



November 1999 Contemplation Theme

Motivation

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

Why you do what you do is more important than how you do it. This is because why you do something affects what you choose to do, as well as how you actually do it. Every single goal can be traced to one source — a desire to feel happy. Everything you want to accomplish, everywhere you go, and everyone you choose to spend time with is for one purpose — to make you feel happy. Some of you may be objecting, “I do not go to work so that I will feel happy. I feel happy when I leave work!” You may not love your job, but you do go to work in order to have a place to live, pay your bills, and buy necessities as well as luxuries. The alternative would not feel happy at all. In fact, a job is considered to be a good one when you actually like doing it (or doing most of the parts of it)— which is again about feeling happy.

A student recently described her beautiful vacation in Ireland. She had a wonderful time and learned a lot, not just about Ireland, but also about herself. I know others who have spent their vacation time doing hard physical labor on charitable projects, returning home feeling really happy. Both of these are good things, chosen so that they would feel happy.

There is an underlying problem — you do not already feel happy. You have to do only certain things and not do others in order to feel happy. If you do not, you will not feel happy. The goal of yoga is to change it all, by discovering the inner source of happiness. The way you feel after a yoga class or after you do yoga is an immediate taste of this independent happiness. When you feel this way, there is no need for doing a particular thing, and no aversion to doing it— the usual motivation is gone. Now your array of choices becomes limitless. You can choose to do or to not do any thing, go or not go to any place, see or not see any person, but the why has changed. There is no need that the activity pays off with a certain outcome, because the way you would have felt after its completion is already full and complete within you. You are actually no longer motivated at all, but you can participate in everything with great happiness.

Motivation is one of the themes painted clearly in the Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic. The main protagonist vehemently exclaims, “I want to be discontented!” A wealthy and powerful King for twenty years or more, he has everything he desires including power, wealth, the love and support of his family, and respect of other kings. He has everything except the one thing he wants above all else, the destruction of his royal cousins, who are ethically and spiritually his betters. If he allows himself to be happy with his life as it is, he would have to give up his passion to destroy his cousins. He clings fiercely to his self-destructive unhappiness, which drives him relentlessly. It ultimately brings about world war. This world war caused the death of millions, annihilating the race of great warriors at the end of the Third Great Age, around five thousand years ago.

The lessons in this history are as alive and meaningful today, as we draw close to the ending of this millennium. They offer us an opportunity to see ourselves in the light of Ancient Truths. The Mahabharata story offers you a way to look at your own life. May yoga give you new eyes to see it all clearly.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rama', with a small heart symbol above the 'a'.