

Report on
North America BK Green Retreat - 2015
Consciousness and Matter, the Confluence of Two Living Systems
Peace Village Retreat Center, New York (July 31 - August 2)

On Friday, July 31, BKs from USA, Canada and Spain gathered at Peace Village on Friday evening with a lot of enthusiasm. The coordinating team (Sr. Shubhra Goel from Ohio, Sr. Irene Miller from Peace Village, Br. Juan Milling from Canada, and Br. Gordan Lawrence from California) welcomed everyone and spoke of the theme of the retreat. All the participants introduced themselves and shared what aspect of green consciousness pulled them to attend this year's retreat. This was the 4th annual Green Retreat, and over half of us had been to all the previous retreats.



Br. Gordan introduced 3 short videos. After each one, there was time for group discussion. The first video was "A Pale Blue Dot," about this small blue green planet we call home. The second video was

part of the "Nature is Speaking" series (we watched the one about the soil speaking). The third video was by Jill Bolte Taylor, a brain scientist. She spoke about the stroke she had and her insights into the role of the right hemisphere of her brain, which generated vivid experiences of unlimited joyful consciousness when not restricted by the left hemisphere.

On Saturday, we enjoyed murli and class by Sister Mohini, and Tai Chi led by Sr. Colette. Then Br. Neville from Global Retreat Centre in Oxford, UK made a presentation of groundbreaking new research into consciousness and matter. His talk covered new understanding about consciousness gained from brain visualizations, near-death experiences and the science of Quantum Physics. There is a link to the video of his talk at the end of this report.



Neville summarized extensive research on near death experiences (NDEs) that occur in many cultures, when people who have recovered from what is considered to be dying tell remarkably similar stories of being beyond their bodies in the presence of light, outside of space and time. They experience total acceptance and unconditional love and have access to a deep knowledge and wisdom, with indescribable clarity and insight.

Neville explained that many scientists believe that the left brain acts a filter for our consciousness. The filter excludes most of the enormous amount of information and stimuli that is constantly coming at us, which would otherwise overwhelm us. Without this filter, our lives would not be manageable. However, it generally filters out the blissful experiences of unconditional love, deep knowing that the right brain is capable of

experiencing, (such as the quite similar experiences of Jill Bolte Taylor and those who have NDEs).

Neville showed us a video describing a famous experiment from Quantum Physics called the "Double Slit Experiment." He explained the significance of the experiment which is that consciousness effects matter. By observation, matter becomes fixed into a



physical location or position. Without observation, matter exists as possibilities. It isn't fixed into one location. When our thoughts become fixed and bound to the prevailing iron aged "reality," our power, our vision and our ability to have faith in Baba's reality is limited.



Quantum Physics goes back at least 100 years, but it is only in more recent times that quantum scientists became more willing to explore consciousness. There were several quotes from scientists which were very interesting:

"The universe seems to me to be nearer to a great thought than to a great machine. It may well be...that each individual consciousness ought to be compared to a brain-cell in a universal mind." "Mind and matter, if not proved to be of similar nature, are at least found to be

ingredients of one single system." Sir James Jeans, English physicist, astronomer, and mathematician.

"It is not matter that creates an illusion of consciousness, but consciousness that creates an illusion of matter." Bernard Haisch, astronomer, physicist and author of *The God Theory*.

A major point made by Neville in this talk is that the science of quantum physics reinforces the knowledge of Raja Yoga. We are so used to seeing the world through our brains and senses, and Baba is teaching us and training us to see the world differently. We can reduce our desires, and our karmic entanglements and make ourselves freer to experience the unlimited. We make ourselves peaceful so that pure consciousness has an opportunity to expand and deepen. Baba knows that we need to continue to keep using our brains and continue to function in this reality, but He constantly reminds us to focus our minds on Him. He reminds us to practice taking our mind and intellect beyond – to a higher point. Neville said that he now understands why Dadi Janki often tells us to think less. The message is to use your brain to do what you need to do, but to have the practice of keeping your mind with Baba. Neville then related Baba's method to neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to change its neuro-circuitry (the equivalent of wiring in the brain). Science shows how through meditation, people can lay down new neuro-circuits, according to the thoughts and feelings they frequently have. Baba teaches the soul (= consciousness) to change the brain (= matter) by aligning our thoughts with His thoughts, our vision of ourselves and the world with His truth about world transformation. With that direct connection, we can develop the purest stage of happiness that Baba refers to as super sensuous joy. The pure consciousness of a yogi keeps the body healthy.



One of the aims of the 2015 Green retreat was to experiment with some of the educational and experiential workshops designed by the International Green team for use in outreach. This was done on Saturday, as an interactive workshop for BKs led by Sr. Irene on Consciousness & Matter, which combined exercises from two of the ten green workshops that can be found at <http://www.environment.brahmakumaris.org/resources#workshops>. These are available for use by any BK who wants to attract those interested in environment and spirituality.

On Saturday evening Brother Juan shared a presentation about climate change with images and information from Al Gore's Climate Reality project. He explained some scientific facts of climate change and how it is affecting souls from all corners of the world. He shared that the degradation of elements reflects the state of mind of human beings - and that - with the power of our spiritual identity and yoga, we have the

opportunity to shift our own hearts and minds and inspire other souls to do the same in order to live in a sustainable and flourishing future. He ended the presentation with some news about what would be happening

at COP21 in Paris where the next UN Climate Change Conference will take place. BKs will be there to offer meditations and workshops - but mainly to continue to ignite hope in people.



On Sunday morning, the retreat concluded with a session of final thoughts and future inspirations led by Sr. Shubhra in the beautiful natural setting of the Pavilion. The participants experienced soulful music played on flute by Br. Ed Nizalowski, while the meditation on Nature and elements was conducted by Br. Vijai Sadal. The session was concluded by exchange of soul conscious drishti and green retreat memorabilia with each other.

We then prepared for a public program titled ***Protecting Our Mountains & Valleys with Pure Intentions***. We invited the audience into an interactive session called "Consciousness and Energy", exploring the energy of our thoughts and our spiritual response-ability. We showed a video about the Double Slit Experiment, and also a few scenes about quantum physics from the movie "What the Bleep do We Know?" The program ended with a guided meditation, as well as toli and blessings and a word of thanks from the green retreat coordinators.



(The talk that Brother Neville gave is available on the Peace Village webcast site at this link.

<http://livestream.com/peacevillagewebcast/events/4236538>

In the recording, Br. Neville's talk begins at the 12:20 time. Before that the camera is just filming meditation)

(Green Retreat Photo Credit – Cindy Pinella from Brahma Kumaris Queen's Center)

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From the Green Retreat design team: 2015 was our most interesting year working as a team. We learned a lot about the topic from many sources, discovered more flexible ways of working together and are looking forward to next year's retreat. Please join us to make the North America Green Retreat - 2016 even more memorable!

