



June 2006 Contemplation Theme

# I Want To Be Happy!

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Everything you do in your life, you do in order to be happy. This is true even with the things you don't like to do. For example, many people work in a job they don't like. They stay in the job because the pay makes them happy, or the benefits, or the security it provides. You may be figuring out your perfect vacation this year — so you'll be happy for two whole weeks. You try to find the perfect pizza, the perfect relationship and even the perfect style of yoga — all so you can be happy. You even do nice things for other people because it makes you happy.

This is simply the way the world works. It is called normal — doing things and having relationships for the purpose of being happy is what a normal human being does. When it works, you are happy. When it doesn't, you are unhappy, which then means you have a problem. You try to solve that problem by doing more things, or finding new relationships, or getting a new job, or buying something, etc.

When you recognize that all the things you do are an attempt to find happiness, then you can see that the real problem is different than what you thought. The problem is that you are looking for happiness, which means two things:

- 1) You are not feeling happy now. If you were feeling truly happy, you would not be looking for something to make you happy.
- 2) There is something you can get or something you can do in order to get this thing called "happiness."

You have been trained to approach happiness as if you can get it, like you get a cup of coffee or a new pair of shoes. It comes from the outside. Mass media makes it clear, and agrees with your parents, your teachers in school and everyone else you have ever known. Happiness comes from one of these:

People — if you fill your life with the right people, you will be happy. If they are really the right people, you will always be happy.

Place — if you come from the right place, move to the right place, vacation in the right place, if the weather is perfect, or if you picked the road with the least traffic on it, you will be happy.

Things — if you own the right things, if you buy the right size, if it comes in your favorite color, and if your yoga blankets all match your eyebag, you will be happy.

All of this is technically "manipulation." You are making a Herculean attempt to manipulate your life circumstances. This word "manipulation" is a technical term in yoga. It has to do with handling things, like using your hands and fingers to manipulate the keys on your key chain. In childhood you learn to handle things, beginning with learning how to manipulate a spoon to feed yourself, button your own buttons, tie your shoes, open doors, brush your teeth, etc. Along the way, you also learn how to manipulate your parents and the other people in your family and they return the favor. This is all part of the experiences you have before you can even talk.

When you go to school, you learn that if you accomplish certain things, like doing well on a test or on the playground, you will be happy. Other people approve of you; they like or love you, based on your accomplishments. This is all necessary training — training in how to live in the "normal" world, learning how to be in relationship with other people and developing the ability to get ahead in the world. This is all beneficial and important training, but quite limited.

The limitation is that it ignores what really happens when you feel happiness. When you go for a walk in the woods or take a bite of a delicious tidbit, a feeling rises inside. It is a bubbling up, a light and delightful filling that rises inside you. This feeling comes up inside just before you laugh — the impulse

to laughter is an inner arising of something, which is called *udana prana* in Sanskrit. When something happens on the outside, your mind stops, even if only for a moment, and this feeling arises inside. It is called happiness. It comes from an inner source and rises within you.

When you are not feeling this, you look for something outside that will trigger this inner arising of happiness. The amount of time that you are looking for happiness, compared to the amount of time that you are actually happy is not well proportioned. You feel only isolated moments of happiness, which are too short and too infrequent, and too hard to make happen because they depend on the external circumstances. Your happiness depends on others, and they don't always make your happiness their highest priority.

But when you consider what happiness really is, you see that it actually happens inside of you. It arises from an inner source. Since the source is inside, couldn't you be happy all the time? "Happy" doesn't mean just about being OK with things. "Happy" means honest-to-goodness happiness, the inner feeling that is so real and so full that you cannot suppress the smile and the twinkle in your eye. If happiness comes from inside, then what makes you NOT feel that happiness all the time?

Udana prana is always flowing upward, but there are inner blocks. To understand this, first you need to remember the feeling of this upward flow of happiness. When you hear a joke, there is that moment just before you laugh — you know the feeling of the laugh upwelling inside you, just before you laugh. Where did it start from and where does it move through? It flows up, arising within your body and mind — from where does it originate? What does it flow through?

The origin is the point just below the tip of your tailbone; it flows through your spine and spreads from your spine through your whole body and mind. This point just below the tip of your tailbone is actually the point of origin for every breath. This is the source of the energy that keeps your heart beating. This is the foundation of your own individual existence, which is why we start the *Svaroopā*® yoga practice with poses that release tension in your tailbone muscles. This inner opening dissolves the blocks to the flow of udana prana. With this inner opening, it is easier to feel happiness. It is easier to laugh, also it is easier to cry. You don't depend on the external things to create your happiness — it is ever arising inside.

Yoga says that you must feel happiness. Anyone who doesn't experience enough happiness begins to wonder if life is really worth living. Happiness is a need, like air and food and water. The reason that you need happiness is because your true nature is bliss. You are bliss-incarnate. Without happiness (which is a taste of bliss), you feel lost. You are cut off from yourself, because your Self is Bliss. When you feel happy, you get a little taste of your own essence, and then you want more. You must have this inner experience, but you need to look in the right place to find it. If you want water, don't go to the desert, go to the river. If you want happiness, don't look outside, look for the source inside! To find it — do more yoga.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rama". Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the number "31".

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