

**“Inner Transition for a Greener World”**  
**A Report from the BK Environment Initiative**  
**North America - Green Retreat**  
**July 11-13, 2014 Peace Village, Haines Falls, NY**

**Friday July 11, 2014**



At 7:30 pm, the green retreat began in the beautiful natural setting of the Catskill Mountains at the Peace Village Learning and Retreat Center, Haines Falls, NY. Participants were welcomed and were asked to introduce themselves.

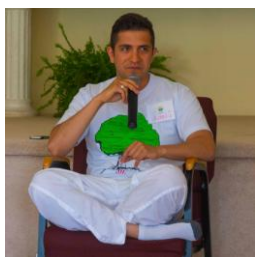
Next, we watched part of a video of an interview with Vandana Shiva (*Walking and Talking with Vandana Shiva: Sonatas of the Soil*). She described the violence that modern farming methods and seeds have on traditional Indian farming and families.

She also described methods of planting crops together for higher yield and more diverse diets. She states how human conscience has become so misguided that we have declared a war on nature in which toxic chemicals are used to “round up” life. The evening ended with announcements and a closing meditation.

**Saturday July 12, 2014**

On Saturday morning, after the murli class some of the participants did morning stretches and Tai Chi, followed by breakfast.

**Inner Transition for a Greener World by Br. Juan**



Transition means letting go and moving to a new place i.e. from where I was to where I am going. Our inner transition is the effort we make in order to go back home and incarnate in the new world as deities. Imbibing purity empowers the self, and so we are able to serve the environment. Juan’s talk then followed the theme of the “10 Ways to Change the World”. Next Juan talked about the BK contribution to the UN climate conferences and C.O.P. Conferences and how people attend them with a feeling of

urgency, but when there isn’t an agreement on parameters affecting climate change, they lose hope.

Sister Julia shared her experience of attending the climate conferences and the importance of building relationships and sharing our spiritual perspective consistently over the years.

**Introduction to Permaculture Design Philosophy by Br. Gordan**

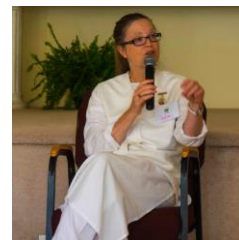
Br. Gordan explained that sustainability can be thought of as the midpoint on a line.



At one end is a pristine environment with natural resources in abundance and at the other end is a damaged environment and the exhaustion of natural resources. Sustainability is a point on the line where the rate of destruction of the environment matches the rate of regeneration of the environment. It is often said that to become sustainable, the use of the resources has to slow down. The real goal is regeneration by understanding nature and improving design. Our spiritual vibrations can also help

nature regenerate.

Br. Gordan went on to explain the importance of permaculture. Permaculture is based on the design of cultivated ecosystems that have the diversity and resilience of natural ecosystems. The philosophy of permaculture is based on 3 ethics; earth care, people care, and fair share and 12 basic principles.



Permaculture skills help people to be more resilient in the event of natural disaster and economic upheaval. It puts people into action while giving them hope.

### **Visit to Farms which are following Permaculture Design Philosophy**



We visited 2 local farms where we were given an introduction to the history and philosophy of the cooperative which initiated the Permaculture garden (named the Long Spoon Cooperative). We toured the garden and saw numerous beautiful vegetables growing together. In many of the garden beds, different vegetables were inter-planted to complement each other.

### **Link between Consciousness and Matter- How Internal Nature effects External Nature**



In the Evening, Sister Shubhra led a workshop on the link between consciousness and matter. She talked about how the internal nature of man affects the external. She talked about what divine qualities we learn individually from the five elements. She closed the session with a meditation serving nature and the five elements.

After dinner, we gathered to watch a video of a talk prepared by Sister Elizabeth (from Anubhuti Retreat Center). Sr. Elizabeth described our karmic footprint and our role as Brahmins in the confluence age. The session ended with a brief meditation and updates for the next day.



**Sunday's July 13, 2014**

**Public Program (Theme - Inner Transition for a Greener World)**



We were delighted to hear from Karuna Foudriat of Transition Town Saugerties, a local branch of Transition Network, a non-profit social action organization that works towards community interdependence and self-reliance, as well as Sister Irene, from the Peace Village Learning and Retreat Center. Sr. Irene gave a brief introduction about the BKs and their understanding that the environmental crisis is a symptom of the deep spiritual crisis worldwide. Raja Yoga meditation is the foundation for the type of stability and compassion under pressure that will be necessary to face the world's problems. BKs contribute to an upward energy spiral in society

through worldwide meditation programs and support of initiatives that can be effective at all levels of society. Unless we have peace in our hearts and minds, it will be impossible to reverse the downward energy spiral affecting all cultures. The concept of upward and downward spirals comes from a white paper called Consciousness and Climate Change II, a Confluence of Two Living Systems, written by the BK NGO Office.

Our guest speaker Karuna Foudriat is a practicing Sufi, an ordained interfaith minister, and meditation teacher. The deep connection Sufis feel for nature and the deep interconnectedness can be summed up in the phrase, "The oneness of all being". A powerful part of Karuna's talk was an explanation of how humans cope with the knowledge we receive about the problems with the environment and climate chaos. Many won't even admit that climate change is real; They continually go through the different stages of fear, denial, apathy, depression and anger in a nonlinear way. Karuna is a member of Inner Transition, (the spiritual arm of Transition Network), where volunteers interconnected with the environment and the real needs of people use their spiritual experience to assist others in changing their outlook.



**Long Spoon Cooperative**

Frank, from the Long Spoon Collective, gave a very passionate talk about the background of their organization, and the work they are engaged in. Frank briefly described how the economic system is exploiting people and the environment based on the model of competition and scarcity. He also described how their collective is creating an alternative that is sustainable. He began by saying that it is crucial to have right mind and right spirit.



Frank said this is a culture of taking, and not giving. By participating in the system, we become complacent. Long Spoon Collective attempts to live without exploitation and do the hard work of changing habits by shifting from competition to cooperation

and sharing. The Long Spoon Collective is working to eliminate the barriers to enter into sustainable living by building a new food and housing infrastructure that doesn't rely upon money as a means of exchange - only participation. Frank finished his talk by saying, "This is not a utopian dream, but this is urgent work that must be done, and we are currently doing it".

## **Sr. Kala's Talk - Hope, Environment, Interconnection**

I was thinking that all you have a very close connection with nature. We are all connected to nature, but what is our most intimate connection with nature? It is with the body. Sr. Kala comes from a field of taking care of the body as a physician. A body is not really anything without a living being – a soul - being there. It is made of all the 5 elements. If we understood who we are, and what we are - that we are the living being within the body - our connection with nature and our way of looking at nature would be so different. That shifts the focus of how we think, how we act, and what we do. Always keep the purity of your intention and purity of emotion, and do not mix it with anything else. We are so interconnected and we should not lose sight that it is all for the benefit of the greater good. Who is ultimately responsible for the creation? The Creator. So, have the trust that there is a connection between nature and the Creator and consider yourself as an instrument for the Creator to work through for any task. There is a force that is pure, benevolent and all-knowing. I have to connect with something bigger, something unlimited that has no selfish interest at all. There is the purity of emotion, with no insecurity. I am not doing anything out of fear.



Life is perpetual, eternal, and it has its own way of rejuvenating. Our hope as BKs comes from this understanding as well as an inspiration to do something. Doing something on a regular basis that contributes to a better planet - even if it is little, generates hope. The hope I get from that will give me the energy to do more. People in the world are looking for happiness outside of themselves. Spirituality tells us, you are a soul, and you are happy by nature. You don't need to consume and accumulate in order to feel secure and happy. In soul consciousness, there is a deep inner treasure, so you don't have to go out into nature and take things from it, depleting the natural resources.

Silence is a very important value for us. Within silence we can discover the peaceful and happy self. In



silence, we observe ourselves and see if something is necessary for me or not. We are not the owner of the natural resources, but we are entrusted with it, to put it to good use for the benefit of all. This is sustainable benefit. This is what environmental awareness is all about. You are thinking about giving, not taking. Even if I can't share physically, I can share through my love and my peaceful thoughts. We started with a clean and pure world and will make the world clean and beautiful. Together, the Creator and I are on this journey of transformation. Sr. Kala ended the talk

with a guided meditation commentary and then gave toli and blessings to everyone in the audience.

(A detailed version of this report is also available; please contact Br. Gordan by email at [peacefulsoular@yahoo.com](mailto:peacefulsoular@yahoo.com).)