

## Religion Experts Column

*This is the response to this week's question for the **Ask The Religion Experts** feature of the Sunday Ottawa Citizen. Questions are provided by the editor. All responses are available on the Citizen's online blog for the feature. We invite you to consider this response and share your own. It is our hope this will generate some thoughtful discussion of the real-life applications of Buddhadharma and deeper understanding for us all.*

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*Sunday, January 23, 2011*

**Q** : How does accelerating change impact fundamental values?  
**A** : What exactly is changing in this way? The seasons still progress as they always have for aeons. The clock and calendar still move the same way my grandfather knew. When I lay a fire in my fireplace, it still burns the same way. My garden doesn't seem to grow any faster than it did twenty years ago. So what changes are speeding up? While our natural world is degrading, it has not accelerated. Have we just selectively engineering certain change in new ways?

This project to accelerate certain change is a by-product of the techno-industrial solutions we in the so-called developed world have embraced (or had thrust upon us) in the hope that by controlling, manipulating and, most importantly, consuming our material world we can achieve happiness. Thus, by speeding up our material world, we aspire to relieve our suffering and dissatisfaction. The blur of activity, the parade of novelty, the steady replacements of bigger-more-faster, serves both to distract us from our suffering and delude us into believing we can manufacture and somehow eternally hold happiness.

The Buddha taught us that everything in our world changes, without our influence. Everything to which we try to ascribe some permanency has no fixed or permanent essence. The peace or happiness we crave itself is not permanent. It is precisely this quest for permanence of and the search for happiness in "things" which lead to the pain and sorrow we try so eagerly to avoid. Only by opening ourselves to the flow of the world and experiencing that flow without attachment (wanting it to stop, to control it or make it something we have forever) can we relieve the sorrow.

A change is not really "as good as a rest". We must learn first to rest, that is, refrain from distracting ourselves with some novelty which we expect to improve our lives. If we can refrain from hopping from this to that and attend to what is going on - the seasons, the ticking of the clock, the fireplace flames or the lazy transformation of a garden - we will find the relief and peace that we seek

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