

leap of faith

THE NEW HOPE SANGHA NEWSLETTER

FALL 2005

Meditation Retreat November 4–6 See page 3.

Five Subjects for Frequent Recollection

John's Dharma Talk, Columbiere Retreat, June 19, 2005

Dear Friends,

The university students are back in town. The air temperature is a bit cooler. All this means that the fall season is upon us. It was wonderful to see so many sangha members at our last Tuesday night meditation. This fall we will explore The Awakened Heart teachings, also known as, Bodhicitta. A central practice within this teaching is gratitude. Despite the inevitable ups and downs of life if we can reflect on what we are grateful for, our hearts will stay open and thrive. Recently I have been particularly grateful for my teachers, their wonderful teachings and our sangha. My teachers inspire me to continue with this inner work, which I know will lead others and myself to freedom. The teachings of Bodhicitta especially, are so effective in releasing old patterns of suffering that are ready to be released. The many sanghas I am a part of around the country support me in my practice and teaching. For this I am deeply grateful. I hope to see you soon and wish you peace.

A Deep Bow,

John



This past January I did a two-week self-retreat at the Forest Refuge. It is a newly built facility next to the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts. Posted on a bulletin board there were the Five Subjects of Frequent Recollection. I used these reflections as a focus for my retreat:

- 1) I am subject to aging. Aging is unavoidable.
- 2) I am subject to illness. Illness is unavoidable.
- 3) I am subject to death. Death is unavoidable.
- 4) I will grow different, separate from all that is dear and appealing to me.
- 5) I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and live dependent on my actions. Whatever I do for good or for evil, to that I will fall heir.

We should often reflect on this.

I am subject to aging, illness and death — all pertain to the physical body. We all know that we are aging, subject to illness and will eventually die. We can try and hide from the aging process, perhaps with some degree of success. I am constantly humored by my own vanity and how much time I spend looking at myself in the mirror as if I don't recognize who is there. Let's see how many gray hairs there are... are there any new wrinkles?

One of the wonderful things about coming to these retreats is growing old with the sangha. Who wants to grow old alone? It's a lot more pleasurable growing old with others so we

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**RESIDENTIAL AND
NONRESIDENTIAL RETREATS**

OCTOBER 7-14, HOT SPRINGS, NC

For details see feature below.

OCTOBER 28-30, ANN ARBOR, MI

Residential Retreat with Barbara, Aaron, and John. For information Contact Hal Rothbart at 734-971-3455 or Pat Shalis at pshalis@tds.net or 734-996-3743.

NOVEMBER 4-6, PITTSBORO, NC

Residential/Non residential Meditation Retreat with Barbara and John at Windsong Center. For info. call 919-286-4754 or office@newhopesangha.org. See page 3.

**DECEMBER 28-JANUARY 4,
HOT SPRINGS, NC**

For details see feature below.

**JANUARY 27-29, 2006
PHILADELPHIA, PA**

Residential Retreat Led by John through the Philadelphia Meditation Center. For information e-mail PhlMedCtr@aol.com call 610-853-8200 or see their web site at www.philadelphia-meditation.org

FEBRUARY 3-5, ATHENS, GA

Non Residential Weekend of Meditation with John. Contact David Kurtz at 706-546-7238 or dkurtz41@yahoo.com.

**PLAN AHEAD FOR THESE
RETREATS**

**APRIL 22-29 OR APRIL 29-MAY 6
(DATE TBD) EMERALD ISLE, NC**

Residential Retreat: Vipassana at the Ocean, with Barbara Brodsky, Aaron and John. For information contact Linda Pendelton at 910-822-6375 or mettagreetings@earthlink.net.

MAY 19-21, PITTSBORO, NC

Residential/Non residential Retreat with Barbara Brodsky and John at Windsong Center. For information. call 919-286-4754 or john@newhopesangha.org

JUNE 16-24, ANN ARBOR, MI

Residential Retreat with Barbara, Aaron, and John. For information contact Hal Rothbart at 734-971-3455 or Pat Shalis at pshalis@tds.net or 734-996-3743.

WEDNESDAY DHARMA CLASS

The Awakened Heart: *Bodhicitta*

The series will run from Sept. 28-Nov.30 (no class 10/12 & 11/23) The eight classes will meet in the Chapel at the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship 4907 Garrett Rd. Durham, from 7:00-8:30 pm. Suggested donation \$10/ class or \$80 for the series.

Translated "Bodhicitta" means the pure Awakened Heart. This isn't something that we finally get when we are enlightened rather it is within each of us. It is that part of us which is deeply loving, patient, kind, generous and fearless. Often our fears get in the way of our accessing this loving heart, but it is always there. Within bodhicitta is the aspiration for service to all beings. Service opens the heart to bodhicitta and bodhicitta inspires service.

We will be using Pema Chodron's fine book "The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times" as a resource as well as other texts that illustrate this beautiful and effective teaching. Each class will include a presentation, discussion and a short meditation.

**BIMONTHLY MEDITATIONS AND
DHARMA DISCUSSIONS**

New Hope Sangha holds meditations and dharma discussion at the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Garrett Rd. in Durham. We will meet from 7:00-9:30pm in the Chapel. The 1st Tuesday of the month there will be a dharma talk on "The Awakened Heart" and on the 3rd Tuesday there will be a discussion period. This is an open group and all are welcome to attend. There is no fee charged. See www.newhopesangha.org for more details.

TWO RETREATS AT
Southern Dharma



FALL RETREAT
IN THE MOUNTAINS



Vipassana and the Open Heart

October 7-14

This is a beautiful time of year to do a retreat in the North Carolina mountains. The temperature is cool and the fall foliage is on its way. Barbara Brodsky will be joining John. A week-long retreat is a wonderful opportunity to deepen practice.

NEW YEARS RETREAT

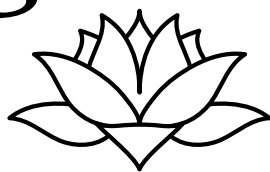
Take Refuge in the Silence

December 28-January 4

John will again be back at Southern Dharma Retreat Center to lead the New Year's Retreat this year. He led the New Years Retreat for many years and is looking forward to participating in this wonderful retreat again. He will be leading it with David Lawson, a teacher with the Deep Spring Center Sangha in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Join us on the mountain as we let go of the old and welcome in the New Year.

For information about both these retreats contact the Southern Dharma Retreat Center, 1661 West Rd., Hot Springs, NC 28743. Call: 828-622-7112 or www.main.nc.us/SDRC

Take Refuge in the Silence



NEW HOPE SANGHA INSIGHT MEDITATION RETREAT

November 4–6, 2005

A weekend retreat is an opportunity to develop calmness, wisdom, and compassion in a supportive environment. Emphasis is placed upon developing mindfulness in sitting, standing, and walking to help us access our innate understanding, joy, and peace. A weekend retreat such as this can be a wonderful way to learn meditation and to deepen one's practice. Beginners, as well as the more experienced, are welcome to attend. There will be instructions, practice, dharma talks, chanting from various spiritual traditions and silence.

THE RETREAT LEADERS **Barbara Brodsky** is a Quaker and trained "dharma teacher" in the Buddhist tradition. She is the guiding teacher of Deep Spring Center in Ann Arbor Michigan. Barbara has been deaf for 27 years; living with silence has greatly influenced her life and teaching, as have years of active involvement with nonviolent action for social change. **John Orr** received Theravada Buddhist ordination and training for a period of eight years while living in Thailand and India. He has been teaching meditation and leading retreats around the country since 1980. John is an Interfaith minister and teaches at Duke University.

THE LOCATION The retreat will be held at the Windsong Retreat Center, 2540 Seaforth Rd., Pittsboro, NC. This is a lovely Center located on 16 beautiful acres east of Pittsboro, near Jordan Lake in Chatham County. Windsong is within easy driving distance from anywhere in the Triangle and commutable. There is lodging available on a first register first serve basis. There are no private rooms. Tent sites are available. Check in will begin at 5:00 pm on Friday and supper will be served from 6:00-7:00 pm. Course opening is at 7:30 pm. We will end by 9:30 each evening to allow time for commuters to return home. The retreat will end at 4:00 pm on Sunday. Upon registration you will receive directions to Windsong Center and other information.

REGISTRATION The fee structure for the retreat has changed. The cost for the weekend is \$100 for commuters, \$123 for people wanting to tent and \$130 for those wanting a bed. Fees for Windsong Center are included in this cost. Barbara and John will offer the retreat on a 'dana' generosity basis. Participants will have the opportunity to offer generosity to the teachers at the retreat. Your generosity enables the teachers to continue to offer these retreats and is the main source of their livelihood. As a gift to Windsong Center there will be a hour long work period on Saturday and Sunday morning. Appropriate jobs are assigned and none of the work is too strenuous. A deposit of \$70 will hold a place in the retreat. All but \$10 of the retreat fee is refundable if you cancel before October 21. For information call The Durham Meditation Center (919) 286-4754 or email office@newhopesangha.org.

NEW HOPE SANGHA Fall Retreat, November 4–6, 2005

REGISTRATION FORM

To register for the Weekend Retreat return this form to Durham Meditation Center, c/o 1605 Edgevale Road, Durham, NC 27701.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email Address _____

Please check appropriate boxes. If possible pay in full, otherwise a deposit is required. Please make checks payable to Durham Meditation Center.

- I will be commuting (\$100)
 I will be tenting (\$123)
 I will be needing a bed in the center (\$130)
- Paid in full _____
 Deposit enclosed (\$70) _____

TOTAL DUE _____

TOTAL PAID _____

FREQUENT RECOLLECTION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

don't feel alone in the process. The June retreat has historically been one where a lot of old friends come together. To go through this journey of aging together is a real gift and I thank you.

I have pictures of Barbara and myself fifteen years ago when we first started teaching. Barbara had blonde hair with pigtailed. I looked a little bit more buff than I am now and certainly much younger. And we both looked a lot more innocent than we do now. For the most part I've been blessed with good health, but a few years ago I was diagnosed with a couple of chronic illnesses. When the doctors told me, I was rather incredulous that I could actually have a chronic illness. These illnesses, while manageable, remind me that I'm aging and subject to illness. One of the values of this kind of reflection is that it helps us to see the ever changing condition of the body and the impermanent nature of life. It readies us for the inevitable changes that lie ahead.

One of my teachers, Ajahn Chah, was once meeting with a group of lay visitors when he picked up a glass that he was about to pour tea into and said, "Do you know how I relate to this? As though it is already broken. I use this glass and drink from it often, but in my heart I know that someday it's going to be broken." This is an example of a readiness of mind that realizes the nature of existence. Everything is subject to decay and will eventually change form or die. Nothing will remain the same forever. I am subject to aging. Aging is unavoidable. I am subject to illness. Illness is unavoidable. I am subject to death. Death is unavoidable.

In our culture, death tends to be hidden. Oftentimes there is not a lot of encouragement to reflect upon death. I have met young adults who have never seen a corpse. It shocks me that people could live that long and never see a corpse. In India it isn't uncommon to see corpses. Once, while walking in Calcutta, I saw a woman lying in the street face up dressed in white. She was on a blanket and was obviously placed there by relatives or friends, who did not have enough money to buy the wood to cremate her. Some people placed coins next to her body as they passed.

The Thai monastery in which I was ordained had an open-air cremation tower at its center. Every couple of weeks a body placed in a simple wooden box would arrive in a small pick-up truck. Before the body was cremated, it was placed in the Meditation hall with the lid off and everyone had an opportunity to view the body and meditate on death. In preparation for the cremation, nothing is done to the body cosmetically which means, for example, that if the person died in a motorcycle accident, the body could be badly disfigured, bloated or blue. This is one form of Buddhist meditation - reflecting on the decomposition of a corpse. Eventually, the family arrives and there is a ceremony with chanting and blessings to the dead. The next morning the family returns with an urn to collect the ashes.

Personally, I experienced a lot of aversion to the whole situation. I would try to avoid it as much as possible. When they were cremating the body I would go to the corner of the monastery and do walking meditation, and try not to pay attention to what was happening, even though I could smell the smoke of the burning flesh. There was obvious discomfort with death and resistance to being reminded of it. I was in my early twenties then and it's understandable that a healthy young person wouldn't be drawn to reflecting

upon death. Perhaps in part it's the aging process itself as we experience it that inclines us toward more reflection on death. One of the things that I found refreshing about living in Asia is that they accept death as much as they do birth. The teaching of samsara and being born, dying and being reborn again are deeply rooted in Hindu and Buddhist cultures. This isn't to say that people don't feel deep sadness and grief when they lose a loved one. The pain of that loss is no different than anyone else's. There is simply acceptance of death as a part of life. We are subject to death. Death is unavoidable.

In the Buddhist tradition, the kind of reflections we've been speaking about are carried over into our vipassana meditation where we increasingly are able to see birth and death and ultimately the deathless more clearly. On one of the beams in the dining hall of a Thai monastery, the following is written in chalk: "There are no Thais. There are no Indians. There are no foreigners. There is only birth, death and the deathless."

This is what we are looking at every moment in our meditation practice. We witness the birth and death of sensations in the breath and body. We experience thoughts and emotions arising and passing. The whole sensory realm appears and disappears as we make contact with sounds, odors, tastes and whatever we are watching. Moment-to-moment awareness of the five aggregates of self — the body, perceptions, feelings, mind, and consciousness being born and dying — helps us to relate skillfully to the current circumstances of our lives. Awareness of the gaps between these experiences of body and mind, and the ability to rest our attention in these gaps is one of the doorways into the deathless. The Buddha referred to this as, "The unborn, the uncreated, and the undying." He also called it the unconditioned or nibbana. In our practice, although we emphasize looking at the aggregates and seeing them arise and cease, being born and dying, we also know that there is the deathless realm from which it is all taking place. It is the background of our experience and in being aware of the gaps between sensations, thoughts and moments of sense contact we realize suddenly or more gradually the deathless realm which is always there and was never born and will never die. The Pali word nibbana means cessation or to cool off what is hot. The torment of the mind cools off and eventually ceases into peace as we relate skillfully to what is arising for us in the present moment. At the same time, there is a deepening awareness of the deathless realm.

The fourth reflection: "I will grow different, separate from all that is dear and appealing to me."

I am separated from my wife and stepchildren. We were together for eleven years. My two stepchildren are college age and presently living in Minneapolis, which is where their mother is also living. Marriage, separation and the possibility of divorce are new experiences for me. When I saw this reflection on the bulletin board of the Forest Refuge it touched my heart deeply, because this is what I was going through. We separated a year ago last August and I have experienced a lot of emotions — both before we separated and now that we are apart. The most predominant feelings are sadness, loneliness, and, at times, despair. The loneliness is the most surprising because when I was a monk, living in seclusion for extended periods of time I rarely felt lonely. In fact, I would seek out seclusion in forests and caves. But years later when I returned to the U.S. and moved

to North Carolina, I started to experience feelings of loneliness. Besides falling in love with my wife Glenda, the other reason I wanted an intimate relationship was so that I wouldn't continue to feel lonely. In fact, I didn't feel lonely for eleven years. However, when we separated the loneliness returned. It was like the loneliness was sitting in my mind for eleven years lying dormant and given a change in circumstances of life, there it was again. The loneliness is a tough one. A part of me wants to escape it in whatever way I can. Fear of the loneliness engenders feelings of being separate from what I love, which are my wife and stepchildren. Being kind to my fear and loneliness helps me to stay open to all the joy and pain in my heart. The emotions of sadness, grief, anger and despair, as well as deep love and gratitude, are all a part of what I've been experiencing this past year. When I'm separated from what I love and cherish there is pain. It teaches me that there is nothing in this world that I can hold onto — absolutely nothing. I can't cling to my body, emotional life or my relationships with people. I can't even cling to this sangha and the wonderful retreats we have in Michigan. I know one day that I will die or the retreats will end and everything will change. Each time I come to Ann Arbor I reflect on the impermanence of these retreats. This helps me not cling to them and it fills me with gratitude for your presence and the time we spend together.

The fifth reflection: "I am the owner of my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and live dependent on my actions. Whatever I do for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir."

This reflection speaks of Kamma (Pali) or Karma (Sanskrit) and means action. Most of us have our share of karma. When I see the billboard advertisement that reads "Got Milk?" I think "Got Karma?" When people ask me the favorite Buddhist question "if there is no self then what gets reborn?" I answer "unresolved karma." This reflection is a valuable one, because it helps me to take responsibility for my thoughts, speech and actions and how I am manifesting my energy on a daily basis. Peace and well-being arise when I act skillfully; sorrow and suffering arise when I do not.

In my relationship with my family, basically I was a very good father and husband. But I did some things which were unskillful and created pain for my wife, children and myself. None of us are perfect. Some of my actions contributed to the demise of our relationship and for this I am deeply sorrowful. There is a practice called the Seven-Branch Prayer, which is part of the Bodhicitta or Awakened Heart teachings. The Seven-Branch Prayer works effectively with habitual states of mind, such as fear, blame, anger and greed. One of the pieces of the Prayer is called Compassionate Regret. We regret the things that we have said and done that have hurt ourselves and other people. We also have compassion for our humanness and the pain that we all experience.

There can be healing when we take responsibility for our actions and at the same time have compassionate regret for how those actions caused pain for others. There are six other steps to the Seven Branch Prayer that I won't go into now, which contribute to resolution of these habitual patterns. I have never found shame and guilt to be helpful mind states that heal. Compassionate Regret keeps my heart open to everyone involved in a painful situation such as the one with my family.

We will end by reflecting on these five subjects. I will write them on the board so you can copy them down and use them as part of your practice. Spending a few minutes at the beginning or ending of a sitting reading and reflecting on them can be helpful. You may find that one or two of them speak especially strongly to you at any given time and can become a focus for spiritual inquiry. Again the five are:

I am subject to aging. Aging is unavoidable.

I am subject to illness. Illness is unavoidable.

I am subject to death. Death is unavoidable.

I will grow different, separate from all that is dear and appealing to me.

I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and live dependent on my actions. Whatever I do for good or for evil, to that I will fall heir.

The last line reads: We should often reflect on this.

Thank You!



SPIRITUAL COUNSELING & MEDITATION INTERVIEWS

Spiritual Counseling addresses both psychological and spiritual issues, honoring the wisdom of many paths. It is helpful for people who are just beginning to explore their psychological and emotional experience. This counseling can also be relevant for those who have been in psychotherapy and now wish a more transpersonal counseling perspective that helps them know more fully their divinity. Sessions may also include instruction in mindfulness meditation. Rates for counseling meetings are on a sliding scale.

Meditation interviews are also offered and are similar to interviews given at retreats. The content of the session is about your meditation and what you are experiencing in your practice. Meditation interviews are available on a dana (generosity) basis. John is welcoming new clients at his Durham office and also does telephone consultations. He can be reached for more information or to make an appointment at 919-286-4754 and at john@newhope-sanhga.org.

Learn How To Meditate

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 9AM-4PM, DURHAM, NC

During this day together we will discuss and practice three aspects of Mindfulness Meditation: The Ground: The fundamentals and how to meditate. The Path: What resistances and challenges are we likely to encounter and how can we work with them. The Fruit: Integrating mindfulness into our daily lives. The workshop will include instruction and practice in sitting, standing and walking meditation along with discussions relevant to mindfulness meditation. Bring a bag lunch if you want to eat a mindful meal at the workshop site. Anyone wanting to sit on the floor, bring a folded blanket and cushion. Comfortable chairs are provided.

Offered by John at The Bishop's House Room 107 (East Campus) through Duke Continuing Education. Fee \$125. Fee includes a copy of Mindfulness In Plain English by Bhante Gunaratana, which will be given to each participant. Register online at www.learnmore.duke.edu/shortcourse or by phone 919-684-6000. Have the following information ready: Class ID# 9547 and MC/Visa information. To register by mail call 919-684-6259 during business hours and ask for a copy of the fall short course program which includes a registration form. Advance registration is recommended. Registration is possible at the class site, space permitting. Materials fee: \$2, due at beginning of first class (exact amount please)

Suggested reading: Mindfulness In Plain English by Bhante Gunaratana. The workshop fee includes a copy of this book. You will receive, at no extra cost, a copy of the book by mail after you register or at the workshop itself if you register less than a week before the workshop date..

Mindfulness Meditation: *The Art of Living in the Present Moment*

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 9AM-4PM, RALEIGH, NC

Fee \$85, Course ID Number (CE 1044), 0.6 CEU available

Instructor: John. Held at Meredith College. Register by requesting a Community Outreach Fall 2005 Catalog available at: Meredith College, Graduate and Professional Studies, c/o Anne Henderson, 3800 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC 27607-5298 or register online at www.meredith.edu/academics or call 919-760-8450

Suggested reading "Seeking the Heart of Wisdom" by Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield.



THE CONTRARY WAY

Boulders waste no grief
Rocks do not cry out in fear
The lark's home is on the wing
Rabbits do not cling to what is dear.

The rose gives freely of its scent
The hippo rolls in mud with joy
The earthworm claims no honor of descent:

Those who embrace ten thousand things
This world cannot destroy.

Anna Louise Reynolds



FALL 2005
leap of faith

Meditation Retreat
November 4-6
See page 3.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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