



February 2010 Contemplation Theme

# Innate Yearning

by Karobi Sachs, CSYT, RN, E-RYT 500

I had my first *Svaroopa*® yoga experience on a hot, steamy summer weekend at Kripalu Center in Massachusetts. About 70 yogis gathered in the large room, each spot equipped with three blankets, one chair and two blocks. I had no idea what to expect, but I knew that I had to experience this “new” kind of yoga that had you doing familiar poses in a different way.

Rama\* led us through a long class in the morning, then more asanas (poses) in the afternoon, and more again the next morning. I could feel the poses making changes in my body that I had never experienced before. I got a deeper understanding when I received my first adjustment. Wow! *Svaroopa*® yoga could open up the tight stuck spots in my body, opening areas I had never felt before. During the second morning, I realized something else was happening that I hadn't expected, something I had wanted and been looking for, for a long long time.

This yoga was tickling a “knowing” in me that I could barely name or recognize. By the end of the weekend, I knew that something subtle and profound, deep inside me, had been awakened. *Svaroopa*® yoga had uncovered an innate inner knowing and a deep yearning that had been unfulfilled in my life. I had thought I was never going to find it. Yet, here it was! Something was bubbling up to my conscious awareness... this felt GOOD! All I knew was, “This is deep and this is right!”

Now I know that I was experiencing the Self. I had found fulfillment of a yearning for the “something more,” something that I had been looking for as long as I could remember...so strong, so innate, so much a part of me. I had looked in many, many places for this fulfillment, but without success. And here it was. Something had unlocked that door and said, “Yes it is here. It is real and it can be nourished.”

It felt like how you feel after a deep, long sigh. I knew, finally, what I had yearned for was for real! I had searched for it without knowing what I was looking for. I couldn't find it in clothes, friends, lovers, or food. None of them had worked in the long run. And here it was in *Svaroopa*® yoga! From that day on, I knew my yearning was valid; there really is something more! As I continued on this path, I learned Sanskrit names and got new understandings about this yearning through my study of the ancient yogic texts. I know now how this yearning can be nurtured, grown and fulfilled.

You have this yearning, too. It is built into you. It is part of the “human condition.” It is not just a longing for chocolate or pretzels — it goes deeper than that. You can feel it. Just contemplating the word “yearning” almost takes you right there. To recognize that you are longing for something is so beautiful in itself. It is bittersweet.

Your lifelong journey is propelled by your yearning. Sometimes the yearning lies hidden deep inside. Sometimes it is just under the surface. Sometimes it arises strongly within you: a deep and profound longing. When the yearning arises, you need to take it seriously. Honor it.

You can take steps towards recognizing the yearning that already lies inside. Take a moment right now. Consider what your life was like before yoga. What drew you to yoga? Maybe you started out looking for relief from physical discomfort or stress. Even though that's what brought you to it, *Svaroopa*® yoga gives you so much more. You keep coming back because you are getting that “something” that you don't get anywhere else.

There is so much inside you that you ignore. Now it's time to go beyond the limited thinking you are used to. Allow yourself to feel deep inside yourself — what do you long for? This may be a little daring. Go ahead and do it anyway. You know this has come up for you before. What are you yearning for? What you are yearning for is what keeps you moving. Look into your heart; see if you can let that yearning surface. Maybe you felt it when you were a child, but you couldn't figure out how to get the “something” that you were yearning for.

The word *svaroopa* names this “something.” This is what I was experiencing that weekend so many years ago: the yearning that lies deep inside and tugs at your heart. It fills you with an expansiveness that almost can't be contained. You yearn for the richness of your own beingness to well up inside — it knows no bounds.

The first line in *Svaroopa*® yoga's Statement of Purpose gives the first reason why we do the poses:

*Cultivating our innate yearning for transcendence.*

In the ancient yoga texts, the beginning *sutras* (verses) are the most important ones. This is true as well with the *Svaroopa*® yoga Statement of Purpose, which has five points. In yoga, what comes first is always the most essential.

Each of the six words in the first point above has great meaning. “Transcendence” means you leave one state or quality behind, so you can live in another, specifically moving from the worldly to the divine, from the mundane to the sacred. It means you find your own Self — you go beyond who you think you are. You go beyond the “small-s-self”

to find your deeper essence within: your True Self, the “capital-S-Self,” which yoga calls by many names, Shiva, Atman, Brahman, Chiti, svaroopā.

Transformation is not the same as transcendence. Transformation is important, but it refers to personal growth and self-improvement. Transcendence means you experience yourself as sacred; you experience yourself as divine. The Sanskrit word svaroopā names what the practice of Svaroopā® yoga gives you. Svaroopā means “the bliss of your own being” or “your own true nature.” The promise of Svaroopā® yoga lies within its name. You will find your divine nature; you will experience yourself as Consciousness-Itself.

We begin the Foundations of Svaroopā® Yoga course by asking everyone, “Why are you here? What do you hope to get out of this course?” So many yogis say, “There is something different about this yoga...” “There is something I can’t name, but it is what I have been looking for all my life and didn’t even know it...” They are describing the effect that Svaroopā® yoga has — on them and on you. What draws you back to yoga, class after class? Your yearning keeps bringing you back, your own divinity calls out to you — to recognize yourself as Consciousness-Itself.

The yearning is a sense of deliciousness that you know is there just beyond your grasp. It is a tingling vibration deep in your being, promising something more than you can even imagine. It is the welling up of tears for no reason; it is the longing for that which you know — and yet can’t grasp onto. It is the elation that wells up, just by contemplating yearning itself. It is the swelling of your heart into an expectation of unknown joy. This is the yearning. You know it so well.

Your yearning is innate. It is built into your human nature, your human condition. You are born into a human body, with flesh, bones and muscles, and within you also dwells the divine, as your own Self. You know yourself as the “small-s-self,” and you also know the built-in yearning to return home again. The desire to find that deeper dimension of yourself is inherent in you. This is the yearning.

Svaroopā® yoga excels at opening up the tight places in your body, reducing pain, opening up your breath — yet it is giving you something more at the same time, something you never even knew was missing. Doing all the wonderful poses is so beneficial, and still you get so much more!

Have you had an experience in a yoga class that you might call an “ah ha!” moment? The fog cleared; you could see with clarity, beyond the everyday circumstances of your life. Or you felt the depth and vastness of your being, or you basked in overwhelming inner bliss. This is what brings you back over and over again.

This is your innate yearning for transcendence. Svaroopā® yoga not only offers that “something more,” but also cultivates your yearning for it. Svaroopā® yoga gives you the tools to move on the path of transcendence, towards your own divine Self. Yet it is up to you to take the steps on this path. It is your choice. It lies right in front of you. Are you ready to go?

*In peace and grace, Karobi*

\*Rama Berch is now Swami Nirmalananda.

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