



December 2002 Contemplation Theme

Relationship

I walked down to look more closely at the lake, curious to see what was causing the churning of the water. The surface would roil in random places, in an erratic fashion. I wondered if it was a new kind of fountain, but I could see no pattern to the movements that would indicate a mechanical structure. I stood by the edge of the lake, and could not see what was making the water churn. I walked across the low bridge and found the reason. Catfish mating. The shallow water under the bridge revealed many couples, twining around each other as they played at the surface and jumped into the air — courting death in their dance of life. I stood and watched for a long time, in complete awe and delight. Their silvery bodies shimmered in the light as they burst into the air and then slithered around each other as they fell into the water again. It was mesmerizing — a Shiva-Shakti dance.

I laughed because it also reminded me of high school. You remember how powerful those hormones are, especially as a new experience in your still-maturing body. The power of it can propel you into irrational behaviors for many years longer than the time it takes to merely survive adolescence. I had believed that my 20-something years of celibacy made me understand it all very well, until I saw watched those catfish in the lake. Then I saw that I had not been developing my understanding at all — I had been avoiding it. Well, I had also been channeling this energy into my meditation and yoga practice, as well as into teaching and service to others. So I began to contemplate this dance of life, and I am still in the process. I suspect that the full understanding of it could propel me into enlightenment.

The driving impulse to relationship is not expressed only in the sex drive. It is much more powerful. It underlies everything you do and everything you think you are. The drive to relationship is wired into you. You were born out of relationship. Whether your biological parents conceived you in love and joy, or in lust, pain or even in violence, it was still relationship. At birth, you were incapable of surviving without relationship. You had to have someone to care for you, both physically and emotionally. Babies without emotional care fail to thrive and may even die. You probably know someone who has adopted a baby girl from an orphanage in China, Romania or elsewhere. Hearing about their new daughter's growing responsiveness in those first few days makes clear the power and importance of relationship in the early years of life.

You learned to walk and talk while being in relationship. You even patterned your body movements on the people you saw moving around you in those pre-verbal years. Those deep patterns may be causing some of your body aches and pains now. One of the effects of the *Svaroopa*® yoga practice is to deconstruct those unconscious pre-verbal physical patterns. As your posture and movement patterns open up, you become free from some of those pre-verbal patterns in your mind and emotions as well.

The holidays can make it really clear that relationships are really challenging. Many people approach this time of the year with dread, or even go into depression. Even when you are looking forward to spending time with those who are most dear to you, you can also count on some of the old familiar issues to surface. If yoga doesn't help with your relationships, what can?

The catfish twining around each other in the water were following the cosmic dance that is embedded in everything that it exists. The impulse to be in relationship with others is the cosmic dance that becomes the spiraling of your DNA. Shiva, the primordial essence that existed before the Big Bang,

dances with Shakti, the energy that becomes the atoms that make up this universe. Their dance is the pulsation that becomes the beating of your heart and the rhythm of your breath. Their dance of ecstasy is that which propels us into relationship. We go through meeting with those we care about and then separating, and then meeting in reunion again (especially at the holidays).

Sometimes you look into the eyes of another person and connect to something. It is profound and fulfilling. This is the key to relationship. You return to those with whom you have found it in the past. When you feel that deep connection with someone, you want it again. This can be with a spouse, partner, friend, sibling, parent or even with a stranger in a shared moment. You want that connection again, because it is essential to your being. It is the essence of Beingness Itself. You must have this connection — it is Vitamin S, “Self.” This technical term in yoga means your own Self as Consciousness-Itself.

It is the Self in another that makes you love them. You have noticed that when they are at their best, they are so much easier to love. When they shine with that inner light, you really want to spend more time with them. If only all your family members were enlightened! It would be so much easier.

The problem that you have with relationships is that you want the other person to be enlightened. You hope that he or she will be in such a great state that you will feel that connection, be uplifted and filled with love and joy. Once you are a yogi, you have to do that for them. You do this by filling up on the inside first. If you want better relationships, do more yoga.

Consider the alternative. You already know how the holidays will go once you get everyone together. The truth is that you don't always like the people that you love. Wouldn't it be easier if they would all do yoga? Your life would improve tremendously. However, the reality is that you have the responsibility of doing it for them, because you have the tools that make a difference.

When you do yoga, you make that connection on the inside — to your own Self as Consciousness-Itself. Your eyes become filled with light and love. Just look in the mirror at the end of a class or your own practice session. You shine with an inner radiance that makes it easier for them to connect. You become the extension cord that plugs everyone in. You don't arrive feeling empty and hoping to be filled up by them. You come in already full, and you actually have something to share. It overflows from your own inner source. It won't matter to you if they are still running their old routines on you and on each other. It might even be endearing, or at least you feel compassion for their misery. (Remember compassion from last month?)

In yoga, you find the fullness in yourself. Because it is already there. The most important thing you can do to make your holidays better is to do more yoga. Your family will appreciate it!

(One last note: they might appreciate it more if you just do it without telling them about it.)

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rama". Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the number "311".

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