



May 2008 Contemplation Theme

## **Deprogramming & Reprogramming**

by Rama Berch

A young man approached the famous Zen Master, asking for his teaching. Responding to the Master's questions, the student described his three previous teachers and his progress with each, emphasizing his own dedication to attaining the ultimate experience. The Master replied, "Come tomorrow morning and we'll begin with a formal tea ceremony." The student was honored to arrive at sunrise, especially once he discovered that the Master was doing the tea ceremony himself — it was just the two of them.

The student watched as the Master poured the tea, filling the tea bowl past the usual half-way point. The master continued pouring, and pouring, and pouring until the tea rimmed over the edge and spilled across the table. It poured off the edge into the student's lap, scalding hot! He yelped and leapt up, standing there in total confusion. Then the Master said, "You will have to empty yourself before I can teach you. If I try to add teachings to your already full mind and heart, it is like trying to pour tea into an already full cup."

You need some deprogramming, too. You may even know it.

The wonderful physical changes that *Svaroopa*® yoga provides are the tip of the iceberg — so much more is happening, even from your very first class. Think of your physical problems as a road map of your life so far. The physical changes are a way of repairing the damage you have experienced, or even inflicted on yourself. At a Yoga Pain Clinic that I taught several years ago, a man in his 20s explained that he had broken over 20 bones in his body, in various sports and athletic endeavors. The doctor reading the recent x-ray of his spine told him, "You have the spine of an 80-year-old."

Whatever got you started in yoga came from your life so far. It's easy to see that your physical history leaves traces, but so does the way you use your mind. You can think yourself into tension — everyone knows that. But holding yourself tight, physically, has a huge effect on your mental and emotional state. If you want to try it now, you'll need to give it at least 3 minutes. Set a timer, on your watch or cell phone. Hunch your shoulders up, stick your chin forward and glare at a spot on the wall. Stay with it for the whole three minutes.

Now breathe again. You may need to do a tailbone release to open up your body and breath again. To open up your mind and heart!

It's called body language. Other people know who you are and where you are at, just by seeing the way you sit and stand, the way you walk, the way you breathe. They see the amount of opening in your eyes, the color and texture of your skin, and much more. Everyone knows how to read a book by its cover. The problem is that you were trained, at a subliminal level, to hold these tensions, to live in this body language. You need deprogramming before you get new programming.

A teacher-in-training said to me, "I've always had this deep swayback. My mother had it; my sisters have it. It's genetic." Six months later it was gone. She was delighted to report that her grown son had pointed it out to her, "Mom, you've lost your old-lady butt!" Only then did she believe what I had told her, "It isn't genetic. You learned to walk by watching your mother walk, as did your sisters."

You got that subliminal programming by watching the adults walking around you, long before you could talk. This is a very deep level of programming indeed. How's the quality of your programming? As you consider this, your need for deprogramming becomes more clear.

When you are doing the Primary Spinal Openers, you are doing the deprogramming. These well-supported poses must also be well aligned, in order to unravel the deeply hidden tensions in your spinal muscles. *Svaroopa*® yoga sequences the spinal release, beginning at your tailbone and carrying the core release along your sacrum, through your waist area, and the vertebrae through your rib cage, shoulders and neck. As your core tensions dissolve, you are also dissolving the related

mental-emotional programming, much of which was programmed into you before you could walk and talk.

If physical pain or mental-emotional pain got you started doing yoga, that pain was merely the symptom that your programming wasn't working for you. Those of you who have been practicing for some time recognize you are doing the deprogramming and reprogramming, and you want it to go as far and deep and fast as possible. Maybe you are somewhere in between — you know that yoga is doing more than merely treating your pains, you appreciate its work on the deeper causes, but you aren't really ready for the total makeover on every level of your being.

Even though the programming you already have is the cause of the problems you have, I congratulate you on your ability to accomplish a lot in your life. But sometimes you are getting results in spite of yourself. I see this in my Yoga Business Skills courses. Guiding students through the process of discovering their vision for their life and work is a daunting task; I love it. Watching them shed the layers of expectation, dissolve their old limitations, erupt out of inherited concepts, and break down the walls of self-sabotage —it's like watching a birth, except they are birthing themselves. I call this whole thing by one name, yoga.

As you go through the monthly class themes that your teacher offers, you are doing the deprogramming and reprogramming. The themes sequence you through deprogramming from *Daily Practice* through *Lower Spinal Release* and *Upper Spinal Release*. Then you begin the reprogramming in *Abdominals*, *Backbends* and *Standing Poses*. The power of your experience deepens incredibly when you have a teacher who has completed her or his Teacher Training, as she or he takes you into the next five themes with more deprogramming in *Forward Bends* and *Neck & Shoulders*, and reprogramming in *Balance & Inversions*, *Classical Poses* and *Vinyasa*. The two — deprogramming and reprogramming — meet in the final theme, *Seated Poses & Twists*, setting you up for a deeper inner experience of your own essence.

You cannot release your spinal tensions and continue to be the same person you were. You are not the only one who appreciates it, so does everyone around you. This isn't just treating pain. This isn't just a process of healing. *Svaroopa*<sup>®</sup> yoga is deceptive — it's downright sneaky! It looks like you are doing this simple thing, sequencing from your tail to the top, to dissolve the deep spinal spasms and open up your body's health, youth and vitality. Then you realize that much more is happening — dissolving your resistances and negativities, uncovering your inner radiance, finding the source of joy within and opening up your ability to share it with others. If yoga doesn't strip you down to the bedrock, then you aren't doing enough yoga.

“What is the difference between your two sides?” It seems like a simple little question, but it is part of the deprogramming and reprogramming. It helps you begin to be aware of how your body feels, even when you are not doing yoga. It starts with the physical level, “Oh, my body feels worse than it did two days ago —I need to do some yoga.” Then it sneaks past your body as you realize, “Oh, I'm cranky — I need to do more yoga.” Then it sneaks even deeper until you realize, “Oh, I don't feel like myself — I've lost track of my inner essence. I need to get back to normal. I'll do some yoga practice.”

You are redefining “normal.” The old normal just isn't good enough any more. If you take on the familiar anxieties again, you feel your tailbone tuck under. If your mind runs the instant replays of those old experiences, you feel your breath getting short and your brow knitting up. If you begin to repeat your familiar litany of complaints, you can feel your skull tightening and your heart begin to ache. You used to live with those tensions all the time, along with the related mind-set. Now you don't want to go back there, ever again.

Now you know how good you can feel. You even know that yoga promises more than you have found yet. You hear others in your classes describe physical releases that you haven't felt yet. You hear them talking about meditation, the workshop they took, the book they read, or the chanting CD they have in their car stereo. Perhaps one of them goes to a Guru, letting that teacher strip away some of the inner layers that block their ability to truly hear the teachings — the deprogramming must occur before reprogramming is possible.

This month is Master Yoga's birthday, and it is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of my Guru, Swami Muktananda. I lived and studied with him for many years, and continue to serve him through my teaching and in my life. He stripped me down to the bedrock, even taking me down when I was resisting (on more than one occasion). It wasn't always pretty and nice, but it worked. I offer my life in undying gratitude. *Svaroopa*<sup>®</sup> yoga is my offering to him, as well as my offering to you. I made sure that Master Yoga was founded on his birthday, so that both celebrations occur together. I get to bow to him as I bow to you. I honor your practice and the experiences you are having. It is truly an honor to be able to serve you in this way.

I take my responsibility to deprogram you quite seriously. Every time you begin at your tailbone, you are stripping away another layer of resistance, need, fear and desire. Every time you do another Ujjayi breath, you are dissolving the blocks to you being fully alive and fully embodied. Every time you read one of these articles, you let your mind and heart open a little more. Even if I push a hot button, or especially if I push a hot button, you are going beyond your preconceptions.

When you get upset about some things, cry over others, worry about others, and know exactly how you want things to be, your old programming is still limiting your aliveness. You cannot see the world clearly when you are looking at it through your reactions. You cannot open your heart when you are checking to see if it is safe first.

To get new programming is far too easy. It's the deprogramming that's hard to find. You can take all kinds of courses or trainings, go on a trip, read a book — lots of programming is available out there. You go home on a high! You learn some new things to add into the mix of your life. You have trouble remembering what you learned. Your teacup is already full, so you can only take in a little.

Deprogramming happens when you do more *Svaroopa*<sup>®</sup> yoga. Whether it is a series of classes or private sessions with your teacher, a personal yoga weekend at home, or a dive into one of our Yogimmersion programs, you can do the 'bunny-hop' (moving faster than the tortoise, the slow-and-steady pace of at-home practice). You let the yoga reach a little deeper inside, so the old ways of being simply dissolve. You know that you aren't who you used to be, even when you don't know what is gone.

Now you live in the question. Instead of seeing how it should be, you walk into every situation with the open-ended question — what's this? Instead of knowing what you want, you look to see what is available. Instead of needing something to happen, you embrace life's uncertainty. You never know what is going to happen next. You never did, really, anyway. Yoga calls it freedom. It is full of delight. It has the texture of love, while being spacious at the same time. It is your destiny, and you have some work to do if you want to fulfill your destiny. Do more yoga!

Namaste,



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