

## International Green Team visit to Australia

Eight members of the International Brahma Kumaris (BK) Green team toured Australia to meet with the Australian Green team, conduct retreats and give talks in several cities from 17 Sep to 13 Oct 2013. The tour comprised of almost 50 programs including three retreats, a radio interview and a magazine interview. There were many talks including three in Spanish, two in Portuguese and one in French. Most events were on the theme of spirituality and the environment. For several of the visitors it was their first trip to Australia and everyone had a lot of new experiences.

The international visitors were



The two main retreats during the tour were a meeting of the International and Australian Green teams at the Aravali Meditation Sanctuary in northern New South Wales from 18-22 Sep and “Spirituality – the Heart of Sustainability” for sustainability professionals at the BK retreat centre in the Blue Mountains near Sydney from 27-29 Sep. Details of those events are in separate reports. The film about the retreat in the sanctuary made by the host, Robin Ramsay, is at <http://vimeo.com/76248960>. It was shown during the retreat in Leura.

News of visits to various BK centres are below.

During the first week of the tour there were programs in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Cairns, Newcastle and Sydney.

Tue 17 Sep

In the very first public talk of the tour Arnold spoke at Brisbane Centre on “Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times” to approx. 20 people who gave very positive responses.

Mon 23 Sep

In Newcastle centre, 150km north of Sydney, local BKs and friends gathered in the evening to learn about “Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times”. Renaud introduced the importance of understanding the principles of nature as the main laws of how life is self-organized. “Problems occur whenever human activities disturb or dismantle any life cycle (water cycle, carbon, GMO, day and night, etc.). To face the effect of any form of disturbance, knowledge of the self and meditation are precious tools,” he said. The audience of about 15 went through an exercise entitled “555”. They were asked “what do you feel about the 5 people, the 5 objects and 5 main places you go to?” to draw a profile of their personality through which they could appreciate strengths and weaknesses and learn how to regain freedom when their feelings are challenged.



Tue 24 Sep

After a weekend at the Aravali Meditation Sanctuary, Arnold gave another talk at Brisbane centre. This time the topic was “Personal Responsibility ... Making a Difference”. Some of the 15 participants tuned in remotely via Skype. Arnold spoke about who is responsible for climate change, what responsibility means and how personal change will positively affect people in connection with us. Special emphasis was given to changing our thinking and living a values-based life.

At Lidcombe Community Centre in Sydney, Luciana gave a lecture to 25 participants on “Living in Harmony and Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times”. She explained, “We live in the world of sudden events and uncontrolled situations. Inner stability is an important tool to face whatever comes in our way.”

That evening at Ashfield centre Luciana teamed up with Renaud for a talk on “Healthy Minds, Healthy Planet” attended by 17 people. Renaud emphasized the importance of being ‘connected’; “Life has a principle of connection between human beings, animals, plants and minerals. Connection is experienced through vibrations as well as the electromagnetic fields which surround us. These magnetic fields operate through perpetual cycles. Modern lifestyle is a story of breaking these cycles, which is violence performed at all levels of life, spiritual and physical. Meditation gives peace to the mind and helps us to change our lifestyle and eliminate violence, thus recreating harmony.”



Luciana introduced the concept of the five houses, from the Greek word oikos- ecology: body, mind, home, planet and universe. She shared about the principles of Deep Ecology: interdependence, the web of life and the need of ethics in science. She reminded the audience, “in our modern lifestyle, there is so much waste without any concern for other people from whom we are separated. Individualism is a source of great disharmony in our relationships with nature and other human beings.”

Wed 25 Sep

Arnold gave a talk about "Healthy Minds, Healthy Planet" in the Gold Coast centre, about an hour south of Brisbane.



There was a full house with 25 people attending, some even sitting on the floor as all chairs were occupied. Participants were encouraged to take personal action in the areas of reducing carbon intensity, improving energy efficiency and lowering consumption. Most agreed that they could change their own behaviours by, for example, limiting trips by car.

Renaud and Luciana spoke at East Sydney to 18 of the women’s empowerment group on “Living in Harmony, Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times”. Luciana introduced the activities of the Brahma Kumaris in the field of the environment: solar energy, water treatment, yogic agriculture, education in India and participation in international UN conferences. Renaud remarked that in traditional societies women were responsible for the health

of the family and the household economy. Women and the feminine side of human life share the will to give and sustain whereas our modern lifestyle of consumerism is based on taking and throwing away.

Thu 26 Sep

Usha flew to Sydney on Thu 26 Sep after a few days in Cairns, northern Queensland, where she conducted three programs for local contacts. After being in different cities for during the week Usha, Arnold, Luciana and Renaud met with local BKs at Ashfield centre for afternoon tea. Later in the evening Usha gave a class on “The Power of Knowledge” to a small but very appreciative group of 5 regular students while Luciana gave a talk in Portuguese to 8 people on “Non-Violence and Respect”. This was the first Portuguese talk held at the centre but most of the audience had had contact with BKs in Brazil. It was a chance to connect with the coordinator of the Brazilian Community Council of Australia (BRACCA) who came to pay respects to Luciana briefly before the talk.



Fri 27 Sep

All the Green team made their way to the Blue Mountains retreat centre from various directions, some from Sydney and some who had travelled south by road. During the day Usha gave a talk to a small group at the University of the Third Age (U3A) at Penrith in western Sydney on "Healthy Minds Healthy Planet". A few Australian BKs travelled from interstate to help with the "Spirituality – the Heart of Sustainability" retreat at Leura, which began at 5.30pm.



On Sunday morning Valeriane travelled to Sydney for morning class with Sydney BKs at Concord Community Centre.



Mon 30 Sep

After the weekend retreat in the Blue Mountains, from 10-11am Ms Shirley Lewis from As Sustainable As Possible (ASAP) invited Golo Pilz and Sonja Ohlsson to speak during their weekly hour at Radio Blue Mountains 89.1 FM. In the evening at Leura Retreat Centre, Golo the director of Brahma Kumaris solar installations in India, presented a slideshow and talk on "Solar Energy Installations for Large Communities."

For other members of the team after their busy day started at Leura, local host Charlie Hogg drove Usha, Valeriane and Arnold to Wilton Retreat Centre for lunch then to Ashfield, while Arnold stayed at Wilton. In the evening Usha went to Toongabbie in the western suburbs of Sydney to give a talk for 40 people on "When Love Becomes a Power". Keethan Nadarajah, who runs the Toongabbie class location said, "We all enjoyed a busy and spiritually rewarding month in September. We hosted Usha's talk and the following week we invited Renaud from France to meet the regular BK students. He shared his unique and inspiring journey of spirituality. We also met members of the Green team in other centres and took great benefit from their company."

Valeriane remained at Ashfield centre, where for the "Art of Resilience" talk in Spanish there were over 30 people from 10 countries of South and Central America. Valeriane spoke on different attributes that are required in order to be resilient such as the capacity to tolerate, the capacity to bounce back and to love and respect oneself.



Tue 1 Oct

There was an evening program at Ashfield, Sydney on "Simple Living" presented by Sonja and Golo attended by 25 people who received an introduction to the Green wing of the Brahma Kumaris. "Living Green means to rethink, reuse, reduce and recycle. Instead of simple living shall we call it to living well adapted or living smart?" Golo asked. Sonja shared a meditation on 'living in the now' and being peaceful and contented on the inside in order to live a life of simplicity on the outside.



Wed 2 Oct

The Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of New South Wales hosted a lunchtime Seminar on “India One: Solar Thermal Electricity for India” with Joachim Golo Pilz. The Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the Institute Mark Diesendorf introduced Golo. After a general introduction to the global need for alternative energies and which technologies are available, Golo shared about Brahma Kumaris’ investment in solar energy. Golo made the professor laugh by sharing how in India people call the Sun a deity, the god Surya and that people believe that food cooked with solar energy has better vibrations. Golo quickly continued saying he was not sure he could mention such unproven statements in this temple of science.



He finished the presentation by asking for permission to add a few slides on the paradigm shift needed in our consciousness and how we need values and ethics in order to fully use the available technologies. Participants happily agreed and listened with interested to how thoughts and attitudes are the keys to transforming the world. One comment from the audience was: “A new economic system hasn’t been presented to turn the negative trends around, so to bring values into the system like you do seems to be the only solution.”



After the program Golo was interviewed by Ms. Jyoti Uttam from Indian Link, a fortnightly Indian Newspaper. The article can be seen at <http://www.indianlink.com.au/epaper-archive/il-syd-october-13-2/pageflip.html> (page 30-31)

At East Sydney meditation centre in the evening a small but very interested group gathered at the beautiful centre in a central location in Sydney to hear about “Healthy Minds Healthy Planet”. It was a beautiful spring evening with a powerful meditation atmosphere in the centre. The presentation on alternative energies by Golo underlined the need of spirituality in addressing global issues. The evening finished with Sonja facilitating a dialogue on how we see our own personal responsibility in this context.

Also in Sydney, Luciana went to the northern suburb of Pennant Hills to give a talk on “The Role of Faith and Religion in Strengthening and Maintaining Peace and Human Rights” for 15 participants amongst whom there was a representative of the Baha’i faith and one of Christianity. “The purpose of faith and religion is to inspire their followers to express high principles in their behaviour and interactions. For that a regular and constant practice and an effective method are necessary to strength the inner being,” Luciana said.



In Melbourne Renaud and Valeriane spoke on “Healthy Minds

Healthy Planet” at North Balwyn centre. “There was a small group which allowed a lovely conversation in a circle”, Valeriane reported. “Renaud made people aware of how our energy affects the planet in terms of consumption and contamination, but also of the power of thoughts. He gave the example of the Japanese Dr Emoto’s work.” Valeriane spoke about healthy minds, asking participants to imagine the power of a healthy mind and how our capacity would change if there was no negativity within, illustrating the contrasting impacts of positivity and negativity.

Earlier that evening during the Spanish talk at Fitzroy centre on “Positive Mind Positive Future”, Valeriane spoke about the link between the state of the world and the state of the mind. She encouraged participants to see for themselves what could be making their mind and lifestyle healthier and how to have a positive impact on the world.



At Fitzroy centre on the same evening Usha gave a class on “When Love Becomes a Power”, while Tamasin Ramsay was invited to the University of Melbourne, School of Population Health, for an alumni reception and keynote session as part of the ‘2013 Festival of Ideas: State of the Environment’.

Thu 3 Oct

Valeriane spoke at McKinnon centre in Melbourne on “Living in Harmony”. “I asked them if they liked being in harmony with other people and then to reflect on whether they were feeling harmonious enough inside. Then we reflected on how to be more harmonious inside and how peace, love and happiness are the kind of experiences

that make us feel like that. We considered how to feel more that way and discussed the impact of un-harmonious thoughts on our minds and hearts. There were only a few people but they were happy,” Valeriane said. One student even enrolled for the following weekend’s retreat on the same topic at the Peninsula Retreat Centre.

At Fitzroy centre Renaud gave a talk to a group in the French language. Usha had taken a one hour flight south to Hobart, Tasmania, where she gave evening class on “When Love Becomes a Power” for 25 people.

Golo gave a presentation to the BKs at Wilton Retreat centre on the climate change scenario in the world and how we can use the power of the mind in creating something new.

Meanwhile, in the morning Luciana went to Liverpool class location for morning class and breakfast and with a group of about 12 very interested BKs. She went to Wollongong centre, about an hour south of Sydney, for lunch and stayed to to give a talk on “Healthy Minds Healthy Planet” for 22 participants in the evening. She shared, “It is according to our level of awareness that we create the atmosphere around us, in our home and office. It is also our awareness that determines how we use the resources of time, money and the elements of matter given to us as custodians for the planet.”



Sat 5 Oct

In Hobart, Usha ran an “Earth Care Workshop” at the centre for 15 people.

Renaud and Luciana conducted a one day retreat from 10.30am to 4pm at Wilton Retreat Centre on “Healthy Minds Healthy Planet” for about 20 people, many of whom were from a Portuguese speaking background and had come to see Luciana. After the program they went to Ashfield to stay overnight and met the Sydney BKs at Concord Community Centre on Sunday morning.



Fri 4 – Sun 6 Oct

A “Living in Harmony” retreat for the public attracted 40 participants to the Peninsula Retreat Centre an hour south of Melbourne. Valeriane, Tamasin and Arnold facilitated the retreat. Some highlights were;

On Saturday morning Valeriane took the participants into a meditation to become aware of the needs of human beings, the earth and animals’ at the present moment. They experienced how they could share spiritual energy such as love, peace and contentment and then shared which responsibilities they felt they had.

Through another meditation they experienced how we all live on this planet, breathing its air, drinking its water and how therefore we are completely sustained for free by the earth. Valeriane asked participants to reflect on how they could contribute and give back some of the energy they have. One group reflected on how they could make a difference in health, food, horticulture and deforestation.

Warren Carey led a Tai Chi session and meditation from 7am to 8am.

Arnold conducted a session on “Law of Karma and Values” where everyone deeply considered the fundamental spiritual principles that can help us live in true harmony. He shared, “Nothing we do is an isolated act. Our thoughts, words and actions have broad, deep and lasting consequences.” Questions considered were: “What is the law of karma and how am I acting now? What does it truly mean to live a values-based life? What are my values... really? What will I do differently, from now?”

Mon Oct 7

Jacqueline Russell, coordinator of the retreat centre in Melbourne and Arnold had lunch with four people from The Pachamama Alliance. One of them is a board member for 'Be the Change in Australia'. Arnold said, “They were really open to strengthening the relationship with BKs and confirmed the need for spiritually sustaining professionals who are working in the environment field. They were particularly supportive of the new project with Pachamama, Transition Town and BK.”

A Brahma Kumaris Residential Retreat

Friday 4 October  
to luncheon Sunday 6  
October 2013

**Living in Harmony**  
Creating inner resilience in challenging times

*In the midst of change lies the opportunity to develop inner resources needed to ensure a harmonious and sustainable world.*

International guest facilitators who have represented the Brahma Kumaris at recent international conferences on environmental issues take up the spiritual theme of a healthy mind for a healthy planet.

Valeriane Bernard  
Geneva, Switzerland

Arnold Beekes  
Amersfoort, Holland

Tamasin Ramsay  
New York, USA

**Environmental philosophy**  
The application of spiritual values to environmental concerns  
**Anthropological fieldwork in innovative grassroots research initiatives**

Centre for Spiritual Learning  
83-99 Stotts Lane, Frankston South.

Bookings: [peninsula@brahmakumaris.org](mailto:peninsula@brahmakumaris.org) or phone: (03) 5971-1599

This retreat is offered as a community service without a set fee. Contributions towards costs involved are appreciated and enable programs to continue.

Usha had meanwhile flown to Western Australia to spend a few days in Perth. After participating in many programs and experiencing Cairns, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart, she was delighted to be “sleeping in the same bed for three nights!”



Her first program on Monday evening titled “Loving.... Me” was held at Annasha, a luxurious Spa & Massage complex owned by Anna, a student of Perth’s Gooseberry Hill Class Location. Anna enthusiastically gathered approximately 20 of her clients for a “spiritual spa and massage” to revitalise their inner beauty and power. Usha inspired the audience to embrace their own uniqueness, lovingly letting everyone know that, “There is no-one in the world like you and that is amazing!”

Tue 8 Oct

In Sydney from 12-1pm Valeriane gave a talk at Lidcombe Community centre for approx. 25 people on “Personal Responsibility”. In the evening she conducted class at Ashfield centre on “Strengthening Resilience” for 15-20 people. Renaud, who was also staying at Ashfield centre, went to the north shore suburb of Willoughby to give a talk to 20 people on “Living in Harmony”. Everyone enjoyed his entertaining delivery and stories.



In Perth, Usha spoke on “When Love Becomes a Power” to an audience of approximately 60 people at Shenton Park Community Centre. Her natural presentation enabled audiences to feel comfortable and at ease. This was evident when a lady said, “I have a personal question to ask about being deceived which has happened to me recently and I would like to hear your thoughts on deception and why it can happen easily.” In essence, Usha’s response was brought back to self-respect, “If there is true self-respect along with the power to discriminate which can come through meditation and truly loving myself, then accurate judgments are far more probable.”



Luciana had arrived in Melbourne from Sydney and she spoke at Essendon centre on “Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times” to about 25-30 people. She shared about the connection between consciousness and what is happening in the environment, “Everything is interconnected in a web of life. Practical steps like simplicity and respect for the elements of nature ensure that we receive nature’s protection in return. As we cannot change all that is around us, we can strengthen ourselves to face whatever comes on our way.”

Wed 9 Oct  
In Fitzroy centre  
Luciana gave her

second talk in the Portuguese language at 6pm for 10 people, sharing about “Positive Mind Positive Future”. After a short breather she teamed up with Arnold at to give the Fitzroy evening class at 7.30pm for 60 people.

Valeriane returned to Sydney from Melbourne and gave a talk at East Sydney to the women’s empowerment group on “Making a Difference”. Earlier in the day she’d had some time for sightseeing with a ferry ride to Manly and walk on the beach in perfect weather.





Renaud had travelled north to Gold Coast, where he visited Currumbin Ecovillage (<http://theecovillage.com.au/>) for a tour and lunch with one of the residents who later attended the evening program at Gold Coast centre with 4 friends. A total of 17 people attended Renaud's evening talk on "Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times".

South of Perth, "Earth Care" was the topic for Usha's program in Fremantle Centre. She warmed the audience by not initially speaking but inviting everyone to write a letter from Mother Earth to themselves with their non-dominant hand. "We all took up the challenge and Mother Earth spoke to each one of us about caring for Her, how much She has nurtured us and Her hopes that She will one day be restored to Her original, pure beauty", wrote Carolyn Minter the coordinator of Perth centre. "We walked Usha through Perth's famous King's Park where Mother Earth displayed her spring flowers and natural beauty. Usha's visit left us with a feeling of natural warmth combined with wise experiences."



Sonja and Golo visited the beautiful Whitsunday Islands in northern Queensland





Thu 10 Oct

Luciana visited North Balwyn centre in Melbourne and spoke on "Creating Inner Resilience in Challenging Times" for a small group of about 10 people. In the mornings members of the Green team visited various centres for morning class with BKs.



Arnold gave a talk at McKinnon centre for 20 people on "Healthy Minds, Healthy Planet". Special emphasis was given to the need to transform from customers into citizens and how spirituality can give us strength, keep us recharged and improve our capacity to create. Our renewed identity then becomes a foundation for a new way of handling social and environmental challenges. In Brisbane centre Renaud gave a talk on the same topic.

In Sydney Valeriane gave a talk in Spanish on "Attitudes that Lead to Success or Failure" to a group of eight people organised by the Spanish Cancer Community Network. The group were very keen and touched by Valeriane's warm and simple presentation. They had booked a hall especially that day because Valeriane was flying out from Australia that night and they didn't want to miss her visit.

Sat 12 Oct

Brisbane BKs were pleased to host a talk by Golo Pilz, a member of the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative, titled "Consciousness and Climate Change". The talk, with slide show, was extremely informative and presented with great authority and not a small amount of humour. The audience responded warmly and enthusiastically to Golo's suggestions as to

how they might assist the cleaning up of Mother Earth by putting into practice some of the suggestions Golo made. "Ultimately it is by changing ones attitude towards the planet that one is able to create and sustain worthwhile change", Golo said. He inspired all those present to look with a greater love at Spaceship Earth and become personally responsible as a first step towards the changes we want to see.

#### Personal experiences

Green team members were asked what new experiences they had had and a few of their replies were:



Valeriane: "it was my first visit to Australia, first time to hug a koala and have him gaze into my eyes, first time I fed a cockatoo and my first bush walks."

Sonja: "the first time Charlie himself made me a cup of chai."

Luciana: "it was the first time I looked at snakes as harmless creatures and had good soy milk."

Arnold: "it was the first time I did Tai Chi."

Many thanks to all the Green team and everyone involved in tour who gave great cooperation.

