



Kalyāna

~ Reflections on the Beauty of Dhamma ~

JANUARY 2005 / 2547 ~ Volume II

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The Ottawa Buddhist Society has been privileged to have Ajahn Viradhammo here in Ottawa on an extended stay and enjoys his various teaching activities on a regular basis. Ajahn V's presence has now been felt throughout the National Capital Region through his series of articles on different themes in the Religion section of the Ottawa Citizen newspaper.

This edition of Kalyana aims to highlight several of these wonderful articles that have spread the gift of Dhamma to our friends and neighbours across the city, along with special contributions from several OBS members and friends of our community.

**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #1:
THINKING FOR YOURSELF
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**

Q: *Western philosophy has emphasized the autonomy of the individual, and encouraged thinking for yourself. What does your faith teach about the freedom of individual members to dissent from the faith's teachings and the consequences of their decision?*

A: The goal of Buddhist practice is sometimes described as the 'unshakeable deliverance of the heart.' This is an inner realization that is deeper than thought. It is not merely an intellectual conclusion, a belief from scripture or teacher, a view held because of a cultural bias, or a popular idea based on a recent fad. This inner realization comes about through the patient and diligent work of a compassionate and ethical lifestyle, contemplative exploration of one's inner world and the development of heart and mind through meditation. This is of course more than thinking for yourself it is knowing for yourself.

This kind of knowing and personal development is greatly enhanced by spiritual companionship and the support of community. When there is disagreement within the community about the spiritual goal, about



the method or the way of living one's life to realize that goal (and help others realize that goal), then the opportunity exists to deeply explore these differences and test the validity of one's insights and realizations. If the quest is for truth, then the ensuing dialogue should be fruitful both for the individual and the community as a whole. Dissent, disagreement and doubt are very important for spiritual development because they call for a willingness to inquire into the nature of the issue. For each individual this means there has to be humility and openness to the perspectives of others.

As well, it requires courage to express a contrary view that might not be easily heard by the group. Often times this is where spiritual communities gain strength and maturity because they are willing to hold the tension that dissent often engenders. Sadly it is often the time when things also fall apart. The consequences are dependent on the depth of wisdom and strength of compassion that each individual brings to the situation.

**Ajahn Viradhammo
Ottawa, Canada - 2004**

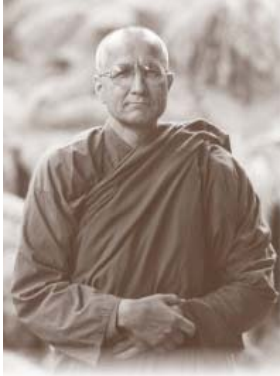


Kalyāna

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Are you interested in contributing to the next issue of KALYANA???

We invite you to send in your contributions for the next edition of KALYANA. Any form of entry will be warmly accepted: articles, poetry, artwork, book reviews, photos, etc.

Our next edition will commemorate Vesak – the full moon day in May that witnessed the three main events in the Buddha’s life: his birth, subsequent enlightenment and death (parinibbana.)

We invite you to submit your reflections on one of these three major events, stories of Vesak celebrations, or any dhamma-related contribution that you wish to share with other OBS members & friends.

For more information, or to send in your entries, please contact Dilani Hippola at dilanih@yahoo.com

You may send in your entries at any time of the year. The next issue will be distributed during Vesak in May 2005.

Deadline for Submissions to the next edition of KALYANA:
APRIL 1ST, 2004

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For more information on the Ottawa Buddhist Society and its activities, please consult the OBS Website at:

<http://www.ottawabuddhistsociety.com>

or contact the OBS Communications Secretary at: obs\_secretary@yahoo.ca

**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #2:  
RELIGION AND HAPPINESS  
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**



**Q:** *Is it necessary to believe in a religion to be happy?*

**A:** From a Buddhist perspective, to be happy, we have to understand the causes and conditions for unhappiness. If those are clearly understood then we can try to create the causes and conditions for happiness. This is not a matter of belief but rather one of inquiry. This kind of inquiry is not the sole domain of religion but is a part of our common human aspiration. We all want to be happy in whatever way we define that word.

Some of our unhappiness is trivial and some of our unhappiness is tragic. The unhappiness of civil war is different than the unhappiness of losing a hockey game. The solutions we find to deal with unhappiness are also different. Being bored and buying a new gadget gives one a certain kind of happiness. Being bored and volunteering at the local hospice gives another kind of happiness. The results will vary according to causes and conditions.

The Buddha's spiritual journey came about through his own inquiry into suffering, an inquiry into the human predicament of birth, old age, sickness and death. His inquiry was not merely intellectual but deeply spiritual and his realization was equally profound. It is this deep spiritual realization that lies at the root of the serenity and compassion of the Buddha and it is this enlightened realization which he taught.

The great spiritual beings of our human history have all taught that there is a sacred, transcendent value to each human being beyond the circumstances of their birth and culture. It is this that is at the heart of the religious impulse. In Buddhism we call it wisdom. My own teacher put it this way, "The peace which arises from wisdom is not happiness, but is that which sees the truth of both happiness and unhappiness".

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**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #3:
ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**

Q: *What is your faith's perspective on the relationship between ecology and spirituality?*

A: Our spirituality is stunted or even perverted if we are unaware of our connection to the environment we inhabit; unaware of the creatures that share these spaces and unaware of the natural laws that govern the interdependence of all life. It is this latter understanding - our interconnectedness - that takes us beyond selfishness and egotism and allows us to see the earth and be glad of the things that grow out of the earth. The mind completely lacking in spirituality only knows the world through prices, figures and statistics.

Ecology is the study of the relationships of organisms to their physical environment and to one another. The environment we inhabit is not only the earth and its ecosystems but also our own bodies and minds. Buddhist spirituality is based upon an ecology of mind and body as well as environment. We study the mind, the body and the relationship between the two. From this inner ecology it is possible to understand the causes and conditions that result in inner harmony and conversely to understand the causes and conditions that create inner wastelands of alienation and despair.

From inner balance and contentment we can observe, with clarity, the world around us because we are not biased by the distortions of greed, aversion and egotism. This clear seeing results in a heartfelt sensitivity to all forms of life and a deep humility regarding our own place in all of this. From this humility there is an ability to watch, to wait and to gain insight into the laws that govern the natural world. Our spirituality then becomes a life of harmony with the flow of interconnectedness or as one teacher puts it, our 'inter-being' with all life.

ACCEPTING REALITY

By: Peter Black

Ottawa, Canada

Recently, I have reflected upon three “teachings” about acceptance, that is, about accepting reality. They made me realize the great importance of that attitude in practicing mindfulness, and in reducing *Dukkha* (the Pali word for unsatisfactoriness or suffering).

The first teaching was by Eckhart Tolle in *The Power of Now*. He said that, faced with a stressful situation, we have three choices: change (i.e., improve), leave, or accept the situation. I interpret the term “stressful situation” very broadly - that is, any situation which causes us to experience emotional pain (a negative emotion such as aversion, anxiety, fear, anger, envy, or craving).

The first two options involve our acting in the external world, outside ourselves. Changing the situation by acting ourself or persuading someone else to act differently. Or taking ourselves out of the situation (for example, changing our job). The third option involves acting inwardly upon ourself - by reflecting upon the inappropriateness of resisting a situation we cannot change or leave, and by observing our resistance until it dissipates and disappears. For example, if it is raining, a situation which we cannot change or escape, the wise course of action is to accept it. The only result of wishing that it would not rain is to make ourselves unhappy.

The second teaching came from Bhante Rahula at a retreat in Arnprior last fall. He said that the following equation provides a useful perspective on dukkha:

Suffering = Pain times Resistance

If we experience a painful situation (either physical or emotional pain), and we resist the situation by wishing it was not happening, we will increase our suffering by the extent of our resistance. For example, if we have a head cold and then dwell on the things which we cannot accomplish because we are ill, we will make ourselves suffer far more than if we just experience the head cold as a physical experience on its own.

As I thought more about this equation, it struck me that, if we substitute the word “reality” for pain, it becomes even more powerful:

Suffering = Reality times Resistance

In other words, any time that we resist reality, we make ourselves suffer. That's not to say that we cannot choose to change reality or leave it, as mentioned above. However, if we invest any effort whatsoever in wishing that reality was not happening (which, when you think about it, is really quite unskillful or unwise), we only create unhappy feelings (*dukkha*) for ourselves. It does not matter if the reality in question is unfavourable weather, an illness or pain, a problem at work, a difficult relationship, or the unfortunate circumstance of someone who we love, know, or empathize with. Whenever we become aware that we are experiencing resistance, we should try to identify the cause of the resistance and reflect upon the suffering that we are creating for ourself. The more aware that we can become of our resistance and its source, the more our resistance will dissipate and reality will not look too bad after all. The better we can learn to do this, the more peaceful our life will become.

The third “teaching” arises from the seven attitudes of mindfulness presented in the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program. As I reflected upon these and their relative importance, I concluded that the attitude of acceptance was the most valuable of the seven, at least for me. When we accept reality (except where we decide to leave or change it), this acceptance of our current activity or life situation tends to reduce our need for the other six attitudes. Accepting reality usually means that we also practice:

- **non-judging** - judging ourselves and our life situation or reality much less
- **non-striving** - striving less to change reality
- being more **patient** with whatever we are experiencing, our current reality
- **letting go** of preconceptions or expectations about our current situation
- greater **beginner's mind** of our experience because we are more relaxed with the status quo
- greater **trust** that the future will be alright too, since our current situation is not a problem.



**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #5:
ANGER
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**

**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #4:
CHASTITY
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**

Q: *In an age of greater sexual freedom, what does your faith group teach about chastity?*

A: Chastity is a word that is not much used these days and each of us has a different feeling for the word. From my Buddhist perspective two issues come to mind – proper sexual relationships and sense restraint.

Certain sexual relationships are out of bounds. Sex with minors and adultery are obvious examples of social prohibitions in any culture that is concerned about the vulnerability of the young and the stability of existing family structures. These are normal aspects of human decency.

Beyond this, however, there is the issue of sensory experience and how it relates to the spiritual life. Whether we are speaking of sex, video games or a cold beer on a hot afternoon, the pleasure of sense experience is transitory and contingent on many factors outside of our control. Sense pleasure is at is. It comes and goes. The goal of Buddhist spirituality is to realize the contentment of the heart that is deeper than the normal movement of pleasure and pain (the duality inherent in all sense experience).

In addressing the problem of discontent, Buddhism suggests that the solution does not lie in maximizing pleasure but in abandoning the need for pleasure. Only contentment can make you happy – desires fulfilled breed more desires. Sense restraint and the cultivation of inner contentment are thus encouraged as part of the path to deep peace. Rather than going outwards to find fulfillment we are encouraged to return home to the serenity of the heart. Trying to find spiritual fulfillment in sense pleasure is like trying to find a turtle with a moustache.

Q: *When is anger truly righteous and acceptable?*

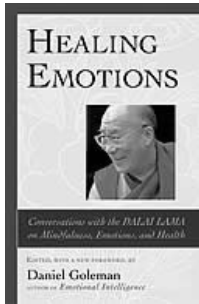
A: That's a bit like asking, "When is pollution truly right and acceptable?" If there is a garbage strike you may be justified in putting the rubbish in your back garden but eventually you will have to deal with it. In the same way anger is toxic no matter what the justification. Deliberate, sustained anger is like a wound that becomes septic - we call it hatred. Deliberate, sustained hatred becomes violence and we call it war. Anger is natural and we need to understand it. Hatred, on the other hand, is anger misunderstood. It turns and bites the heart that feeds it.

Righteous anger is a singularly dangerous form of human suffering for the very reason that one feels right in one's anger. When righteous anger takes hold of the heart, when it is encouraged and feed, it eventually takes on a life of it's own. Somewhere down the slippery slope of righteous anger the person, the group or the society need a target for their anger because this kind of anger makes them feel alive. The targets may change but the anger remains. It's similar to taking medicine with toxic side effects. The medicine may initially give a good feeling but in time, as the toxins build in the system, the medicine itself becomes the cause of the sickness.

This doesn't mean that we have to be doormats and endure unacceptable forms of injustice. On the contrary, if we take responsibility for our anger and realize it's harmful effects then our perceptions and judgments will be guided by wise discernment not by deluded passions. Our ability to think and act in ways that minimize present and future suffering will be enhanced because we won't be blinded by destructive emotions.



BOOK REVIEW



Healing Emotions Edited by Daniel Goleman, Shambhala, Boston and London, 1997 (269 pages)

Reviewed by:
Johanne Carpentier

I was in the library looking at the section about Buddhism when suddenly the title, *Healing Emotions*, attracted me. I did not hesitate to borrow the book after I saw that it was a conversation between the Dalai Lama and various western psychologists, physicians and scientists. Moreover, having read books written by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Sharon Salzberg and including the editor of this book Daniel Goleman, I knew I was going to be interested in what they had to say.

The major question posed by the book is, "Can the mind heal the body?" This book is a record of a conference that brought together various people with different perspectives in order to develop a better understanding of the body-mind connection. Divided into six parts, each contains input from contributors who specialize in fields such as Ethics, Biology, Emotion and Culture and the Nature of Awareness. Throughout, the Dalai Lama asks questions like, "What do you recognize as the nature of thought?", or, "What is an emotion?" He gives his opinion about the existence of delusion, the nature of compassion and other issues that differ from scientific or religious paradigms. Interestingly, he also tries to understand the concept of low self-esteem, something that Tibetans apparently don't experience.

What I liked about this book is that it was a collaboration of like-minded people who brought new light to an interesting topic, done in harmony, with the acceptance of opinions through understanding, not judging or attempting to change each others ideas. Explanations that deal with how the body-mind works made it clear to me that in many cases there is a strong possibility that the mind can actually heal the body. For instance studies conducted on brain activity and meditative states found that people reported emotions with greater intensity, but let it remain in their awareness without reacting to it as much.

This is a book that I recommend to anybody who is looking for more understanding of our complex body-mind system.

Samyutta Nikaya I.1

Ogha-tarana Sutta Crossing over the Flood

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Then a certain devata, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One.

*On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him,
"Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood."*

"I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place (or: unestablished)."

"But how, dear sir, did you cross over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place?"

"When I pushed forward, I was whirled about. When I stayed in place, I sank. And so I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place."

*(The Devata:)
At long last I see
a brahman, totally unbound,
who without pushing forward,
without staying in place,
has crossed over
the entanglements of the world.*

That is what the devata said. The Teacher approved. Realizing that "The Teacher has approved of me," she bowed down to him, circumambulated him -- keeping him to her right -- and then vanished right there.

Source: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/sutta/samyutta/sn01-001.html>

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**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #6:
GOOD WORKS & LOVING OTHERS
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**

Q: *In your religion is faith in God and following the rules enough or is it also necessary to perform good works and love others?*

A: The teachings of the Buddha don't use the concept of God so perhaps I can phrase the question differently. 'Are good works and love for others a necessary part of the spiritual life and if so why?' From a Buddhist perspective this would be similar to asking if skating is necessary for ice hockey.

According to Buddhism once we have the basic needs of life such as food, clothing, housing, medicine and the safety and opportunities of a civil society we can develop the spiritual side of our life. If, however, we don't have these then our energies are necessarily taken up with survival. It is our civil duty to try to ensure that all beings have these basic requisites so that they too can practice a spiritual life. Each of us has limited resources and we can only help a little bit but concern for the welfare of others and taking some action from that sense of compassion are fundamental principles of an authentic Buddhist lifestyle.

In Buddhism, there is a goal to the spiritual life, namely, to liberate our hearts and minds from the suffering caused by greed, hatred and egotism.. The realization of this goal is the meaning of the spiritual life. "Do good; refrain from doing harm; purify the heart." These are the simplest instructions describing the effort that one puts forth on the path to inner peace and freedom. To do good is to think, speak and act with compassion, generosity and wisdom. To refrain from doing harm is to refrain from thoughts, words, and actions that are motivated by greed, hatred and egotism. This is an ongoing endeavor that requires honesty, dedication, forgiveness and tremendous patience. The more we operate from love and generosity the stronger those same energies become in our hearts and minds. The less we act from greed, hatred and delusion the weaker those forces become in our being. The culmination of this kind of effort is the purity of heart that in Buddhism is known as, 'our real home.'



**AJAHN V – Ottawa Citizen Article #7:
THE MEANING OF LIFE
By: Ajahn Viradhammo**

Q: *Why do you believe that your faith's teachings provide the best answer to the meaning of life?*

A: I feel a bit uncomfortable with the phrase 'the best answer ...' as this implies that our different faiths are mutually exclusive (there can only be one that is best). I don't believe that. Perhaps 'best' means the best for you at a particular time in your spiritual development.

As for answers, Buddhism does not supply an answer to all the questions about life. For instance we don't have a genesis story. Rather, it stresses the importance of asking a good question. From a good question there is the possibility of inquiry and from sincere inquiry there is the possibility of authentic insight. Insight is an answer from the heart and is deeper than an opinion or belief. This kind of answer is the best answer in that it strikes us deeply and comes from our own efforts. The teaching guides us in this inquiry.

The Buddha's question to his followers was and continues to be, "What is the cause of your suffering?" It is a very personal question that requires sincere and determined self-inquiry. In our texts the Buddha speaks to this basic question, time and again. Once the basic needs of life are met, he suggests, the problem of suffering rests in our own hearts. When someone would go off topic and ask him who had the best teaching he would bring them back and say that's not important. "Why do you suffer?"

So, a good question can lead to a good answer. From his own enlightenment the Buddha offered answers that now form the basis of Buddhist faith. But faith and belief are not enough. In an odd sort of way, faith in the Buddha's question is the faith to doubt. A great Zen master put it this way, "Little doubt, little awakening. Great doubt, great awakening. No doubt, no awakening."

POETRY CORNER



In the Forest:

Late Winter and Spring

By Sharon Hepburn and Jim Thomson

A sudden blizzard:
Blinding snow blurs homeward path...
Gone NOW the way found!

Avalanching snow,
Failing to hold its thunder,
Settles for silence.

Soft wind strikes clear chimes:
Icicles in forest river
Sounding spring's first song...

A tender tree
Bends to respect the wind--
Honorable boughs.

The Night Traveller

*Feeling little and frightened as the pain swells slowly.
Who cares that I lie here alone, no one to console me?*

*But wait, that just isn't true. Something deep in awareness
does care.
St. Francis is right, this relief is too good not to share.*

*No pink, cinder-block room can hold this limitless force.
So I make a plan and set a course.*

*I load up my knapsack with love, peace and light.
I add hope, faith and joy then close the clasp tight.*

*Guided by planets and stars shining bright,
this Supreme Being will make service calls tonight.*

*First to my buddy whose energy wanes because he can't
figure out what to do.
Please know, I understand. I've been in that place too.*

*Next stop to a colleague and chum – our relationship all
knotted in blame.
Truth is, I just miss you and hope you may feel the same.*

*Now over to someone who's been down so long, he thinks
he's meant to stay there.
Stay steady, my friend, feel the full pain and with grace you
may sense a joy in the air.*

*Next, to a friend who has lost her faith and lies constantly
struggling with doubt.
I'll crack open her window to hear that brave bird that sings
before night fades out.*

*I'd better get back before I am missed.
But first, one important stop more on my list.*

*Two sweet, gentle souls who fear the future is terrible and so
live at the edge of unbearable.
And under the light of the near-new moon, I whisper to each,
Darling, I care and I'll be back soon.*

Inspired by:

St. Francis of Assisi prayer
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as
to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are
pardoned

By: Jane May ~ March Retreat 2004

Note to Self...

This retreat will be different, I can feel it. I won't judge others and I'll irk no one. By the end, I'll have no remorse for whatever I've done.

Ok, let's get started. This first-stage arahant's ready to roll. So spread out those mats and let the bells toll.

Oh oh, there's that woman from the last retreat who always smiles at me. I think that she thinks I am gay. Well, I'll just let her know ... But wait, is that a husband in tow? I guess I was wrong. I'll just slink to the back and keep my head low. I hope she forgives me for being an ass.

Note to self: stop judging others and get refund for that mind-reading class.

Would you look at that hair, those bangs are surreal. I'm glad I had mine done, I like how it feels. But wait, check out with what I have to deal. This morning I have 5 cowlicks all standing up in a line. I hope I'm not blocking the view of the shrine. Is that someone thinking out loud, "Down in front"? I can't tell.

Note to self: stop judging others and next time pack hair gel.

Does he have to keep sucking his teeth like that? It sounds like he's constantly calling his cat. But wait, this morning I awoke with a seed in my teeth that's just beyond reach. Now I'm six hours older and the seed feels the size of a boulder. I'd better start checking for moss.

Note to self: stop judging others and pack more floss.

Man oh man, this place is frigid. Does the term Middle Way mean nothing to people in here? No doubt too many women of a certain age, it's clear. But wait, today the flashes come hot and heavy. It sure is no fun getting older. Now I'm the one sitting here thinking, couldn't the room be a bit colder? I sure hope the next sitting is better.

Note to self: stop judging others and do menopause metta.

Ahh, they're sick. Well, isn't that sad. Honestly, why would anyone come on retreat when they're feeling bad? But let me rethink that thought from before, perhaps my mind was not lucid. As I look up at the hospital ceiling and the doctor asks how I'm feeling, "you mean besides stupid?" I say. I sure hope others don't see me this way.

Note to self: stop judging others, seems there's always a price to pay.

I can't believe Ajahn forgot the words to the homage. Oh well, no permanent damage. This morning I'll just cut him some slack. After all, we do want him back.

Note to self: stop judging others and think gratitude not lack.

OK, so we've come to the end and I have to admit to some lapses. Not 100% mindful and more than a few missed synapses. Now I'm tired and I'm sore and it's getting quite late.

One last note to self: stop judging others, you may seal your own fate.

By: Jane May ~ March Retreat 2004

My Journey

My nose-ring, bindi, sari
Flags billowing in the snowstorm.
Slow Indian gait, curly-black hair,
Head foggy with a sack full of dreams
And gilded hopes.

No elders to obey,
No ration cards for milk or sugar,
Belly full of Loblaw's specials
I'm free to fly, and consume: 'holy mother-cow',
higher-education.
Ashok's new car, house ... indentured by debt --
sell heirlooms.

Meera's hugs:
"Mummy, my friends say my house doesn't smell
like an Indian home."
Shall I kiss or slap her?
Rahul's eager claim:
"I scored a hundred percent on my math's test!"

Back home, attending a colorful family-wedding,
Goose-bumps at hearing Sanskrit Shlokas.
Aged salesman remembers my pet-name -- Bubli
Sudden palpitations: "I'll die among strangers."
Labeled forever: 'visible minority'.

Meera's migraine turns ugly,
Her Doctor's agonized tone:
"It's a brain hemorrhage ... congenital ... sorry,
nothing we can do."
Rahul drowns in his tears.....
The yoga of life rips apart our illusions of
'permanence'.

Her cremation roots us to this new land
As compassionate Canadians resurrect us with
their gift of love.
Receptive at last to the kindness of these white
strangers, we unlock our perceptions.
Then, the ancient Canadian Shield, at Champlain
Point, evokes a vision of Shiva,
His drum-call awakens me to His timeless fire-
dance of creation -- cycle of birth and death.

After three decades,
Karuna and Sarah, my honorary grand-daughters,
Delight me with their antics.
I've begun to appreciate Nietzsche's 'eternal
recurrence',
And in that bounty of each passing moment
-- I'm home.

By: Nalini Virmani, April 2004
The poem "My Journey" won the top award in
CBC's BET 2004 competition, and was broadcast
on CBC ONE on July 1st, 2004.
Congratulations Nalini!

THE MUDRAS

By: Patricia Willoughby

Ottawa, Canada

Anyone who has attended a performance of Indian Classical dance will recall the stylized hand gestures and finger postures made by the dancers. These same gestures and finger postures have been used for centuries in Buddhist art to depict the Buddha. They are called mudras and they are believed to evoke ideas in the mind symbolizing divine powers or the deities themselves. The ideas are conveyed through the position of the fingers, each of which, starting with the thumb, is identified with one of the five elements, sky, wind, fire, water and earth.

Buddhist art uses five mudras to represent the Buddha. These five mudras are:

The Dharmachakra mudra

The Dharmachakra mudra has the thumb and index fingers of both hands touching at their tips to form a circle that represents the Wheel of Dhamma. This mudra symbolizes when the Buddha preached for the first time after His Enlightenment in the Deer Park at Sarnath.



- The middle finger represents the 'hearers' of the teachings
- The ring finger represents the 'solitary realizers'
- The Little finger represents the Mahayana or 'Great Vehicle'.

The three extended fingers of the left hand symbolize the Three Jewels of Buddhism, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; the hands are held in front of the heart, symbolizing that these teachings are straight from the Buddha's heart.

The Bhumisparsha mudra



The Bhumisparsha mudra has the five fingers of the right hand extended to touch the ground, symbolizing the Buddha's Enlightenment under the bodhi tree.

Varada mudra



The Varada mudra has the left arm hanging at the side of the body, palm facing forward and fingers extended, symbolizing charity and compassion. The five extended fingers in this mudra symbolize generosity, morality, patience, effort and meditative concentration.

The Dhyana mudra



The Dhyana mudra is the mudra of meditation, of concentration on the Dhamma and of attainment of spiritual perfection. It can be made with one or both hands. When made with a single hand, the left one is placed in the lap and symbolizes the female left-hand principle of wisdom.

When made with both hands, the right hand is placed above the left at the level of the stomach, with both palms facing upwards and fingers extended. In some cases the thumbs may touch at the tips, forming a mystic triangle.

Abhaya mudra

The Abhaya mudra symbolizes protection, peace and the dispelling of fear. It is made with the right hand raised to shoulder height, the arm bent, the palm of the hand facing outward and the fingers upright and joined. The left hand hangs down at the side of the body.

This mudra was probably used from prehistoric times as a sign of good intentions. As practitioners we perform these mudras consciously to make us aware of our inner energy. Each time we make these gestures or assume these positions we bring our physical bodies into harmony with the cosmic forces. Performing the mudras consciously makes us aware of our inner energy.



Adapted from: *Mudras of the Great Buddha; Symbolic Gestures and Postures* by Nitin Kumar, Editor, Exotic India Newsletter, August, 2001, <http://www.exoticindia.com>

It's that time of year again: Renew your OBS Membership for 2005!

The Ottawa Buddhist Society relies on its members for support through annual membership fees. These fees differ from donations given to monastics at OBS events as they are dedicated directly to the organization of OBS activities and events throughout the year, travel costs for visiting teachers / monastics, and help to support long-term initiatives and investments for the Society. By supporting the OBS through your annual membership fees, you are supporting the maintenance of our strong and supportive community and helping to ensure our continued growth.

Membership forms are available at all OBS events and are also posted on the Ottawa Buddhist Society website at:

<http://www.ottawabuddhistsociety.com/Membership/OBS2005MembershipForm.pdf>

You can also request a form from the OBS Communications Secretary at obs_secretary@yahoo.ca

The OBS thanks you for your continued support...



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