

Pahk Your Kahma in Hahvahd Yahd

by Con Chapman

Yoga instructions have been added to parking citations in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to “debunk the idea that all parking tickets are a hostile action.”

The Boston Globe



It ain't easy bein' a meter maid in Cambridge, believe me. Everybody thinks they're a genius here. You try tellin' Alan Dershowitz he's parked more than a foot from the curb. “Eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable,” he says, like I haven't heard that one before.

“You can appeal,” I says. “It's right there on the ticket, next to the *Pranayama*.” We got to write *340,000* tickets a year, I don't have time to stop and show everybody how to do the *Uddiyana Bandha*.



Or how about them snow emergency tickets? We got to clear the streets for the plows, so that ticket's gonna run you forty dollars. And what do I get when I try to write one? Nuthin' but grief. Last winter one guy says “You call this an emergency? An

economy in tatters, two wars raging, talk radio whipping up nativist sympathies—*that's* an emergency.”

“You should take a deep breath,” I said to the guy as I ripped the ticket off my pad. “Try the *Jalandhara Bandha*.”

“The what?”

“The Net Bearer Bond. Right there on the citation. Like you're catching fish.”

The guy looked down at the ticket. “Are you nuts?” he asked.

“No, I'm centered is what I am. I don't fly off the handle just because somebody's doing her job trying to make the Athens of America a better place to live.”



I could see I'd caught the guy off guard, deflecting his rage with my verbal jiu-jitsu.

“*Namaste*,” I said as I turned to go. “The divinity within me salutes the divinity within you. Have a nice freaking day.”

This time of year is the worst, though. You got a million college kids back in school, totally disrespectful of Traffic, Parking & Transportation Regulations, which are available on the city website, I might add. Would it kill them to take a minute from illegal downloading to review them? I don't think so, and yet as I approach Central Square I see a twenty-something kid with a wispy beard

getting out of his beat-up Volvo with an armload of LP's on his way to a used record store. As soon as he looks up, I pounce.



"I'm gonna have to write you up," I says.

"What for?"

"You're parked you cah within twenty feet of an intersection—twenty bucks."

"Come on—give me a break. I have to sell my roommate's albums because he can't pay his share of the rent. I'll be lucky to get half that much for all this folkie crap."

"That's not my problem," I say as I note his license number. I watch him carefully out of the corner of my eye—meter-maid rage is the biggest occupational hazard of my profession.

"This is so unfair!" he screams when he can control himself no longer.

"You know what John Kennedy's dad said?" I say, recalling one of Hahvahd's most illustrious graduates.

"No, what?"

"Life is unfair. Here—try the *Chaturanga Dandasana* when you get back to your apahtment."

"The what?"

"Right there on the back of the ticket. It'll help you relax, maybe you can talk some sense into your knucklehead roommate, okay?"

The kid looks at the pose, and I can tell he's a little confused.

"I . . . I thought parking tickets were about enforcement—hostility."

"Maybe in Boston, but not on this side of the river," I say. "In Cambridge, it's all about helping *you*—the violator—reclaim the wholeness that's your birthright with the three limbs of Patanjali's classical yoga: *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*."

I can see the kid is having a little trouble getting his mind around the enlightenment I'm offering him—for free. Your tax dollars at work.

"You don't *have* to do it as part of the Sun Salutation sequence," I say, trying to reassure him. "You can do it individually, too. Just be sure to exhale when you release."

"Okay—I guess."

I smile at him, and bow low. All in a day's work—for a City of Cambridge Parking Enforcement Officer and Guru.

