



September 2000 Contemplation Theme

## Renewal

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

“Reduce – Reuse – Recycle” is the message emblazoned on my insulated mug, which is scratched and nicked precisely because I follow its message. It is showing its age. You might be feeling the same way. A generation or two ago, people took for granted that they would develop some aches and pains as they aged. Baby-boomers like myself are less accepting of the rusty joints and leaky mind. Many young adults say they aren’t going to wait until their hinges begin to squeak. And now there is an upsurge of interest in yoga for kids, which is a program we have planned for the near future.

The yoga texts say, “Begin yoga as a youth. Don’t wait until your hair and teeth are falling out and you can’t see any more. Start now! Don’t waste your life.” But what if you didn’t do that? What about these aches and pains, regardless of your age? What about those wrinkles – or are they laugh lines? Yoga makes you young again. Young eyes shine with light, and are wide open and clear. Young skin is soft and smooth, and the young mind is osmotic – able to absorb new information at an extraordinary rate. Yoga promises you all of this, and more. We have a bibliography in our Yoga Library that lists over 2,000 medical studies showing that yoga & meditation reverse the aging process. This is fantastic news, but it is still not what I call “renewal”. Renewal is to make new again: a change throughout your whole being, not only your body and mind.

Do you remember your first love? There might be a whole movie of material in your story, especially about what happened at the end, but forget that for the moment. Do you remember the feeling of being in love for the first time? This is what yoga call “new.” Maturity brings a lot of other things along with love, like responsibility, mutual support and compromise. But that feeling of newness is still in there, sometimes buried under other stuff. Finding it again is called renewal, but renewal is not limited to feeling love.

The day can be exhausting, so you fall into bed. You hope to wake in the morning refreshed and renewed. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn’t. Shavasana is more reliable, the guided relaxation at the beginning and end of yoga classes. Students often describe going really deep and feeling more refreshed than after a full night of sleep. Their eyes are shining. Their skin is smooth. They are renewed. Where is this “really deep” place that provides such renewal?

The source is within you. You tap into it when you allow yourself to feel love, as well as every time you laugh. It bubbles up every time your mind becomes still. All the practices of yoga are to plug you into that constant stream of aliveness and bliss. When you live in this flow, you are always new. When you cut it off, you begin to die. Even a moment of this connection is a renewal. Yoga is the science of connecting.

Yoga first youthens your body, giving increased flexibility and resilience along with lessening your aches and pains. It then helps you with your mind, providing clarity and a renewed enthusiasm for life. You develop an emotional bounce, so the events of life do not flatten you. But the best is when you keep going: a whole new sense of Self arises from the source inside. Then, regardless of what your odometer says about the number of years on this body, you live each day as fully new. No renewal is needed. Allow yoga to make you new again.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rama'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small heart symbol above the letter 'a'.