



December 1999 Contemplation Theme

Light

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

It seems strange that we celebrate light at the darkest time of year — when we have the shortest days and longest nights. As we pass the winter solstice and celebrate such meaningful holidays, we continue the ancient ritual of lighting outside and inside our homes. The earth turns on its axis to begin bringing us longer days and our calendar turns on its heel, facing us squarely into the mirror so we can see ourselves! Can we find the light within?

One part of the ancient epic Mahabharata brings us to a scene where we find a great hero, Arjuna, suffering darkness and despair. Through a series of foul deeds, his beloved son has been killed in battle. Now Arjuna suffers. He is in danger of losing his clarity about why he must fight this war. Earlier, Krishna led him through confusion into clarity. Arjuna had been fighting skillfully, while never losing sight of the higher purpose he is serving in the midst of the chaos. Now grief moves him dangerously close to acting out of anger and desire for revenge.

Krishna says to him, “I am crossing the great era of darkness with you. This struggle is absolute; you and your brothers are the world’s only light. If your heart breaks or closes up, if it becomes bitter, dark or dry, the light will be lost.” No matter what, you must keep your heart open. The light is found in the center of your heart, and it shines through your eyes. Your heart must remain open, or everything is lost!

The holidays should be the time where this is easiest, but the reality is often very different. Holiday stress is not an oxymoron anymore. You may have emotional residue from Christmas Past, which stays safely hidden during the rest of the year. Perhaps the reality of your family just does not meet the expectations of the idea of which you still dream. Maybe the list of things that must be done is beyond the capacity of any superhero. So you begin to close up.

What is the answer? More yoga! The fanatic in me loves being able to repeat this again. Ask yourself, “What really does work for me?” Will another eggnog or glass of champagne do it? “If your heart breaks or closes up, if it becomes bitter, dark or dry, the light will be lost.” You must keep your heart open. You must shine your light into the world. Yoga gives you the tools; all you have to do is use them.

The light that must be found is inside your Self. You do not merely find that light within — you are that light. Finding it is not just a survival tool for the holidays, it is a life skill that will be needed in the New Year and every day. You are nothing without that light. You can travel all over the world, select the perfect gifts for all the people on your lists, and bake the perfect pie, but it will all be meaningless if you do not find the inner light that is your essence and being. You must know your Self!

Namaste,

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

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