



August 2013 Contemplation Theme: Alignment with Grace #8

Forever Young

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“Forever Young” – it’s a movie title, also a song and an important goal for many people. Yogis come by it naturally. They have rosy cheeks, young skin, sparkling eyes and vibrant health. What makes yogis look so young? They’re shining with the light of Consciousness.

The entertainment world calls that glow — charisma or star power. The famous athletes, musicians and actors are called “stars.” Think of the stars in the heavens; they illuminate the night sky with a light that is reaching us from trillions of miles away. How brilliant is that light?

People with star power do really well in front of a camera; the camera “loves” them. When they stand up in front of a group they start to glow. That glow is the One Light, the light of Consciousness; it is shining through them. They’re not necessarily enlightened in that moment, but they know how to channel that light. They can tap into it and use it to impress others as well as to fulfill their own desires.

Of course, it’s not only actors that have charisma. Everyone can shine with Consciousness, because everyone and everything *is* Consciousness. Some people have a natural ability to channel that light, to turn it on. Yet others dedicate their lives to immersing themselves in its Source. We honor such a person with the title, “yogi.”

Have you ever looked at your teacher and thought she or he looked healthy, glowing, even *interesting*? Your teacher has immersed herself or himself in yoga’s practices for a year, five years, or maybe ten or twenty years longer than you have. They’ve learned yoga practices and developed yogic skills which they share with you, but they also share something more.

There’s something in the tone of their voice, in the way they breathe. Maybe you can say they’re peaceful, profoundly peaceful, deeply content. Maybe you can say they radiate vitality and joy. Beyond the tangible benefits of the practices they teach (and the benefits are amazing), just spending time with your teacher somehow has an effect on you.

Teachers will happily disclose that one of the greatest things about teaching is that it places them in the flow of Grace. When your teacher is in that flow, you get wet too. How does that happen? One yogic text describes it:

Lokaananda.h samaadhi-sukham — Shiva Sutras 1.18

In every moment, the realized yogi experiences the delight of I-consciousness, and this experience is transmitted to those who come in contact with her or him.

Their bliss continues in every location and every circumstance.¹

A yogi who is established in the experiential knowing of their own Divine Self is a Self-Realized being. While they continually experience “the delight of I-Consciousness,” they also transmit this experience to everyone around them. In other words you get a “contact high” from being with your teacher, when your teacher is in that yogic state. This is why yoga’s ancient tradition recommends you have a teacher who is in the highest state; you get benefit from their attainment! The bliss of your own Divine Self naturally arises in their presence. It’s catching.

You already know that moods are contagious. When you sit with a friend who is in a dark and gloomy mood, it can be hard to keep your own spirits up. You might walk out and feel down yourself; it can last for a while. Now consider what happens when you spend time around a laughing baby? You can’t help laughing yourself! So what happens when you’re with someone

¹ Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda

who is in bliss and is emanating bliss? Your breathing opens up, your heart opens up, you soften into your body and you begin to settle into your Self. You catch the bliss! This is the power of Grace.

The power of Grace flows through the generations, from teacher to student. It is called the paramparaa, the lineage. Though your teacher may not be in a state of bliss all the time (yet), they are ahead of you in the process. That's why they are your teacher! Even if their body isn't perfect, their inner state has been expanding all the while they've been doing yoga.

Now your teacher has a teacher, who is even more established in the ongoing state of Bliss and Knowingness. That teacher, who is the equivalent of a grandparent in your lineage, is enjoying the flow of Grace from their own teacher, who is in the flow from their teacher, and so on — all the way back.

Ultimately, the gift you are given by your lineage is the ability to live in Self-Knowingness, the ongoing experience of being Consciousness-Itself. You won't ever not know. You won't ever forget. As the sutra describes, "Their bliss continues in every location and every circumstance." Radiant with the bliss of Consciousness, the teachers that precede you on the path are the models and the mirror for where you are headed. And their state is marvelously, mysteriously contagious.

Your teacher will always credit her or his own teacher for their own experience, and credit their teacher for what they now teach you. Yet the reality is they're getting it from their own inner Source, from diving deep into their own essence, their own svaroopa. That's what they're teaching you in every pose and every breathing practice, even when you think they're working on your body.

We know that your body is important! That's why yoga has so many things you can do to improve your body. Yet while you are doing these things, something more is happening. As your poses open your body and clear your mind, you're opening to your own Self, which is the One, ever-present beingness, pure consciousness.

Consciousness is ever-young. Consciousness is always experiencing unending joy, peace and bliss. Everything that exists, and even everything that doesn't exist, vibrates with the bliss of consciousness, which is the One Self that is your Self. It's all Shiva. It's all You. And you already know this, deep within yourself. You know it because it's who you are. Unfortunately you don't always experience this knowing, at least not as often as you would like to. Not yet. You just need to do more yoga.

Your first yoga class gave you that something more, even when you weren't looking for it. It opened you up to an experience of your Self. As you continue the practices, your inner experience expands and becomes more steady; you begin to base yourself in the bliss of your Self. You don't leave it behind on the yoga room floor when you get up and fold your blankets. You can take it with you. It's completely portable.

And it's perceptible to other people around you; it's a great blessing to the others around you. By being based in bliss, you are also sharing your bliss! You begin to affect the people around you in the way that your teacher affects you. It is the greatest service, the greatest gift you can give. And you carry the lineage on to another generation. All this is happening when you do more yoga.

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