

Fall GWV Charismatic Meditation Teacher Training Retreat
Culpepper, Virginia, October 8 to 15, 2006



The grove near Culpepper, VA. where the retreat was held

Sunday 10-08-06

It was dark when we touched down in Pittsburg. I was fairly groggy from getting little deep entry into the non-material domain, so I followed the passengers and kept my eye on the signs that directed me to the baggage claim. We stepped on and off two moving sidewalks and took an automated shuttle and descended at least one flight of stairs before we had arrived at the baggage turn-style.

As I entered the large baggage claim area I passed a bearded man who was wearing a "Saints" jacket and leaning against a pillar reading. I looked his way, because he seemed to match the description Ernest had given me for himself. He returned my

glance, but when he did not respond I continued to the turn-style, there I found my bag had just dropped down the shoot, so I said, "Oh, that is my bag," and reached around the people who were crowded around the turn-style.

As I was trying to negotiate the duffle bag onto my back with my computer bag the man I had glanced toward came up behind me and said, "Jhanananda?"

I turned to him and said, "Yes, you must be Ernest."

He said, "Yes, let me take your bag."



Nirodha & Ernest

I was surprised to see he was taller than I had expected. We walked to his car, which was in a parking garage across the street and he drove us the 6 hours to Culpepper, Virginia. Along the way there was very nice scenery of rolling hills covered with deciduous forests with their leaves changing into fall colors, and green grassy farms, and cattle grazing in green fields, and big, old wooden barns, many small towns. Because I had spent so much time sitting on the plane I asked Ernest to stop almost hourly for me to stretch my legs and relieve the pack pain from so much sitting.

We arrived at Bill Gray's (Nirodha) parent's house by early afternoon. There I finally got to meet my friend Nirodha, who, like Ernest, was also taller than I had expected. Nirodha's New Zealand-wife let us in the house; she was very gracious and gregarious.

Not long after we had talked around the kitchen table, Nirodha's mother came from church; she was very smartly dressed in a suit; soon after, we were joined by Nirodha's father, who looked like an older version of Nirodha.

With the sun reaching for the horizon we did not stay long talking. Nirodha's father allowed us to use his truck to transport ourselves, and our gear, to the campsite, which was not far away in woods at the end of a series of pastures. There we set-camped on the edge of the first meadow, which was surrounded by a deciduous forest. At the base of the meadow was a stream.

After we had arranged our camps we joined together for some dialog, then we meditated for about an hour. After meditation I went right off to sleep, because the body had not had much rest in the previous 48 hours.



One of the many views of the forest available to us on our hikes



Nirodha & Jhanananda

Monday 10-09-06

The body rested solidly until some time in the middle of the night, so I got up to meditate outside. I noticed the moon was about 60 degrees above the horizon when I began to meditate and it was at its zenith when I next opened my eyes. It was still quite dark so I went back to the tent and rested until dawn. I got up sat outside to meditate again for about an hour. After sunrise the others got up and joined me for meditation. After meditation we made and ate breakfast together. After breakfast we had some dialog for about an hour, then we meditated for another hour, then we parted for separate hikes in the forest. On the hike I noticed quite a few species of gilled mushrooms, and regretted not bringing my mushroom guide to identify them. Today I began composing a poem.

We gathered together again to meditate for an hour late afternoon, then we made a light meal. After cleaning up we had an hour of dialog, then we meditated for an hour before retiring to our tents.

Tuesday 10-10-06

I became aware of the physical before dawn and got up to meditate. I looked at the moon and found again it was about 60 degrees above the horizon. I meditated for a while. When I opened my eyes again, I looked up at the moon and saw

that it was at its zenith. It was still dark, so I went back to the tent and lay down until dawn, when I got up again and meditated. The others joined me after sunrise, when we meditated for an hour, then we made breakfast. After breakfast we had an hour of dialog, then we meditated for an hour. After meditation we went for hikes. There was a light layer of high clouds causing the day to be cool. Nirodha said there was a storm expected.

While I am familiar with Theravadan and Zen retreats being far more intense in the practice of meditation, I have found their practice model seems to produce more pain and less charism, so I have instructed the others to meditate as long as it produces pleasure (piiti) and joy (sukha), as soon as it produces pain (dukkha) then meditation should be stopped. Thus, like Monday, we meditated about 4 times together and had two dialog sessions.

Wednesday 10-11-06

This morning I got up before dawn and meditated for an hour, then I retired to my tent to rest until after dawn, when I got up again to meditate. After sunrise I noticed the cloud layer overhead had thickened causing the day to be darker.

Later after noon we gathered for dialog. After only a few minutes I felt raindrops, so asked the others to help me arrange the kitchen area for rain. Nirodha suggested we build a lean-to out of one of his father's tarps, so we lashed one long side against three large trees that stood together



Ernest & Jhanananda



Our outdoor kitchen

at one side of the meadow. One end of the other long side was lashed to a young tree and the other end we fashioned a support out of dead limb and the conjunction of a few small limbs. Once they are all lashed together it made a strong support for the one free corner without a tree to lash to.

After we had moved the kitchen and our sitting gear under the lean-to we had an hour dialog, followed by an hour of meditation. There was no more rain.

Shortly after we retired to our respective tents the storm broke. The rain and wind lashed out my tent and lightning arched overhead. It rained like that most of the night. Fortunately the tent kept me warm and dry.

Thursday 10-12-06

I got up before dawn and meditated in the tent, because the ground was soggy outside, but it was no longer raining. I left the tent at dawn and found the low areas were all filled with fog.

After the morning breakfast, dialog and meditation I went for a hike to the end of the main trail. Shortly before the end of the trail I startled about for white tail deer. I heard one of them make a sound "Sooh." before they scattered.

Friday 10-13-06

I got up before dawn to meditate. It was quite cold and my back was chilled. I dressed and put on my coat and wrapped the sleeping bag around me and meditated in the tent for about an hour.



The view from the meadow where we were camped

After meditation I lay back down until sunrise, when I got up and left the tent. I found the tent and the grass covered in frost.

Saturday 10-14-06

One of the members of this retreat consistently exhibited outward signs of absorption in the form of charismatic rocking and moaning. During our four meditations a day I had observed all week the local wild and domesticated animals seemed to respond with their own vocalizations in response to his.

Sunday 10-15-06

It was so cold at night that some nearby cattle bellowed all night. I got up before dawn and dressed fully and put on my jacket and wrapped the sleeping bag around me for warmth and meditated for an hour or so. It was still dark

when I finished meditation so I lay down with all of my clothes on and the sleeping bag over me for warmth.

After sunrise I heard Ernest get up and start preparing breakfast, so I got up and joined him. We ate the last of the oatmeal. After breakfast we packed our gear and ported it to his car.

Around noon Nirodha drove up in his father's truck and asked to meditate with us one last time before we parted. After an hour of meditation we helped Nirodha pack his gear into his father's truck, then we drove to his parent's house where we posed for pictures, then Ernest and I drove back to Altoona, PA arriving at sunset.



Jhanananda

A Eulogy for the Dead Religions

Religions today are all smoke and mirrors and costume changes with choirs, chanting monks, pipe organs, and trumpets and clashing cymbals.

Priests with no charisms take pretentious titles like:

His Holiness
His Eminence
Reverend
Venerable
Lord

But, they cannot describe a clear path to gnosis

These pretentious priests
Are nothing more than the funeral procession
Of the dead religions

Venerable Holiness
Is being saturated in charism
Through betrothal to the sacred.

How do we know when a religion is dead?

When its priesthood
Cannot provide
A clear methodology
For communion with the sacred
We know that religion is dead.

When the priesthood cannot recognize gnosis
We know that religion is dead.

When the priesthood cannot value gnosis
We know that religion is dead.

When the priesthood cannot respect gnosis
We know that religion is dead.

When the priesthood cannot honor gnosis
We know that religion is dead.

When the priesthood cannot recognize,
Value, respect and honor
The charismatic experience of
communion in gnosis
And the various fruits of
the contemplative life,
Then they are nothing more
than the charming hosts
Of a three-ring big-top.

We know then that religion is dead.



Ernest

Fall GWV Charismatic Meditation Retreat
Culpepper, Virginia, October 8 to 15, 2006

Retreat Report by D.Ernest Wachter (YTHU)

Let me begin by thanking Samana Jhananda for coming to the east coast, giving excellent dhamma instruction, providing a noble example of the contemplative lifestyle, and preparing wonderful vegan meals throughout the retreat. I'd also like to thank Nirodha for his charismatic company and participation, for securing a great retreat campsite, for providing cooking equipment and tarps, and for timing the meditation sessions.

I had been to both Zen and Theravadan Buddhist retreats before, but the atmosphere and schedules were always rigid, and often overly-ritualistic. Not so at a GWV retreat, There was plenty of personal time to do whatever I liked: drum, read, journal, hike, meditate, etc., and no posture policing during the meditation sessions. And the dhamma instruction sessions involved free dialog and proved to be very informative and interesting. There were two dhamma talks per day (afternoon & evening) followed by an hour long group meditation session. (The information covered in the dhamma talks is available by purchasing the GWV teacher training manual, soon to be published by Jhananda, so definitely buy it when it comes out!) There was also time devoted to brainstorming ideas for future GWV projects and discussing non-

Buddhist spiritual traditions and ecumenism. All in all a GWV retreat led by Jhananda is an inspirational and educational experience I cannot recommend highly enough. Like a good meditation session it is a mixture of a relaxed state of being with focused mental awareness and therefore leads to meditative absorption and experiential wisdom.

This retreat greatly increased my theoretical and practical understanding of authentic, ecstatic Buddhism as well as my motivation to practice and teach charismatic meditation. I study religious traditions quite a bit but have not found any dhamma teacher able to shed so much light upon the historical Buddha's practice method as can Jhananda. Apart from coming away with a more complete and accurate view of Buddhist psychology, this retreat also permitted me to encounter for the first time a community of ecstatic Buddhists practicing group charismatic meditation.

As part of my teacher training I gave a presentation on the hindrances to meditative absorption which I had been researching for a few weeks prior to the retreat, looking at the canonical and commentarial traditions on this subject and attempting to systematize the information into a outline useful for meditation instruction and practice. It was helpful to get feedback from Nirodha and Jhananda and I learned that much in the commentarial tradition about the hindrances is an over-simplification. I plan to keep working on this research project and eventually post the completed work on the GWV website at some future date.

Concerning my meditation experiences at the retreat, it was at first difficult for me to enter deep absorption because I usually rely upon the charismatic inner ringing to lead me into deeper absorption, but the forest sounds were so overpoweringly loud that it was hard for me to hear the inner sound. Noise from the crickets, the birds, the nearby cattle farm, airplanes overhead, and Nirodha's charismatic moaning were all distractions for me at first. This zoo of sounds was different than the usual automobile noises I am used to in my home neighborhood, But eventually my mind settled down and I began to travel through the material jhanas more easily. And though Jhananda's guidance I was able to distinguish between the different jhana levels more precisely. Then one evening, alone in meditation during a windstorm, I reached the fourth jhana and abided in it for 1 ½ or 2 hours. The fourth jhana level was just like everyone said it would be, a pleasant meditation free from suffering (my physical pains actually became a blissful sensation) that one could abide in forever. But, eventually my intuition told me to get up and right after I did so, the wind broke the branch of our lean-to canopy and the tree limb and tarp came crashing down right where I had been sitting. I escaped unharmed thankful for my intuition and grateful for having had such a pleasant abiding.



A view of a nearby farm

I have found that whenever I intensify my meditation practice a common result is an increase in OOB astral sex encounters during my sleep cycle, and this retreat was no exception. But perhaps my favorite sleep cycle phenomenon that results from increased meditation practice is finding myself meditating in my dreams. And these experiences always prove exhilarating and are sometimes so intense that they are frightening, involving overwhelmingly intense light, sound and flight sensations.

Throughout the retreat I also had some kundalini risings during my meditations and I tried to extend their duration and ride them out as long as possible, but none of them lasted more than a minute or two.

Fortunately the most serious dukkha I had to deal with during this retreat was just the cold nights, an aching lower back from sleeping on the ground, my usual chronic ear-aches, and some itchy insect bites.

I hope to see more of the GWV members at Jhananda's future retreats. Let me conclude with lyrics to two songs I composed during the retreat. The first is a Buddhist take-off of the Christian song "Lonesome Valley" and the second is a drum chant based on the Brahma Viharas.

"Lonesome Valley – Buddhist Version"

Shakyamuni walked a lonesome valley.
Shakyamuni walked it by himself.
Nobody else walked it for him.
He had to walk it by himself.

Now there's a road leading to nibanna,
Through a dark valley not far away.
Nobody else can walk it for you.
They can only show the way.

You gotta walk the lonesome valley.
And you gotta walk it by yourself.
Nobody else is walking it for you.
You gotta walk it by yourself.

Now some people says that Buddha was a prophet
& some people says he was Lord Vishnu.
But the Pali suttas tell us
He was enlightened through & through

Buddha's Eight-fold Path is crowned with samadhi.
Nibanna crowns the samadhi highway.
Nobody else can end dukkha for you.
They can only point the way.

You gotta ride the samadhi highway.
And you gotta ride it by yourself.
Nobody else is riding it for you.
You gotta ride it by yourself.



“The Houses of God Chant”

(upekkha: equanimity / mudita: sympathetic joy / karuna: compassion / metta: loving-kindness / ca: and)
(the chant leader sings each line and the group responds with the same line after him)

May all beings abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May I abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May you abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May al beings abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.

All peaceful beings
All neutral beings
All hateful beings
All male beings
All female beings
All earth beings
All water beings
All air beings
All heavenly beings
All hell beings

May all beings abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May I abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May you abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May all beings abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.

All beings in the east
All beings in the south
All beings in the west
All beings in the north
Beings in the northeast
Beings in the southeast
Beings in the southwest
Beings in the northwest

All beings above
All beings below

May all beings abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May I abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May you abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.
May all beings abide in: upekkha, mudita, karuna ca metta.

Upekkha, Upekkha, Upekkha, Upekkha
Mudita, Mudita, Mudita, Mudita
Karuna, Karuna, Karuna, Karuna
Metta ca Metta ca Metta ca Metta
Upekkha, Mudita, Karuna ca Metta
Upekkha, Mudita, Karuna ca Metta

These are the Houses of God
These are the Houses of God

Om Brahma Viharas
Om Brahma Viharas

These are the Houses of God
These are the Houses of God
These are the Houses of God
These are the Houses of God

Om Brahma Viharas
Om Brahma Viharas
Om Brahma Viharas
Om Brahma Viharas





