



May & June 2003 Contemplation Theme

Choice

You cannot do it all. It is a fallacy that, if you just go faster and just try harder, you can do it all. No, you have to choose. There is not enough time in the day and not enough days in your life for you to do everything that your mind can conceive of. Your body simply cannot keep up with your mind. You must choose which things are most important to you.

If you rent a video for the evening, you won't go to yoga class. If you plan to do both by going to yoga and then watching the video, you will miss out on sleep. You simply cannot shoehorn it all in there. There are a few of you who don't want to hear this, so you decide to do yoga at home while you watch the video. But you won't get the full benefit from the yoga and you won't fully enjoy the video. You will get more quantity in your evening, but significantly less quality. There's the choice — do you want more “things” or more value? You are making this choice all the time, in your home furnishings, in your relationships, in your job, etc.

Because I train yoga teachers, I have the great fortune of knowing many people who are making a career choice. Many who embark upon this professional training are successful professionals in other arenas, and have decided that they cannot settle for the “big bucks” any more. They are willing to make an investment of both time and money in order to change their profession, and even to take a risk that their new profession won't provide as much income. If our economy actually valued the things that benefit people the most, yoga teachers would be among the most respected and the best-paid people in the country, along with child care workers. Instead, in the real world you have to

make a choice — love or money. Meaning or rewards. Quality or quantity.

To return to our starting point, we must ask, “Can't you have it all?” The answer is a definite and resounding, “No!” Yoga probably comes the closest to making everything possible — actually, you can do very well financially as a yoga teacher. But you will have to give up watching some of those rented videos. Your whole lifestyle will change if you become a yoga teacher; it isn't just a job. You must make a choice. It comes back to choice.

The hardest choices to make are the ones that have a lot “riding on them.” For example, whether to take Job “A” or Job “B” can be a hard choice, because you want to pick the one that combines many key factors: you will like the work, you will be successful, you will get recognition, make a lot of money, have a lot of time off, and actually like the people you work with. Of course, it is impossible to get all of these things, but you still can spend a lot of time trying to figure out which job will come the closest. It is hard to choose, because your choice determines what your life will be like for many years. More than that, this job has an effect on whatever job you might have next, so your choice may be a once-in-a-lifetime event that creates and shapes everything that comes next. Plus, we haven't even begun to talk about making choices in your relationships!

All of this becomes problematic because of persona and personality, which need certain external “security blankets” in order to feel complete. To practice “the yoga of choice,” pause and look inside to see who is choosing. When your choice is coming from persona or personality, it will always have an agenda

attached. It will always have the purpose of propping up the persona or personality, often at the expense of another person. From the inner vantage point, the view from the Self, every job is worthwhile, every person is worth knowing, and whether you make a lot of money or not does not affect your inner sense of deep fullness and vast knowing-and-being. How can you put these things together in your life and make choices in a tangible and practical way?

The problem arises because you are looking at how your life creates your happiness or your unhappiness. The reality is that there is no perfect job, no perfect relationship, no perfect family, no perfect home, etc. No matter what you choose, there will be something about it that bothers you — because you have the “seeds of bother-ment” within you. Just under the surface of your mind is an irritation waiting to be triggered. For some people, leaf blowers will set it off. For others it is the ringing of a cell phone in a restaurant. Maybe you fume about the other drivers on the road. Maybe everything I listed bothers you! This inner irritation is not in your deepest Core of Being — it is just hidden within your mind.

This inner irritation, always waiting for something to set it off, arises from a feeling of need. You are irritated because that (usually unrecognized) need is not being met. Your

persona and personality have the need that your surroundings be perfect before they can feel good. You base your happiness on your state of mind, which fluctuates with the conditions around you. If the stock market is up today, you're happy. If not, then everyone around you better watch out. You work hard to manipulate the world into looking how you want it to look. You even ignore the things that don't match, by ignoring world events and avoiding certain members of your family.

This is important because you can refine how you use your free will. You can choose. Instead of making choices about how to construct your world for maximum enjoyment, you can choose to enjoy what is happening. If it is raining, you can choose to enjoy the rain. If it is hot, you can dress differently and relax into the sauna being provided for you by the Mother Nature. If your job is challenging, you can enjoy rising to the challenge — or even enjoy being pushed beyond your limits and learning something new. If your world is in limbo, you can learn to be happy without the usual hallmarks of security and stability. If yoga doesn't give you the ability to work with your mind, then what is the point?

Do more yoga!

Namaste,

