

# leap of faith

THE NEW HOPE SANGHA NEWSLETTER

FALL 2009

Two days of Spiritual Inquiry and Insight Meditation November 14–15. See page 5.

## Jumping the Karma Shark

*Making spiritual progress in the face of habitual patterns*

A dhamma talk given by Jim Jarvis at the New Hope Sangha bi-monthly meeting, July 7, 2009

*The inspiration for this talk came while on the Emerald Isle beach retreat. I was struck by how effortless it was to rest in awareness. Of course, I was at the beach, in noble silence, with beautiful weather, two wonderful teachers, and gourmet food being served. Everything was perfect for that experience.*

I was able to see how the patterns of my practice were set up. How I work on one aspect of the dhamma for several months, and once I understand it, penetrate it, or work through it, I allow myself to move to another focus. These points of practice can last for a couple of days or for as long as several months. The pattern feels very secure. It's logical and it makes sense that if I keep working with life lessons as they are presented, and work mindfully and skillfully with these lessons, then surely spiritual progress will come.

While at the beach retreat, with a greater perspective, I saw how I was trying to get all conditions in perfect order so that eventually, down the road, I could completely release all conditions. As crazy as that was, that was what I was requiring of myself. Why in the world was I putting myself through all this work? Here on this retreat I could let go of everything. Why should I go through all the work of learning how to let go of everything, when I could in this moment simply just let go. Our spiritual path leads us to the freedom of pure awareness, spaciousness, voidness, or the unconditioned. Why not just rest in pure awareness right now?

Tonight I want to talk about a topic that can't be described. A topic that words can only point to. Tonight's topic is awareness. I would like to present some techniques that have helped move my practice into the direct experience of awareness. These techniques are from my personal experience, so please don't think of them as coming directly from Buddhist teachings.

Online you can find a series of dhamma talks given by Bhikkhu Bodhi. They cover the basic fundamentals of Theravada Buddhism. They are a very long and very dry and amazingly full

of important Buddhist teachings. This is a quote from a session on Rebirth and Kamma:

Not all kamma has to ripen as matter of strict necessity. Every kamma, every volitional action has a tendency to ripen, but it doesn't always ripen inevitably. Kamma is like seeds. Seeds ripen if they meet the right conditions, but if they don't meet the right conditions then they remain as seeds. And if they are destroyed then they can never ripen at all in the future. "Similarly" it can be said of kamma, that kamma pushes for an opportunity to mature. It has a tendency to mature. If the kamma meets the right conditions, if it finds the opportunity, then it will bring its results. But if it doesn't meet those conditions, then it won't ripen. And it can even be destroyed by other kamma.

It's true that very often we have to reap the results of our past kammās. But the important point to understand is that kamma is volitional action. And volitional action takes place in the present. Always and only in the present. This means that in the present we have the ability to change the entire direction of our lives.

I take Bhikkhu Bodhi's quote to mean when we are resting in the present moment, and we truly understand what being in the present moment is, we see conditioned reality as it truly is: impermanent, containing no independent self, and having the nature of suffering. When we understand that completely, we are able to let go. When we are able to grasp at absolutely nothing, then no

*continued on page 6*

**Wednesdays, October 7, 14, 21, and 28  
Durham, NC**

*Workshop series  
The Chakras: Working with  
the Energy Body*

As a result of my work with Taoist Meditation and most recently the time that I have spent at The Casa de Dom Inacio in Brazil with John Of God, I will be offering a Four Week Series of Classes on Wednesday evening on the Chakra System. The chakras are energy centers that exist within our energy body and are located on an "electric" pipeline that runs in front of our spine. These energy centers are invisible to the naked eye, but can be felt especially as we tune our awareness into their presence and the energy, known as prana or chi, that moves through them. This energy affects our physical, emotional and mental well-being. When these energy centers are blocked because of the arising of fear or anger, for example, then we can tell the difference in our energy system and how we feel. When the chakras are open, we often feel profound feelings of joy and peace as this divine energy moves through us.

During these four sessions, through the use of guided meditations, visualization exercises, use of tuning forks and chanting, we will explore eight energy centers and our experience of them. Each of these chakras are related to certain aspects of our lives, such as survival and instincts, sexuality, power and will, yearning and love and feeling connected to reality or our divinity. We will come to know through our experience which of these centers may be blocked at any given time and what it feels like to have all of them open and the energy moving freely through our astral body. My experience of this is the feeling of "Being Home" in its most profound sense.

I look forward to sharing this chakra work with you, as it is something which has been an important part of my daily practice for the last three years. It has helped to heal my physical body, balance my emotions, open me to spiritual guidance and allow me to more fully inhabit my spirit body of light. Be sure to check it out!

**Times:** Wednesdays, October 7, 14, 21, and 28 from 7:30-9:00 PM

**Location:** We will be meeting in the Chapel of the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at 4907 Garret Rd. in Durham. Please see our website [www.newhopesangha.org](http://www.newhopesangha.org) for directions. The meditations will be done in chairs, which will be provided. Bring extra cushions if needed.

**Fee:** There will be a \$20 fee for the entire four sessions that will cover the cost of renting the chapel at ERUUF. John will be offering this series of classes on a dana (generosity) basis. At each session, participants will have the opportunity to offer dana.

**Registration:** Please pre-register by sending a \$20 check made out to the Durham Meditation Center and mailed to: John Orr 1214 Broad Street #2 Durham, NC 27705. Registration can also be done at the first class, but please let me know of your intention to participate. It is helpful if participants can attend all four sessions if possible. For any further information contact John Orr at 919-943-0438 or [john@newhopesangha.org](mailto:john@newhopesangha.org).

**October 10  
Raleigh, NC**

*Workshop  
Mindfulness Meditation*

**Instructor:** John Orr

**Time:** Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**Location:** Meredith College  
**Fee:** \$70 for Class ID #1044, 0.6 CEU

**Mail:** Make checks payable to Meredith College and mail registration and payment to:

Meredith College Community Programs 3800 Hillsborough Street Raleigh, NC 27607-5298  
Online: Register and pay online at: <http://www.meredith.edu/community-programs/health-wellness-fitness.htm>

**Phone:** Call Community Programs at 919-760-8450 with Class ID 1044 to pay with MasterCard, VISA or American Express. Bring a folded blanket and cushion if you wish to sit on the floor.

**October 17  
Hillsboro, NC**

*Half-Day Retreat  
Take some time out to nurture  
your meditation and sit with  
the sangha.*

This half-day retreat will include sitting and walking meditation and except for some chanting will be held in silence. For those who would like to stay after we finish and socialize over tea and some lunch, you are welcome. Just bring something simple in the way of food to share with others. This is a good opportunity to greet and meet each other more personally.

**Arrival:** Please plan on arriving between 9.30 and 9.50 am

**Location:** John Orr's home at 2301 Hermitage Rd. Hillsboro, NC 27278. For directions, it's best to e-mail John at [john@newhopesangha.org](mailto:john@newhopesangha.org) or call 919-943-0438. Please e-mail for directions no later than Friday, October 16 as I presently do not have internet access at home.

**What to bring:** Participants should bring a cushion to sit on. Some chairs will be available.

There is no fee, however dana is always appreciated. Most of all I wish to open my home for these sangha meditations and for you to bless my home with your presence. I hope you can join us!

**October 23-25  
Ann Arbor, MI**

*Residential Retreat with  
Barbara, Aaron, and  
John Orr*

This retreat is for experienced meditators who have taken at least two continuing Deep Spring Center classes or attended one residential retreat; for others, permission from Barbara Brodsky is required before registering. To register or for information, contact Mary or Terry Gliedt at 734.369.2628 or [retreat@hps.com](mailto:retreat@hps.com).

**October 31  
Greensboro, NC**

*Mindfulness Meditation*

**Instructor:** John Orr

**Time:** Saturday from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

**Location:** Unity Church in Greensboro: 1935 Opal Drive Greensboro, NC 27403  
Suggested donation: \$40.

For information contact Suzanne Hidore at [thesage@theinneri.com](mailto:thesage@theinneri.com) or call 336-420-1896.

**November 14-15  
Mebane, NC**

*Two days of Insight  
Meditation and spiritual  
inquiry*

Non Residential Retreat with Barbara Brodsky, Aaron and John at Stone House, a beautiful center on 70 acres near Chapel Hill. See page 5 of this newsletter for details.

NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is usually published twice each year and is offered freely. Your donations allow us to continue to publish the newsletter. If you would like to contribute to the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, then please make a check out to the Durham Meditation Center and mail to 1214 Broad Street #2, Durham, NC 27705.

**November 20-22  
Wilmington, NC**

*Mindfulness Meditation Workshop: A weekend with John Orr at The Open Space*

**Location:** 411 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, NC

**Friday, November 20, 7pm to 8pm: Public Talk**

“The Art of Living Mindfully: How to Nurture a Daily Meditation Practice”

Following the Buddhist tradition, the Friday talk will be offered on a Dana (Generosity) or Love Offering basis.

**Saturday, November 21, 10am to 5pm: Mindfulness Meditation Practice**

This can be a wonderful way to learn meditation or to deepen one’s practice. Beginners, as well as the more experienced, are welcome to join us. We will break for an hour lunch at 1pm. The fee for this session is \$60 and \$40 for those who cannot afford the full fee. Pre-registration is encouraged. To hold a space, please send a non-refundable deposit of \$25, made payable to The Open Space. For more information about the weekend & registration, contact Elena Pezzuto at (910) 763-8813.

**Sunday, November 22:  
Spiritual Counseling for  
Individuals**

Spiritual Counseling addresses both psychological and spiritual issues, honoring the wisdom of many paths. Spiritual direction is a central focus in the counseling. Rates for counseling meetings are on a sliding scale based on your income and ability to pay. For further information and to make an appointment call John Orr at 919-943-0438 or at john@newhopesangha.org.

**December 5  
Durham, NC**

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

**Instructor:** John Orr

**Time:** Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

**Location:** Duke East Campus:107 The Bishop’s House

**Course Fee:** \$85; Enroll by 10/22 \$75. Register online through Duke University Continuing Studies at [www.learnmore.duke.edu/week-end/courses/register](http://www.learnmore.duke.edu/week-end/courses/register) or by phone 919-684-6259. Have the following information ready: Class ID 12681 and MC/Visa information. Advance registration is recommended.

**Bring:** A bag lunch if you wish. A folded blanket and cushion if you want to sit on the floor. Chairs are available. Textbook Recommended: *Mindfulness in Plain English* by Henepola Gunaratana ISBN#0-86171-064-9.

**December 28-Jan. 4  
Hot Springs, NC**

*New Years Retreat with John at the Southern Dharma Retreat Center near Asheville, NC*

The winter season is a beautiful time of year to be on the side of

the mountain at Southern Dharma where the center will hold the space for our retreat. Join us for a week of quiet practice that will include instruction in insight meditation (vipassana), loving kindness meditation, evening dharma talks, chanting from various spiritual traditions, optional yoga, group discussion, and individual meetings when requested. People from all meditation and spiritual traditions are welcome.

For registration and information contact the Southern Dharma Retreat Center, 1661 West Rd., Hot Springs, NC 28743. Call: 828-622-7112 or <http://southerndharma.org/descriptions/Orr.htm>

*Retreats in 2010—Mark  
Your Calendars*

**February 19-21  
Mebane, NC**

Weekend Retreat with Barbara Brodsky, Aaron and John Orr. Held at the Stone House, this retreat can be residential or non-residential and is open to everyone.

**April 24-May 1  
Emerald Isle, NC**

This retreat for senior students experienced in meditation will be held at a large house overlooking dunes and a quiet beach. It is led by Barbara, Aaron and John. If you would like more information about this retreat or are not sure what constitutes being a senior student, then contact John at john@newhopesangha.org or call 919-943-0438.

**Dana** (pronounced “dah-na”) is a Pali word meaning “gift” or “giving.” It is closely related to the virtue of generosity and is expressed in many forms—the offering and sharing of our time, energy, knowledge/expertise, material items and financial resources. Dana is a purely volitional act of giving in which we develop our ability to let go, convey our compassion and caring, demonstrate our commitment, and acknowledge our interdependence and connectedness.

Come visit

# John of God

**at his Healing Center  
in Abadiânia, Brazil**

with official Casa guides:



**January 10 - 24, 2010 - with Barbara Brodsky**  
**August 1 - 15, 2010 - with John Orr**  
 January, 2011 & summer - dates to be finalized

**[www.vipassanahealing.com](http://www.vipassanahealing.com)**

Contact: John Orr: [John@vipassanaHealing.com](mailto:John@vipassanaHealing.com)  
 Barbara Brodsky: [Barbara@vipassanaHealing.com](mailto:Barbara@vipassanaHealing.com)

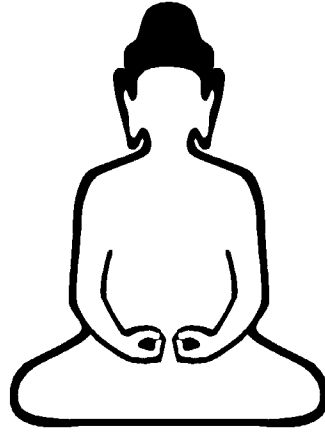
## NEW HOPE SANGHA

# Twice Monthly Meditations & Dharma Discussion

**O**ur community, the New Hope Sangha, will be holding meditations and dharma discussion the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month, at the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Garrett Rd. in Durham. We will meet from 7:00–9:00pm in the Chapel, which adjoins the main Sanctuary. This is an ideal location, which is accessible from anywhere in the Triangle. The first hour will be sitting and chanting followed by a walking meditation period. The second hour we will have a dharma talk and/or discussion. Any questions about your meditation practice or spiritual life are welcomed. If you are late arriving and you hear chanting you may enter quietly. If you arrive late and the chapel is quiet we ask you to wait or sit in the sanctuary or other areas. The chapel door will be opened again during the walking period. We will conclude the evening by 9:00.

Please plan on arriving by 6:50 so we can be in our seats by 7:00. This is an open group and all are welcome to attend. If you are new to meditation and need meditation instructions please come to the Chapel by 6:50 pm and one of the group leaders will meet with you separately to give you instructions and guidance in the practice. If you have any other questions concerning the group please call Jim Jarvis at his office 309-2922 or e-mail him at [jjjarvis@mindspring.com](mailto:jjjarvis@mindspring.com). There is no fee charged. There will be a dana (gift) basket available to help pay the cost of the room rental and a dana basket for the teacher.

The New Hope Sangha is a resource for anyone who wishes to learn and practice the dharma. This is a nondenominational community that respects the wisdom of various spiritual traditions. Our meditation practices are grounded in three Buddhist practices: Vipassana (Mindfulness) Meditation,



Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation and Dzogchen (Non Dual Awareness) Meditation. To facilitate this process we have set up a web site (see: [www.newhopesangha.org](http://www.newhopesangha.org)) that will give up-to-date information about the meditation programs we are offering, as well as dharma talks by various teachers and other useful information. Our newsletter, "Leap Of Faith" is available online and in hard copy for those who request it. Send requests to [office@newhopesangha.org](mailto:office@newhopesangha.org).

### DIRECTIONS TO ERUUF AT 4907 GARRETT RD.

Raleigh/Cary (east), Charlotte/Greensboro (west) via I-40: Exit 270 (15/501). Go north toward Durham. At Garrett Road, turn right continuing 7/10 mile. Turn left into the entrance. Raleigh/Wake Forest via I-85/70 After Rt.70 merges with I-85, Exit from the left lane onto 15/501 toward Chapel Hill. At Garrett Road (BP Station), turn left and go 7/10 mile to entrance on the left. Greensboro/Hillsborough via I-85/70 Exit Rt. 147 and Exit onto 15/501 toward Chapel Hill. At Garrett Road (BP Station), turn left and go 7/10 mile to entrance on the left. As you enter the church grounds, bear to the right, and park in the lot next to the sanctuary. The chapel adjoins the sanctuary. For detailed maps visit [www.eruuf.org](http://www.eruuf.org).

### *Raleigh Meditation Group*

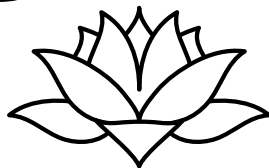
The Raleigh Meditation Group, which is an affiliate of the New Hope Sangha, meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month from 6:30-8:00 pm. Please contact Tom Barrie at 919-605-1476 or email [dharma55@aol.com](mailto:dharma55@aol.com) for meeting location and other information.

## SPIRITUAL COUNSELING & MEDITATION INTERVIEWS

**S**piritual 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 (gift) basis. John is welcoming new clients at his Durham office and also does telephone consultations. As an interfaith minister, he also officiates at weddings and funerals. For more information or to make an appointment call 919-943-0438 or email [john@newhopesangha.org](mailto:john@newhopesangha.org).

# Take Refuge in the Silence



## Two Days of Spiritual Inquiry and Insight Meditation

*New Hope Sangha's Nonresidential Fall Retreat, November 14 & 15, 2009*

**A** 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. Beginners, as well as the more experienced, are welcome to attend. There will be instructions, practice, dharma talks, chanting from various spiritual traditions and noble silence.

**THE TEACHERS** **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 35 years. She is the channel for the discarnate entity, Aaron. **Aaron** is a being of light who has evolved beyond the need to return to the physical plane. We have a special page on Aaron at our web site, [newhopesangha.org](http://newhopesangha.org). **John Orr** received Theravada Buddhist ordination and training for eight years while living in Thailand and India. He has been teaching meditation and leading retreats since 1980. John is the guiding teacher of New Hope Sangha and teaches at Duke University.

**LOCATION AND TIMES** The retreat will be held at **Stone House** in Mebane, NC. We are once again excited to be holding the retreat at Stone House. This is a beautiful center on 70 acres of rolling countryside. **We are offering this retreat as commuting only, to minimize expenses for attendees.** We hope this format will help meet the needs of our community during these challenging economic times. If you require overnight accommodations, contact Cindy Selkirk. Check-in will begin at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday. We will end by 9:00 p.m. Saturday evening to allow time to return home. On Sunday we will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m. and the retreat will end at 4:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday lunch, and Saturday dinner will be provided. About a week before the retreat you will receive directions to Stone House along with other information about the weekend.

**REGISTRATION** The fees for the retreat include facility use, three vegetarian meals, Barbara's teacher travel and advertising. Barbara and John will offer the retreat on a "dana" generosity basis. Participants will have the opportunity to offer dana 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. A deposit will hold a place in the retreat, with the remaining fee due on arrival. The fee is nonrefundable unless there is a waiting list. **For more information call Cindy Selkirk at (919) 932-3637 or e-mail her at [retreat@newhopesangha.org](mailto:retreat@newhopesangha.org).**

N E W H O P E S A N G H A

*Nonresidential Fall Retreat, November 14 & 15, 2009*

### REGISTRATION FORM

To register for the retreat, return this form to Durham Meditation Center, c/o 212 Glade Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Check a box below

Early registration enclosed \$110 ..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(must be paid in full and received by October 23)

Registration after October 23

Full payment enclosed \$130 ..... \_\_\_\_\_

Deposit enclosed \$80 ..... \_\_\_\_\_  
(Deposit is nonrefundable unless there is a waiting list)

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

REMAINING DUE AT BEGINNING OF RETREAT \_\_\_\_\_

This will be the first retreat I have attended

How did you hear about our retreat? \_\_\_\_\_

*Make checks payable to Durham Meditation Center Registration deadline 11/6/09*

# Jumping the Karma Shark CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

unwholesome karma can arise. In fact, if we are resting in pure awareness, no karma of any kind can arise. We are not creating any action that leads to a following action.

Awareness is this present moment. We don't have to go out and arrange the conditions for our spiritual progress. In this present moment, resting in awareness, we have achieved our goal. Awareness is our goal. There is no one doing any holding, no one sitting, there is just awareness. And by resting in awareness, we have jumped the karma shark.

Karma means action. For example, when I pick this object up, if I loosen my fingers, then the action from that karma is that the object will fall to the ground. The next action is that it will bounce. Next, it's going to fall forward. The next action is that I'm going to lean forward, I'm going to pick it up, I'm going to put it to the side. So right there was a series of karmic events. There was a self creating that karma and that karma played out. There were a series of events that unfolded, each as a result of the previous event.

Those of you who have been coming here for several years know that John focuses on the Chain of Dependent Origination, which is also this karma unfolding. The part we focus most on is going from sense base, to contact, to feeling, to craving. So the point of action here, as John teaches it, is when we go from feeling to craving. For example: I go from hearing a bird to having a pleasant feeling from hearing the bird, and then I might move into craving. For me, since it is a positive feeling, I don't want the bird chirping to go away, so I'm grasping the chirping. When we are resting in awareness, we are aware of contact, then the pleasant feeling. But because we don't get wrapped up in the stories, we do not move into craving. For me what would happen in that moment is hearing the bird chirping, then pleasant feeling arises. I am aware of pleasant feeling. Pleasant feeling is just an object that has arisen. Then there is the sound of the bird again, and pleasant feeling arises again. There's no "I want the bird to continue singing." There's no craving or grasping. If the bird stops singing, then the next object in awareness is quiet, or I may hear a different sound, or unpleasant feeling may arise. But there is no grasping, so I am not perpetuating the karma. The series of karmic events does not move into craving, and awareness simply moves to the next sense contact.

*Q: Jim, what do you mean by stories?*

What is meant by stories is mindlessly following the flow of one action to the next action, and so on. When there's, say, the chirping of a bird, and we are resting in pure awareness, there's just a bird chirping. But the stories begin when a split happens. There is an object, for example, a thought that gets mentally labeled as "me." The sound of the bird is mentally labeled as "other than me." We get a kind of tension and separation from what is actually going on. What is really happening is a pleasant feeling, then a pleasant thought, then the chirping of the bird, and then another thought. If we investigate the moment, this is all we see: chirping, feeling, thought, chirping, feeling, thought. If we get caught up in stories, caught up

in believing in this artificial split between me and other, then there's "I want the bird to chirp, it's too quiet, I've been sitting too long, I want the bird to come back," and the stories start going. It is that imagined split that empowers the karma to start flowing. So a story is like riding the karma train.

Now let's do something unusual. We are going to find out what awareness is. We will take two thoughts. We are going to mentally articulate them. The first thought will be, "I feel the contact of the floor against my legs." The second thought will be, "the air is warm." So let's get quiet, and mentally say these two thoughts. When the first thought ends, and before we move on to the second thought, notice the space between the thoughts. Then repeat the two thoughts again. As we do this over and over again, pay more and more attention to the space between the thoughts. *(Pause)* Between verbalizations of the thoughts, we focus on the space. What is in the space? What is the space? *(doing the exercise for a few minutes here)*

OK. I wanted this exercise to be short. This practice is similar to paying attention to the pauses between the breath. But hopefully the thoughts were loud, and the space was quiet. Would anyone like to share what they experienced?

*Q: After the first thought, I had to remember, what was the second thought? I had gotten involved in the space, so I had to have the intention to go to the other thought.*

So there was a spaciousness there and maybe a little bit of dissolving of self.

*Q: I was uncomfortable before, with the heat. After I said the first thought, the heat was no longer uncomfortable. It was just elements of being, it was strange, a transformation of what I thought was discomfort into acceptance.*

That's a wonderful insight. Let's talk a little bit about acceptance. There is a saying by Krishnamurti as quoted in Eckhart Tolle's book *A New Earth*. Krishnamurti reveals to his audience, "Would you like to know my secret? This is it. I don't mind what happens." Wow, that really says it all. Simply accepting all that is happening.

In the last couple of months I've had a mantra come to me over and over again: the mantra is "allow." When I feel resistance, the mantra comes up, "just allow, do not cling." Simply allowing anything to arise. For that allowing to happen, there has to be a diminishing of self, and just allowing aggregates to arise and pass away. A total acceptance of the way things are.

I sometimes view awareness as a light that shines on an object. It is as if the object doesn't exist until I cast my light beam of awareness on it. Sometimes that is a nice trick to bring me into pure awareness. Again, there is no one there. There is just an awareness of the object. There is no split between me and the object, simply the awareness of the object.

There is a quote by Ajahn Chah, when he speaks of resting in awareness that I will paraphrase here. He said about the practice, "We are leaving the childhood of reflective thought behind." By reflective thought he is referring to stories. Being an adult means

resting in awareness—not holding on and not pushing away. Not being swept away by the karmic flow of reflective thought.

Let's do another exercise now. Again, this is an exercise of mine, not from a teacher. I find it extremely helpful. This exercise works a lot of times during a sitting when I get caught just sitting in relative reality. It uses your imagination. Sometimes the little mental trick of pretending can help break you through into understanding.

This exercise uses choiceless awareness: there is no one primary object, such as the breath. Whatever arises, let it arise, and know that it is arising. It becomes the primary object. We are not going to have only one object to focus on. We are focusing on whatever arises. I will be talking during this exercise.

Let's close our eyes. Take a deep breath, as if you are getting ready to do your normal meditation. Let's pretend that if something is not in your awareness, then it doesn't exist. The world only exists because you are aware of it. In this moment you hear my voice. It is the primary object. Your awareness is falling on my voice. Your awareness is like a light shining on my voice. People and objects in other places don't exist. My voice is all that exists in this moment. If a thought comes up, then that thought is the only thing that exists. And it exists only because you are aware that it exists. *(Pause)* Imagine your awareness is creating this world. Objects that arise into your awareness and fall out of your awareness are only there because of your awareness. Only objects in your awareness exist. *(Pause)* The sound of that cicada exists only because your awareness touched it. *(Pause)* In a sense, you are playing God here. This whole world is coming into being because you are aware of it. *(Pause)* My voice exists only because you are aware of my voice. *(Pause)* If you investigate deeply into what is happening in this moment, you can't actually find my voice. You can only find your awareness of my voice. *(Pause)* Your awareness is all that is present—*(Pause)* awareness of voice—*(Pause)* awareness of lights—*(Pause)* awareness of body sensations. *(Pause)* Let's continue playing with this for a while. *(continuing in silence for a few minutes)*

There is only awareness of my voice. There is only awareness of the air conditioner. There is only awareness of the sensations in your body. It doesn't exist if it's not in awareness. *(Pause)* Everything, absolutely everything everywhere is awareness. *(continuing in silence for a few minutes)*

OK. How was that? Any comments? Anybody care to describe the indescribable?

*Q: It feels like going to the underbelly of reality.*

Or maybe we live in the underbelly and we are finally sampling the real thing.

For me there is a sense of expansion in that exercise. It's not my body and it's not my mind, but I feel more out here *(gesturing outwards)*, more than just this physical body. And sometimes it has a quality of radiating, like the world is radiating from my awareness. Almost like the sun, a light bursting out. I'm aware of the cicadas, and I'm aware of thoughts, and the light of awareness is shining out and lighting up the world. If my awareness doesn't hit it, it doesn't exist.

And of course everyone here is doing the same thing at the same time. We are all co-creating the world with our awareness. When I feel caught up in day-to-day experiences, I can easily

slip into a feeling of expansiveness by quickly using this exercise.

*Q: I come from a tradition of Quakers, where the value on reflective thinking is very high. I don't think I want to let that go, but there's a difference in my more recent learning and reading.*

I think it's important to know that we are focusing on awareness, so we are focusing on the unconditioned. John has pointed out in the past that we live in both the conditioned and the unconditioned. I am by no means saying that the unconditioned is the true reality and to deny the reality of living the conditioned world. We obviously can't only rest in the awareness and never create karma. We have to interact in the world. The purpose of this talk is to for us to become familiar with awareness or the unconditioned, something we don't often talk about. We are speaking of using awareness as the primary object. This talk is presenting techniques that will help us experience what experienced meditators work so hard to get to. It's just right here in the present moment. It's embarrassingly simple. All you have to do is get to the space between those two thoughts.

*Q: First of all, I think there is a balance we are looking for. And when reflective thought is the skillful behavior, great. That's different from letting the mind just go on and proliferate. And then there's the commitment that we make when we are doing insight meditation, to go to the direct experience, which is not the thinking.*

And once we develop familiarity with awareness, and it becomes a bigger part of our lives, then we are able to go out into the conditioned world, and behave more skillfully.

In our practice, we are allowing the world to unfold. We are not creating "me" and "other," or when we do, we are aware of that artificial split. We are allowing events to happen, allowing the aggregates to come into existence and fade back out. When I am resting in awareness, my point of view tends to pull back from the conditioned world a bit, and sees it as a shallow plane, with my awareness including the conditioned and also the space around it. You see the back and forth, the karma and conditions happening on this one level, but you feel that your being is greater than that one level. As your practice deepens, and you learn more about awareness, the awareness gets richer and deeper, and the plane of conditions gets relatively thinner.

You are experiencing the space around the string of events that is your life unfolding. It is as if you are watching a Macy's Christmas parade. You are watching the parade from several floors up in a skyscraper. The parade is fascinating and wonderful, and it's why you are here, but you also see beyond the parade to the skyline around it. You see that there is so much more here than just the parade. This expanded view is awareness, and even though it's not conditioned, it becomes the primary object. You become so familiar with it that it becomes your primary object in your daily practice. In time you may want to explore a few floors higher in that skyscraper and look at the world from that even greater point of view. The view just keeps getting deeper and deeper, better and better.

I invite you, during the next two weeks when you sit down to meditate, to put aside your current spiritual work and simply take awareness as your object. Maybe one of these two exercises we did tonight will help you. Go right to awareness and rest there. Jump the karma shark and leave karma behind. ☸

# Half-Day Retreat

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 10AM-1PM, HILLSBORO, NC

Held at John Orr's home at 2301 Hermitage Rd., Hillsboro

This half-day retreat will include sitting and walking meditation and except for some chanting will be held in silence. For those who would like to stay after we finish and socialize over tea and some lunch, you are welcome. Just bring something simple in the way of food to share with others. This is a good opportunity to greet and meet each other more personally. More information on page 2, or call John at 919-943-0438.

## Workshop Series: The Chakras

WEDNESDAYS, OCTOBER 7, 14, 21, AND 28 FROM 7:30-9:00 PM, DURHAM, NC

Fee \$20. Instructor: John. Held at the Chapel of the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4907 Garrett Rd., Durham

During these four sessions, through the use of guided meditations, visualization exercises, use of tuning forks and chanting, we will explore eight energy centers and our experience of them. Each of these chakras are related to certain aspects of our lives, such as survival and instincts, sexuality, power and will, yearning and love and feeling connected to reality or our divinity. Please pre-register by sending a \$20 check made out to the Durham Meditation Center and mailed to: John Orr 1214 Broad Street #2 Durham, NC 27705. John will be offering this series of classes on a dana (generosity) basis. At each session, participants will have the opportunity to offer dana. Registration can also be done at the first class, but please let me know of your intention to participate. It is helpful if participants can attend all four sessions if possible. See page 2 for more information. For any further information contact John Orr at 919-943-0438 or john@newhopesangha.org.

FALL 2009  
*leap of faith*

Two days of Spiritual  
Inquiry and Meditation  
November 14-15  
See page 5.

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