



January 2006 Contemplation Theme

## The Fire of Yoga

By Rama Berch, C.S.Y.T., R.Y.T.

I've always been an ocean-sort-of-gal, or at least I thought I was. As a native Californian, I was born in the sun and grew up barefoot. Ever since I was old enough to choose where I could live, I've looked for a way to be near the ocean. I couldn't always afford to be ocean-front, but living within a few blocks counts. The ultimate was when I could have a roaring fire in a fireplace with the ocean just beyond.

We all love the primal elements: earth, water, fire, air and empty space. Yoga names these *mahabhutas* as the building blocks of all that exists in this world. It is especially powerful where they meet – like the ocean washing against a sandy beach or crashing against the rocks. Maybe for you it is sunrise or sunset over the sea; when there are a few wispy clouds, you can get all five elements at once:

The shoreline – earth

The ocean – water

The sun – fire

The clouds – air (when the air is holding water, you can see it – otherwise air is invisible)

The space between the clouds – empty space

So many beautiful photographs and paintings feature these primal elements, and they touch something deep inside you. Some of your favorite places probably have the combination of several *mahabhutas*, perhaps even your own garden. Yoga explains that we love them because they are different expressions of the One, the primordial essence, which is the source of everything. You are made of this same substance, which is why you experience such a profound feeling in these environments. You enjoy a resonance or a recognition of the shared essence. Since we are so often out of touch with our own essence, we need these external reminders. Many people even have a dream to retire to the hinterlands and live in the midst of nature – seeking an environment that will give them constant peace and joy.

Recently I have realized that, before I loved the ocean, I loved the fire. While I do love the ocean, I always loved fire. My first experience of making friends with fire was when I was about 12 years old. One by one I lit all the matches in a book of matches and let each burn down to my fingertips. I was enchanted and have been ever since.

Ocean and fire are two very important images in yoga. Many texts speak eloquently of the ocean of consciousness, directing you to your own inner essence so you can discover the vastness and fullness that is even greater than the ocean. At my request, Master Yoga has featured photos of the ocean on our catalogue covers for several years. Of course, our locations on both the Atlantic and Pacific are no accident!

This month, our new catalogue has a roaring fire on the cover, to honor the fire of yoga. The power and beauty of fire is captivating. Fire is very important in many ways. The light and heat of the sun makes our planet hospitable for us. Civilization began when man tamed fire. Your own life depends on the cellular fire of digestion and metabolism. Most importantly, yoga specializes in the inner fire, which blazes forth in a radiant glow that transforms your experience of yourself, your life and the world.

This transformation is needed because you live in amnesia, not knowing your true essence. You are Consciousness-Itself, an individualized form with a type of divine amnesia, both because you have forgotten your own divine nature, and also because the amnesia was placed in you as part of the divine

play that brings this world into existence. Your job is to recover from the amnesia and recognize your true being. Yoga is the amnesia-recovery-system.

You already know that yoga helps you with your aches and pains, and can even cure many conditions that medicine is stymied by. I am delighted to hear of every “miracle cure” and receive several reports every week. This is the starting point for most yogis, the motivation to make some changes in your life. In every *Svaroopaa* yoga class, we work diligently to make sure you understand how your body works, while showing you that there is so much more available to you. Once you have had a taste of your own inner essence, you know the real reason you are here. One student told me recently, “Holy Cow! This is about something more!”

Perhaps you got the first taste of the vastness and depth of your own being in Shavasana, when you surfaced from that deeply restful state. You may have even thought you took a short nap, yet you are not groggy from it at all. You are profoundly energized and deeply peaceful all at the same time. Or perhaps you first realized that there was something going on when your teacher set you up in a seated pose, with blankets and props strategically placed to support the tensions in your body. That support made you able to settle into a profound stillness and ease, which was both physical and more than physical. This is especially wonderful after doing Seated Side Stretch.

You may have had the experience of lying in an easy pose, angled and propped for deep spinal release, and had an inner heat spread through your body. The deep spinal opening ignites an inner fire that expands from your core. It’s really amazing! It’s called the fire of yoga. It is the purpose of the spinal opening, dissolving the inner blocks and awakening the fire of yoga.

This fire, like all fire, has the properties of both heat and light. The heat of the inner fire is your own inner radiance, and yoga makes you able to experience it shining at full strength. This is the light of consciousness – which has become you and is being you right now. It is your own power of insight, the flash of creativity, the burst of joy that fuels your laughter or tears. This inner fire is the source of love; it is your own deepest knowing; it is an expansive fullness of inner beingness.

The tensions in your spine block your radiance from shining through your heart and mind. When a pose gives you a spinal release, the fire of yoga may flare up – it is not a hot flash! It may be brief or it may continue for a few minutes, feeling like your own portable sauna. *Svaroopaa* yoga releases the core tensions so that you can experience yourself and your life in a new way. While the dissolving of these blocks are good for your body, they open up much more within you. The fire of yoga is melting the inner blocks even more profoundly than you can do with yoga poses alone.

The fire on our new course catalogue expresses what *Svaroopaa* yoga gives you – the inner transformation and the growing radiance of your own being. I am delighted to be able to use this image to tell you more about what has been going on all along. We will be exploring this subject for the next few months – the fire of yoga, the inner illumination, the radiance of your own being, the light of Consciousness. It is your own essence. As the ancient sages say, “You are That.”

How can you come to know this inner reality? Do more yoga!

Namaste,

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

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To reach Rama Berch or to get more information about *Svaroopaa*® yoga, contact: **Master Yoga Foundation**  
Website: [www.masteryoga.org](http://www.masteryoga.org) ♦ Email: [info@masteryoga.org](mailto:info@masteryoga.org) ♦ 1-866-luv-yoga (588-9642)  
Office: 5670 La Jolla Blvd., La Jolla, CA 92037  
Training Facilities: 125 E Hawthorne, Fallbrook CA 92024 ♦ 56 Baltimore Ave, Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971