



Mid America Dharma News

Summer Issue

Mid America Dharma Group

August, 1998

Old Yogi Retreat

You may be wondering when a meditator becomes an "old yogi." An old yogi is one who continues to know less and less about more and more until he or she knows absolutely nothing about anything. In other words, it is someone who has practiced long enough and consistently enough to cultivate a beginner's mind.

During the old yogi retreat, we will practice some of the essential exercises from the Satipatthana Sutta which are less addressed during typical retreats. Although we will begin with our breath, we will spend most of our time contemplating feelings, states of mind, and mental objects. The focus of our practice will be to break through our identification with the more subtle aspects of mind.

All thoughts use time and space as reference points. When we identify with and therefore cling to these thoughts, our perceptual overlays prevent us from experiencing the wisdom that is inherent in each new moment. The old yogi retreat is designed to support the process of not knowing as our life continues to unfold.

— Matthew Flickstein

The Practice of Generosity

Dana is an ancient Pali word which means generosity. According to the Theravadan tradition, all Dharma teaching is given freely and, in turn, the teachers are supported by the lay community. In Asia everything from temple structures to monks' meals are donations. But dana as a Dharma practice is much more than "tipping the till."

Traditionally the instruction of meditation starts with generosity and morality (sila.) These qualities are considered the foundation of meditation practice by cultivating a calm and spacious mind. True generosity is an inner quality of relinquishing through which we can achieve liberation. In a single act of giving we experience all four of the supreme states (Brahma Viharas): loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, and the first quality of an awakened mind (paramis): generosity. In giving we must also let go of 3 root impediments (kilesas): desire, ill will and separation.

The Buddha spoke about 3 levels of giving. The first level is one in which we give to accumulate merit or get something for ourselves. The second level comes from a deeper understanding of generosity and how it affects ourselves and others. The third and deepest level of giving comes from an experience of no separation between oneself and another (anatta.) Our ability to let go and open our hearts is mirrored by the depth of our ability to give. We give to free ourselves and we give to free others.

A Different Yet Familiar Retreat

Incense, chanting, a teacher in an ochre robe, these are just a few of the differences retreatants will encounter at Mid America Dharma's November three-and-nine day retreat with Ajahn Amaro and Mary Orr. But with difference will also be familiarity. The familiarity of Mary Orr, the familiarity of the practice of sitting and walking in the peacefulness of noble silence, the familiarity of the Abbey around us as we go about our day.

As some of you know, Theravadan monks don't eat past mid-day. This has been a practice for 2500 years. It is done to increase the time spent focused on meditation practice and to lessen the time in which one is focused on activities that revolve around the acquisition, preparation and consumption of food. In this retreat, participants will also be given the opportunity to participate in this ancient monastic practice. Rest assured that if you cannot or do not wish to participate, it will not be required. The Abbey will be serving a light tea of fruit, nut butters, and rice cakes for those who wish to take an evening meal.

The final difference has to do with housing. It is also a monastic tradition that married couples stay in different rooms during retreats. This, like the food precept, is done to insure that the retreatant's focus stays as unwavering and concentrated on practice as possible.

Please feel free to direct any questions that you might have about the particulars of this retreat to Mid America Dharma's retreat coordinator, Ginny Morgan. Ginny is available by both phone and e-mail and would welcome hearing from you. Her phone is (573) 875-8473. E-mail is <morgan@showme.missouri.edu>.

This Is Your Retreat Flyer for Fall Retreats!

Mid America Dharma Group is in the midst of trying to find a different format for our retreat notices. Because we have been successful in offering retreats, our mailing list has grown. Unfortunately this success has led to a higher mailing expense for retreats. In an effort to reduce these expenses, we are trying a new format for our Fall retreats.

The Retreat Schedule page in this newsletter is the only notice you will receive about these retreats. Please keep this information. And please let us know what you think of this new format.

As we begin to understand the truth of how things are, we see for ourselves what brings suffering in our lives, and what brings happiness and freedom.

—Joseph Goldstein

Mid America Dharma Hosts Sangha Leaders Workshop



Sangha Leaders Workshop Participants, left to right:
Front Row: Luke Lundemo (Jackson, MS), Ron Strong (Topeka, KS), Joyce Wyler (Kansas City, MO), Sky Kingsland (St. Louis, MO), Laurie Sanger (Dallas, TX), Robert Brumet (Kansas City, MO)
Middle Row: Gil Williams (St. Louis, MO), John van Keppel (Kansas City, KS), Cheryl Bunn (Kansas City, KS), Bob Mikesic (Lawrence, KS)
Back Row: Jim Sneegas (Springfield, MO), Phil Jones (Columbia, MO), Elizabeth Fryer (St. Louis, MO), John Meyer (Madison, WI), Joan Chohan (Davenport, IA), Ray Chohan (Davenport, IA), Ginny Morgan (Columbia, MO), Mary Strong (Topeka, KS), Joe McCormack (Jefferson City, MO), John Flaherty (Kansas City, MO), Bill Bunn (Kansas City, KS).

Twenty Sangha Leaders from a total of six states met in Columbia Missouri in April for a day long workshop. Participants were encouraged to share experiences of sangha leading, share ideas, and discuss some of the difficulties that they had encountered in running sitting groups. The workshop organizers hoped to promote interaction between Midwest sitting groups, a network of support for their leaders, and a forum in which ideas could be shared and difficulties resolved.

Participants agreed that it was both an enjoyable and a valuable experience and asked that the next workshop be two days long. That workshop is being planned for October, 1999. If you lead a sitting group or are involved in sangha leadership and are interested in attending next year's workshop, please contact the program coordinator, Ginny Morgan. Ginny's address is 717 Hilltop Drive, Columbia, MO. 65201 (573) 875-8473. E-mail is <morgan@showme.missouri.edu>.

Volunteering

Mid America Dharma Group is a non-profit organization run entirely by volunteer labor. If you are interested in volunteering with MADG, opportunities include:

- retreat managers
- retreat registrar
- fundraising
- accounting
- graphic design
- lawyer
- other assorted jobs.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Ginny Morgan at 717 Hilltop Dr., Columbia, MO 65201, phone (573) 875-8473, e-mail <morgan@showme.missouri.edu>.

Upcoming Mindfulness Events

These events are not sponsored by Mid America Dharma, but they may be of interest to you.

- August 22, St. Louis: The Thai Buddhist Temple, 890 Lindsay Lane, Florissant MO, will be offering a retreat taught by K. Khemananda, an internationally renowned Thai meditation teacher and scholar, on Saturday, August 22, 1998 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The retreat will cost \$15.00. Lunch will be provided. K. Khemananda will also be offering free talks on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd. For more information call the Temple at (314) 839-3115
- Sept. 22, St. Louis: Matthew Flickstein will talk about and sign his new book The Journey to the Center: A Meditation Workbook at 7:30 p.m. at Borders Bookstore, 11745 Olive Rd., Creve Coeur.
- Sept. 23, Columbia: Matthew Flickstein will talk about and sign his new book The Journey to the Center: A Meditation Workbook at a location to be announced. For more information, contact Ginny Morgan (573) 875-8473, e-mail <morgan@showme.missouri.edu> .
- Oct. 3, St. Louis: Jon & Myla Kabat-Zinn will speak on Mindful Parenting at COCA, 524 Trinity. You must register to attend. Contact Peggy Guest (314) 361-4227, ext. 2.

"O Practitioners," said the Buddha, "there is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize Nirvana. This way is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

"What are the Four Foundations?"

"One remains established in the observation of the body in the body, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.

"One remains established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned craving and every distaste for this life.

"One remains established in the observation of the mind in the mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.

One remains established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life."

-adapted from the Satipatthana Sutta

Mid America Dharma Group Fall 1998 Retreat Schedule

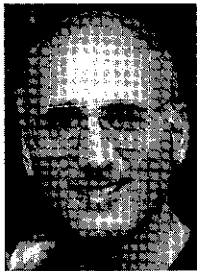
September 25-29, 1998, "Old Yogis" Retreat
 with
Matthew Flickstein
Camp Sabra, Lake of the Ozarks, MO

Instructions at this retreat will be geared toward deepening practice and erasing the lines between practice and everyday life.

Participation will be limited to 30 people. Each retreatant will have his or her own cabin.

For the purposes of this retreat, an "old yogi" is someone who:

- Has a consistent daily practice,
- Has been sitting for at least one year,
- Has attended a minimum of one silent Vipassana retreat,
- Has expanded the concept of practice to include every moment,
- Has begun to realize the value of being present with fear, and
- Has worked at keeping a "beginner's mind."



Matthew Flickstein, the resident teacher at the Forest Way Insight Meditation Center, has been practicing and teaching Vipassana meditation for over twenty-one years. At one time he ordained as a monk in the Theravadan Buddhist tradition.

His primary teacher has been Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, a Buddhist monk for over 57 years and author of, *Mindfulness in Plain English*. Matthew co-founded the Bhavana Monastic and Meditation Center with Bhante Gunaratana in 1982.

Prior to developing The Forest Way Insight Meditation Center Matthew was a psychotherapist and facilitated personal development workshops. His first book, *The Journey to the Center: A Meditation Workbook*, will be published by Wisdom in September, 1998.

November 6-9

or

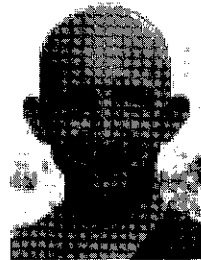
November 6-15, 1998

with

Ajahn Amaro & Mary Orr
Conception Abbey, Conception, MO

Retreatants have the option of registering for the first weekend (November 6-9) or the full nine days of this retreat.

The retreat will include elements of the monastic tradition as well as the lay-led tradition taught here before. There will be instructions in a variety of different meditation techniques as well as bowing and daily devotional and reflective chanting. Retreat participants are strongly encouraged to keep the 8 monastic precepts. For those who do not feel able to do this, a very light meal of fruit, crackers and nut butters will be available in the early evening. Candles and incense will be burned during devotional periods.



Ajahn Amaro began his training in Thailand in 1978 with Ajahn Chah and later joined Ajahn Sumedho in England. He was a senior monk at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England for some years. He now resides near San Francisco, California where he is the abbot of Abhayagiri Monastery. He is the author of *Silent Rain*, available for free distribution.



Mary Orr has practiced vipassana since 1983; prior to that she followed western contemplative practices. She worked as a therapist from 1977 - 1995. She was trained to teach by Jack Kornfield, and now teaches classes and retreats in Santa Cruz and throughout the United States. Mary has led a number of MADG retreats in the past.

REGISTRATION FORM

If you will be registering at different times for both retreats, please photocopy this form.

Return this form with check payable to:

Mid America Dharma Group, 13741 Pembroke Cr., Leawood, KS 66224

September 25-29 "Old Yogis" Retreat with Matthew Flickstein, Cost: \$225 (no doubles); Deposit: \$70

November 6-9 Retreat with Ajahn Amaro & Mary Orr, Cost: \$180, double; \$190, single; Deposit: \$70

November 6-15 Retreat with Ajahn Amaro & Mary Orr, Cost: \$365, double; \$390, single; Deposit: \$70

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Will you arrive after 8 p.m. on the first day? Y N

Is this your first insight meditation retreat? Y N

Please Print:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

_____ Please reserve a single room.

_____ Please reserve a double room.*

*Requested Roommate's Name: _____

Do you have special needs? _____

Information on Mid America Dharma Group Retreats

Insight Meditation offers an easily accessible way of freeing the mind from the distortions of self-centeredness, negativity and confusion. Through concentrated awareness, we can learn to see our experience as a constantly changing process, in which pleasure and pain, fear and joy, and all aspects of life are accepted with increasing balance and equanimity. This insight leads to an understanding of our true nature and the possibility of living each moment fully with compassion and genuine freedom.

Insight Meditation requires no belief commitments and is compatible with religious affiliations. Unless specified by the retreat description, no previous meditation experience is required.

Retreat Format: Retreats begin with check-in at 4 p.m. on the first day and run through lunch on the last day. Beginners must be present from the start of the retreat to receive initial instructions.

Periods of sitting meditation will be alternated with walking meditation. Participants will be guided through group or private interviews and daily general lectures. The retreat will be held in silence with talking only during teaching periods.

The September retreat facilities will be at Camp Sabra on the Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri. The camp has 1000 acres of mostly forested land overlooking the lake. Each retreatant will have his or her own rustic cabin. The camp is divided into two villages, one for males and one for females. *Therefore, married couples will not be allowed to share cabins.*

The November retreat facilities will be at Conception Abbey, a Benedictine monastery located near Maryville, Missouri. Private or double rooms are carpeted, spacious, clean and quiet. *Co-habitation in rooms by couples will not be allowed at this retreat.*

Meals are plain vegetarian. A complimentary tea table will be available. Please be responsible for any special dietary needs.

Please bring a meditation cushion or bench and a soft floor pad for meditation. Standard chairs are available and may also be used.

Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Please do not wear or bring strongly scented lotions or perfumes.

REGISTRATION: A deposit of \$70 must accompany your registration.

Deadline: Final payment is due and registration closes on Sept. 17 for the Sept. retreat and on Oct. 30 for the Nov. retreat.

Retreat Costs: September 25-29 Retreat \$225 (no doubles);
November 6-9 Retreat \$180, double; \$190, single;
November 6-15 Retreat \$365, double; \$390, single.

Refunds: No deposits will be refunded after the deadline. Please register as early as possible. An information packet will be sent after you register.

Retreat Registrar: Call with questions.
September Retreat - Ginny Morgan (573) 875-8473
November Retreat - Joyce Wyler (816) 220-1434.

Scholarships: Inability to pay should not prevent you from attending, as there are scholarship funds set aside for this purpose. Deferred payment plans are also available. Contact the Registrar for a copy of the scholarship and deferred payment criteria. Written applications for scholarship must be received by the Registrar no later than three weeks prior to the retreat.

Dana (or generosity): These retreats are led by teachers who freely give the teachings without any payment. All retreat fees go for retreat expenses. It is central to this tradition that the students support the teacher with a donation. There is no expected amount, but you are encouraged to give to the extent you are able. Dana is totally voluntary.

Mid America Dharma Group
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address service requested

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