

## BK Ecological Retreat for Europe & the Middle East

Casa Sangam 5 to 9 June 2014

*Now is the time*



Between Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> and Monday 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2014, a retreat focusing on environmental awareness and ecology was held at the retreat centre at Casa Sangam, near Gubbio in Italy.

At the start of the retreat, participants discussed how they had contributed towards sustainability in their personal lives and what motivated them to come.

Each morning, after breakfast, participants went for a meditative walk to serve the elements- air, fire, earth, water and ether.

In the Friday morning session, François Becher gave a presentation on matter, money and production – an overview of how human beings live, relate and vibrate in the world. Some key points:

- The environment is not only green – it is multi-coloured, like a rainbow (the white of the ice caps, the blue of the oceans, the pink of the people, the black of oil, the green of the forests...)
- Population: from 3 Bn in 1969 to 7 Bn now, in one generation.
- New souls have no sense of “history”, they come down and enjoy life on Earth – mostly through consumption.
- The crisis created by us human beings, starting from WW2 onwards – we are now predators of the ecology.

He identified five areas that are interesting to explore:

- Earth,
- history,
- money,
- growth,
- a spiritual approach

The earth is a living organism with different organs, just like a body with sea, ice caps, volcanoes, mountains, winds etc. There is a need for a natural, organic balance, the sustainability of life and death

In its history the human beings went through three phases: The magic phase, before Galileo where everything one does is for the next generation – Earth is then sacred, it is a gift from God. Humanity then went through the machine phase with the exploitation of Earth and then a systemic phase

So these phases also correspond to four levels:

- Harmony – respect, love, divorce –
- Selfishness, greed, lack of awareness
- Lifestyle – man is predator
- Entropy – Exponential curve of population growth.

### Spiritual approach:

The current scenario is understandable from a spiritual perspective: the drama is accurate, allowing billions of souls (the last wave(s), probably) to descend on Earth and enjoy their moment of happiness.

Some quotes from Gandhi:

“There is enough for human need, but not for human greed”, “Simple living, high thinking”, “Be the change that you want to see”

In the afternoon, Giorgio took us to visit the farm.





At the farm, we shared a group meditation from the walls of Mirabella which is the higher part of the property where Piero, the manager of Casa Sangam, has his residence.

In the evening we had an informal conversation in which the participants all shared what they are doing in the fields of the environment and sustainability.

On the Saturday, Valériane ran a workshop on sustainability where she ask the participants to reflect and share around these 5 questions:

- Why is sustainability important for you?
- What specifically, in sustainability, is important for you?
- How would you explain it to a six-year old kid?
- Is there a relationship between Gyan and sustainability, and if so which parts of Gyan are important sustainability-wise?
- What does Baba want me to do (for myself, for the people of the world, for nature)?

She then presented a drawing of how the knowledge of the Brahma Kumaris is conducive to a very unique way of understanding sustainability. It takes its roots in a way of life that is completely compatible with sustainability by giving us the aim of constant connection with the Divine. Achieving total purity allows us to contribute to the creation of a future sustainable world.

In the afternoon, Giorgio conducted a session on healthy food. Some of the points that were shared or recommended to study further:

- The China Study – book
- Milk and dairy are “the greatest killer”
- “Raw till 4”
- Fat is another “great killer”
- 80/10/10 – book: 80% carbohydrates, 10% fats, 10% proteins
- Carbohydrates are not only grains, cereals, but also fruit and vegetables

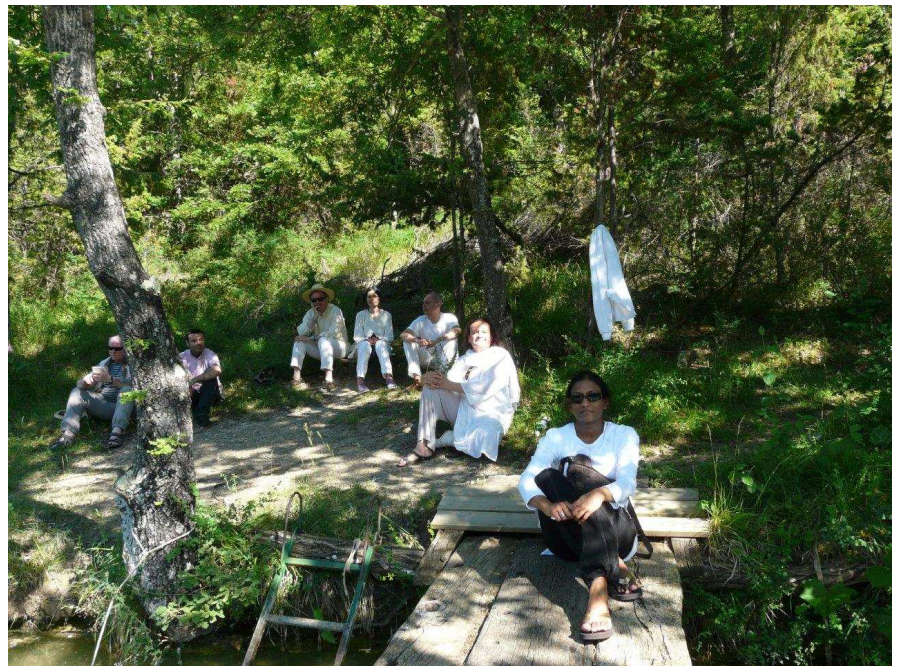
In the evening, we had a get-together where Valériane explained the work of Brahma Kumaris at the UN in the Climate Change context as well as in Geneva.

On the Sunday 8th June, in the morning, we explored through group reflection:

1. How the participants could engage in this environmental work?
2. How best to communicate the link between spirituality and the environment to BKs and others?

We took a walk to the idyllic lake with group meditations for the service of the elements.

In the evening, we shared our feedback and experiences.



Francois's overview and Valérieane's walking meditations on serving the elements, the sustainability reflection and Giorgio's food insights were particularly enjoyed.

All enjoyed the small group and sharing with family, friends, and colleagues; and the research, contributing to making sustainability more part of the BK conversation;

Souls were also interested in the idea of exploring further:

- A factsheet about sustainability
- Agree on a BK environmental charter (recommended practices)
- Maintain a dashboard
- Balance between the need to be economical and the need to help the planet.