

# JOY: The Journal of Yoga

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## **Finding Our Way**

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The sign said, "be non-violent", and it helped me understand a wiser and better way to be.

Another sign said, "be content", and it helped me understand a wiser and better way to be.

Another sign said, "less greed", and it helped me understand a wiser and better way to be.

In trying to find a better way to be, or finding our way, directional signs are there to assist us, to guide us.

Many do not see any reason to find a better way.

They have what they have thought is necessary in order to live.

It does not mean that even though they have these things, that they are living well.

We can have a job, a roof over our head, food, and friends and money in the bank, but it does not always mean that we are living well.

When we live well, we are free from many states of consciousness that limit us, or keep us in bondage.

So even with our material needs being met and wealth, we still may have anxiety.

We may be very fearful of any change, or what we perceive to be a threat.

We may endlessly worry, about this thing and that, and in that tendency, also be cultivating other tendencies that grow from worry.

Impatience, getting angry easy and poor concentration.

There may be an inconsistency in one's thoughts, and mood and energy swings.

I often remember a Yoga student that I had for a short period of time in Malaysia, who had wealth, and had friends, who told me that she "had to worry".

Really, what we have to do is be mindful, relaxed and concentrated, so we do what needs to be done, with a minimum of worry, anxiety, and resentment.

It is hard for some of us to see that our duties, responsibilities, chores and errands are really gifts.

If we can see them in this manner, we may have a better attitude to performing them and perform them more efficiently.

The various concepts, attitudes and actions that make up what we frequently think of as being spiritual teachings offer us directional signs that point us in a way to get to that state, where we do have less worry and anxiety.

When these directional signs are put together, or looked at together, they can be thought of as a wonderful guidebook and map, that leads us somewhere where there is joy and warmth.

And in order to get there, we do not really have to go anywhere, except understand and apply.

When we are doing our daily duties, responsibilities and activities, they provide an opportunity to apply these things.

This is one reason why we can refer to them as being gifts.

Another reason we can think of them as being a gift is because even though we may curse them, we still have the ability to do them and grow from them.

Some of us have lost mindfulness of the many people in this world that do not get to experience these gifts.

The villager with no water in Nepal.

The crippled and maimed man, woman or child in Cambodia, Afghanistan or Sierra Leone.

The victim of sexual exploitation in India, the Philippines or Thailand.

The lost or abused man, woman or child in our own culture, society and country.

Our understanding of their suffering, should be making us more appreciative of what we have.

That is when we can better see things as gifts.

The directional signs, guidebooks and maps to getting us to a better place mentally and physically are quite similar in their content and suggestions.

They contain the three concepts and actions mentioned above. When we practice non-violence, we show, if not kindness to another, then at least patience and tolerance.

But violence is very subtle, and though we may not be doing one physical harm, which is how we usually think of non-violence, we may be violent to them in our thoughts and words.

We may gossip about them or slander them behind their backs.

We may habitually criticize, ridicule and judge them in our thoughts, without being able to see their good points, their spiritual attributes or their suffering and confused feelings that have led them to behave in ways that we have an aversion to.

But non-violence has another element to it, that we are not always mindful about.

That is in violence to oneself, and this comes about in so many ways.

We feel and think that we are inadequate to the task at hand, be it big or small.

We feel and think that we may not, or can not be loved and respected by another human being.

We feel and think that we will fail in any endeavor we try.

With contentment, we better appreciate those physical and mental gifts and attributes that we have been given, and learn how to work with them.

Do we need a big car, a big house, lots of clothes and servants, and to be invited to all the most fashionable social events and parties, or do we just need the love and respect and understanding of a few people, but most of all the love and understanding and respect of ourselves?

Can scripture and teaching and the body, breath and mind give us a greater contentment than the material aspects of life?

Yes, if they are read, understood, and applied in a skillful manner.

What about non-greed?

It has always seemed to me to be closely related to contentment. There is non-greed when we have understood and cultivated contentment, and there is greed when we have not understood and cultivated contentment.

Do we need another pair of shoes, another dress or pair of pants, car, house, wife, and the list can go on and on.

These three directional signs do assist us in finding a better way, or for some, finally finding their own way.

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