



October 2004 Contemplation Theme

Having Experiences

By Rama Berch, R.Y.T.

When you lie in Shavasana, the tensions melt away from both your body and your mind. You need to clear both, because the chronic tensions in your body are created by your mind. For long-term improvement in the condition of your body, you must change the way you use your mind. This clearing of your mind provides an added bonus – the whole rest of your life will improve. You begin to see things more clearly and respond to situations as they really are, instead of reacting to what you *think* is going on.

Your body and your mind are not two separate things that are in relationship with one another. Your body and your mind are both outward expressions of only one thing – you. They are two different levels of the blossoming of consciousness into individuality – consciousness has become you and is being you. Consciousness becomes you by shaping your mind into its tangible form on a subtle level of manifestation, and then further condenses into the physical level as your body. Your body is the outward expression of your mind. Anything you do with one affects the other.

Yoga takes advantage of this reciprocal relationship to accomplish its true objective: *asanas* (yoga poses) use your body to calm and quiet your mind. One of the best reasons to do yoga poses is that it is significantly easier to work with your body than to work with your mind. One of the easiest ways to do this is by “living in *Shavasana*,” which we contemplated a few months ago. Caution! This practice will not only change your body; it will also change your mind. You will be unable to hold onto the old hurts and grievances. You will become more forgiving and compassionate. You will become less judgmental toward others and toward yourself. You will breathe easier, smile more frequently and feel more alive. This will change your experience of life itself.

Life is about having experiences. You are always having an experience: your own personal, individual, unique experience. Whether you are driving, reading, eating, working, walking, talking – in every moment you are having an experience. When you are doing nothing, you are having an experience of doing nothing. Even when you are sleeping, you are having an experience of sleeping. This is because you are consciousness – you cannot turn it off.

Any time that you are not experiencing peace, joy and bliss – your mind is messing with you. You may think that your unhappiness is coming from the situation around you, but it is not. Your mind adds editorial content, which is what causes your pain and unhappiness. Your mind overlays its content on your perceptions. Your experience is actually the result of two things, perception plus the content of your mind. You can think of it as an equation: $E = p + m$ (experience = perceptions + mind content). Perceptions come in through your senses and your mind adds content in order to create your experience. Without the added content, you actually don't have a personal experience.

Sometimes you think you are sharing an experience with someone else, and later you find out that you each were having different experiences of the same thing. You can go to a movie with a friend, but each of you has a different experience of it. This is because your experience is actually the result of two things, perception plus the content of your mind. $E = p + m$.

This is really easy to see at a family gathering. Everyone who attends has a different experience of the event. The things that you notice are different than what other family members notice. Your mind screens out some things while it focuses on others. Your mind can distort what is actually happening in order to construct or support your preconceptions and beliefs. Your mind may even add on, embroidering onto events without you realizing it.

You are supposed to have experiences. Having experiences is one of the two purposes of human life. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* explains, "*prakaasha-kriyaa-sthiti-shilam bhootendriyaat-makam bhoga-apavargaartham drshyam,*" the objects and events of the world...are for the purpose of providing you with experiences and with liberation (Sutra 2.18). Life does not have only one purpose; there are two:

- (1) For you to have experiences
- (2) For you to become liberated (enlightened).

Having experiences depends on having mental content to add to your perceptions, and liberation is becoming free from that mental content. When you are free from that mental content, the inside of your mind is free from clutter. You feel spacious, open and free on the inside. You naturally see everyone and everything in life in a completely different way – and you are able to allow the power of consciousness to shine through you. It shines through your eyes, through your heart, through your words and actions, and it illumines your life. You really can change the world, by clearing the inner levels of your own being.

The science of yoga is specifically designed to provide progressive clearing of the mental content that you add to your perceptions. Even when you are working with your body, it is for the purpose of clearing your mind. Each clearing gives you a feeling of greater inner freedom while simultaneously opening your ability to perceive reality, both outside you and inside you. Your mind has been creating your pain, and yoga makes you able to get out of it. The end result is the constant experience of blissful recognition of The One Reality that has become you and all that exists.

Do more yoga!

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rama". Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the number "301".

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