

## *BK Ecological Retreat for Europe & the Middle East*

*Lisbon 16 to 20 June 2016*

### *Caring for Nature*

*On Thursday, all the retreat participants arrived and were welcomed in Baba's lovely home in Lisbon. In the evening, we discussed what had motivated us to come and in which ways we felt connected to nature.*



*On Friday we started with Chi Kung exercises in the garden with Joanna and a meditation on serving the elements.*

*Afterwards, there was a presentation by Valeriane on "Caring for the earth". The essence of the presentation was as follows: "Just as we are not the body but the soul, matter is NOT the forms that we see. It is the interaction of the 5 elements. We need to re-educate the soul to relate to nature. We need to understand the effect thoughts and emotions have. There are many layers of understanding we can have in order to connect on the basis of purity."*

*This was followed by a workshop and discussion which helped us to process and apply what we had learned in the morning. In the afternoon we had another workshop in which we explored different ways of perceiving and connecting with nature in silence. This was to enable us to practically experience how, when we are in a deep space of soul consciousness, we are able to serve and give back to nature rather than take.*



*We also did a creative writing exercise which took us through several shifts in perspective in relation to a chosen natural living 'thing'.*

*In the evening after dinner, Angela (Algarve) shared the work she does in the eco and organic farm she runs with her partner. Then Joanna shared about the green work happening in the UK and Mara told us the story of how the retreat centre has gradually become more eco-friendly and finally also vegan.*

*On the Saturday morning the whole group went to the forest-park on the hill behind the centre to have murli and meditation there and it was a very special experience. Afterwards, sister Shipra conducted some pranayama exercises.*

*Later on in the morning, souls went through a personal silent journey where we used art to express the special relationship we have with nature and the 5 elements. In the first part of the morning we did our own individual work. In the second part, over a 30 minute period, we created a collective piece of artwork on the ground with bits and pieces of wood, stone and vegetation that had been collected. This exercise proved to be thought provoking in terms of harmonizing sanskars and learning to work together in a creative and respectful way.*

*In the afternoon Valeriane shared about the UN work that the Brahma Kumaris are doing in the field of the environment and climate change.*

*After this Sylvia and Claudio, who are professional musicians, had invited the whole group to come to a street concert, in the vicinity of the centre, where they were playing. And the evening was free afterwards.*

*On the Sunday morning, after murli and meditation, we reflected on what we felt were the needs of the time regarding serving the elements and also how to bring the ecological and the spiritual aspects together in our personal lives and in service. In order to introduce the session with some practical experiences, Mike Hudson from London shared the events and gradual practical 'greening' of GCH as well as some of his personal interests in the subject. Sylvia talked about the progress that had been made at the Centre in Leicester and also some of the projects she wants to develop there.*



*We then went to a very special place for lunch near the Ocean in a nature reserve.*



*In the evening we had a general feedback session. The retreat had proved to be an enriching experience for all.*