



May 2007 Contemplation Theme

Illumination and Its Source

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

Everyone has illumined moments whether they do yoga or not, but illumined moments are not enough. It's like finding one chocolate chip in an ice cream pie – it's not enough. Yoga is about living from your own illumined essence – all the time. To get there, you need some conditioning and preparation. The healing and transformation you get are the conditioning and preparation – not the goal.

Healing and transformation come from the same source as illumination – the inner source, which is your own essence and being. You might think that the poses create the healing, and then the healing creates the transformation, which then creates your illumination – but this is not how it works. All of these come from the one source, your own Self.

The healing you get does not come from the poses. The healing comes from your own healing power, which had been blocked by the tensions in your body, mind and heart. While the poses target key points in your spine to release the deep tensions, what happens next is the important stuff. As powerful and delicious as the poses are, don't allow yourself to get distracted by them. The poses are the technology – you have to look beyond the technology to see the message. It's just like watching a Presidential address on a giant screen TV; the technology doesn't improve the message. Don't get too caught up in the technology – it's not about the poses. It's about the inner opening. Yet you must do the poses to get the inner opening.

Your body has a tremendous healing capacity. Bandages, splints, cortisone shots and many medications are only treating the symptoms, in order to make you more comfortable while you wait for your body to heal itself. With time, your body heals itself from most things. You have also experienced the healing power of time which provides perspective and lessens the pain from old events. Your body, mind and emotions have an amazing capacity to heal.

When you dissolve your spinal tensions, you open up the life force that is always surging up your spine. It's like removing a log jam from a river. You don't have to make the river flow; you simply remove the blocks. The flow of the river creates your healing, which happens on every level of your being. *Svaroopa*® yoga provides healing because it bathes you in your own healing power.

Still, it is too easy to misunderstand yoga as a way to health and healing. It's like going to the bank and walking out with a roll of pennies. You got some money – but how much is it really worth? As important as healing is, there is more.

Along with healing, you get transformation. You recognize it when you know you don't want to go back to being the way you used to be – you love the "new you." But the new you isn't really new. It is the real you, which had been hidden under layers of confusion and artificiality. You become more real, more authentic, more present, more positive, more confident, and more available to others and to life. Core opening dissolves the artificialities and exposes the bedrock of your true being. It's like when Michelangelo described carving his statue of David, "I just remove everything that doesn't look like David." The poses don't create the transformation; the inner opening does. Yet you must do the poses to get the opening.

When I found yoga, I wasn't looking for healing (even though I was in pain). I was looking for transformation and I knew it. I didn't like the way I was but I didn't know how to be any other way. I had spent years delving into psychology, both as a client as well as a student as an undergrad and in graduate school. Once I found yoga and meditation, I left graduate school without completing my degree. Yoga offered me what I had been looking for – only I hadn't known where to look.

I dove deep, moving into the *ashram* to study full time and serve my *Guru*. I loved hearing the teachings, even the same teachings over and over again. It was only after I had been there 6 years that I realized that yoga was giving me more than mere transformation; it gives me illumination – the knowing of my own inner radiance and divinity. I thought I had wanted transformation, but I really wanted much more. Psychotherapy had been a stepping stone that offered me profound transformation, but it wasn't enough for me. It was important, but it wasn't enough.

The illumined moments in your life are the moments of absolute clarity and insight. Illumination arises inside, but it doesn't feel like something big and fancy is happening to you. It feels so natural and easy. It is the time when you feel most like yourself. All the practices of yoga make you able to surrender into your own divine essence. The goal is to live in that openness and inner fullness, in every moment, in every activity, in every breath.

The relationship between illumination and mind is a two-way street. First, you must clear your mind in order to perceive the radiance of your own divinity. Being trapped in your mind is a painful place to live. Yoga has many practices for the purpose of extricating you from that trap, including *pranayama*, *asana*, chanting, meditation, study of the texts and *seva* (service). Every time your mind becomes still, you experience *svarootpa*, your own essence. Spinal opening is especially effective in creating this experience, which is why we call it *Svarootpa*® yoga.

It's like looking into the waters of a lake. When the water is churned up or muddy, you cannot see all the way through to the lake bed. When your mind is churned up or muddy, you cannot see all the way through to *svarootpa*, your own divine essence. You must quiet your mind in order to see who you really are. Then you allow your mind to surrender to that greater reality so you can know that as your own being.

Then your essence shines through your mind into the world. While your mind must be clear for you to see through to the Self, it must also be clear for your essence to shine through. If your mind is cloudy or distorted with your own concepts, fears and desires, you perceive the message incorrectly. No matter how clear the signal is, if your mind is in poor condition, the message will be garbled. When your mind is peaceful and clear, you don't experience mere moments of illumination – your whole life is radiant and divine.

Your own divine essence is the source of your healing and transformation. It is also the source of great art, poetry, and music. Consciousness is the source of scientific breakthroughs. August Kekulé saw the circular structure of the benzene ring in a meditative vision; Einstein wrote about how he saw the relationship between energy and matter in meditation and translated it into scientific terms in his famous formula $e=mc^2$. Yoga texts are illumined works, not the works of reasoned intellect. They are a record of the words of illumined beings, speaking from their inner knowingness. The science of *Svarootpa*® yoga comes from the same source, through an initiation given to me by my *Guru*, which is why it is so different from other styles of *asana* practice (yoga poses).

What you are doing is like rewiring a house. The old wiring works just fine for the old appliances – your body, mind and nervous system works just fine for the non-illumined state you have been living in. The lifestyle that seems to work for everyone else doesn't work for you; the fact that you are doing yoga proves that. Even if you think you want to return to a life ruled by your unconscious reflexes along with your petty fears and arrogances, your body won't let you. Your body and mind need new wiring, and are getting it every time you do yoga.

Every time you open your spine, you access your own illumined essence. You also unblock the flow of your life energy, which branches out through your nerves and through your whole body, including your bones, organs and glands. Of course you will heal! But if that energy is going to your physical healing, then that energy is not available for propelling you into an illumined state. The one energy supply gives different results depending on your readiness.

In ancient times, a yogi would not accept a disciple who needed healing or transformation. He would send such a student to someone who specialized in those important sciences and tell the student to return when she/he was ready to use this energy for its highest purpose. In the western world, we welcome everyone, but they each get different benefits, depending on their need and readiness. As you continue this core opening, you get different results, progressing through to the highest purpose – your own illumination.

The poses don't create your healing, transformation and illumination. One source creates all three – healing, transformation and illumination. That source is the source of the universe, your own divine essence. The poses remove the inner blocks so that the energy of life can flow unimpeded through your spine and being and so you can live in the illumined knowing of reality – that reality that is inside and outside. How do you get there? Do more yoga.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rama". Above the signature is a small heart symbol containing the number "31".

Copyright © 2007, S.T.C., Inc, All Rights Reserved; Please do not copy in any way without written permission.

SVAROOTPA® is a registered service mark of S.T.C., Inc and is used by permission.

To reach Rama Berch or to get more information about *Svarootpa*® yoga, contact: **Master Yoga Foundation**
Website: www.masteryoga.org ♦ Email: info@masteryoga.org ♦ 1-619-718 -YOGA (619-718-9642)
Training Facilities: 1440 Phoenixville Pike, West Chester PA 19380 ♦ 125 E Hawthorne, Fallbrook CA 92024
Office: 4406 Park Blvd #C, San Diego, CA 92116-4046