

Now is the time

About 30 people gathered from UK, Portugal, Turkey, Germany, Holland and Switzerland in Baba's wonderful home in Lisbon, Portugal from the 2nd–6th July 2015. This was the first time the "green" retreat did not take place in beloved Gubbio in Italy. Lisbon's sweet BK family hosted this event and made us all feel completely at home.

We gathered to experience the soul's true relationship with the five elements, reflecting deeply about how we interact with Nature and exploring how to improve our daily efforts to respect the environment.



This retreat was punctuated with meditations to serve the elements and of *Qigong* and *Hatha Yoga* practices to sustain the body.

Friday's overall theme was **Environment Awareness and Spirituality**.

Once participants had given their introduction and described a personal aim for the five days, they reviewed *Environmental awareness: Spirituality and me*. Valeriane conducted a reflection on the relationships we have had with Nature and the elements throughout the cycle. In this reflection, she described how souls relate to Nature in the golden and silver age, and moved on to the changes that took place in the copper and iron ages. She included the evolution of faith and religion over time.

During the workshop that followed that first morning, BKs were asked to consider the way BapDada speaks about nature, the physical world and the elements, and what adjustments they feel are still needed in their lives. These musings were included in a personal letter each one wrote to the self on Baba's behalf, especially regarding his/her ongoing efforts and relations with Nature.

On the Friday afternoon, BK Marie Lisette (La Haye, Holland) conducted a workshop on healing our relationship with Nature, under the title *My relationship with the elements and nature during the first and the second half of the cycle*. She works as a professional art therapist.

Mike, Carol and Sylvia spoke about their spiritual journey on Friday evening, sharing their personal life choices in relation to sustainability and the environment.



Saturday was dedicated to the theme, **Environment, Consciousness and Action.**

After *murli* and breakfast on the beach, everyone joined the workshop on practical personal actions, which began by asking people to reflect on how in nature there is always a best time and right time to do something, just as in daily life and the world drama.

The key question was:

What is time asking you to do with regard to your own spiritual efforts and the environment?

Further thought about the highlights of the retreat and areas for future focus, especially personally, led to discussion and feedback. Participants were asked to reflect on just a few of these symbols (below) and get together with those who made the same choice to discuss 3 practical actions they could take to put the slogan into practice in their lives. Some of the choices were: live with simplicity; be unlimited; be positive; respect all life; walk the talk; open the heart; empower yourself; eat and live well;.



On **Saturday afternoon**, we shared the global work done by the Brahma Kumaris for the environment. Joanna (UK) showed people the different resources that are available from the www.environment.brahmakumaris.org/ website, and Valeriane (Switzerland) shared about the activities at the UN for the environment, climate change, and sustainability.

On **Sunday**, the full group focused on how they want to engage in serving nature, and how best to communicate the link between spirituality and the environment to BKs and their wider communities. Then, according to these interests, BKs separated into 4 groups to probe each theme in more depth. These topics included: *mansa seva*, inner environment, hands-on-service, 'green' workshop development and outreach communications.



After some time working on their personal and national interests, many of them expressed the will to continue working together on these topics and the action plans. The gathering enjoyed a coastal walk before the evening closed with further sharing and farewells.

Om Shanti

