga’s practices for the purpose of finding the deeper dimension of being, so that you feel filled from the inside. As you become more accustomed to feeling full and whole, you take this feeling with you into your work and home. You begin to carry this new sense of self wherever you go. You become able to enjoy all aspects of your life without depending on them. In this path you find the deeper Self and practice staying in it until the old distracting “small selves” simply dissolve away.

The end result of either path is a tremendous sense of freedom, because you remain full and complete no matter what is happening on the outside. With this freedom comes a great love and respect for everyone and everything else, because you see that all are amazing and wonderful expressions of the same Source, which you have found inside your own being. This is yoga, “union.”

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama'. Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the number '30'.