



GAIA HOUSE

INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

spring 2012
NEWS



Director's piece...

Now in an unnaturally warm late March I feel excited at the prospect of the long, dreamy, hot summer days ahead. Coming out of winter always brings a relief, heralded at the front of Gaia House by the patches of daffodils and around the back of the building by the delicious smell of the wild garlic growing in dense, shaded clumps. I have a strong feeling of being revived, that there is more to look forward to once again.

I enjoy this time of the year and the resurgence of life. But in Rob Burbea's article in this newsletter, James Gustav Speth is quoted: "we, I fear, are living a dream. We need to be reminded of the nightmare ahead." In his striking piece Rob asks us what it means to wake up from the dream. He points out the anomaly that pursuing a compassionate approach to life must consider future generations, yet that very consideration will put us in a direct – and potentially very uncompassionate-looking – collision course with our contemporaries and even ourselves. I am forced to ask how much I am living a dream: how much of my own self-satisfied value system is nothing more than vaporous nice intentions? Suddenly my enthusiasm is compromised, my sense of who I am feels undermined; my passing springtime enjoyment seems like a cheap refuge. Rob's uncompromising message is not an easy one to take on board.

It's not easy because such strong, appealing ideas are fraught with difficulty. It is brave to expose these thoughts,

to get us thinking and to challenge our conventional thinking. I tend to harbour a comfortable notion of compassion as a pleasant feeling of goodwill, but the searing honesty which Rob advocates would not be so easy to live with. The intellectual beliefs and values in my head are in conflict with the course of my daily life, with assumptions which I hold about how I should relate to people or how I should behave in society. What do I do when ideas which hold out the hope of a better world prejudice the easy relationships which make my world feel peaceful?

Rob is giving us a difficult message: although we can all make sense of ideas in the Dharma, living in a way fully true to the Dharma is a different matter altogether. The Dharma, according to this ruthless exposition, undermines us, presents us with complications and contradictions where we search desperately for clarity and straightforwardness. Truth appears to be an elusive notion, maybe even a spurious one. In the face of such difficulty do we bow our heads and leave it for others to sort out, or do we look into the depths of seeming impossibility and join the collective search for a way to reconcile this into our lives and our future?

The deepest truth that I need to come back to when I get lost in such labyrinthine complexities is the grounding, simple presence of that springtime beauty in the garden, and the pleasure it creates.

Talking of which, Emma describes inspiringly the pleasure she has derived from working in the garden for the last couple of years later in this issue. So many people enjoy our gardens,

but few get to know them so intimately as she has done; it is delightful to hear some of the inside story, especially when written in such a poetic way.

This newsletter is the first one to be taken under the wing of Charlotte Johnston, our new Communications Manager. Very many thanks to Sarah Abdy for her years of hard editorial work, during which this small publication has come a long way. With the intention of harnessing the considerable expertise available to Gaia House, Charlotte is aided by an Editorial Group consisting of two teachers (Stephen Batchelor and John Peacock), a trustee (Sarah Hamilton), and by any measure last of all, me.

The 2013 programme is already being put together now, and it seems timely to pass the message on that there will be an extended shutdown of six weeks in January-February 2013. A couple of retreats will unfortunately be lost because of this, while others will be re-scheduled, but we hope to accomplish a full overhaul of the internal heating equipment throughout the house over that period. With a hoped-for end result of a much less troublesome, more efficient and more effective heating infrastructure to complement our woodchip boiler and solar panels, we think that the sacrifice will be worthwhile.

Andy Power
Director

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A word from our Trustees

Writing this gave me an opportunity to reflect on my first year as a Trustee, both personally and in terms of what has been happening at Gaia House. Recently there have been changes amongst the Trustee Board with the departure at the end of 2011 of Douglas Stoddart and Rob Sully. Thanks are due to both of them for the generosity with which they gave of their individual skills, expertise and time over the past years. We are pleased to welcome two new trustees, Pete Mallard and Justin Andrews. Both may be already known to some readers as Pete manages The Barn Retreat at Sharpham and Justin has been a coordinator at Gaia House.

Greater numbers of yogis from an ever wider range of backgrounds have been coming to Gaia House and our capacity this year is being increased by off-site retreats at Seale-Hayne campus near Newton Abbot. This, together with the intention to build on outreach activities, has necessitated some staff restructuring. We wish Charlotte Johnston all the best in the new role of Communications Manager.

On a personal note I have come to deeply appreciate just how many people, (staff, co-ordinators, volunteers, teachers, trustees and yogis) contribute in different ways to what Gaia House has to offer. I've discovered more about the value of not being attached to my view of Gaia House or my opinion of what should happen. Discerning when to speak and when to listen is an ongoing learning process giving me new perspectives on Right Speech.

THE GAIA HOUSE TRUSTEES

Pictured below, left to right: Peter Gingold, Trevor Dunkley, Michael Jeffries, Peter Mallard, Diana Parratt, Sean Williams, Andy Power (Director), Justin Andrews and Sarah Hamilton.



The Trustee Board, like the Boards of many charities with a strong ethos, is faced with the need to make decisions that accord with Gaia House's Ethical Guidelines whilst at the same time ensuring that we comply with legal frameworks and satisfy the Charity Commissioners' requirements for good practice. The intention to maintain this balance, work closely with the Teacher Council and make decisions through consensus can be challenging at times. It's good to be able to acknowledge the progress we have all made recently, in addition to outreach and Gaia House @ Seale-Hayne. Financial stability and a buoyant Retreat Support Fund has enabled us to introduce lower rates for young people. Our new website is now up and running well. Turning on the new biomass boiler has created a warmer environment for all (even some comments about the house being too hot!) and we continue to look at ways of improving the House infrastructure.

Diana Parratt



Waking Up In (Our Own) Time

Rob Burbea



What does it mean to wake up today, in the midst of this modern life?

If 'waking up' has something to do with the way we meet life, what is our sense of what an 'awakened' (or at least, a 'more awakened') meeting with life might involve? What do we imagine it might look like? And in our notion of 'Meeting Life', what exactly do we mean when we say 'Life'?

For modern 'Life' (however we construe it) now inevitably includes an awareness of a whole range of uncomfortable but undeniable facts about itself, about our collective situation and how we shape it through our choices and actions. At times of course it can feel tempting to try to avoid this awareness and the questions and emotions it might bring up for us. To live wakefully and authentically, however, we have to endeavour instead to somehow broaden the range and reach of our hearts and our questioning, and with it the compass of what the Dharma means today.

We live together on a planet of now more than seven billion human beings (and rising), and with all the immense and almost overwhelmingly complex challenges that we (and other species) are facing, we might wonder whether humanity is equipped, practically or philosophically, to meet such unprecedented and elaborately interacting issues as climate change, massive species extinctions, depletion of resources, unsustainable consumerism and runaway economic systems and all the suffering that these already cause and will cause in coming years.

Of course, the responses of the heart and the beauty and necessity of empathy and compassion are all vitally important in relating to all this, but I have explored those aspects at length a number of times elsewhere, and in what follows, I would like to try to emphasise instead the qualities of clarity and unflinching honesty. I hope you can ponder this article within a larger context of necessarily diverse approaches to these themes.

So then, although it's nearly impossible, because it's entangled with all the others, let's try to tug at just one thread of this daunting knot of our times, from a Dharma perspective:

Though often conceived of as an 'environmental' issue, anthropogenic global warming is also probably the biggest Human Rights issue the world has ever faced. For we know, almost with certainty, a stark truth: as a result of global climate destabilisation, alongside the wholesale devastation to other species, many millions, or even billions of (mostly poor) human beings will be confronted with practically unavoidable death and suffering by starvation, water shortage, loss of land and displacement through droughts and flooding, increased disease, extreme weather events and doubtless brutal regional conflicts fuelled by resource scarcities.

Now, if climate change is a Human Rights issue, it must then be an ethical issue; and if it is an ethical issue, it must be a Dharma issue, because the Dharma path is based on ethics (sīla), and should also have as a measure of its fruit the expression of ethical care. (Many of us feel that it would be an ethical issue even if no humans at all were affected but only non-human nature, that the circle of moral consideration needs to expand to include a deep valuing of the natural world, in and of itself. But, for now, we'll just consider the human-to-human moral questions.)

We should perhaps pause here already, as it can be hard not to feel turned off considering all this. Talk of such enormous human and non-human misery, such irretrievable loss, the powerlessness and inertia we feel and witness can feel burdensome and oppressive. And in the West, 'morality' can often bring with it a habitually and historically associated sense of heaviness and repression, or possibly even guilt, which is rarely helpful. Naturally we may rather want to hear and think about things that make us feel good.



"Where is the joy?" we might ask, from lives that might feel already burdened with busyness, complexity and demands. "Can't someone talk about this in a way that inspires?" But maybe, given the perhaps unparalleled complexity, diversity and obscurity of the psychology underneath our collective inertia and inadequate responses to the climate emergency, the task of inner transformation will call for, and call forth, a whole spectrum of voices and emotional pitches and timbres, and some of them simply won't be joyful or easy. We can learn, though, to simply include it all in what we ask the heart to hold, what we train the mind to contemplate.

A few years ago, in a stab to remove talk of crisis from contemporary environmentalism, someone made the interesting point that Martin Luther King Jr., in the ethical struggle of the Civil Rights movement, inspired by raising his dream as a vision. He did not proclaim "I have a nightmare"; that wouldn't have fired the imagination. But, as James Gustav Speth wrote in response, 'he did not need to say it. [African-Americans in the 1960s] were living a nightmare. They needed a dream. But we, I fear, are living a dream. We need to be reminded of the nightmare ahead.' What does it mean to wake up from this dream?

Whatever our reaction to hearing or reading about the environmental situation and its moral aspects, somehow each of us needs to find his or her ways to hold such pressing ethical questions so that these questions open up,

rather than shut us down. How will you and I keep truly alive in our own hearts and minds and in the Dharma community an open investigation into what *silā* means for us in this modern age?

It seems a crucial first step that we do. Because if climate change is fundamentally an ethical issue, and so a Dharma issue, I wonder further if it behoves me, as a Dharma teacher, to demonstrate moral leadership here in one way or another. Reflecting on what forms that might take, two paths immediately suggest themselves as indispensable. Firstly, what I say, write and teach must speak deeply to the *silā* aspects of these issues. Surely, from somewhere, somehow, the fires of ethical concern must be lit. In a world nightmarishly slow to address the moral and practical challenges of climate change, a sufficiently large segment of humanity must venture beyond spoken platitudes to raise the essential moral questions to a primary place in society's discourse. And secondly, I have to express more than words that sound good. In order to be real, ethics need to materialise, to be made manifest in behaviour as well as speech. We may need care here, however: to be too rigidly prescriptive in terms of behaviour tends to make many people feel understandably nervous and deprived of a degree of freedom. Unskilful rigidity tends to inspire little support, or, at worst, may even end up provoking a defiant backlash. If we let go, though, of such inflexible 'rules', we must still find ethics to guide us, and what these might be is still open for our exploration.

Most Buddhists may want to look to the teachings of the Buddha for direction. But the Buddha did not live and teach in a fossil-fuel-based, industrially globalized world of seven billion people with an awareness of the disastrous cumulative effects of their actions on countless present and future lives. The moral precepts he taught, beautiful and vital as they are, were commensurate with the nature of his society at the time, and simply may not be, as they stand, complete enough, wide enough for our age. We may need to look elsewhere for additional guidance.

The Dalai Lama recently met with scientists, philosophers and religious leaders from around the world at the Mind and Life Conference convened to discuss the global environmental crisis. He stated his opinion that religions, including Buddhism, East and West, have become "part of the status quo, part of the problem, and need to become instead part of the solution." Recognising that the multiple environmental crises have many of their roots in unquestioned economic thinking and untrammelled consumerism, he went on to say that Buddhism and other religions "need to challenge greed and consumerism in the world much more deeply, and need to start contemplating and addressing larger socio-economic and environmental issues in their teaching."

We humans have known about climate change for a while now; at least since the first IPCC report in 1990. To the Dalai Lama's statement we could add that this knowing exactly how we are causing devastating climate change and our concomitant lack of appropriate responses to curtail emissions are, from a Buddhist point of view, almost classical examples of the work of delusion and greed, two of the root afflictions that Dharma teaching and practice

is supposed to uproot. Shouldn't we then expect modern Dharma to be vigorously and emphatically addressing these manifestations of delusion and greed in ourselves and in our societies, and particularly the ways they fuel the almost incalculable present and future suffering of global warming? The Dalai Lama is effectively saying he does not see much substantial evidence of this yet within Buddhism, and he feels it needs to change.

Our modern Dharma must include environmental ethics as equally as any other of the traditional ethical guidelines. My hope is that these can become integrally woven into the vision that we have of what the Dharma is and involves. Just as most practitioners might expect, say, ethics around sexuality to be manifest in a 'Dharma life' and certainly a teacher's life, so we might also expect environmental ethics, kindness and care to have comparable importance. And their absence from any 'Enlightenment' or 'path of wakefulness and kindness' would similarly call into question for us, on a gut level, the authenticity, reality and fullness of that 'Enlightenment', that 'wakefulness' and that 'kindness'.

Visibility matters here. The perception of all those who come to, or even consider coming to, Gaia House matters. As in other areas of modern moral concern in our culture, it is important to communicate a moral message loud and clear – to be transparently and visibly diverse, for instance, and not institutionally racist or institutionally sexist. Gaia House has done remarkably well in recent years in terms of the carbon footprint of the building itself, and this crucial work is to be celebrated. Great credit is due to all those involved. Now the Gaia House teachers would also like to get involved.



New wood-burning boiler at Gaia House

Hopefully, as mentioned, we can begin to communicate widely this message of environmental ethics (and the associated Human Rights ethics) and their centrality in the Dharma. In addition, and as a very modest start, we have made a number of small requests to the Gaia House Trust (please see the Teachers' Corners in this Newsletter for details), recognising at the same time that in the longer term a bigger shift in the way teachers and teachings are offered internationally may well be needed. We know that on their own these measures hardly represent a significant shift, but, without knowing exactly what the next steps might involve or require, we hope this will be a genuine beginning.

We also recognise that the vague hope that from somewhere there will arrive for us a technological fix to rather effortlessly remove the whole problem is an illusion and a part of the dreaming, the being asleep.

**Waking up will involve sacrifices
for everyone.
And this may be difficult.**

We, and indeed the network of Dharma centres, have long been accustomed to having relatively easy access to a great deal of all kinds of things (and not just obviously material things), and somehow we, like most people, expect this abundance to continue. As individuals, and as institutions like retreat centres, we must admit that we might have the same reluctance that can be witnessed at the international level to give up and have less when we might not see others doing the same. Perhaps we fear we may miss out relative to others, or lose our standing or status.

Of course, it can be a lot more uplifting and attractive to talk of community projects that we can feel enthusiastic about, e.g. the installation of the biomass boiler, and this is hugely important psychologically (and obviously practically). But it's also true that the biomass boiler involves no loss at all for anyone. It seems harder to enthuse over pending sacrifices. We need, however, to be able to be moved to action in the absence of the emotion of enthusiasm. There are anyway other potential sources and channels for our enthusiasm: in re-visioning together how Gaia House operates within the system of international Dharma teaching for instance, in spirited protest at Government policies, and perhaps, even, in civil disobedience.

Bringing all this into the scope of what Dharma practice means may not be easy or comfortable for any of us. It can be difficult and unsettling when one dwells on these ethical questions. We might realize how many of the decisions

that we make, individually, collectively, or institutionally as a retreat centre, are effectively, in part, statements of valuing some things over others. How many tonnes of personal carbon emissions, above what I need to survive (what are termed 'luxury emissions'), can I justify, even if it's 'for the Dharma', knowing that any extra I emit might mean a future human being will not have even enough to survive ('subsistence emissions')? We need to be clear and honest here what we are deciding and implying matters more than the lives of certain others. Of course this is not a simple ethical problem. We cannot trace a direct one-to-one causal connection between, say, that flight I took, and a particular person's misery and hunger through drought. But we do know that there is a connection. And just because ethical problems like this may feel dishearteningly complex and unfamiliar, that does not mean that we shouldn't try to feel or think our way through them. Because what could I say to convince this future person that I am making a morally right choice? The fact that they are not yet born or are still too young, far away or poor to know or complain can take some of the stark discomfort of it away, but it still exists as a moral dilemma given what we now know. Reflecting on the ways we do things from the perspective of caring for future human beings can feel uncomfortable to say the least, and such contemplations may not be completely welcome inclusions into my practice, especially if I have come to meditation and the Dharma understandably seeking inner simplification and the calming of agitation. These pressing questions are not simple, however, and it may well be that a degree of agitation accompanies earnest and engaged inquiry and reflects a healthy ethical sensitivity.

We don't know exactly what will be asked of us as teachers or as a retreat centre in the coming months and years, but if we are too quick to refuse to consider certain possibilities, changes, and sacrifices that would make a difference, we might also need to inquire a little more searchingly, lest we be then not too far from President Bush Sr. 'explaining' the US refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol by stating that "The American Way of Life is not up for negotiation."

We do not want the Dharma and Gaia House to mimic the wider failure of governing bodies to change anything really significant, so we ask for your feedback, ideas and support. In the midst of almost certainly the defining issue of our time, and as we move together towards a very uncertain future, what do, what will contemporary Dharma teachings counsel, model and express?

Rob Burbea, Gaia House Resident Teacher

November 2011

Many thanks to Robert Brodrick and Chris Cullen for helpful feedback and editing of this article.

SANGHA NEWS

Sponsored all night meditation at Gaia House

A group of practitioners have undertaken to stay up through the night at Gaia House following a meditation schedule, not only as a way of stretching ourselves in practice, but also to raise money for people in Somalia who are experiencing what the director of Oxfam has called "the worst food crisis of the 21st century". The idea of sitting through the night as a sponsored activity is a merging together of attention to the inner world whilst offering a vigil for a world where people are dying for lack of food and water, as well as offering help in a practical way through sponsorship.

As you read this, we will have already done the all-night meditation, but it's not too late to be involved. If you would like to undertake your own all-night sponsored meditation in aid of this cause, perhaps with your local sitting group (as the sitting group in Brighton did), feel free to email me on retreatmanager@gaiahouse.co.uk for ideas about structuring your evening, sponsorship forms, etc. Also, it's not too late to sponsor the all-nighters in retrospect. The Just Giving webpage will stay open for some time yet, and the money is very much needed. See www.justgiving.com/allnightsit. The money goes directly to the Disaster Emergency Committee's East Africa Appeal.

I want to offer a really big thank you to all those who have given so generously, for all the messages of support, and to those who took up the challenge of staying up all night to meditate and raise money. It's shown me that, as a community of practitioners, we can accomplish wonderful things together.



Dartmoor Walking and Meditation Retreat

with Yanai Postelnik

Camping at Gidleigh Village hall, Chagford, South Devon, 28 September – 1 October

Following the richness of our first walking retreat at Easter, this silent retreat will again offer a special opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and practise the Dharma, while exploring the beauty and wilderness of Dartmoor. Following in the tradition of the Buddha, we will support our hearts to deepen in wisdom and compassion, while walking together in a range of landscapes, sitting in meditation, and spending time around the campfire.

Further information or booking contact Faith: 07952157585 or faithburch@hotmail.com

BuddhaDharmaSangha Summer Camp

Yanai Postelnik, Catherine McGee, Brad Richecoeur and Kirsten Kratz

Dartmoor National Park, Devon - 18-26 August

You are warmly invited to participate in the 11th annual BuddhaDharmaSangha camp. We combine Insight Meditation, Qigong and Inquiry with the transformational quality of the natural world. As well as space for formal practice with mornings in silence, there is also time to enjoy being in nature and with others, walks on the moor, nights around the campfire, star gazing, songs, stories and more.

For more information or to book call Brad: 0845 3305086, bradr@qigong-southwest.co.uk or visit www.qigong-southwest.co.uk

Insight Meditation Retreat

at Gayles, in the South Downs, with Yanai Postelnik

14 – 16 September

An opportunity to spend the weekend in contemplative silence, with full instructions for Insight Meditation and opportunities to discuss your practice with the teacher. Suitable for beginners and experienced meditators. Gayles retreat is a small centre situated in beautiful countryside on the South Downs, near Eastbourne and easy to reach from London.

For further information or booking, contact Roz Robinson: 07721 023 845 or 07969 749 829 or visit www.retreattogayles.co.uk



Coordinator news

As we move through 2012 (where did it go?), the ever changing cycle of coordinators rolls on. We said au revoir to Pascal, who finished his second period of service having wooed us all with his cooking. And that's not all: 2am meditation? Check. Walking to Hay Tor and back in time for lunch? Check. With many thanks to Pascal for his service to Gaia House.

Anni Mustonen leaves us this spring to take up a PhD. Ever-willing, thoroughly organised and always on hand with a friendly smile, Anni will be greatly missed. Many thanks for everything you've offered to Gaia House and the people here, Anni.

Ray Richardson takes over from Pascal in the kitchen, having worked previously as a counsellor and undertaking a 3 month retreat prior to arrival. Ray is proving to be something of a master chef - look out for his lasagne. Also arrived is Susanne O'Brien, taking over from Anni in Household. Susanne brings much experience, having worked at the Barn Retreat Centre, and an infectious sense of enthusiasm. Welcome both.

Coordinator Positions

If you are interested in offering service to Gaia House as a coordinator, there are positions becoming available this year. We are looking for a Maintenance Coordinator to start in the autumn, and for a Reception Coordinator to start at the end of the year. Please email admin@gaiahouse.co.uk for details, or call 01626 323881 to speak with Sarah.

Rachel Davies

Retreat and Outreach Manager

SPRING

Gerald Manley Hopkins certainly demonstrates enthusiasm for the whole package of Spring, weeds included. Best to accept that you'll never fully eliminate them, and why would you want to when they are so "long and lovely and lush", so juicy and green and so generously giving me a purpose for spending my days out in the Spring sunshine, transferring them to the perennial weed heap to make rich, dark compost. I'm now enjoying the delights of my second Spring co-ordinating the Gaia House garden. As I move into my last six months here, I'm finally getting used to the amazing reality that it is actually my job to watch the changes the seasons bring and involve myself in the rich pageantry of beauty and decay, life, death and re-birth as it unfolds in this wonderful place.

I'm deeply appreciative of the privilege I've been given in being supported to spend my time tending to this sparkling environment. Of course I haven't felt like this all the time: I must confess that this winter I've had days of low motivation where I'd much rather stay in bed than go out there and get cold, and it's a big relief that Spring has finally "turned her angel eyes upon our western isle" - and with gusto.

It's not just me who's having a good time out there, enjoying "all this juice and all this joy". The rooks are squabbling, the squirrels are scampering, the rabbits are lolling and all the birds are singing at once. Retreatants are relaxing out there too, soaking up the sun, and this week I've seen a peacock butterfly investigating the primroses and a bumble bee with knee pockets packed with pollen gathered from the flowers of last winter's bolting kale.

This Spring we've a few projects in progress to support bees and other small creatures. The area around our new wood burning boiler house is becoming a wildlife sanctuary. The banks have been sown with wild flower seeds that have been patiently watered and weeded by several kind yogis who've visted on retreat during this hot weather, and we've also gained an impressively deep and round pond created by garden volunteer (and ex Household co-ordinator) Tom C. Newts and tadpoles have already taken up residence there with a little help from Richard, our Gaia House builder.

"Nothing is so beautiful as Spring –
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush"

A further wildflower area is taking shape in the back garden, thanks to the two retreatants who recently created the marvellous winding stone path, and the 'forest garden' pond that was more like a swampy bog has been relined and re-landscaped by recent work yogi John S. and sown with wildflowers by work yogi Isla.

Sometimes people ask me whether it is a lot of work to manage the gardens on my own. The answer is, of course, that it's not because I am not on my own. Not in the least! The number of unseen hands that have tended to this garden, while on retreat, or as volunteers, friends or other is practically uncountable. I'll go way over my 'word count' if I individually thank the many yogis who volunteered to help in the garden during their retreats but I can guarantee that the garden will reward you with it's glow next time you visit. I would like to mention by name those dedicated volunteers who have made up the garden team this year: that's John C., our garden expert, who has recently completed a heroic pruning job on all the apple trees. Tom, who is always willing to do the heavy and less glamorous work and must be one of the most committed and supportive volunteers the garden has ever met, and Jane K., who has made the garden

so beautiful and is responsible for many of the lovely touches you'll have seen around the garden: the hand painted signs, the sweet pea wig-wams, and the improvements to the mosaic to name just a few. Thanks also to Catherine who has sent much advice, seeds and support for the wildlife projects.

"What is all this juice
and all this joy?"

A strain of the earth's sweet being
in the beginning

In Eden garden. –
Have, get, before it cloy,"

Wishing you all some of the 'earth's sweet being' in this fresh time of new beginnings.

Yours from the weed heap,

Emma

With excerpts from Spring by Gerald Manley Hopkins and To Spring by William Blake

Pictured below from left to right: Mark Ovland, Emma Burleigh, Tony Mone, Juha Penttila, Anni Mustonen, Brian Watson, Trish King & Ray Richardson



Instant Communication

Martine Batchelor



When my family first bought a phone in 1965, it was a major event. It was a new and foreign object in the house. Not a simple object like a fridge or a cooker but one that offered instant communication. In those days whenever the phone rang, a real commotion occurred. The ring of the phone seemed to be demanding instant response. All at once everyone used to leave whatever he or she were doing to rush to answer it. Nowadays when we hear the phone ring we are more likely to leave the answering machine on to check who is calling. From a foreign object to a convenience to possibly a nuisance, the phone has become an integral part of our daily life.

As the voices race through the telephone wires, instant communication takes us over and seems to hurry us along. We start to live our life on the phone: organising, planning, plotting, and complaining, even raging. Now with mobile phones, we have instant mobile communication. In these circumstances, the phone can actually stop us from being able to be on our own, to be present to what surrounds us, to respond to the concrete situation in front of us as we are glued to one ear listening to somewhere else.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist teacher, suggests a whole practice around the phone in order not to be rushed off your feet and also to be more present to yourselves. It was fascinating while staying a month with friends in America who used this technique to watch them answering the phone. They were very busy people, who gave a lot of themselves and had many responsibilities. Whenever the phone rang, they would wait three rings before answering even if they were next to the phone. The first ring, they would use as a bell of awareness and stop to be fully present to this moment – standing in the kitchen by the phone. The second ring, they would breathe deeply and on

the third ring they would open their heart to whoever was ringing and then they would unhook the phone and answer. If they were further away from the telephone they would breathe deeply on each ring.

I find this technique interesting at the level of redirecting our reflexes. When we hear the phone ring, what do we do? Do we jump and run, even with our hands full of soapy water? We don't have to rush to answer the phone. We can take our time. In the same way we would appreciate if someone took their time to breathe and cultivate a good intention when we phone them. The more we give in to the myth that things must happen instantaneously, the more impatient we are likely to become, with all the irritations and stresses this implies. A meditative attitude towards instant communication would see the benefit of the communication but play and experiment with what instant means.

The phone can become a tool of awareness and even compassion. At the beginning we have to become conscious of how we use and respond to the telephone in our daily life. We might have a cool and calm attitude or our response might stress us. If we have already a calm attitude, we can expand it by cultivating a compassionate attitude as well. If we have a stressful response, we need to allow ourselves to respond in a different way. We are not stuck; we can change and transform. A very simple expressed intention can make a big difference to the way we respond.

The first thing is to realise that when the phone rings we can meditate, walk slowly and reach for it. The second thing is to have a more open and caring mind because this is beneficial for you and others as well. Nowadays there are numerous double glazing proposals or new deals being touted over the phone. We can put the phone down harshly or we can answer kindly.



The people at the other end of the phone are only doing their jobs, something you might not want to have to do yourselves to earn your living. At the same time you do not need to feel obliged to listen and buy a product you have no use for. Then you have to strategize and think up creative ways of dealing with phone sales.

I try to be polite, thanking them for their calls but tell them that unfortunately I do not need their products.

Are we startled when we hear the phone ring? We could be lost in daydreams and fantasies. A phone call will actually bring us back to the present moment. Then it acts as a meditation bell by enabling us to come back to ourselves and what surrounds us. Or we could have been suffering great distress due to a shock or a loss. If we are in pain and cannot leave home, it can offer instant access and support. Someone even a continent away can be there for us.

A warm voice contacts us. We are listened to and we can share our feelings. We realise that we are part of a wider and caring world. A phone ring could even be the cause of our awakening in the same way as the sound of a pebble striking a bamboo pole was for a Zen monk.

Long ago in China, a monk wanted to become awakened at all cost. He tried so hard to sit in meditation day and night for many years.

But nothing would work. He felt obstructed from all fronts. Finally he decided to give up putting in so much effort. So he went to a hermitage to live a simple life while cultivating a garden to produce his food. A few months later, as he was squatting in the field hoeing away, he hit a pebble that flew off and struck a bamboo pole. When he heard the 'ping' it created, he was awakened to his own being and truth.

Insight Meditation and Mindfulness-based Approaches

An interview with Christina Feldman



In the past 20 years there has been an increasing interest in mindfulness in western society. Programmes such as Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) are being taught to help people to cope with stress and help reduce the risk of recurrence of clinical depression. In this article Christina Feldman will be commenting on the issues from a Buddhist perspective in a brief question and answer format.

Why do you think there is an upsurge in Mindfulness-based Approaches in the West in recent years?

It is difficult to find any organisation or structure in our culture today that is not being impacted by the teaching of mindfulness. In schools, prisons, hospitals, businesses and mental health centres mindfulness is being taught and applied both by professionals and clients. 2500 years ago the Buddha taught mindfulness as one of the pivotal practices that enables us to change the shape of our mind, be more awake and present in our lives and understand what it means to be less governed by the habitual and impulsive patterns of greed, hatred and delusion that create suffering. These same core teachings now have gone beyond the traditional settings of monasteries and retreat centres and their benefits explored in a more secular world. They are teachings that speak to the human story that can feature so much struggle and confusion, just as it features the timeless longing to find the end of struggle and confusion. What the cultivation of mindfulness teaches is that it is possible for any human being with sincerity and commitment to find a way of being in their life that is guided by understanding, ethics, kindness and inner balance.

How might mindfulness be helpful in managing everyday life and emotional problems?

People, in every walk of life, reach a point when they acknowledge the futility of utilising endless strategies to avoid or suppress the difficult that is part of our lives. Loss, sadness, disappointment, grief are part of living in a world of changing conditions that we cannot control. It is a world that can be reacted to with fear, depression or anger – reactions that only compound the difficult. It is equally a world that can be responded to with mindfulness, compassion and investigation. Mindfulness teaches us to pause, rather than to flee, to befriend rather than reject, to be present in our lives rather than abandon them. Learning it is possible to let go of the extra layer of reactivity, the optional suffering, enables us to meet the moment as it is, rather than being lost in our 'shoulds'.

What do you see as the challenges of teaching mindfulness in secular settings?

In the face of struggle and confusion we are prone to want to find 'quick fix' solutions. The path of mindfulness is not one of these, it is a practice of a life time that asks for boundless patience and dedication. It is not always easy to convey that mindfulness is not just a technique but a path that is as deeply challenging as it is rewarding. In the Buddhist tradition wise mindfulness is part of a multi-dimensional path that begins with ethics and culminates in liberating insight, rather than mindfulness being an end in itself. It is an ongoing exploration to find the skilful means to convey the depth and breadth of this path in secular settings in a language that doesn't alienate the very people this practice can benefit so deeply.



Where do you see the long lineage of Buddhist theory and practice and these secular teaching programmes converging?

When asked to state the essence of his teaching, the Buddha responded – I teach just one thing. There is suffering and there is the end of suffering. It is a statement that has informed students' practice in traditional settings over centuries, it is equally the heart of mindfulness taught in non-traditional settings. To find the end of struggle and anguish we need to understand its causes, to see directly for ourselves how our personal worlds are born and shaped moment to moment. The teachings of compassion, healing and kindness are timeless, the motivations that bring both dharma students and professionals to this path. The Buddha's teaching over centuries has always been in a dialogue with the range of cultures it moved into. It is a dialogue that continues today with western science – I believe it is a dialogue that is mutually enriching.

What part might retreat centres such as Gaia House play in this emerging interest?

Over the last few years I have taught on the post-graduate programme in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy at Exeter University. Mostly I co-teach with Willem Kuyken, a Psychology Professor and founder of the Exeter MBCT programme. I teach core Buddhist psychology as I would in any other setting; together Willem and I explore how this teaching converges with contemporary psychological understanding. It is clearly understood in the contemporary mindfulness world that teachers of mindfulness need to be deeply rooted in a personal practice and an understanding of the origins and applications of mindfulness as part of insight traditions, if they are to embody mindfulness. During their training students undertake a minimum of two intensive insight meditation retreats. What Gaia House and other dharma centres offer are the opportunities for mindfulness teachers to learn, to practice and to deepen their own understanding and develop the skilful means to bring that inner transformation into their professional lives.

There are currently three Universities in the UK offering a range of training/courses in MBSR/MBCT/MBA up to Masters Level. For further details see their websites

Bangor <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness>

Exeter <http://psychology.exeter.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/pgmindfulness/>
<http://exeter-mindfulness-network.org>

Oxford <http://oxfordmindfulness.org/>

Teacher's Corner

At the Gaia House Teacher Council meeting in November, we discussed our desire to embody and express fuller and more appropriate responses to the contemporary challenge of global climate change. We recognise that this will be an ongoing discussion, and one that will require much careful consideration in a number of areas.

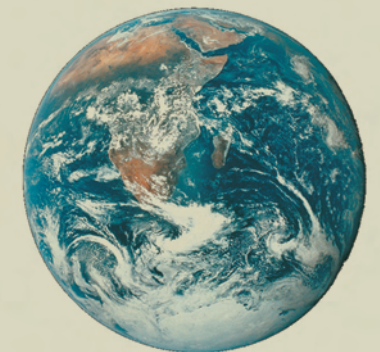
As a very small beginning we have agreed to work towards reducing our environmental impact with the following measures, which are currently being reviewed by the Trustees.

We hope to reduce the amount of teacher air miles. Especially in the case of shorter retreats, we will give preference to UK-based teachers and avoid air travel where practical.

We would also like to offset the carbon emissions of all teachers' flights travelling here by air. We are aware of the highly questionable ethics of offsetting and that this therefore does not really represent a solution, but regard it more as a transitional measure.

Whilst our core programme will remain based around direct contact, we will look into and experiment with new ways of offering teaching that involve less travel. For example, we will explore how online teaching could enhance our provision by offering set periods or day retreats online, perhaps via Skype or similar platforms.

We intend to allocate time at every Gaia House Teacher Council Meeting to the continuing exploration of our Dharma responses to the climate crisis.



Your feedback please!

Hello I am the latest addition to the Gaia House team. I moved down from Oxford to work at Gaia House and to realise a long-held ambition to live in Devon. It's a lovely time of year for new beginnings here, as the countryside around us launches into spring, and I am very happy to be embarking on my new work life in such an inspiring environment.

When I told my friends and family about my new job there were quite a few questions about what my job might involve; as Communications Manager in a silent retreat centre! So to set the record straight, my responsibilities will be putting together the newsletters and programme, managing the phone and IT systems, updating the website, coordinating the advertising and assisting with the dissemination of our Dharma talks. I will also be helping Gaia House keep up with new forms of communication, as we strive to be as accessible as possible to all sectors of our diverse community.

On the subject of newer forms of communication, I would like to thank everyone who has 'liked' us on Facebook. To clear up any confusion, some of you have 'liked' us on the (Unofficial) Gaia House Facebook Page, set up by one of our community, but now that we have an official

page I would like to invite you to 'like' our official page. Our Facebook page provides a useful forum for the Gaia House community to connect in the world beyond our physical space, and to share experiences and reflections. We expect to see the activity on Facebook grow over time, so I would like to encourage all our Facebook yogis to get involved.

I am mindful that communication is a two-way process which involves listening as much as talking, so I am very keen to hear your thoughts about how we communicate with you. As a starting point, I am interested in your views on our newsletter; for example what do you think about the content, layout and style and what areas of news would you particularly like us to cover? Please get in touch with your thoughts via whichever communication mode you prefer, new or old! I am working at Gaia House Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays when I can be contacted by telephone on 01626 323 881 and my email is comms@gaiahouse.co.uk.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Charlotte Johnston
Communications Manager

Committed Dharma Practitioners Programme commencing Spring, 2013

The CDPP is an extended programme integrating the study and practice of the Dhamma that is rooted in the Buddha's teaching of the path to liberation. The programme provides opportunity to study the texts (pariyatti), develop and cultivate our experiential understanding of the teaching (patipatti) and investigate how they apply to our meditation practice and daily life, and understand what is meant by realisation (pativedha).

It offers a number of different, yet interwoven strands within its framework – teaching, discussion, community, reflection and investigations applied in our daily lives. Students will have previous experience with dharma practice, and the programme is an opportunity to learn and practice together. One of the intentions of this extended programme is to encourage participants to embed the teaching in every area of their lives:

'When I first considered the Committed Dharma Practitioner Programme I wondered how I would fit it into a busy life. I asked a Gaia House teacher who knew me and the CDPP. She had previously said of the busyness "you need to do less;" but now of the CDPP programme she said, "absolutely, you should do the CDPP." Over the two years I have found many aspects of my life transformed by what I have learned. I have gone from seeing Pali and the suttas as impenetrable

to coming to love learning what they have to offer. The course had the added bonus of introducing me to a rich and diverse community of teachers and students.' (Willem Kuyken, 2011-12 participant).

Modules and Retreats:

The modules, held in the beautiful setting of Sharpham House, will offer an in-depth exploration of the teachings of the Buddha. They will include sustained blocks of teachings and discussion, and times for questions each day. Retreats will be held at Gaia House and will have a study practice format.

'The programme has been practical, challenging and inspiring. The suggested readings and reflections have woven the course modules into daily life and offered sustenance in meeting the 'good, bad and ugly' on a moment-to-moment basis. The course has been enriched by the patience and generosity of the teachers, and by the dedication and tenacity of fellow students.' (River Walton, 2011-12 participant)

Please email sharphamcdpp@yahoo.com for more details and an application pack, and the course will be open for applications later this year.

FOCUS ON RETREATS...

Training the Mind, Freeing the Heart

Martin Aylward and Vinny Ferraro @ Seale-Hayne

Tues 12th – Sun 17th June 2012

Retreat Code: 12174

Cost: £350 (£298) £420

Following our impulses and reactions, we find ourselves pulled and pushed around by life. Dharma practice invites us to liberation from our inner patterning, through really engaging our own mind, and daring to explore and liberate our own heart, meeting life deeply from the inside out. The retreat will unfold both traditionally and experimentally, offering silence and interaction, teachings and exploration, opening to the sweet relief and vast possibilities of our own freedom of being.

Awakening Wisdom and Compassion

Caroline Jones & Paul Burrows

Sat 4th – Fri 10th Aug 2012

Retreat Code: 12158

Cost: £266 (£226) £319

During this retreat we will explore ways of practising that help us to live with greater sensitivity, simplicity and joy. We will deepen our understanding of kindness, mindfulness and concentration, discovering for ourselves the path of freedom in each moment.

Meditation and Mindfulness

Martine Batchelor & Jake Dartington

Fri 24th – Wed 29th Aug 2012

Retreat Code: 12160

Cost: £230 (£195) £276

This retreat will give us the opportunity to explore two important qualities for developing mindfulness: concentration and investigation. There will be periods of sitting and walking meditation inspired by the Vipassana tradition, which will enable us to cultivate tools of mindfulness that we can then apply in our daily life so that they can become the ground for our life, and bring more spaciousness and alertness to all that we live and do.

Touching Heaven & Earth – Meditation and Qigong

Yvonne & Max Weier

Sat 1st – Wed 5th Sept 2012

Retreat Code: 12161

Cost: £193 (£164) £232

This is an invitation to relax, open and surrender our body/mind to a deeper experience of life. The more embodied we are and the brighter our awareness is, the more we feel at home in ourselves, in the world, in the cosmos.

Group-meetings and walking meditation will complement the sitting meditation and Qigong sessions.

Please note: this might be Yvonne's last retreat with Gaia House.

Who do you think you are?

Alan Lewis

Fri 7th – Sun 9th Dec 2012

Retreat Code: 12170

Cost: £118 (£100) £141

An investigation of the sense of self in everyday life. Please see our website for further information.



A Secular Buddhist

Stephen Batchelor



I am a secular Buddhist. It has taken me years to fully “come out,” and I still feel a nagging tug of insecurity, a faint aura of betrayal in declaring myself in these terms. As a secular Buddhist my practice is concerned with responding as sincerely and urgently as possible to the suffering of life in this world, in this century (our saeculum) where we find ourselves now and future generations will find themselves later. Rather than attaining nirvana, I see the aim of Buddhist practice to be the moment-to-moment flourishing of human life within the ethical framework of the eightfold path here on earth. Given what is known about the biological evolution of human beings, the emergence of self-awareness and language, the sublime complexity of the brain, and the embeddedness of such creatures in the fragile biosphere that envelops this planet, I cannot understand how after physical death there can be continuity of any personal consciousness or self, propelled by the unrelenting force of acts (karma) committed in this or previous lives.

For me, secular Buddhism is not just another modernist reconfiguration of a traditional form of Asian Buddhism. It is neither a reformed Theravada Buddhism (like the Vipassana movement), a reformed Tibetan tradition (like Shambhala Buddhism), nor a reformed Zen lineage (like the Order of Interbeing). It is more radical than that: it seeks to return to the roots of the Buddhist tradition and rethink Buddhism from the ground up.

In exploring such roots, the secular Buddhist finds herself excavating two fields that have been opened up in the past century by modern translators and scholars. The first of these fields consists of the earliest discourses attributed to Siddhattha Gotama, which are primarily found in the Pali canon of the Theravada school. We are

exceptionally fortunate as English speakers not only to have a complete translation of the Pali canon, but one which is continually being improved. The second of these fields is that of our increasingly detailed understanding of the historical, social, political, religious and philosophical conditions that prevailed during the Buddha’s lifetime in 5th century BCE India. Thanks to scholars like Richard Gombrich, we are beginning to see more clearly the kind of world in which the Buddha taught. Together, these two fields provide a fertile soil for the project of rethinking, perhaps reimagining the dharma from the ground up.

My starting point is to bracket off anything attributed to the Buddha in the canon that could just as well have been said by a brahmin priest or Jain monk of the same period. So when the Buddha says that a certain action will produce a good or bad result in a future heaven or hell, or when he speaks of bringing to an end the repetitive cycle of rebirth and death in order to attain nirvana, I take such utterances to be determined by the common metaphysical outlook of that time rather than reflecting an intrinsic component of the dharma. I thus give central importance to those teachings in the Buddha’s dharma that cannot be derived from the worldview of 5th century BCE India.

Tentatively, I would suggest that this “bracketing” of metaphysical views, leaves us with four distinctive key ideas that do not appear to have direct precedents in Indian tradition. I call them the four “P”s:

1. The principle of conditionality
2. The process of four noble tasks (truths)
3. The practice of mindful awareness
4. The power of self-reliance

Some time ago I realized that what I found most difficult to accept in Buddhism were those beliefs that it shared with its sister Indian religions Hinduism and Jainism. Yet when you bracket off those beliefs, you are left not with a fragmentary and emasculated teaching, but with an entirely adequate ethical, philosophical and practical framework for living your life in this world. Thus what is truly original in the Buddha’s teaching, I discovered, was his secular outlook.

And when you bracket off the quasi-divine attributes that the figure of the Buddha is believed to possess and focus on the episodes in the canon that recount his often fraught dealings with his contemporaries, then the humanity of Siddhattha Gotama begins to emerge with more clarity too. All this supports what the British scholar Trevor Ling surmised nearly fifty years ago: that what we now know as “Buddhism” started life as an embryonic civilisation or culture that then mutated into another organized Indian religion. Secular Buddhism, which seeks to articulate a way of practicing the dharma in this world and time, thus finds vindication through its critical return to canonical sources, and its attempts to recover a vision of Gotama’s own saeculum.

Above all, secular Buddhism is something to do, not something to believe in. This pragmatism is evident in many of the classic parables: the poisoned arrow [M. 63], the city [S. 12:65], the raft [M. 22] – as well as in the Buddha’s presentation of his four “noble truths” as a range of tasks to be performed rather than a set of propositions to be affirmed.

Instead of trying to justify the belief that “life is suffering”, one seeks to embrace and deal wisely with suffering when it occurs. Instead of trying to convince oneself that “craving is the origin of suffering”, one seeks to let go of and not get tangled up in craving whenever it rises up in one’s body or mind. From this perspective it is irrelevant whether the statements “life is suffering” or “craving is the origin of suffering” are either true or false. Why? Because these four so-called “truths” are not propositions that one accepts as a believer or rejects as a non-believer. They are suggestions to do something that might make a difference in the world in which you coexist with others now.

“Enlightenment,” therefore – though I prefer the term “awakening” – is not a mystical insight into the true nature of mind or reality, but rather the opening up of a way of being-in-this-world that is no longer determined by one’s greed, hatred, fear and selfishness. Thus awakening is not a state but a process: an ethical way of life and commitment that enables human flourishing. As such it is no longer the exclusive preserve of enlightened teachers or accomplished yogis. Likewise, nirvana – i.e. the stopping of craving – is not the goal of the path but its very source. For human flourishing first stirs in that clear, bright, empty space where neurotic self-centredness realizes that it has no ground to stand on at all. One is then freed to pour forth into the world like sunlight.

A longer version of this article is available on our website at www.gaiahouse.co.uk



One Day Retreat Information 2012

Brighton

27 May Bhante Bodhidharma

29 September Martin Aylward

For information and registration:
www.bodhigarden.org

Email: info@bodhigarden.org

Bristol

5 May Brad Richecoeur Meditation and Qigong

2 June Ajahn Kovida Awareness and Insight

8 September Caroline Jones
The Kindness of Mindfulness

3 November Christina Feldman Contentment

1 December Bhante Bodhidharma Mahasi day retreat

Venue: St Michaels on the Mount Parish Hall,
Old Park Hill, off Perry Road, Bristol
BS2 8BE.

You can book online at
www.bristolmeditation.org.uk where you will
also find further information about
day retreats.

Sheffield

26 May Sangha day

6 - 8 July 'The Path of Freedom' residential
retreat in the Peak District

1-8 September (3 days + 4 weekday eves).
Caring and Presence: a retreat for those who
work supporting and caring for others.

8 September Metta – day-long linked to
above retreat but open to all.

Further info:
www.sheffieldinsightmeditation.org.uk

Cambridge

12 May Martine Batchelor

26 May Bhante Bodhidharma

1 September Christina Feldman

17 November Yanai Postelnik

Venue: Friends Meeting House,
12 Jesus Lane, Cambridge

Time: 10am - 5pm, registration 9.30 am

Cost: £8 in advance/ £10 on the day +
teacher dana

Concessions: students, unwaged, retired £5

Contact: Advance booking by cheque for £8,
payable to DeMarrais/Retreats, to
Liz DeMarrais, 9 George Street, Cambridge
CB4 1AL

Further information: May 26th retreat -
tel. 01353 659 082

All other retreats – tel. 01223 460 966

Oxford

26 May Chris Cullen

8 September Stephen Batchelor

20 October Bhante Bodhidharma

1 December Yanai Postelnik

Venue: Headington Parish Hall

Time: 10am–5pm, registration from 9.15am

Cost: £10 (£5 concessions)

Contact: see
www.oxfordgaiahouseretreats.co.uk
(for booking form, information about the
retreats, contacts for sitting groups).

For other enquiries, ring Brigid or David on
01608 811940

London Insight Meditation

5 May John Peacock – study day -
St Anne's Church, Soho

13 May Martine Batchelor - King Alfred's School

20 May Stephen Batchelor and Don Cupitt – Buddhist-
Christian dialogue - Friends' House, Euston

26 May Locana – focusing workshop –
Avonmouth House

10 Jun Vinny Ferraro - King Alfred's School

23-24 Jun Akincano - King Alfred's School

8 Jul Jenny Wilks - King Alfred's School

9 Sep Stephen Batchelor - King Alfred's School

10 Sep Caroline Jones and Paul Burrows –
6 week evening course

21 Sep John Peacock and Mark Williams –
dialogue: Buddhism and the mindfulness
movement – Friends' House, Euston

22-23 Sep Ajahn Sucitto - King Alfred's School

6-7 Oct Yanai Postelnik - workshop: the contemplation
of death

21 Oct Bhante Bodhidharma -
King Alfred's School

3 Nov John Peacock – study day –
St Anne's Church Soho

5 Nov Caroline Jones –
6 week evening course

17-18 Nov Christina Feldman –
King Alfred's School

9 Dec Rob Burbea – King Alfred's School

For further details please see www.londoninsight.org

New events are added all the time. Please register on our
website to receive email updates on all our events.

Day retreats mostly take place at King Alfred's School,
a lovely venue in Golders Green, where we have the use
of the grounds for walking meditation as well as a spacious
hall for sitting. It is easily accessible from central London
Days run from 10am to 4.30pm, with registration from
9.30. Please bring a contribution to a shared
vegetarian lunch.

John Peacock's study days (5 May and 3 November) will
focus on the Sutta Nipata, which contains some crucial but
neglected texts that are among the oldest in the Pali Canon.
They are therefore hugely useful for helping us to recover the
Buddha's teaching in its original form.

Stephen Batchelor (20 May) will spend an afternoon
in dialogue with the leading radical Christian theologian

Don Cupitt, discussing the issues that engage them both
and taking questions from the floor. Like Stephen's,
Don's work in shaping a contemporary approach to spiritual
practice has inspired many, but also attracted great criticism
from some traditionalists. This unique event will be chaired
by Madeleine Bunting of the Guardian. For more info,
see www.londoninsight.org/dialogue.

A focusing workshop (26 May) led by Locana
will introduce this technique of awareness, enquiry and
transformation as an adjunct to conventional insight practice.

John Peacock and Mark Williams

(21 September) will also meet in dialogue, to consider the
rich but controversial relationship between Buddhist practice
and mindfulness-based therapies. Madeleine Bunting will
again chair.

Saturday Insight is a new weekly drop-in group
led by Paul Burrows. It meets at 10.30 at a beautiful
venue in Covent Garden. Paul is shaping an evolving
programme for the group, responsive to both the interests of
regulars and the needs of those dropping in occasionally.
Guest teachers assist Paul or lead the group when he is
unavailable. Please contact saturdayinsight@gmail.com for
further information.

Prices for events are kept as low as possible: the fee for day
retreats in 2012 remains unchanged (£14 in advance,
£17 on the door). Concessions are available, and no one
is excluded because of inability to pay. Teachers receive
only expenses, but at our events we warmly invite you to
offer them dana (a voluntary contribution to their livelihood).

There is a network of sitting groups in and around London
linked with us, including study groups with particular themes.
Please see www.londoninsight.org/community/
sitting-groups for more details.

Contact details:

enquiries@londoninsight.org

07954 472771

www.londoninsight.org

www.facebook.com/londoninsight

Twitter: @londoninsight

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UK Sitting Groups

This is the latest UK sitting groups register. If your name and details are not featured here and you run a sitting group in the UK, please do let us know and we can add you to this feature of the newsletter. Please keep us up to date with your plans so that we can ensure we always publish the most up to date information.

Keep in touch via email on comms@gaiahouse.co.uk.

AVON & SOMERSET

BRISTOL gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk
Gordon Adam 0117 908 0494

BRISTOL julia.wallond@yahoo.com
Julia Wallond 0117 939 4361

BRISTOL www.bristolchan.co.uk
Mike Masheder and Pat Simmons 0117 977 4683

FROME dan.lupton@hotmail.co.uk
Dan & Eva Lupton 01373 464564

GLASTONBURY devin@zendesigns.org
Devin Ashwood 01749 813969

TAUNTON lindy.booth1@virgin.net
Lindy Booth 01278 455830

WELLS sally@sallylever.co.uk
Sally Lever 01749 674842

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

MILTON KEYNES 01908 300557
Helen Stephenson 07548 366601

BERKSHIRE

NEWBURY millington.susan@gmail.com
Susan Millington 07958 574524

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CAMBRIDGE j@jdteasdale.plus.com
John & Jackie Teasdale 01223 460966

PETERBOROUGH peterboroughinsight@gmail.com
Barbara Reid 01733 252322

CUMBRIA

KENDAL bgkt@etherway.net
John Gerrard 01539 729793

CORNWALL

CALLINGTON sheranmurray@hotmail.co.uk
Sheran & Paul Murray 01579 370142

HELSTON sophiemuir@freeuk.com
Sophie Muir 01326 221651

REDRUTH
Vanessa 01209 214031

REDRUTH hopefieldceb@yahoo.co.uk
Elaine McCormick 01209 315266

PENZANCE lee.stev@live.co.uk
Lee 01736 799170

DERBYSHIRE

DERBYSHIRE b.riley@lboro.ac.uk
Billie Riley 0115 944 3034

DEVON

EXETER infobarleyfarm@gmail.com
Mary Booker 01392 496079

EXETER 01392 874386
Anne da Costa

PLYMOUTH john@johnpollex.co.uk
John Pollex 01752 224902

DORSET

COLEHILL steve.w@metronet.co.uk
Steve Wilkens 01202 880661

POOLE jasonthemiller@hotmail.co.uk
Jason Miller 01202 718524

WEYMOUTH 01305 786821
Sati Sati

ESSEX

COLCHESTER mmckol@gmail.com
Mike McKenna 07729 428970

CHELMSFORD essexinsight@yahoo.co.uk
Esther Spencer 07719 558078

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

CHELTENHAM ihatrany@aol.com
Ivan Hatrany 01242 514280

FOREST OF DEAN jane-spray@fiscal.co.uk
Jane Spray 01594 861404

HAMPSHIRE

ALDERSHOT pshaw@zoom.co.uk
Sarah Wiesendanger 01252 318064

PORTSMOUTH brian.attridge7@ntlworld.com
Brian Attridge 02392 863266

SOUTHAMPTON sirdar80@yahoo.co.uk
Jilly Cooke

HERTFORDSHIRE

POTTERS BAR 01707 644309
Vanessa Hope vhope@mindfulnessforhealth.co.uk

KENT

MAIDSTONE lawrence_hamer@hotmail.com
Lawrence Hamer 07984 954398

LANCASHIRE

LANCASTER paulblanc@waitrose.com
Tony Butterfield 01524 65123

LONDON AREA

HAM AREA 0208 789 1992
Gaetan Louis de Canonville

EAST LONDON Josephine.petersson@sky.com
Josephine Doorley-Petersson 0208 534 3151

SE21 stellachapman@yahoo.co.uk
Siella Chapman 0208 6939251

MIDLANDS

BIRMINGHAM anantacitta@virginmedia.com
Anantacitta 0121 420 3268

KNOWLE/SOLIHULL julia@dfte.co.uk
Julia Evans 01564 777605

NORFOLK

NORWICH jacuumccarney@yahoo.co.uk
Jacqui McCarney 01603 613798

NORWICH samwest@onetel.com
Sam West 01603 760776

STOKE FERRY carolhunter135@hotmail.com
Carol Hunter 07917 420716

NORTHUMBERLAND

HALTWHISTLE cblain@onetel.com
Chris Blain 01434 322176

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

NOTTINGHAM jakedartington@hotmail.com
Jake Dartington 07989 979929

OXFORDSHIRE

OXFORD reynold@alexox.com
Reynold Greenlaw 01865 249820

SCOTLAND

GLASGOW www.glasgowzen.org.uk
John Fraser 0141 339 3888

GLASGOW gracenotes_uk@yahoo.co.uk
Grace Boyle 07849 738411

EDINBURGH radianthessence@hotmail.co.uk
Di Tyrer 07519 256489

SOMERSET

TAUNTON stpa.fisher@dsl.piex.com
Annie Fisher 01278 457245

BATH karenconnect8@yahoo.co.uk
Karen Smith 07726 340270

SURREY

EAST MOLESEY charmiantaunton@fiscal.co.uk
Charmian Taunton 0208 979 8597

RICHMOND gworthington06@aol.com
Geraldine Worthington 0208 546 5525

SUSSEX

BRIGHTON abbiebodhitree@hotmail.co.uk
Abbie Mead 01273 248753

TYNE-AND-WEAR

NEWCASTLE walter@whitleybay.pws.com
Walter Young 07508 055643

WALES

CARDIFF blanchtimmed@gmail.com
Tim Blanch 01656 841625

LLANDRINDOD, WELLS drcooke@fiscal.co.uk
David Cooke 01597 860327

TENBY ninapope@btinternet.com
Nina Pope 01834 871012

WILTSHIRE

SWINDON hughie@carrollonline.co.uk
Hugh Carroll 07949 605519

WORCESTERSHIRE

WORCESTER 01905 352065
Sally Dean & Robert Wilkins

YORKSHIRE

SHEFFIELD sghsg2009@gmail.com
River Wolton 01433 631350

Overseas Sitting Groups

If you run a group outside the UK and wish to feature in the overseas sitting groups register, please email comms@gaiahouse.co.uk for more information on how to feature in our bi-annual newsletters.

IRELAND

COUNTY DONEGAL info@aofev.com
Aoife Valley + 353 (0) 86 304 2893

MALTA

MELLIEHA michaeljhoey@googlemail.com
Michael & Tess Hoey 215 203 39 or 992 774 97

AUSTRALIA

TASMANIA monikaheisswolf@yahoo.com.au
Brian Board & Monika Heisswolf +03 6295 0487



GAIA HOUSE
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West Ogwell, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6EW
info@gaiahouse.co.uk www.gaiahouse.co.uk
+44 (0)1626 333613 Registered Charity No: 900339