



February 1997 Contemplation Theme

Kindness

By Rama Berch, C.S.Y.T., E-RYT 500

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” I thought I lived by the Golden Rule until I began to stand yoga’s teaching, “Honor the other person, for they are a spark of divine consciousness, as you are.” Then, I realized that I had always followed the Golden Rule as though it said, “Be nice to others, so they will be nice to you.” I wanted other people to be nice to me, and being nice to them was a way to get what I wanted. Sometimes it worked. Sometimes I just became a doormat for other people.

When I realized this, I stopped being nice. All those years of being nice had been an act, anyway. Now my real personality began to show. I was rude and abrupt. I would smile, but it was not genuine. On the occasions that I forced myself to slow down and be nice, I felt superior to the incredibly dense and slow person I was dealing with, so I would be nice out of pity. Amazingly, there were still people who liked me. There were a lot who did not, but I did not care. The problem was that I was not happy. Even though I was not a phony any more, I had to live with a rude, abrupt person — myself.

I further considered yoga’s teaching and made a real effort to see the other person as divine consciousness. Since I lived in an ashram (residential yoga center) during this time, the people who surrounded me were all working on themselves. But they were far from enlightened beings. At least it seemed that way to me. Keep in mind that it is always easier to see how someone else is unenlightened than to see it in yourself. I would sit and think of a person I really disliked and contemplate, “Somewhere inside you is a spark of divine consciousness, even if I cannot see it yet.”

I began treating other people better. Over time it got easier. It became a habit to look for that spark in each person. As I have continued this practice over the years, it continued to change. I began to really see that spark in everyone. More than that, even the unenlightened parts began to look like a manifestation of divine consciousness. Now, I need few reminders to greet each person with true welcome and joy. Quite naturally, I have become genuinely friendly and kind. Even when I have to speak up strongly or move quickly, people tell me they experience compassion or kindness in what I do. Perhaps it is because yoga has made me able to see God in each one of you. Thank you for being in my life.

Namaste,