

# The Fire Is Bright Within Us

By Dhyani Ywahoo

Ritual is a sacred form, a path, a way of doing things. All people have rituals and in these times, new rituals are evolving....Ritual is an offering, a receiving, a thanksgiving. It's the wise practitioner who realizes, "Yes, I have good opportunity to be alive." Even with the suffering that we see in this world and experience in our own mind, there are still joy markers to be found. A joy marker is something you find that says, "Oh, it's good. I learned something from the Creator, from friends and family, something good. These joy markers can be found when you're hungry or sad, and are something that takes your mind away from sadness or hunger. A joy marker enables you to see what was perceived as suffering, as an opportunity to realization.

In these times people are suffering greatly. Many children have been traumatized by parents who have forgotten how to love and who carry on negative patterns of relationship. Energy of grasping is quite strong. People want this, they want that. So it is challenging for human beings to be well centered, in the moment.

Ritual is a fire that you can maintain in your life in every step. It is your inner mantra. The power of sacred words, tuning in your mind to those sacred sounds, enables you to transform the illusions of suffering and to call forth your inner medicine, that you can bring forth what is good for yourself, your family, your clan, the entire planet. We are all in relationship. As you find peace in yourself, as I find peace in myself, we send our around the world an energy of transformation. The fire of compassion radiating from your heart, ignites the hearts of others.

So we have the ritual of saying, thank you, the ritual of giving away, of receiving, of seeing with our breath and of observing the flow of the wind as a gift in our life. Such rituals enable us to fan brighter the fire of clear mind. To the native people, the fire is the gateway, the doorway, the mystery which feeds form, born of emptiness. All beings around this universe when looking at fire can be in touch. Whether we call ourselves Hindus, Moslems, this or that, we can all look at the fire and we are united by that.

The fire reflects equanimity, compassion, and care for all beings. As we look at it, we notice it has certain qualities. First we look at fire and observe our breath. Then the mind gets pretty still as agitation is pacified. The conflicts of the day begin to fade away, as we look at the beautiful gateway of the fire. We look a little more into the fire and notice certain thoughts arising and they become more apparent. We say, "Oh, we don't need that." We cast it out.

Now the fire is purifying our minds. We continue looking and we think, "What can I do for my people, my family? How can we make our lives better? How can joy and abundance shine in our family life?" This is coming to the stage of magnetizing the vision of abundance, of peace. Everything is there. It is just for ourselves to know how to be receptive to it.

So as we watch the fire, we begin to call forth a vision of hope for family, clan, nation, future generations, and here we find the sacred energy of magnetizing. This is the power of ritual, that which we do on a regular basis, with commitment to stabilize, to purify, to bring forth what is good for the people. That's sacred medicine, inner wisdom, and each one of us has that sacred medicine within.

It's time for all the caretakers of the earth to arise, and know that wherever we come from, we have something to do. This arising from the earth is the recognition, first, that we are one with it and that we have no dominion over the earth and no dominion over one another. The wise practitioner develops

the meaning and sovereignty of one's own nature, that is, to recognize your responsibility, understand your true purpose, your true entity. Rein in the wild horse of mind, to become master of your own destiny.

Why have you been given this opportunity? What does the universe need from you? It's a big opportunity to have human life. It's a very good opportunity to be living in these times. Everything is changing. We can say, "Yes, we are one with creation," or "No." It's our choice. To make this choice, there needs to be in everyone's heart a certainty of faith that there is an underlying current that brings forth this dream, whatever you call it: God, Allah, Sacred Mind, Jujū, Great Mystery. It underlies this dream, this vision that we are all living.



Faith is something that you have, or may take for granted. When you don't have it, you feel like "Where is it?" and want it. To cultivate faith so that one can hope for tomorrow, you look at the small things that happen in our lives and be fully present with them. What can you be sure of? When you inhale, you'll exhale, that's a fact. So you can have faith in your breath. One of the names for the Creator, in the Cherokee tradition, is "the one who makes the breath." By tuning into one's own breath, we recognize there is some force that keeps us going, something that keeps us alive. The Breath carries the Mind—without breath, mind and life do not move.

To cultivate faith is a first step in bringing the mind to stability. As we cultivate faith, we begin to look around and see how we can help one another. This is generating the energy of altruism. How can we be good caretakers for the present generations, our family and friends, the future generations? How we treat the earth now, we're going to have to come back and deal with it. We can't expect the great-great-grandchildren to be responsible for the messes that are made now. In this moment, you are already ancestors of those yet unborn. So what can you do?

First step, what are you sure of? Inhale, exhale. That's one thing you are sure of. The sun rises and sets. That's another thing you are sure of. Then you look around at yourself and feel the body. "I am sure of that, I am thankful." So each moment is an opportunity to realize the vastness of the universe. Buddha mind, Great Mystery, Christ mind, is all happening in your mind. What's in the way of your knowing? Ashes in the fireplace. Pffft! Blow them out. Let's get the bellows going.

Here's where chanting is an effective medium, where people singing and dancing together is very powerful medicine. By the movement of the breath, those illusions that obscure the pure fire within are blowing away. I invite you to sing a little song and feel the earth energy rising up in your body and be

thankful for what she offers us. She's our mother. Each one of us was fed through the navel by her. Five streams of energy became five organ systems in our bodies through her benevolence, her kindness, her caring. Now children have responsibility to their parents. We have responsibility to our grandmothers to listen to the teachings that are given, to listen and be thankful, and to give something in return.

\*\*\*\*\*

Your true nature is peace. Your mind, Your being, is well. Illusions and confusions arise as ideas. Your essential nature is clear, like that sacred fire. It is for us in these busy times to come again to the center, to be in good relationship with the earth and the heavens. Ah, so it is. That sound opens the door that we may see the relationship of our thought and action and what is manifesting tomorrow. There is no real accident. There is nothing to say "excuse me" for....

It is natural that you are moving in the world. Human beings feel doubt, wondering "Am I doing right, am I moving in harmony with the sacred law? Am I doing right for my family, my friends, the people, the future generations?" Even though you may not be thinking it in words, your heart, your quiet nature, is thinking these things. Basically human being is good being and wants to bring forth what is good. When we see confusion in the world, when we find we are reacting to that confusion with more confusion, we feel great sadness. This sadness is what brings people to the spiritual path....

How can it be that we can purify ourselves? By prayer and by putting aside certain things we may have been attached to, and by developing generosity, and by spiritual practice which we call ritual. Just the moment you sit down with the intention to stabilize your mind, to purify your action, you have instituted a medicine ritual. Coming home again, coming to be friends again with your family and friends—this is the great medicine of forgiveness. Without this we cannot go far on the spiritual path....

What we think is bringing our tomorrow. If we believe the idea that it is hopeless, if we believe it cannot be better,

**"It's time for all the caretakers of the earth to arise, and know that wherever we come from, we have something to do."**

then it will be that way in one's life. We can awaken the spark of clear mind in ourselves, and all is better....How do you ascertain that you are really seeing the truth? Evaluate how you are feeling, when is the energy strongest, when can you see the nature of your mind most clearly? That's the natural indication that you are walking in the right path.

All paths eventually lead home. A couple of them have cliffs that are dangerous. It is the wise practitioner that looks carefully and says, "I want to take the path that will get me home in a whole way. get us home in a whole way." That is, to bring together in our own nature, the mother and father energy that has given us life....

There is a lot happening in this world. If we look at the suffering and take it to heart without knowing how to transmute it into health, it hurts. We all have something to do. When we look around and see people suffering and are concerned for them, let's do something about it. Our spirituality, our creative mind, is not just sitting in a beautiful place, it's walking on the mean streets. In the woods, everywhere, our spiritual duty is calling us to move with dignity and to generate an energy of love. For it to change, it is up to us to change. By putting aside attachments to blame, by transforming the anger, it becomes a power. When anger is replaced by indignation, then we can change.

When you walk and see hungry people

on the street and your heart becomes appalled, that's a message you can do something. If you have repulsion, you can do something. If you have attraction to help, then you need to do something. What can you do? People are doing it everywhere: simple folks getting together making food kitchens, taking food out to those people who are living on the street, and reminding our legislatures it could be our grandparents the next day.

The nation reflects the people, and people have to put aside their grandparents, their children, and close their minds to the suffering of the very people who have given us life. As you look around the cities, in Providence too, you find some homeless people. Why is this, when the earth is the home of all of us? It's because we've somehow forgotten the energy of compassion. We think it's them and not us. Well, we're all in this together, and the way our old people and our children are treated is the way you and I will be treated tomorrow.

For so long there has been an energy of racism and oppression of the native people, black people, women people. Now this energy of oppression has gotten so out of hand that even the white man—who used to be able to say, "I'm free and 21 and I can get a job"—is finding he's being aged out as well. How come? Because we allowed that thought-form of superiority and separation to go on in this earth. We as individuals need to put aside conceptions of them and us and realize it is we who create this dream.

Remember this forgiveness meditation, that we may forgive ourselves for our own racism and ignorance, and that we can set a new thought in mind of good relationship. I pray we make ourselves caretakers of the earth and begin in whatever way possible to start taking care of our friends and neighbors. When you see somebody hungry, you have enough beans in your pot to share. When you visit an Indian family, there's always something in that pot to feed you. Always.

We're fortunate we're living in a land of abundance. So let that energy show from our hearts. Forgiveness is a very powerful medicine, because we can

change the thinking of our leaders, who are supposed to be our walking sticks. We can change their thinking by calling them correct. Let us do it in a loving way. They may say, "That's past." The past has determined the present. Let us make a change, why not feed the people? "Well, the people can get jobs." Really? Where are the jobs?

We must talk to one another and take our responsibility as citizens seriously. It will not get better without us doing something. So there is the inner process of generating clarity, pacifying and purifying our minds, realizing its true nature is pure. Then there is the mind of altruism we need to develop. That is yet another piece of wood to put in the fire, the mind of caretaking. So let us put all this wood in the fire and make a large fire to burn away illusion and scarcity and fear. Let us put aside the illusions of "us" and "them" and forgive ourselves for what might have been, could have been, should have been.

It can be better, so please remember these things. Aho.

You Have a Gift

We will begin to find that we have quite a capacity for sitting still, for focusing the mind on whatever needs doing. Most important, you become like a battery, generating energy of love and good will for all beings. That's the greatest gift you can offer. When you practice, the light goes from your heart.

continued on page 13



**MEDITATION IN A HOSPITAL SETTING** *continued from page 8*

We have worked with over 2000 people over the last 8 years who have been through the stress reduction program, and 80% of them report that they're still practicing in some form or another. Most have been very open. If one person like the fireman I told you about has a dramatic improvement (of course, we had him come back and tell his story on the first day of the next class) in the first or second week, then most of the other 20 or 30 people in the class suddenly find that their level of belief in their own possibilities goes up accordingly....What we're doing, in the context of the medical model of illness and health, is quite

revolutionary. Yet we are finding that there has been minimal resistance, if any, to using meditation in the context of stress reduction training, either by the patients or the physicians who send their patients.

I find it very interesting work. For instance, if I showed my patients this flyer [for the "Healing The Mind And Spirit Conference"], they would never show up. I consider what we're doing to be priceless, to be extremely important to the well-being of our planet, particularly in this period of time, that people begin to recognize our connectedness and power, individually, to make changes in our lives, to grow and heal and collectively do the same....What we're finding is that you can take this teaching and give it to ordinary folks in an unadulterated fashion without the trappings that we

may have become used to in a Zen Center. For example, a gold Buddha would not be helpful to my clients (laughter)....

It's wonderful for me to come back here [to Providence Zen Center]. My heart just bursts, because I trained in this tradition and I absolutely loved it, the chanting in Korean, the bowing, the gold Buddha...But it wouldn't wash at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. What I'm learning is that I care about mindfulness and I could care less about the packaging. I think it's so important that we should all take responsibility in our own ways to be as mindful as we can. Within the practice, that's all you need to do, because the rest of it just spills out, takes care of itself no matter what your job is. There's no real difference between "us" and "them", there is no us and

them. We don't think of "the patients" or "the staff", we are all just people.

You have to be sensitive to how easy it is to turn people off, or to get them to feel that you're on one side of the fence and they're on the other, how easy it is to create boundaries that become solidified and then reduce possibilities....Ram Dass once received a letter from a student in which she told him: "When I was a Buddhist, I had all sorts of problems with my parents. But when I became a Buddha, everything was okay."□

*Jon Kabat-Zinn, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Director of the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester, is a longtime student of Zen and teacher of yoga.*

**FINDING YOUR SACRED SPACE** *continued from page 6*

reaches to all worlds to help our relatives, friends, co-workers and even those yet unborn. All are benefitted by one's inner practice. This is foundation practice.

Anything else that we learn...is vibration. All is thought and wishing to communicate with one another. You are waiting to hear from the trees, and the trees are waiting to hear from you. By doing this practice, we become more aware of that inner sound, the stream of clear mind. The message of the earth is more apparent to our ears. We recognize how the illusions of separation, of anger, of "us" and "them", are but thought forms. Essentially, we are all one in the stream.

In this time, what we can do to help is awaken from the dream, awaken ourselves and others to the realization that all is essentially well. The clear light, the fire, is right within us. What we need to do is get out some good brooms and sweep out the fireplace, sweep out the hearth. What are these ashes that get in the way of that light burning brightly? Pride. Pride has many faces. It's also pride when we think we're not good

enough. That's like saying the Creator didn't have enough good sense when s/he gave you this body and these gifts....

The wise person looks to cultivate the thoughts of peace and harmony. First, by recognizing what are the thoughts that cause discord, disease, in my own life....How are my thought, word and deed contributing to the apparent confusion? What can I do to make it better? Then you make an affirmation: "I affirm that I have the skills and ability to communicate essence to essence with others, and to accomplish the goals that have been set for myself and others." You make that affirmation in the beginning of the day and say, "I will do 3 things this day that I may accomplish my life purpose of harmony, peace, and good relationship...."

You have a gift the earth needs right now, to bring peace on this earth. Take it out of the closet, let it be apparent. How? By ascertaining what are your life skills. What gifts have you brought to this life? What are you good at? When do you feel clearest, brightest? When is there most energy? That's an indication of what your skills are. Then you want to refine those skills so that there is a one-pointedness of mind, and no doubt that you are doing your work that is beneficial to all beings. This comes through practice and affirming, "I shall accomplish these things for the benefit of family, clan, nation, the planet." Just

by saying these words over and over, we counteract those poisons and doubts that curtail our completing a task....

Your gifts are needed. So many people have a talent for poetry, and their poems might free another person from grief, yet that person puts off writing the poem. "The family needs me to wash dishes." "This is more important." "That's not going to make money." So you put aside that gift.

That gift is your muse, your power, your totem. When you know you have a creative gift and you put it aside, you're putting aside some of your life force and some of the hope for future generations. To cultivate your art, to clarify your mind, is not just a thing of fun, it is also a spiritual duty so that you can bring abundance on all levels to your family and friends. As long as the gifts that are flowing within you are unmanifest, other gifts will also be held back in the large circle of life.

For example, we are sitting here in this beautiful temple. Sweat, hard work and sacrifice made it happen, and people's practice keeps it going. From here, there goes into the earth an energy that gives the earth strength, that purifies the atmosphere around here, that transforms some of the suffering in the city. Just because people sit here with stillness of mind and making prayer, they make this even more sacred space, and we receive that benefit wherever we are.

Suppose in our hearts we say, "I don't believe the earth is alive, I don't believe in God, I don't believe my mind counts." That's closing a door to one of the rivers of life force that goes from the holy places. Eventually people with doubt all over the world close the water of life. Earth is making new water all the time. It is only human beings holding back emotion, feeling scarcity: not enough love, not enough time. Human beings holding back mind, holding tight, then closing the life force flowing through the earth. Then there's less energy in the atmosphere.

It is a reciprocal relationship between you and the earth and the sky. What we are thinking, how we are feeling, affects the entire circle. If you are feeling sadness or anger and you go to the office, certainly it will be reflected back to you in a flash. It is like that even with our mother the earth. So when you make peace with yourself, when you are willing to stabilize your mind and cultivate that energy of generosity, it is good for everyone around the earth.

To open our hands, to manifest our heart's creative gifts, is something that is done by walking upon the land. Your creative potential, which may yet be unmanifest, is waiting to come through your hands. It flows through the energy of the heart. So the wise practitioner gets to know the nature of their own mind, looks deeply at one's own heart and recognizes, "These thoughts are here. Are they appropriate in this lifetime? If not, I cast them to the fires. Are these thoughts appropriate to bring forth the creative gifts? If so, I shall plant them as seeds of good cause, that may have good relationship for many generations to come."

Our thought is making it happen. How you feel about yourself is determining how nations will respond to one another. If you cannot forgive yourself, then how can nations overcome the illusion of "us" and "them"? That's why it is so important that we come to good relationship around the child within us, that we recognize our parents for what they are, ourselves for what we are—without blame, without shame. Each one is unique and we've chosen to be together....

Even now there are beings looking at us when we meditate, contemplate, pray, who are saying, "Is this the opportunity that we may bring something good to the earth?" Remember, somebody is watching you, thinking, "Are you the doorway?" Can the light beings pass through?" Can they be born? Are you making the effort?

Someone's always watching. So let us be alert and generate energy of love and compassion, so that the beings of the coming age see a fertile ground to come into. What is the ground? Our consciousness. What are the seeds being planted? Our intention to do something good. What are the weeds? Confusion. What is our duty? To keep the garden clear. That's our life....

The world needs your special gifts, so you cannot keep these seeds away too long. They will even sprout in the darkness, unattended. Why not bring them out to the garden of clear mind and let something good happen? They say that we can even disarm missiles with our thoughts of peace and love. I certainly saw native people make planes and tanks stop. Even tanks stood still.

Let us make enough love that this war machine comes to peace. What are nations but individuals? It just takes a few of us singing that song of peace to make a difference. You are the one to tip the scale. So take care. Ho.□  
*DHYANI YWAHOO, a Cherokee woman and 27th lineage holder of the Ywahoo lineage of the Cherokee Nation, is founder of the Sunray Meditation Society in Bristol, VT.*



**PROVIDENCE ZEN CENTER**

*offers*

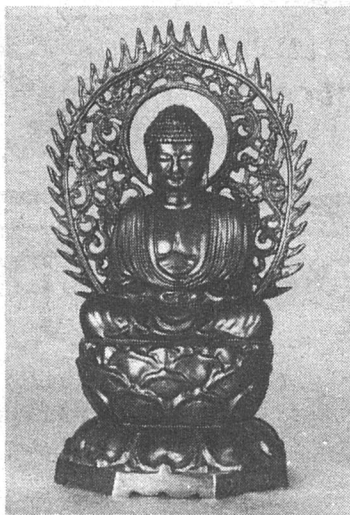
- a residential training program
- daily practice of meditation, chanting, work and formal meals
- pleasant surroundings on 50 woodland acres
- three Master Dharma Teachers in residence
- part and full-time staff positions available (part-time pays room and board, full-time adds a stipend)
- large organic garden

\$285 monthly training fee includes:

- room and board
- conferences & workshops
- monthly retreats
- weekly interviews with teachers (kong-an practice)
- dues

Write to: Director  
Providence Zen Center  
528 Pound Road  
Cumberland, RI 02864

**BUDDHIST MEDITATION SUPPLIES**



—RETAIL & WHOLESALE—

- Statues • Cushions • Benches
- Bells & Gongs • Altar Supplies
- Incense • Clothing • Books & Tapes
- Rosaries • Posters • Jewelry

For fully illustrated and annotated 41-page CATALOG, send \$1.00 to:

SHASTA ABBEY  
BUDDHIST SUPPLIES  
Dept. P, P.O. Box 199,  
Mt. Shasta, CA 96067  
Tel. (916) 926-4208

**Carving Shop**

---

**WOODEN SIGNS**

---

**FIGURES**

---

**ARCHITECTURAL**

---

**SCULPTURE**

---

**David Klinger**  
Providence, RI  
401-861-3646