



February 2005 Contemplation Theme

The Inner Drive Toward...

By Rama Berch, C.S.Y.T., R.Y.T.

There is a deep inner drive that keeps you moving through life — it is actually the impulse toward the knowing of your own divinity. When you remain attuned to it, you are able to identify its true nature. You are able to harness its power and use it for the most important endeavor of human life — upliftment. When you lose track of the radiance and purity of this inner drive, it still propels you forward but you mistake it for a drive toward worldly accomplishments. These parts of life are important, but they exhaust you and create a lot of inner turmoil. When you find this inner current and ride it to its true destination, you become more and more refreshed. You become lighter. You become free within your own being. Then you know how to live your life.

Yoga is the science of discovering the source of this inner drive. When you do asana, you enjoy an immediate improvement in how your body feels. In addition, you get more. A quality of inner peace becomes obvious when you leave class, and it begins to last for days. You gain a new clarity of mind that allows you to see your life more clearly and move through it more easily. These are some of the most significant benefits of taking yoga classes.

The ancient tradition of yoga warns that these benefits can actually be a trap — you can get stuck in an externalized focus, using your inner peace and clarity to make you better at your worldly accomplishments. Fortunately, as you continue your yoga practice you discover that this peace and clarity brings an internal benefit that far outstrips the benefits of seeing the world more clearly. It makes you able to see yourself more clearly. It makes you able to address some of your previously hidden patterns of self-delusion and self-sabotage.

Choosing to engage in the inner process consciously and willingly is an important part of yoga practice. Last month's contemplation article suggested you choose just one word as your New Year's resolution. This decision to consciously participate in your own process speeds up the progressive lightening of your own being, and is called *tapas*. This inner work can be hard, which is why *tapas* is usually translated as "austerity." It means that you tackle the hard stuff.

If you do not willingly tackle this inner work, life makes sure that you do it anyway. Outer events push you into lessons you have been avoiding. Your relationships propel you into your own fears and resistances. Other people show you the ways in which you try to hide your own warts from yourself. You can choose to work on that stuff consciously or you can wait for others to push you there, but you will have to do it one way or the other. Your *karma* must be resolved; your life lessons must be learned. Your inner blocks that obscure the knowing of your own divine essence must be cleared. This is the purpose of your life. You cannot avoid your own purpose.

When I began yoga in earnest, I went to study with a Guru, along with several thousand other people. Instead of being one of two or three close disciples, I sat in the back of a very large, very full room. Opera glasses were not allowed. It forced me to find the truth of the teachings inside, through my own expanding inner experience. It took me many years of intense interaction with "those other people" to discover that they were one of the greatest gifts in my life. I was living, working and studying with people who shared my goals and process. Sometimes they supported me in that process, and sometimes they pushed my buttons and plunged me into it at a new level. But they never let me slack off — they propelled me forward and inward, even when I didn't want to go there.

When I returned to the mainstream lifestyle in the USA, I missed the pre-dawn Sanskrit chants and the gourmet vegetarian meals. I missed the Guru. And I missed the community that I had disliked for years. Gradually, I understood the power of the relationships with all "those other people." That led me to an appreciation of the importance of all of our relationships. "Those other people" are there to help you get enlightened. This is happening whether you think you want to become enlightened or not.

When those other people in your life are being kind and helpful, it is clear that they are helping you, but sometimes it looks like they are making things worse. Yet they are propelling you forward and inward

in amazing ways. To be able to embrace this aspect of relationship fully, you need more information about yoga's perspective on relationships.

The dynamic that manifests in all our relationships arises from the primal impulse that brings the universe into existence. That impulse is still pulsating within you – it becomes your own inner drive that propels you through life, both into worldly activities as well as into the inner work that must be done. The dynamic arises from Shiva, the One Reality that has ever existed.

That expansive ever-existent Reality decided to manifest an inner vibration, which became a pulsation that grew into a split within its own existence. That inner split was and is a conscious meaningful split, which creates a dynamic that draws the seemingly-separate parts ever toward one another. These two parts are separate, and yet they are not. It is like slicing a sharp knife quickly through a bowl of water — there is a momentary split but the water never really separates. Within Shiva's split, you feel like you and I feel like me. We each feel separate from the primordial One Reality, and yet we are not. We each know ourselves as individual and different from one another, yet we also recognize a "something" in the other person.

What happens when you see that "something" in another person, you are drawn toward them. You are always looking for other people in whom you can see that "something." That "something" that you are seeing in the other person is Shiva. It feels like a magnetic attraction that cannot be resisted. You must connect. If you resist it, you feel like you are going to die — because this impulse is the source of life. You don't know the source of your own life (because of Shiva's inner split), so you look to connect to it outside of yourself, in another person.

This impulse to connect with another is an essential part of the human condition. You must be in relationship with other people. The most intimate relationships are, of course, the most difficult, because they ultimately teach you that you must find this essence inside. The source of life arises from within you, and it must be found here. Once you find it inside, you discover that that it is not merely within you – it IS you. Then you see it in everyone and everything, in its radiance, perfection and beauty.

I have met many people who use yoga to avoid meaningful relationships with other people, yet your progress in yoga is profoundly affected by your relationships. Your relationships are part of your yoga. They are a proving ground, where you test your yogic state and see if you can carry it into the world. They are a mirror, showing you the blemishes that you still need to work on. Your relationships are support, while they are simultaneously the sword that slices away everything that you must let go of. They challenge you to give more, and to give up more and more of your own limitations. They teach you to be authentic. They show you how to be willing to risk everything. You learn to live without guarantees, how to live in limbo. Relationships train you how to be transparent, so that your own radiance can shine through to them — and to yourself.

Without relationships, your yoga is incomplete. This is because Shiva dances as you, while simultaneously choreographing your life's dance so that you are dancing with Shiva in all "those other people." Yoga is not about turning inward to avoid life — it is about using every experience and every relationship to make conscious willing progress toward your own divinity. The deep inner drive cannot be denied, so you must recognize its true nature. When you how to use it fully, you can fulfill the purpose of your life: to know yourself and all that exists as the many ecstatic forms of the One.

Do more yoga!

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rama". Above the letter "a" is a small heart symbol containing the Sanskrit character "Om".

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