

UK BK Ecological Retreat

11 to 13 November 2016 at Worthing

Planting Seeds

On Friday 11th November, BKs gathered from all over the country: Glasgow, Isle of Man, Leeds, Wakefield, York, Leicester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Oxford, Langley, London and Brighton.

The retreat started with sharing our current efforts in relation to the environment and what had motivated us to come. Then Joanna did a short presentation on the International BK Environment Initiative and highlighted the wide variety of resources available on the eco.brahmakumaris.org website and also Greenangelinitiative.org. We also watched some short videos from the site.

On Saturday we started with an interactive presentation by Mike from London, in which we looked at the deeper reasons for why we are moving towards becoming more eco friendly. For the first half of the cycle we will live in harmony with Nature and now is the time for creating those sanskars. Mike said this was an aspect of dharna, or 'walking the talk'. Ecology comes from Ekos (Greek for 'the home') and we discussed how the Earth is our home and we are one family living on it. Mike talked about our relationship with Nature as a dance, a rhythm or harmony, and how we need to utilise resources/energy/etc according to the circumstances – not just blindly save everything but use them wisely.



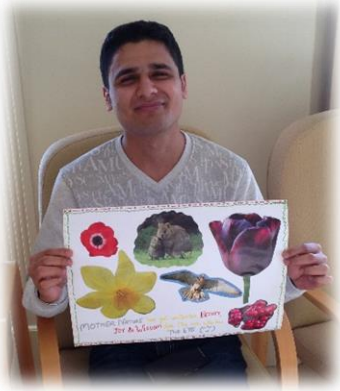
After a break there was a choice of workshop. One was an art workshop with Carole from Nottingham, who started by showing us a range of things she had made out of recycled materials. This session was very much about how to use everything in a worthwhile way. Carole then showed participants how to make original print designs for blessing cards using old polystyrene packaging. Participants became quickly absorbed in the very creative task.

The other workshop was with Nirmala from York which consisted of insights and experiential exercises into the practice of mindfulness. Nirmala demonstrated how being in soul consciousness and using the 5 senses enabled participants to be more present and connect deeply with nature. Exercises and meditations in self compassion and giving compassion to nature were also explored. Both groups were brought together at the end and Nirmala took us through a beautiful commentary on being a flawless diamond.

The afternoon started with some Chi Kung exercises and then participants split up to explore a choice of 50 minute taster workshops taken from the BK Environment website and presented by different facilitators. The workshops were Making Good Things Happen with Maria (London), The Power to Change Habits with David (Leeds), Earth Care with Davina (London) and Non-violent Living with Rose (Glasgow).

In the evening we watched part of a new documentary called Before the Flood by Leonardo di Caprio.

On Sunday, Linda from Brighton helped us to consolidate our learning and prepare for the future by taking us through a creative workshop where we each made our own eco vision board. Everyone shared their learning and inspirations from the retreat.



Practical suggestions arising from the weekend:

- Maria will be working with Nick from Leeds to make an e-book of eco friendly cleaning materials out of the research the London group have been doing.
- To make an ebook of vegan toli recipes. Sahil volunteered to help with this.
- To have 'foot free' discussion groups where participants can circulate and stop and join small group discussions on different eco themes.
- To offer one day retreats for centres in different regional areas made up of a variety of 'pic & mix' eco modules presented by members of the eco team.