

Searchlight Casting for Faults in the Clouds of Delusion

By Steve Armstrong

Title from lyrics of “Dark Star” by Robert Hunter, performed by the Grateful Dead

My introduction to dhamma practice and meditation was a silent retreat. No book, class, dhamma talk, instruction nor sitting preceded my entry into 14 days of silence. At the time I thought it was a huge mistake. But in retrospect, I consider myself fortunate that lack of experience and expectations allowed a beginner’s mind to just try it. One challenge we all face in on-going practice is to sustain freshness of mind. To paraphrase Krishnamurti, “I do yoga every day, but I never let it become a habit.” If a daily practice is not to result in a feeling of disempowered lassitude with the torment of routine, a greater commitment to dhamma practice calls forth a refreshing of the mind for a closer look at the familiar.

The simple routine of a silent meditation retreat, however, is a tool to relieve the mind of the distractions of our daily “to-do” list which can keep us on the surface of our lives. A retreat supports the energy of intention to just observe in greater detail the mind, body and environment, and the interface between them. To give an example from the world of art, from a distance the narrative of a tapestry may be captivating, but upon closer inspection one understands how the tapestry is constructed. So too with the captivating narratives of our life, from a distance they are all so familiar. When observed up close, the knotted threads of the narrative emerge and are understood to be just so many pixels of impersonal conditions unfolding over time.

Dramatizing ordinary events by liking-disliking, valuing-devaluing, approving-disapproving is so exciting. Sayadaw U Tejaniya reminds us that, “Excitement undermines awareness.” Lack of awareness entangles the mind in defilements, the source of suffering. It is challenging to simply observe the familiar threads of our personal narrative and understand them as deeply impersonal conditions. Just observing can be so boring unless we truly understand the disentangling process. When I was a monk in Burma, my teacher, Sayadaw U Pandita’s encouragement took the form of asking me not to repeat in my daily check-ins anything I had mentioned before. This set off a scramble of creativity to say the same thing differently; but he was not impressed. I had to look more closely.

Sustained attention gradually pierces the veil of familiar identification to reveal the appropriation of impersonal events as “my” story. When experiencing pain, one of three responses is possible. 1) We can indulge in the feeling of the pain. 2) The suffering can be narratively knotted ever more deeply into identification within “the tapestry of my life.” Or, 3) awareness recognizes the painful feeling as an impersonally conditioned, momentarily fleeting experience being known. The first is suffering. The second is entanglement. The third is wise understanding that reveals the peace of freedom.

In June, Kamala and I will offer our annual 9-day silent mindfulness retreat, this year without the weekend option. By keeping the attendance to full time participants, there will be a longer period of time to develop the stability of awareness that reveals and explores the subtlety of mind. The added days, which allow our practice to continually deepen, is an invaluable opportunity to pierce the veil of identification. It is challenging in the face of the busy-ness of our lives to allow ourselves time without distractions to stop, wait and simply observe without any agenda to fix, figure out, accomplish or acquire. Multi-tasking as a tool works wonders in our daily life, but we also need the continuity of awareness to reveal the deeper structure of the mind from which liberating insight emerges.

Dear friends,

It has been another year of change for TCVC.

The TCVC Board has been looking at ways to reduce expenses for the past few years. In response to rising costs we looked again for places in the region to hold retreats. We are happy to have found a wonderful facility at Koinonia Retreat Center. Koinonia (pronounced koy’ na nee’ a) is located near Annandale, Minnesota on 114 acres of old prairie, big woods and lake shore. All accommodations have modern plumbing with no more than two people to each room. Single rooms are available.

The June retreat is our first nine-day without a weekend option. With the continuity of silence and inner stillness, yogis may gain momentum earlier in the retreat, strengthening mindfulness to experience more deepening in their practice. We encourage those of you who haven’t tried a longer retreat to join us.

With so many people struggling to make their way in this economy, we are grateful for everyone who has donated their time and money to help make TCVC retreats possible. We are grateful also for everyone who attends the retreats. Without our collective commitment to retreat practice close to home, people would need to travel some distance to longer retreats with senior teachers.

TCVC welcomes beginners and experienced meditators, men and women from all life experiences, backgrounds and diverse communities. We encourage you to extend this welcome and encouragement to people you know.

Peace and happiness to all,
TCVC Board of Directors

TCVC Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 8

10 AM at Dunn Bros Coffee
4648 E Lake St in Minneapolis

Contact Elizabeth Archerd
at 612-729-6168
or earcherd@comcast.net

Please join us to celebrate a year of service for TCVC. This will be an informal meeting with the TCVC board: Elizabeth Archerd, Naomi Baer, Gail Iverson and Joanne Skarjune.

A huge thanks to retreat registrars Joanne Skarjune, Deah Kinion and Elizabeth Archerd. Much gratitude to retreat managers Mimi Jennings, Deah Kinion, Robin Blake and Robb Reed.

A big thank you to Elizabeth Archerd for spearheading the effort to obtain our non-profit mailing permit and having the printer address the newsletter. There is no longer a need for volunteers to do our mailings!

If you are interested in serving TCVC in any way, large or small, ongoing or for a one-time special project, please contact Elizabeth. We welcome your service.

TREASURY REPORT

Retreat Fund	\$2,275
Retreat Deposits	1,650
Operating Fund	300
Scholarship Fund	2,000
Balance	\$6,975

Thanks to everyone who has donated money to TCVC. Your generosity supports our ongoing operations and makes it possible for people who could not otherwise afford the retreat fee to attend our retreats.

Your tax-deductible donations, payable to TCVC, are appreciated. You may send a check to TCVC, PO Box 14683, Minneapolis, MN 55414, or donate online at www.givemn.org

PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

COMMON GROUND MEDITATION CENTER

2700 East 26th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
www.commongroundmeditation.org
Contact 612-722-8260
retreats@commongroundmeditation.org

Common Ground offers weekly practice groups, introductory classes, metta practice groups, Buddhist studies courses, family practice programs and daily open sitting sessions. See the website for the monthly half-day and day-long retreat schedule.

Retreats led by Mark Nunberg at Holy Spirit Retreat Center in Janesville, MN

April 22-25
September 2-6

ARROW RIVER FOREST HERMITAGE

Box 2, RR 7, Site 7
Thunder Bay ON P7C 5V5 Canada
www.arrowriver.ca
Contact 647-477-5919
arfh@explornet.com

The Arrow River Forest Hermitage is a Theravadin Buddhist monastery and meditation center under the guidance of Ajahn Punnadhammo. Arrow River occasionally offers group retreats but most teaching is on an individual basis. Retreats of three days to three months can be scheduled.

INQUIRING MIND

A Semiannual Journal of the Vipassana Community
PO Box 9999
Berkeley, CA 94709-0999
www.inquiringmind.com

Inquiring Mind is a donation supported, semiannual journal dedicated to the creative transmission of Buddha-dharma to the West. Each issue includes an extensive international calendar of vipassana retreats, as well a listing of events and sitting groups throughout North America.

LIBERATION PARK

PO Box 205
Norwalk, WI 54648
Contact 608-823-7141
info@liberationpark.org

Liberation Park is a young Dharma refuge in southwestern Wisconsin that provides a natural setting for personal meditation retreats and living out a Buddhist ethics of ecological and social responsibility. Santikaro is the founder and guiding teacher. People are invited to work weekends during the spring through fall to complete the building of the center.

MADISON VIPASSANA

P.O. Box 45014
Madison, WI 53744-5014
www.vipassana.net
Contact Janice Sheppard
608-829-0944, uppekha@yahoo.com

March 20-26 Myoshin Kelley & Edwin Kelley, Marathon, WI
Contact Julie Meyer, 608-231-1558
July 9-11 Sharon Salzberg
Madison, WI

MID AMERICA DHARMA

455 East 80th Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64131
www.midamericadharma.org
Contact Jon Yaffe at 314-644-1926
gjyaffe@sbcglobal.net

March 19-24 Shinzen Young
Conception, MO

July 6-13 Joseph Goldstein & Annie Nugent, St. Louis, MO

DHARMA SEED

www.dharmaseed.org
Dharma Seed is a small non-profit organization supported solely through donations. Since the early 1980's, Dharma Seed has collected and distributed dharma talks by teachers transmitting the vipassana or insight practices of Theravada Buddhism. This website makes these talks freely available for download or streaming as digital audio files.

REGISTRATION JUNE 4–13 STEVE ARMSTRONG & KAMALA MASTERS

Registration deadline is May 14. There is a \$25 late fee after May 14.
Mail your registration to Mariann Johnson, 3507 W 50th St, Minneapolis, MN 55410

Name _____ Male/Female (circle one)
Address _____ City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Email confirmation is sufficient Enclosed is a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope for postal confirmation
 This is my first retreat I can help set up or clean up I need a ride I can give a ride
 I have special accessibility, dietary or other needs. (Please enclose a description or contact the registrar.)
 I use a CPAP or other medical device. (Please specify or contact the registrar.)
 Enclosed is a scholarship request for \$ _____
\$ _____ Retreat Fee* Double \$520 Single \$620 Singles are available on a first-come basis.
\$ _____ Add \$25 late fee if mailing after May 14
\$ _____ Optional tax-deductible donation to TCVC: Operations Scholarships Either Fund
\$ _____ **Total Enclosed** (Make check payable to TCVC)

* The teachers that we ask to lead our retreats do not request or receive any compensation from us for their teaching. At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to practice *dana* (generosity) by offering a donation to the teachers.

Vipassana (insight) meditation is a simple and direct practice: the moment-to-moment investigation of the mind/body process through calm, open and precise awareness. Learning to observe experience from a place of spacious stillness enables one to relate to life with a balance of wisdom and compassion.

Retreats are held in noble silence and include sitting and walking meditation, instructions, Dharma talks, and time for questions with the teacher.

As the teachings of the Buddha are considered priceless, they have traditionally been offered freely. The teachers do not receive payment from TCVC for teaching. The registration fee covers room and board, travel expenses for the teachers and other expenses.

At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to offer a donation to the teachers to support their living expenses so they may continue to practice and teach.

Scholarships are available for up to \$260. To apply for a scholarship, include a letter with your registration giving the background of your need. Scholarship requests must be received by the due date and are limited to one retreat per person per calendar year.

Those who wish may help others by donating to the TCVC Scholarship Fund or Operating Fund.

Registration Send a check for the full amount to secure your registration. If you are applying for a scholarship, subtract the scholarship amount requested from the registration fee.

Cancellations Notify the registrar if you need to cancel. TCVC retains a \$25 fee for cancellations received after the due date, along with any cancellation fees charged by the retreat venue.

Schedule

Fri 6/4	Registration	3:00–6:00 PM
	Evening meal	6:00 PM
	Retreat opens	8:00 PM
Sun 6/13	Retreat ends	After noon meal

Yogi jobs are included in the schedule for all participants. These mindful work periods are assigned on a first come, first served basis at check-in time.

Attendance Please plan to arrive by 6:00 PM on the opening day of the retreat and to stay for the duration. Exceptions must be approved by the retreat manager.

Meals Vegetarian meals begin with an evening meal from 6:00–7:00 PM on Friday night and end with lunch on the last day of your retreat.

Accommodations at the Koinonia Retreat Center have modern plumbing with no more than two people to each room. Single rooms are available on a first-come basis.

Detailed information about the retreat is mailed upon registration. Contact the registrar, Mariann Johnson at 612-872-7959 or retreats@tcvc.info

Directions to Koinonia from Minneapolis

394 West to 169

North on 169 for 1/4 mile

West on Highway 55 2.5 miles past Annandale

South (Left) on County Road 3 for 4/10 of a mile

West (Right) on 80th Street for one mile

South (Left) on Pilger Avenue for 2/10 of a mile

Allow two hours travel time from Minneapolis on Friday afternoon. Alternate routes and more information is available at KoinoniaRetreatCenter.org.

You may leave Koinonia's phone number, 888-801-7746, with family for emergency contact only.

Twin Cities Vipassana Collective
P.O. Box 14683
Minneapolis, MN 55414

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Twin Cities Vipassana Collective Calendar Visit us at www.tcvc.info

Date	Teachers / Event	Location	Contact
May 8, 2010	Annual Meeting	Dunn Bros Coffee	Elizabeth Archerd 612-729-6168 earcherd@comcast.net
June 4–13, 2010 Full-time only retreat No weekend option	Kamala Masters & Steve Armstrong	Koinonia Retreat Center Annandale, MN	Mariann Johnson 612-872-7959 retreats@tcvc.info
Feb. 4–6, 2011 Feb. 4–13, 2011	Santikaro	Koinonia Retreat Center Annandale, MN	Gail Iverson 612-721-8626
June 11–13, 2011 June 11–20, 2011	Kamala Masters & Steve Armstrong	To be determined	Naomi Baer 651-698-1458

TWIN CITIES VIPASSANA COLLECTIVE (TCVC) is a community of people interested in developing and deepening their meditation practice. We provide opportunities to hear and practice the teachings of *vipassana* (insight) and *metta* (lovingkindness) meditation, with an emphasis on residential retreats led by senior teachers in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

Grassroots Dhamma is published by TCVC. To join our mailing list, send your name, address and phone number to mailings@tcvc.info or our mailing address above. Current and past issues of *Grassroots Dhamma* are available on our website, www.tcvc.info