

Universal Beauty and Well-Being

By Steve Armstrong

The traditional "Qualities of a Beautiful Mind" are Generosity, Morality, Renunciation, Wisdom, Effort, Patience, Truthfulness, Resolve, Equanimity and Loving Kindness

Beauty has been said to be in the eye of the beholder. But the physical eye sees only the beauty of the world around us while the mind's eye sees the beauty within. This deeper vision is what sees and knows the inner beauty which creates and establishes a profound sense of well-being.

We all know teachers, family members, friends or acquaintances that we might call beautiful; these people are special because of their generosity, understanding, kindness or integrity. Such qualities have been recognized throughout time and in every culture. People with these qualities are always seen as having the karmic profile of a good human being. This beauty is not culturally specific nor does it change with the most recent standards for goodness; rather, these qualities are universally recognized as the qualities of the inner beauty of the heart. Such beauty is not exclusive to any religion, ethnicity, socio-economic or age group.

What's more, the attainment of this inner beauty is a possibility for everyone. So also is its benefit: a profound sense of well-being.

When any one of us recognizes that we could be more honest, less reactive, more grateful for what we have or more resolute in fulfilling our aspirations, we implicitly have acknowledged two things. First, we have recognized that we do not yet fully manifest the best within us. Second, we have seen that there is as-yet-unrealized potential within our heart for developing the qualities of inner beauty. These two understandings are pre-conditions both for aspiring to change and for making a decisive commitment to further develop our heart. This knowledge is the foundation for a growing sense of well-being.

The qualities of inner beauty purify our heart of three things; the self-aggrandizing activity of attachment, the self-righteousness of aversion and the self-enhancement of delusion. Such purification reveals and strengthens all that is great within us.

All the qualities of inner beauty share three common attributes. They are: nobility, compassion and skillful actions.

The first characteristic of the qualities of inner beauty is that they are all noble (*ariya* in Pali). These qualities are revered, esteemed and acclaimed as honorable and distinguished. A person does not become noble by always possessing or displaying the beautiful qualities; rather, we can see that these qualities inherently affirm this characteristic beauty of heart.

When we are able to let go of our Frank Sinatra-style insistence on doing things "my way" and instead adjust to acknowledging and accommodating others' ideas and understandings, we abandon defensive rigidity and ennoble our life with simplicity and patience. Such behavior is commendable, even dignified, and manifests the best within us. It takes effort; not the effort of insisting on continuing on our own path, but rather the effort of renunciation or letting go of our way of doing things. We may initially feel like we are being deprived when we have to let go of doing things "my way", but in fact, making space for and accommodating others actually feels better. We recognize our own goodness when we think, feel and act in this way. Others appreciate such thoughts and behavior too.

Compassion, the second property of inner beauty, makes room for and holds others with care and consideration. When we rest in a non-reactive, balanced strength of mind we make space for others. This humanitarian attitude motivates beneficial actions toward others who are suffering and seeks ways to support wholesome interests everywhere.

We all appreciate it when someone sensitively recognizes and acknowledges our situation and responds with a willingness to connect without condemning. When I take the time to connect with the homeless person on the street, I demonstrate my recognition of and interest in them. I'm not sitting in judgment of their behavior or life condition. I'm also not blaming anyone for the conditions I see; nor am I trying to solve the world's social problems. I am just reaching out to offer the best of human connection: love and acceptance along with support and well-wishing. Not only does the recipient benefit by the love and generosity; I too walk on with a lighter feeling of well-being in my heart.

Skillful actions when touching the world is the third trait of universal beauty. The commitment to awaken to the beautiful qualities of heart is accompanied by the willingness to express them. We allow these qualities to manifest in our thoughts, decisions and actions. For example, suppose when I feel hurt or misunderstood, I tend to isolate from others and freeze up. Skillful action would not lie in explaining, cajoling, or criticizing me; that would not melt the ice that has formed over my heart. However, if someone skillfully, patiently and without reacting waits patiently to hear me when I am ready to speak, all will flow again. Many times, the beautiful heart knows that the confident renunciation of doing more is required. It recognizes that the skillful action often lies in doing less.

Inner beauty can be more fully developed in each of us. If we simply remember them and raise their profile in our hearts these qualities are more accessible. When we actively cultivate these beautiful qualities of mind, we flourish. We, and others, benefit from an enhanced and enduring sense of well-being.

TCVC Annual Meeting

Friday, April 8

7 PM Social, 7:30 PM meeting
Dunn Bros Coffee

4648 E Lake St in Minneapolis

Contact Todd Stitt

at 612-729-1715

or t_stitt@msn.com

You are warmly invited to attend the TCVC Annual Meeting—an informal gathering with the TCVC Board: Elizabeth Archerd, Matthew Buzzard, Naomi Baer, Gail Iverson, Joanne Skarjune, Todd Stitt and Bob Zeglovitch. We'll connect with dharma friends new and old, and entertain input regarding TCVC retreats.

TCVC gives a big thanks to registrars Mariann Johnson and Elizabeth Archerd for getting everyone lined up for the retreats and retreat managers Naomi Baer and Matthew Buzzard for their selfless work during retreat. A special thank you to Jean Fagerstrom, who has updated the TCVC mailing list and handled our mail.

The TCVC retreats happen because of the energy of many people. If you are interested in helping TCVC in any way, large or small, ongoing or for a one-time special project, please contact Todd.

TREASURY REPORT

Retreat Fund	\$5,541
Retreat Deposits	2,250
Operating Fund	300
Scholarship Fund	1,460
Balance	\$9,551

Thanks to everyone who has donated money to TCVC. Your generosity supports our operations and makes it possible for people who could not otherwise afford the retreat fee to attend.

Your tax-deductible donations, payable to TCVC, are appreciated. You may send a check to TCVC, PO Box 14683, Minneapolis, MN 55414, or donate online at www.givemn.org

PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

COMMON GROUND MEDITATION CENTER

2700 East 26th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406

www.commongroundmeditation.org

Contact 612-722-8260

retreats@commongroundmeditation.org

Common Ground offers weekly practice groups, introductory classes, metta practice groups, Buddhist studies courses, family practice programs and daily open sitting sessions. See the website for the monthly half-day and day-long retreat schedule.

Retreats led by Mark Nunberg at Holy Spirit Retreat Center in Janesville, MN

February 17–21

May 5–8

ARROW RIVER FOREST HERMITAGE

Box 2, RR 7, Site 7

Thunder Bay ON P7C 5V5 Canada

www.arrowriver.ca

Contact 647-477-5919

arfh@explornet.com

The Arrow River Forest Hermitage is a Theravadin Buddhist monastery and meditation center under the guidance of Ajahn Punnadhammo. Arrow River occasionally offers group retreats but most teaching is on an individual basis. Retreats of three days to three months can be scheduled.

INQUIRING MIND

A Semiannual Journal of the Vipassana Community

PO Box 9999

Berkeley, CA 94709-0999

www.inquiringmind.com

Inquiring Mind is a donation supported, semiannual journal dedicated to the creative transmission of Buddha-dharma to the West. Each issue includes an extensive international calendar of vipassana retreats, as well a listing of events and sitting groups throughout North America.

LIBERATION PARK

PO Box 205

Norwalk, WI 54648

Contact 608-823-7141

info@liberationpark.org

Liberation Park is a young Dharma refuge in southwestern Wisconsin that provides a natural setting for personal meditation retreats and living out a Buddhist ethics of ecological and social responsibility. Santikaro is the founder and guiding teacher. People are invited to work weekends during the spring through fall to complete the building of the center.

MADISON VIPASSANA

P.O. Box 45014

Madison, WI 53744-5014

www.vipassana.net

Contact Janice Sheppard

608-829-0944, uppekha@yahoo.com

April 13-17 Ajahn Yatiko & Ajahn Karunadhammo at Pine Lake Retreat Center in Westfield, WI

July 29-31 Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia at Lussier Family Heritage Center in Madison, WI

MID AMERICA DHARMA

455 East 80th Terrace

Kansas City, MO 64131

www.midamericadharma.org

Contact Jon Yaffe at 314-644-1926

gjyaffe@sbcglobal.net

March 4-6 Bridget Rolens & Jon Yaffe

April 1-3 Shaila Catherine

June 25-26 Sharon Salzberg

July 8-11 Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

Sept 9-11 Philip Jones

Oct 13-16 Mary Grace Orr

DHARMA SEED

www.dharmaseed.org

Dharma Seed is a non-profit organization that distributes dharma talks by teachers of Theravada Buddhism. Their website offers talks freely for download or streaming audio.

REGISTRATION JUNE 10–19 STEVE ARMSTRONG & KAMALA MASTERS

Registration deadline is May 20. There is a \$25 late fee after May 20.

Mail your registration to Bob Zeglovitch, 101 Blue Heron Lane, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047

Name _____ Male/Female (circle one)

Address _____ City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Email confirmation is sufficient Enclosed is a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope for postal confirmation

This is my first retreat I can help set up or clean up I need a ride I can give a ride

I have special accessibility, dietary or other needs. (Please enclose a description or contact the registrar.)

I use a CPAP or other medical device. (Please specify or contact the registrar.)

Enclosed is a scholarship request for \$_____ (Maximum scholarship is \$250)

\$_____ Retreat Fee* Double \$500 Single \$620 Singles are available on a first-come basis.

\$_____ Add \$25 late fee if mailing after May 20

\$_____ Optional tax-deductible donation to TCVC: Operations Scholarships Either Fund

\$_____ **Total Enclosed** (Make check payable to TCVC)

* The teachers that we ask to lead our retreats do not request or receive any compensation from us for their teaching. At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to practice *dana* (generosity) by offering a donation to the teachers.

Vipassana (insight) meditation is a simple and direct practice: the moment-to-moment investigation of the mind/body process through calm, open and precise awareness. Learning to observe experience from a place of spacious stillness enables one to relate to life with a balance of wisdom and compassion.

Retreats are held in noble silence and include sitting and walking meditation, instructions, Dharma talks, and time for questions with the teacher.

As the teachings of the Buddha are considered priceless, they have traditionally been offered freely. The teachers do not receive payment from TCVC for teaching. The registration fee covers room and board, travel expenses for the teachers and other expenses.

At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to offer a donation to the teachers to support their living expenses so they may continue to practice and teach.

Scholarships are available for up to \$250.

To apply for a scholarship, include a letter with your registration giving the background of your need. Scholarship requests must be received by the due date and are limited to one retreat per person per calendar year.

Those who wish may help others by donating to the TCVC Scholarship Fund or Operating Fund.

Registration Send a check for the full amount to secure your registration. If you are applying for a scholarship, subtract the scholarship amount requested from the registration fee.

Cancellations Notify the registrar if you need to cancel. TCVC retains a \$25 fee for cancellations received after the due date, along with any cancellation fees charged by the retreat venue.

Schedule

Fri 6/10 Registration 3:00–6:00 PM

Evening meal 6:00 PM

Retreat opens 8:00 PM

Sun 6/19 Retreat ends After noon meal

Yogi jobs are included in the schedule for all participants. These mindful work periods are assigned on a first come, first served basis at check-in time.

Attendance Please plan to arrive by 6:00 PM on the opening day of the retreat and to stay for the duration. Exceptions must be approved by the retreat manager.

Meals Vegetarian meals begin with an evening meal from 6:00–7:00 PM on Friday night and end with lunch on the last day of your retreat.

Accommodations at the Koinonia Retreat Center have modern plumbing with no more than two people to each room. Single rooms are available on a first-come basis.

Detailed information about the retreat is mailed upon registration. Contact the registrar, Bob Zeglovitch at 612-462-0270 or retreats@tcvc.info

Directions to Koinonia from Minneapolis

394 West to 169

North on 169 for 1/4 mile

West on Highway 55 2.5 miles past Annandale

South (Left) on County Road 3 for 4/10 of a mile

West (Right) on 80th Street for one mile

South (Left) on Pilger Avenue for 2/10 of a mile

Allow two hours travel time from Minneapolis on Friday afternoon. Alternate routes and more information is available at KoinoniaRetreatCenter.org.

You may leave Koinonia's phone number, 888-801-7746, with family for emergency contact only.

Twin Cities Vipassana Collective
P.O. Box 14683
Minneapolis, MN 55414

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Twin Cities Vipassana Collective Calendar Visit us at www.tcvc.info

Date	Teachers / Event	Location	Contact
April 8, 2011	Annual Meeting	Dunn Bros Coffee 4648 E Lake St in Mpls	Todd Stitt 612-729-1715
June 10–19, 2011 Full-time only retreat No weekend option	Kamala Masters & Steve Armstrong	Koinonia Retreat Center Annandale, MN	Bob Zeglovitch 612-462-0270 retreats@tcvc.info
Jan. 20–22, 2012 Jan. 20–28, 2012	Rebecca Bradshaw	Koinonia Retreat Center Annandale, MN	Naomi Baer 651-698-1458

TWIN CITIES VIPASSANA COLLECTIVE (TCVC) is a community of people interested in developing and deepening their meditation practice. We provide opportunities to hear and practice the teachings of *vipassana* (insight) and *metta* (lovingkindness) meditation, with an emphasis on residential retreats led by senior teachers in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

Grassroots Dhamma is published by TCVC. To join our mailing list, send your name, address and phone number to mailings@tcvc.info or our mailing address above. Current and past issues of *Grassroots Dhamma* are available on our website, www.tcvc.info