



**GAIA HOUSE**

INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

spring 2011  
**NEWS**

# Welcome...

...to Gaia House's Spring 2011 newsletter.

Our moods are represented in the media right now as gloomy, with the misery of cutbacks and low economic growth. Many people, contrary to the flow of these real and important problems in the material world, find an opportunity to re-prioritise and to reconnect with what is essential during such times. Thus while many charities struggle to maintain their funding in this climate, at Gaia House we have so far avoided the knock-on financial effects of the credit crisis, recession and government cutbacks.

While we count ourselves lucky and hope for this to continue, others have commented on such phenomena as indicating a 'non-discretionary spend'. Such a dry economic term could tempt us to rank ourselves alongside raw vegetables and toilet rolls, but I find the term interesting, vividly illustrating a personal process of growing and developing spiritually. Once we have set foot on this path we are committed, with whatever we do becoming a part of that journey: life cannot throw a single trouble or joy at us without our trying to integrate it, make sense of it, learn from it. A spiritual path once begun becomes non-discretionary even though its form and content may shift and change.

Gaia House's support for that personal process is at the heart of what we offer. The silence, the routine, the meditation, and of course the teachings, all create an environment in which individuals can learn to move, grow, and thrive despite these daily pressures which the world outside and our monkey minds would have us tremble before.

This said, we also wish to help practically with those daily pressures. To this end, by the time you receive this newsletter we will be connecting your new biomass boiler to the house and installing your solar thermal panels on top of the Hermitage Wing, so running a significantly reduced carbon footprint. I say 'your' boiler because of the fantastic response that we had to the fundraising campaign over the last 6 months. In addition to our £45,000 BIG lottery grant, you had raised a total of £47,725.25 at the time of writing. Thank you very much for your wonderful generosity; it has made the project such a success.

If you are yet to book a retreat for 2011 but are interested in doing so, we have a

wide range of offerings from our established teachers and new teachers. These teachers include the first UK teaching visit by David Loy, a US academic and Zen practitioner who has focused on applying the Dharma to real social and economic problems. An insight into his approach can be seen in the article he has written for the newsletter (pg 5).

If you are a carer or someone suffering with serious illness, you may wish to look at our short 'Living with Illness' retreat in August. Local teacher Jean Wilkins will bring her many years of experience working with Roshi Joan Halifax in New Mexico, developing wisdom and mindfulness around intense difficulty and suffering.

I wish you all an enjoyable 2011 summer, and hope that they are peaceful and positive months.

**Andy Power**

Director



Pictured from left to right: Iain, Rachel, Sarah and Andy

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### Credits

Editor:	Andy Power
Photography:	Sarah Abdy, & Vibeke Dahl
Design & Print:	Kingfisher Print and Design Ltd using inks from sustainable and renewable sources, the paper is 100 per cent post-consumer waste. It is also chlorine-free and FSC-accredited ( <a href="http://www.fsc-uk.org">www.fsc-uk.org</a> ). All by-products of the production and printing processes are recycled.
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## A word from our Trustees

In his introduction to this newsletter Andy Power mentions the new biomass boiler being installed and soon to be commissioned, at Gaia House: a crucial outward sign of our commitment towards a zero carbon future. It seems entirely fitting that this is Gaia House's biggest investment since the purchase of the building in West Ogwell in 1996, because doing something about our carbon footprint – along with making sure that the remarkably complex building remains in good shape – is one of the highest priorities for trustees.

In a recent newsletter Rob Burbea wrote of his journey to Copenhagen at the end of 2009, to share in that extraordinary experience of hope, expectation and, let's face it, disappointment about national government's ability to achieve a coordinated response to climate change. He also wrote of the relatively muted way in which the Buddhist world seems to be responding to the subject. I share his concern that this contemplative faith seems to be struggling to come to terms with a really gritty problem. Some characterise it as the result of greed and delusion; another view might be that it is an innocent mistake: it turns out that using coal and oil to heat ourselves and travel is not the good idea that it looked like at the outset.

All faiths are of course wrestling with climate change; a major speech by the head of the Anglican church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, might be summed up as saying 'God won't rescue us from this'. There is surely a powerful message here: bold, concerted, vigorous action is needed to deal with something that is a direct result of human action; human action whose consequences, across time and place, are so different from those that could be understood in pre-scientific times.

We obviously need to think deeply about the form that action should take. Renewable energy schemes and the like are of course vital, but reflection on root causes is

even more important. In *Hell and High Water* another Christian, Alastair McIntosh, paints a powerful picture of the spiritual challenges posed by our meddling with the climate, together with answers with which most Buddhists would be perfectly at home.

There is a further point I would like briefly to raise. My own work lies in the area of engagement with climate change, and I was recently involved in a public meeting of concerned activists where anyone could raise a subject for discussion. Somewhat tentatively, I suggested the topic of 'looking into the abyss', by which I meant facing up to the fact that the future looks increasingly bleak; recent writings by James Lovelock, or Clive Hamilton's *Requiem for a Species* provide any amount of expansion of this theme.

To my amazement some fifty people, roughly half those present, joined the group. It became very clear that many people are carrying a large burden of concern about the subject with them, a concern which is in many cases unresolved. They range from people who spend their days working on subjects related to the environment, and who need to find ways of dealing with this emotionally challenging, potentially depressing subject, to those whose involvement is more occasional but is nonetheless deep. The lesson is surely that everyone concerned needs to be very careful about how they deal with the sense of loss – loss much more nebulous than, say, bereavement, because it is ill-defined and lies in the future – that it can provoke.

This note seems to have rather more of the reading list about it than originally intended! I hope you will forgive that – the subject seems so important that we cannot lose any opportunity to better understand it and the processes that lie behind it; and, of course, to do what we can to mitigate it.

**Peter Gingold**



## The Three Poisons, Institutionalized **David Loy**

David Loy visits Gaia House for the first time from the US in June this year. In this article, a modified extract from his book *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*, he explores his perspective on the roles of greed, ill will and delusion.

He sees them manifesting even outside the reach of well-intentioned individual actions, where our prevailing social and political conditions can make ethical behaviour difficult to achieve.

Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, lived at least 2400 years ago. Buddhism began as an Iron Age religion and all its teachings are pre-modern. So can Buddhism really help us understand and respond to contemporary social problems such as economic globalization and biotechnology, war and terrorism (and the war on terrorism), climate change and other ecological crises?

What the Buddha understood is human dukkha: how it works, what causes it, and how to end it. Dukkha is usually translated as "suffering," but it's better understood as a basic dis-ease, for it is the nature of our unawakened minds to be bothered about something. The fundamental insight of Buddhism is the connection it emphasizes between such dukkha and the self. My deepest frustration is caused by my sense of being a self that is separate from the world I am in. This sense of separation is illusory—in fact, it is our most dangerous delusion.

What does this imply about collective selves? Don't we also have a group sense of separation between ourselves "inside" and the rest of the world "outside"? And if my individual sense of self is the root source of my dukkha, because I can never feel secure enough, do collective senses of self also mean that there is such a thing as collective dukkha? Collective karma?

In fact, many of our social problems can be traced back to such a group ego, when we identify with our own race, nationality, religion, etc., and discriminate between ourselves and another group. Historically this has been a perpetual problem, but in some ways our present situation has become quite different from that of Shakyamuni Buddha. Today we have not only much more powerful scientific technologies but also much more powerful social institutions.

From a Buddhist perspective, the problem with modern institutions is that they tend to take on a life of their own as new types of collective ego. Consider, for example, how a big corporation works. Even if the CEO of a transnational company wants to be socially responsible, he or she is limited by the expectations of stockholders. If profits are threatened by his sensitivity to environmental concerns, he is likely to lose his job. Large corporations are new forms of impersonal collective self, which are very good at preserving themselves and increasing their power, quite apart from the personal motivations of the individuals who serve them. John Ralston Saul, in *The Doubter's Companion*, describes this as the "amorality" of modern organizations:

**AMORALITY:** A quality admired and rewarded in modern organizations, where it is referred to through metaphors such as professionalism and efficiency . . . Immorality is doing wrong of our own volition. Amorality is doing it because a structure or an organization expects us to do it. Amorality is thus worse than immorality because it involves denying our responsibility and therefore our existence as anything more than an animal.

There is another Buddhist principle that can help us understand this connection between collective selves and collective dukkha: the three unwholesome motivations, also known as the three poisons—greed, ill will, and delusion. The Buddhist understanding of karma emphasizes the role of these motivations, because one's sense of self is composed largely of habitual intentions and the habitual actions that follow from them. Instead of emphasizing the duality between good and evil, Buddhism distinguishes between wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala/akusalamula*) tendencies.



Negative intentions reinforce the sense of separation between myself and others. That is why they need to be transformed into their more wholesome and nondual counterparts: greed into generosity, ill will into loving-kindness, and delusion into wisdom.

That brings us to a very important question for socially engaged Buddhism: Do the three poisons also operate collectively? If there are collective selves, does that mean there are also collective greed, collective ill will, collective delusion?

To ask the question in this way is to realize the answer. Our present economic system institutionalizes greed, our militarism institutionalizes ill will, and our corporate media institutionalize delusion. To repeat, the problem is not only that the three poisons operate collectively but that they have taken on a life of their own. Today it is crucial for us to wake up and face the implications of these three institutional poisons.

**INSTITUTIONALIZED GREED:** Despite all its benefits, our economic system institutionalizes greed in at least two ways: corporations are never profitable enough, and people never consume enough. To increase profits, we must be conditioned into finding the meaning of our lives in buying and consuming.

Consider how the stock market works. It tends to function as an ethical "black hole" that dilutes the responsibility for the actual consequences of the collective greed that now fuels economic growth.

On the one side of that hole, investors want increasing returns in the form of dividends and higher share prices. That's all that most of them care about, or need to care about—not because investors are bad people, but because the system doesn't encourage any other kind of responsibility. On the other side of that black hole, however, this generalized expectation translates into an impersonal but constant pressure for profitability and growth, preferably in the short run.

The globalization of corporate capitalism means that this emphasis on profitability and growth are becoming increasingly important as the engine of the world's economic activity. Everything else, including the environment and the quality of life, tends to become subordinated to this anonymous demand for ever-more profit and growth, a goal that can never be satisfied. The biosphere is converted into "resources," and people into "human resources."

Who is responsible for the pressure for growth? That's the point: this system has attained a life of its own. We all participate in this process, as workers, employers,

consumers, investors, and pensioners, with little if any personal sense of moral responsibility for what happens. Such awareness has been diffused so completely that it is lost in the impersonal anonymity of the corporate economic system. In other words, greed has been thoroughly institutionalized.

#### **INSTITUTIONALIZED ILL WILL:**

Since I write this in the United States, the following examples of institutionalized ill will spring to mind: racism, a punitive judicial system, the general attitude toward undocumented immigrants—but the "best" example, by far, is the plague of militarism. In the twentieth century at least 105 million people, and perhaps as many as 170 million, were killed in war, most of them non-combatants.

Global military expenditures, including the arms trade, are the world's largest expenditure: well over a trillion dollars, about half of that spent by the U.S. alone. To put this in perspective, the United Nations spends only about \$10 billion a year. The United States has been a militarized society since World War II, and increasingly so.

Most recently, the second Iraq War, based on lies and propaganda, has obviously been a disaster, even as the war on terror has been making all of us less secure, because every "terrorist" we kill or torture leaves many grieving relatives and outraged friends. Terrorism cannot be destroyed militarily because it is a tactic, not an enemy.

Again: if war is the terrorism of the rich, terrorism is the war of the poor and disempowered. We must find other ways to address its root causes.

The basic problem with war is that, whether we are "the good guys" or "the bad guys," it promotes and rationalizes the very worst part of ourselves: we are encouraged to kill and brutalize other human beings. In doing these things to others, though, we also do them to ourselves. This karma is very simple. To brutalize another is to brutalize myself—that is, to become the kind of person who brutalizes.

This is the sort of behavior we would never do by ourselves, except for a very small number who receive our heaviest social retribution. In war, however, such behavior is sanctioned.

Why? Because it is always justified as collective self-defense. We all accept the right and necessity to defend ourselves, don't we? If someone invades my home and attacks me, it's okay to hurt them in self-defense, even kill them, if necessary.



# War is national self-defense, and, as we know all too well today, national defense can be used to rationalize anything, including torture and what is euphemistically called "preventive war."

And just because we ourselves are not the soldiers sent overseas to do the dirty work does not mean that we remain innocent of the consequences. Our society as a whole is responsible, and we are part of that society.

It's curious that our national self-defense in the U.S. requires us to have at least 737 (the official number in 2005) overseas military installations, in 135 countries. It turns out that, in order to defend ourselves, we have to dominate the rest of the world. While we insist that other nations do not develop nuclear weapons, we spend almost \$18 billion a year to maintain and develop our own stockpile today equivalent to about 150,000 Hiroshima-size bombs. (Since 1997 the U.S. has conducted 23 "subcritical" nuclear tests to help design new nuclear weapons.)

Using even two or three percent of those bombs would end civilization as we know it! No matter how hard we try, no matter how many weapons we have, it seems like we can never feel secure enough.

In sum, our huge military-industrial complexes institutionalize ill will. Our collective negativity has taken on a life of its own, with a self-reinforcing logic likely to destroy us all if we don't find a way to subvert it.

**INSTITUTIONALIZED DELUSION:** The Buddha is literally "the awakened one," which implies that the rest of us are unawakened. We live in a dream-like world. How so? Each of us lives inside an individual bubble of delusions that distorts our perceptions and expectations. Buddhist practitioners are familiar with this problem, yet we also dwell together within a much bigger bubble that largely determines how we collectively understand the world and ourselves. The institution most responsible for molding our collective sense of self is the media, which have become a kind of "group nervous system." Genuine democracy requires an independent and activist press, to expose abuse and discuss political issues. In the process of becoming mega-corporations, however, the major media have abandoned all but the pretense of objectivity.

Since they are profit-making institutions whose bottom-line is advertising revenue, their main concern is to do whatever maximizes those profits. It is never in their own interest to question the grip of consumerism. Thanks to clever advertisements, my son can learn to crave Nike shoes and Gap shirts without ever wondering about how they are made. I can satisfy my coffee and chocolate cravings without knowing about the social conditions of the farmers who grow those commodities for me, and without any awareness of what is happening to the biosphere.

An important part of genuine education is realizing that many of the things we think are natural and inevitable (and therefore should accept) are in fact conditioned (and therefore can be changed). The world doesn't need to be the way it is; there are other possibilities.

The present role of the media is to foreclose most of those possibilities by confining public awareness and discussion within narrow limits. With few exceptions, the world's developed (or "economized") societies are now dominated by a power elite composed of the government and large corporations including the major media. People move seamlessly from each of these institutions to the other, because there is little difference in their worldview or their goals—primarily economic expansion.

Politics remains "the shadow cast by big business over society," as John Dewey once put it. The role of the media in this unholy alliance is to "normalize" this situation, so that we accept it and continue to perform our required roles, especially the frenzied production and consumption necessary to keep the economy growing.

It's important to realize that we are not simply being manipulated by a clever group of people who benefit from that manipulation. Rather, we are being

manipulated in a self-deluded way by a group of people who (mistakenly) think they benefit from it—because they also buy into the root delusion that their ego-selves are separate from other people.

They too are victims of their own propaganda, caught up in the larger webs of collective illusion that include virtually all of us. (The Austrian writer Karl Kraus: "How do wars begin? Politicians tell lies to journalists, then believe what they read in the newspapers.") According to Buddhism samsara is not only a world of suffering, it is just as much a world of delusion, because delusions are at the root of our suffering. That includes collective fantasies such as the necessity of consumerism and perpetual economic growth, and collective repressions such as denial of global climate change.

Realizing the nature of these three institutional poisons is just as important as any personal realization we might have as a result of spiritual practice.

In fact, any individual awakening we may have on our meditation cushions remains incomplete until it is supplemented by such a "social awakening." Usually we think of expanded consciousness in individual terms, but today we must dispel the bubble of group delusion to attain greater understanding of dualistic social, economic, and ecological realities. If this parallel between individual dukkha and collective dukkha holds, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the great social, economic, and ecological crises of our day are also spiritual challenges, which therefore call for a response that must also have a spiritual component.



# Teacher in focus – Paul Burrows

## Why did you begin to meditate?

I remember at school, when I was supposed to know what I was going to do with my life, I would ask myself 'So what am I really interested in?' And then one day it just stopped me in my tracks... 'What actually am I? truly, deep down, what am I?' The sheer fact that I didn't know the answer to this most basic question really caught my attention.

Around the same time, monks and nuns from the Thai forest tradition would sometimes teach meditation classes at school, and a little later my friend Bill lent me *A Gradual Awakening* by Stephen Levine, which includes a really accessible description of vipassana practice. So for me meditation began as a place to sit and dip my toes into the mysterious depths of 'what is really going on here?...'

## Why did you want to become a teacher?

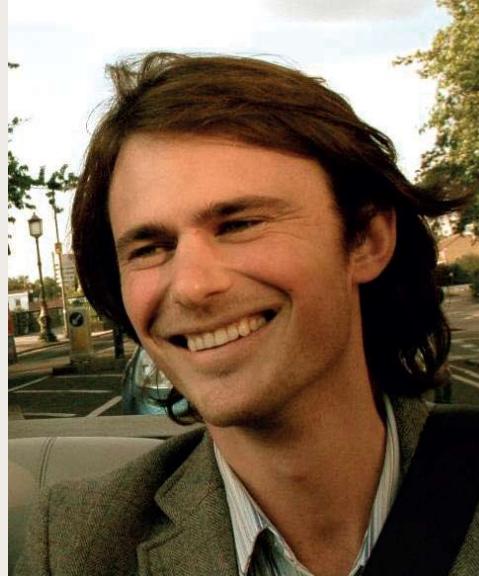
When I first began to read books and listen to teachings from people like Ajahn Sumedho, Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein, they made such an impression on me I would think 'Wow - I really want to be like those guys'. I wondered if I could ever be as clear and confident in myself as they seemed to be, and I liked the idea of being able to touch people as deeply as they touched me. So to begin with, any thoughts about being in the teacher role were based on admiring and idealising some of the senior teachers in the tradition.

After some time working with Christina Feldman as part of her teacher training group, it became clear that teaching is really just another dimension of practice. I think the world needs as many of us as possible to take the lead and host spaces where people are supported to turn inwards and meet themselves.

## What is your practice now?

My life and practice is an ongoing exploration of what it's like to be present to myself.

Actually it's very simple! Non-judgemental, curious and patient inquiry into the wide spectrum of what life presents. When we take an open-minded interest in our direct experience, a kind of magical process occurs, where a whole range of inner resources condense and come to support us in meeting our lives. I also regularly reflect on how others, like me, simply want happiness and don't want pain - and I am fascinated by how that changes my experience of the world.



Quiet sitting practice is a very important tool for me. As is working in pairs with either a teacher or spiritual friend, where there is a shared inquiry into our present experience - this is informed by the Diamond Approach work, which I have been doing since last year.

## How do you apply your practice?

I live in a shared house, and work as a chef in a busy London kitchen. You could say that the application of practice occurs when I connect with another non-judgmentally, and communicate without reactivity. When I come to learn and share something which is true and liberating by talking with another, then I feel like the practice is actually working. Or when I find myself feeling lost, depressed and rubbish about myself and I can meet that with openness and tenderness. If I can move in the world without needing myself or others to be different to how we are, it all flows. From that place, I feel able to at least begin to meet the challenges presented by a desperately unsustainable global culture, and the heartbreak depression and disconnection that comes with it.

## If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

Food, medicine and shelter for each person - that would be a good starting place. An easy idea to understand, why is it so hard to get there?

# with love and thanks to Jackson

I recently attended an exhibition of Abstract Expressionist painters in the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City. These artists were working in New York during the 1930's, 40's and 50's, and included Jackson Pollock. It was to his work that I found myself strongly drawn. 'She-wolf', painted in 1943, evoked for me the energy of carnage and chaos, a world blown apart and thrown into confusion. A human face gapes heaven-ward from inside an animal head. Blocks of blue-grey around the edge seem to labour and fail in an attempt to provide a context or container for the horror. Contrast this with the brightness and brilliance of 'Shimmering Substance', painted in 1946. A circle of sunshine yellow shimmers beneath dancing yellow and white curves swiped and smeared onto the canvas; energy is unleashed in experimentation, spilling out, no border, every moment of the picture a monument to movement. 'One. Number 31' was painted in 1950. It's huge, about 15 by 20 feet. The artist wrote of working on this painting, "On the floor, I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from four sides and literally be in the painting."

Here he is flinging paint, dripping it, pouring it, letting it hit the canvass in its flight. Paint flies in all directions across the canvas, immediate, vivid, celebrating pure colour. A circus of black, white and sage green threads seem alive, raw energy, no mediating implement between paint can and canvas.

The colours, textures and shapes in these pictures are, for me, a language of the heart that expresses something of raw human experience unbound by conventional norms and narratives. The spirit of play overtakes the more thematic approach that drew on the primeval and the mythological. I am inspired by the devotion and courage that allowed him to be led by the materials themselves. These paintings are a testament to one man's willingness to be led into the unknown. After finishing one of these paintings he turned to his wife, artist Lee Krasner, and said, "Is this art?" His radical innovation was accompanied by persistent self-doubt. His life and work was sadly and abruptly brought to an end when he died in a car accident in 1956. He was 44.

American Zen teacher Edward Espe Brown wrote, "Your being you is an expression of the divine or what's beyond. For you to be you, you're letting what is beyond come through you and manifest in your life. It's not exactly that it's yours. It's just coming through you."

May all beings live with love, creativity and joy.

**Caroline Jones**  
New York City March 2011





**Left to right:** Tony O'Connor, Maggie Feeny, Brian Watson, Juliet Grace, Gerald Viribauer, Anni Mustonen, Pascal Wick, Owen Barnett & Juha Penttila. **Inset:** Emma Burleigh

## Winter into spring

It seems everybody is happy to feel an increase in temperature after such a cold winter. This winter didn't come without challenges for the Coordinators and staff at Gaia House, many of which stemmed around multiple issues with our boiler. As usual, the Coordinators fielded many 'on the ground' issues, working hard to keep everybody as warm as possible. Having recently come off a sabbatical retreat here at Gaia House, I experienced first-hand their care and willingness, and felt very much supported.

So we weathered the season (whilst looking forward to the installation of a significantly greener, beautifully functioning, wood chip boiler) and find the Coordinator community shifting again. Isla MacDonald said farewell in December, having managed, as Maintenance Coordinator, some significant projects such as re-painting the Coordinator Wing. Her next steps have included a Sanghaseva retreat and service work in India, and I know she has plans to sit at Gaia House. It's so nice to see ex-Co-ordinators and staff return again and again to Gaia House, like returning back to the bosom of the mother ship. Sort of. Many thanks Isla. Rae Davies also hung up her room plans, and ended her term of service as Household Coordinator in February. Many thanks to Rae for the very hard work she did, especially in terms of the ongoing refurbishment work. We wish her well for her next adventures, including some travel in Italy, WOOFing and time at a monastery.

We welcomed Brian Watson into Maintenance in December, coming with a long history of service work including some time in Spain volunteering at a Triratna (formerly FWBO) retreat centre. Anni Mustonen arrived in January from Finland, and brings to the Household department experience of organising retreats in Finland. Finally, we see the return of Pascal Wick, ex-Garden Coordinator and regular work yogi. Pascal is helping out as 9th Coordinator, supporting both the Kitchen and Household departments for the busy first part of this year before taking over as Kitchen Coordinator in the summer. Welcome to Brian, Anni and Pascal.

Coordinators now often stay for periods of service of up to two years, and so we are no longer accepting coordinator applications on an on-going, continual basis, but as and when posts become available. Please keep an eye on the website for details of upcoming posts if you are interested in becoming a coordinator, or feel free to contact Sarah Abdy ([admin@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:admin@gaiahouse.co.uk)) or myself [retreatmanager@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:retreatmanager@gaiahouse.co.uk), telephone number 01626 335256, if you would like to know more.

Many thanks to all coordinators for their ongoing expressions of service.

**Rachel Davies**  
Retreat Manager

## FOCUS ON RETREATS...

### Transforming Self, Transforming World

David Loy

**Fri 3rd – Wed 8th Jun 2011**

What is the relationship between personal and social transformation? There are profound parallels between our individual predicament and our collective situation, and this retreat will explore their nonduality. If the self is an insecure construct haunted by a sense of lack, we gain insight into our preoccupation with attachments such as money, fame, and power, and how the "three poisons" (greed, ill will and delusion) have become institutionalised.

### Living with Illness

Jean Wilkins, Zahor Lavie, Caroline Jones

**Mon 22nd – Wed 24th Aug 2011**

Facing illness and loss in our lives can bring us to a moment when we need to slow down and look deeply into our lives, a time to find acceptance of a diagnosis or the death of a loved one, to review our healing and coping strategies, and make peace with our mortality. The practice of insight (vipassana) meditation will be used as the basis of exploring this relationship to pain and illness.

The retreat provides an opportunity to explore where we are in each moment of our lives, to listen to ourselves and each other from a heart that accepts both ourselves and others without judgement. Developing greater mindfulness in times of transition, challenge and confusion can enable us to find new ways of relating to our daily lives. The retreat includes guided meditation/reflection, group/council process and contemplative writing.

Because of practical constraints, we request that those attending be able to manage tasks of everyday living.

### Equanimity: Finding Balance in a World of Change

Jake Dartington and Paul Burrows

**Fri 2nd – Sun 4th September 2011**

The quality of equanimity opens up an intimacy with experience that can make peace with all of the pleasures and pains which we encounter in our lives. This retreat offers an opportunity to cultivate a sense of ease and balance in the midst of changing experience. As well as periods of sitting and walking meditation, there will be opportunities to reflect on how to develop equanimity in everyday life.

### Cultivating Community – a Weekend for Sitting Groups and Sangha Facilitators

Chris Cullen & Jenny Wilks

**Sat 24th – Sun 25th Sept 2011**

Supportive community is one of the great refuges and resources on the spiritual path. This weekend is an opportunity for those who organise or regularly attend sitting groups, daylongs, or other sangha activities in their home area to reflect together on the joys and challenges involved in facilitating Dharma activities, and how to enhance the benefits they offer. Come and connect with others to explore practice and service in daily life.

This weekend will start at 11 am on Saturday and end after lunch on Sunday. Because of a large retreat finishing on Fri 23rd, attendees can arrive only on the Saturday morning but are welcome to extend their stay on Sunday night and will be charged the daily rate for this night. There is then the opportunity to give Dana for the rest of the weekend.

## Insight Talks

Don't forget that talks are now available to download via the Gaia House website in collaboration with Dharmaseed. Visit [www.gaiahouse.co.uk](http://www.gaiahouse.co.uk) - click on Resources and then choose Insight Talks.

Talks are free to download but we do ask that you make a donation via the donation link, there are costs involved in producing the talks and getting them uploaded and available.

A guideline is £2 per talk, or whatever you can afford. For further information: [insight.talks@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:insight.talks@gaiahouse.co.uk)

# SANGHA NEWS

## BuddhaDharmaSangha Summer Camp 2011

Dartmoor National Park,  
20-28th August 2011

Yanai Postelnik, Brad Richcoeur  
& Catherine McGee

You are warmly invited to participate in our eleventh BuddhaDharmaSangha camp - an annual gathering of Dharma friends new and old. The camp is a wonderful opportunity to practise Dharma in the time-honoured way of the Buddha - in the beauty of nature, together with a like-minded Sangha.

We will combine Insight Meditation, Qigong and Inquiry with the transformational quality of the natural world and being together in both silence and conversation. We will also devote some time in smaller groups for sharing our experience in seeking to apply the Dharma to our modern lifestyles and exploring ways to nurture spiritual companionship in our lives.

There will be space for formal practice and discussion groups, as well as time to enjoy being in nature and hanging out with others, walks on the moor, nights around the campfire, star-gazing, songs, stories and... whatever we decide to create!

The secluded site exudes both the peace and wildness of the moors. It is surrounded by hills, trees and bordered by the bubbling 'Holy Brook'. We are within easy walking distance of the River Dart, with its swimming places and wooded walks, as well as the open moor and its magical wildness. We bathe in the stream and use especially made 'earth latrine' loos. There is a large carpeted Yurt for practicing in, several carpeted and heated geodesomes for smaller meetings and a large marquee for cooking and eating. We cook communally using mainly local organic vegetables and vegetarian wholefoods.

The price of the camp covers all the basic costs and the teaching is offered on a dana basis. We are a small, intimate camp with participants limited to 90 adults and 30 children, with pre-booking essential as the camp is usually full. At time of going to press there are 20 adult places left, but unfortunately all children places are now full.

For more information or to book call Brad on 0845 3305086, email bradr@qigong-southwest.co.uk or visit [www.qigong-southwest.co.uk](http://www.qigong-southwest.co.uk)

## Buddhist Lawyers Network

Last month a group of lawyers with a shared interest in Buddhism took initial steps to set up a network of individuals studying or working in the law who were also practising meditation and the Dharma.

In addition to sharing experiences and support around integrating spiritual practice and working as a lawyer, it is hoped discussion will be encouraged about Buddhist perspectives on legal issues, the possibility of engagement in particular projects as Buddhist lawyers and generally networking and having sangha with like-minded professionals.

Questions such as 'what is a Buddhist lawyer?' and 'is working as a lawyer consistent with the concept of right livelihood in the Buddhist eight fold path?' were immediately raised for discussion and contemplation.

A website has been set up at [www.buddhistlawyers.org.uk](http://www.buddhistlawyers.org.uk) to invite contact and input from anyone interested in becoming involved.

## News from Brighton

The Bodhi Garden ([www.bodhigarden.org](http://www.bodhigarden.org)), which has hosted Gaia House teachers in Brighton and Hove since 2001, will continue to do so, but in different locations in the city.

This is because, from May 2011, the Bodhi Garden changes from being a physical Dharma centre to becoming a virtual, web-based operation offering retreats on a dana basis. Additionally, a new Buddhist umbrella organisation has been established: Bodhi Tree Brighton ([www.bodhitreebrighton.org.uk](http://www.bodhitreebrighton.org.uk)).

This hosts some of the weekly groups that met at the old Bodhi Garden and is based at Anahata Clinic ([www.anahatahealth.co.uk](http://www.anahatahealth.co.uk)). Bodhi Tree Brighton also plans to run outreach programmes and weekend sangha events.

### Open meditation session

Tuesdays 8.00 - 9.30  
Jiva - 07717 718385

### LGBT group

2nd and 4th Weds of the month,  
5.45 - 7.15  
Sheila - 07789 861367

### Forest Sangha group

Weds 7.30 - 9.15  
David 01273 723378

### Creative Dharma nights

first Friday of the month 7.30 - 9.30  
Sasha 07905 118646

## Upcoming SanghaSeva retreats:

**April 29-30 & May 13-14**

### Being peace weekends, Israel and Palestine

Working for peace as a spiritual expression and a spiritual practice  
Facilitated by Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

**August 15-22**

### Earth Care work retreat, Devon, UK

Connecting to life and the community of all beings through the experience of working with the land  
Facilitated by Zohar Lavie

**October 1-8**

### Reforestation work retreat, Scotland

Nourishing earth and spirit through replanting and caring for the highlands native forests  
Facilitated by Ian Davidson and Caroline Jones

**October 14-30**

### Being peace, Israel and Palestine

Working for peace as a spiritual expression and a spiritual practice  
Facilitated by Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

**October 29 – November 12**

### Khuphuka HIV/AIDS Outreach Project, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Led by Kirsten Kratz

**November 28 - December 28**

### The power of love

### Anandwan leprosy community, India

Living and working in a vibrant community of the abled-disabled while exploring our own hearts and what connects us to each other  
Facilitated by Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

### For more information

[www.sanghaseva.org](http://www.sanghaseva.org)

## Website News...

In the autumn edition we told you about the exciting launch of our new website that was due to take place in November. Many of you might be wondering why nothing seems to have changed. Well, sadly the company we had diligently selected let us down in providing the website that we had carefully specified, we cancelled our project with them and went back to the drawing board.

The good news is that we learnt from the experience and at the moment we are turning to the skills we have around our own table. In time and with the help of our Chairman of Trustees, Michael Jeffries & our IT Consultant Alan Lewis, we have decided to design and build our own!

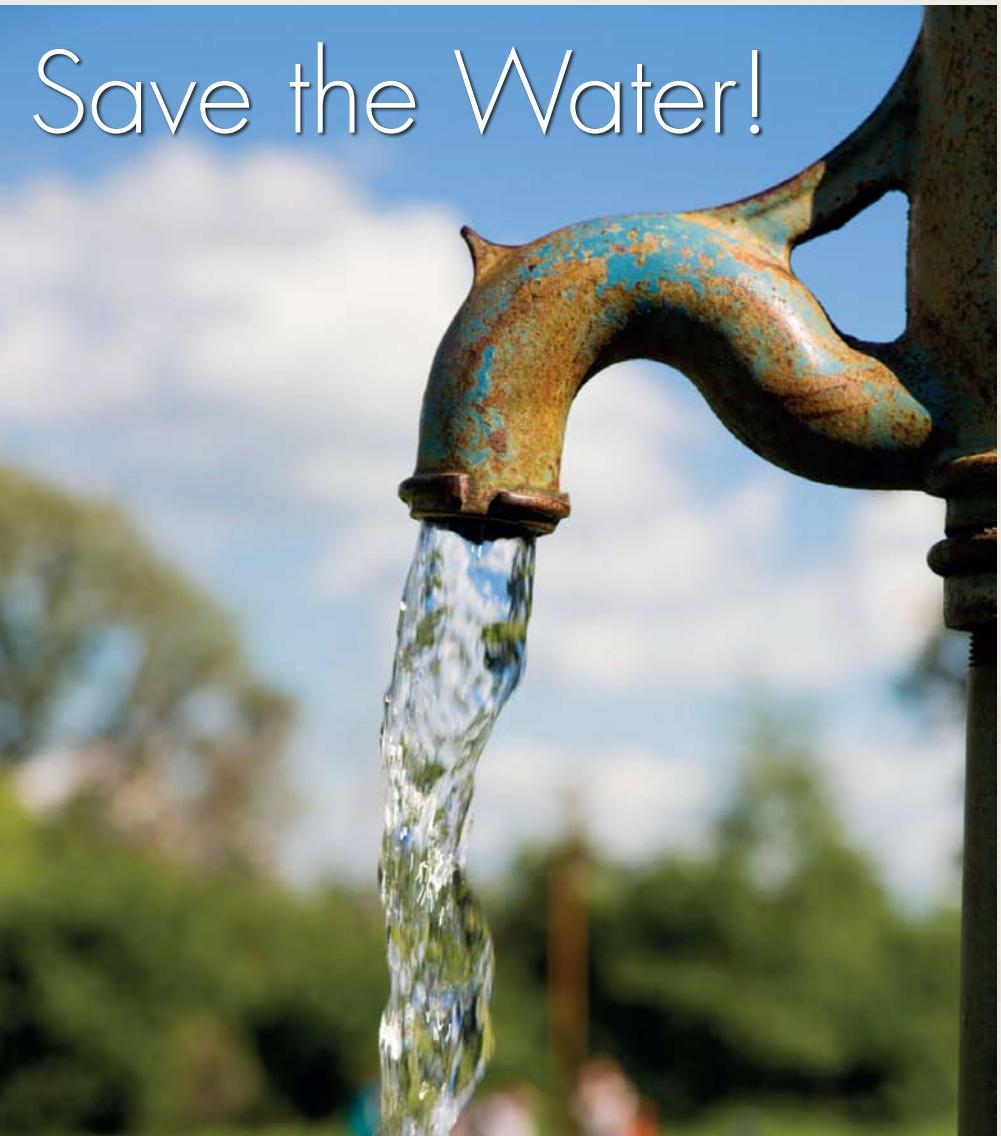
This is very much work in progress and we will be launching parts of the new website throughout the year. It is really disappointing when a company or organisation lets you down, especially when so much work has gone into the preparation and groundwork but we are all looking forward to developing and delivering what Gaia House needs. No timescales – just a clear intention to deliver a really good website.

Watch the website for more news and information.

**Sarah Abdy**  
Admin Manager



# Save the Water!



A few years back we ran an appeal to raise money for a series of water-related projects at Gaia House.

We removed baths and installed showers, we replaced old large and wasteful Victorian toilet cisterns with slimmer new ones, and we tried to dig a borehole to generate our own on-site water supply.

All those efforts have helped to reduce water consumption, although regrettably the borehole was

not successful owing to the limestone rock formation beneath us, despite 120 metres of drilling.

With some money still left in the fund from your generous donations we aim to continue with saving precious water resources by recycling rain water.

Our new sewage treatment system liberated the old septic tank to be used for rainwater storage, so we hope to be able to recycle that water for use in the garden.

## One Day Retreat Information 2011

### Brighton

29 May Bhante Bodhidhamma

25 Sep Rob Burbea

For the Brighton area venues, bookings and other details of all Bodhi Garden events please see our website [www.bodhigarden.org](http://www.bodhigarden.org). Online registration is essential to join these retreats, which are offered on dana basis.

### Bristol

19 Jun Jenny Wilks

23 Jul Ajahn Kovida

15 Oct Yanai Postelnik

19 Nov Jake Dartington

For information and booking:  
[www.bristolmeditation.org.uk/retreats.htm](http://www.bristolmeditation.org.uk/retreats.htm)  
email: [bristoldayretreats@gmail.com](mailto:bristoldayretreats@gmail.com)

### Sheffield

11 Jun Sangha Day

3-4 Sep Catherine McGee

Venue: Stillpoint Centre, Nether Edge

Cost: £10/£20/£30 plus dana

Contact: 01433 631350  
Email: [rwlton@phonecoop.coop](mailto:rwlton@phonecoop.coop)

### Oxford

25 Jun Chris Cullen

10 Sept Rob Burbea

9 Oct Bhante Bodhidhamma

19 Nov Yanai Postelnik

Venue: Headington Parish Hall

Time: 10am–5pm, registration from 9.15am

Cost: £10 (£5 concessions)

Contact: [www.oxfordgaiahouseretreats.co.uk](http://www.oxfordgaiahouseretreats.co.uk)  
(for booking form, information about the retreats, contacts for sitting groups).  
For other enquiries, ring Mat or Ravi on 01908 562483

### Cambridge

28 May Bhante Bodhidhamma

24 Sep Rob Burbea

19 Nov Christina Feldman

Venue: Friends Meeting House, 12 Jesus Lane, Cambridge

Time: 10am – 5pm  
(Registration from 9.30am)

Cost: £8 in advance (£10 on the day)  
£5 concessions

Further info: 28 May – 01353 659082  
24 Sep & 19 Nov – 01223 460966

### London

14 May John Peacock Study Day\*

22 May Jake Dartington

19 Jun Yanai Postelnik

25/26 Jun Rick Hanson\*

9/10 Jul Akincano

14 Aug James Baraz\*

11 Sep Stephen Batchelor

22-24 Sep Gregory Kramer\*

9 Oct Bhante Bodhidhamma

5 Nov John Peacock Study Day\*

12/13 Nov Ajahn Sucitto

4 Dec Rob Burbea

Venue: King Alfred School starting at 10am.  
Those marked \* see website  
for location information [www.londoninsight.org](http://www.londoninsight.org)

London Insight also offers other courses, classes and events.

# UK Sitting Groups

This is the latest UK sitting groups register. If your name and details are not featured here and you run a sitting group in the UK, please do let us know and we can add you to this feature of the newsletter. Please keep us up to date with your plans so that we can ensure we always publish the most up to date information.

Keep in touch via email on [admin@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:admin@gaiahouse.co.uk).

## AVON & SOMERSET

**BRISTOL** gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk  
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**BRISTOL** www.bristolchan.co.uk  
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**GLASTONBURY** Johnny@herizpayne.com  
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**PENZANCE** info@ellenafries.com

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## PEMBROKESHIRE

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Hugh Carroll 07949 605519

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Sally Dean & Robert Wilkins 01905 352065

## YORKSHIRE

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River Wolton 01433 631350

# OVERSEAS Sitting Groups

If you run a group outside the UK and wish to feature in the overseas sitting groups register, please email [admin@gaiahouse.co.uk](mailto:admin@gaiahouse.co.uk) for more information on how to feature in our bi-annual newsletters.

## SOUTHERN IRELAND

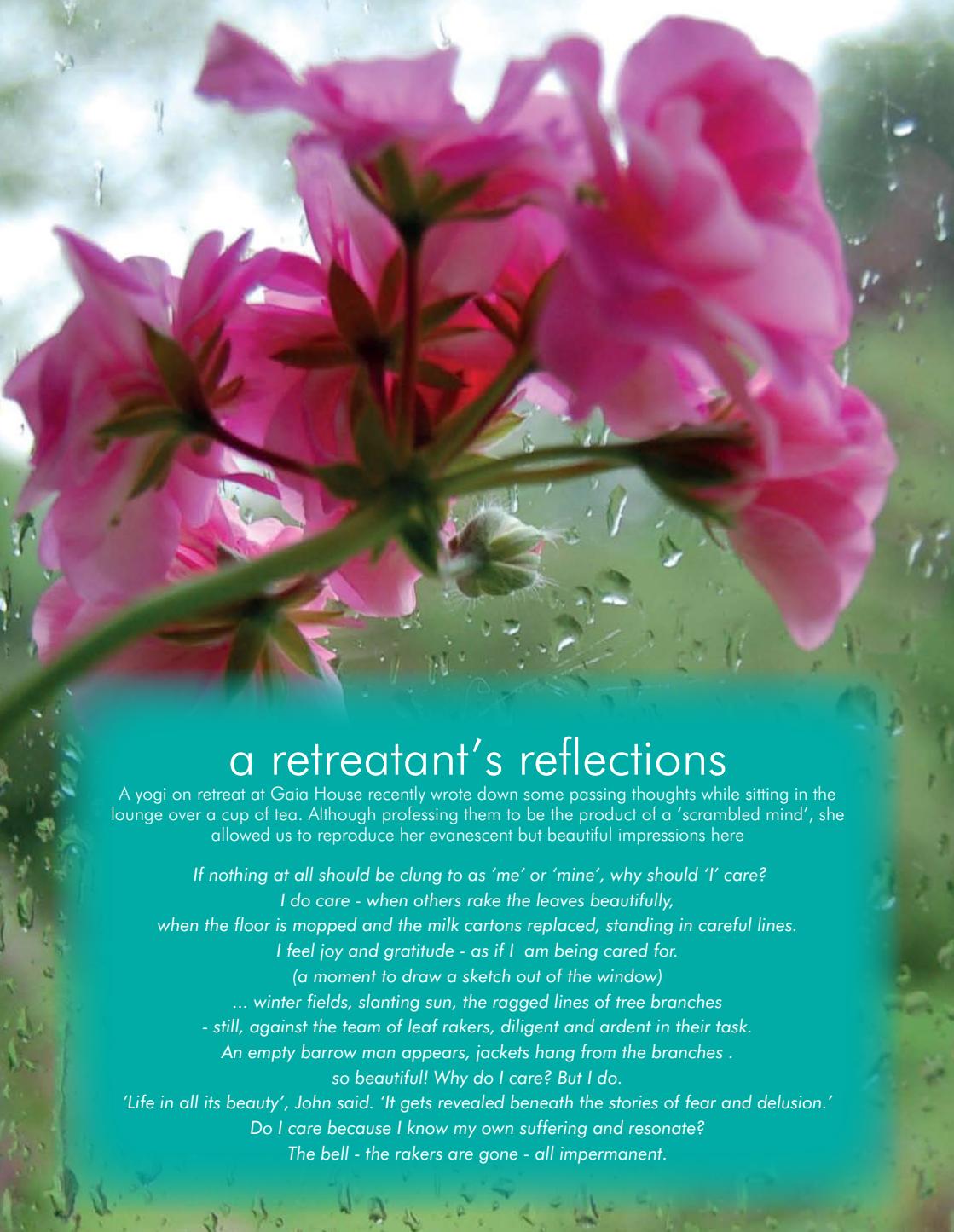
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Aoife Valley + 353 (0) 86 304 2893

## MALTA

**MELLIEHA** michaeljhoeys@googlemail.com  
Michael & Tess Hoey 215 203 39 or 992 774 97

## AUSTRALIA

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Brian Board & Monika Heisswolf +03 6295 0487



## a retreatant's reflections

A yogi on retreat at Gaia House recently wrote down some passing thoughts while sitting in the lounge over a cup of tea. Although professing them to be the product of a 'scrambled mind', she allowed us to reproduce her evanescent but beautiful impressions here

*If nothing at all should be clung to as 'me' or 'mine', why should 'I' care?*

*I do care - when others rake the leaves beautifully,  
when the floor is mopped and the milk cartons replaced, standing in careful lines.*

*I feel joy and gratitude - as if I am being cared for.*

*(a moment to draw a sketch out of the window)*

*... winter fields, slanting sun, the ragged lines of tree branches  
- still, against the team of leaf rakers, diligent and ardent in their task.*

*An empty barrow man appears, jackets hang from the branches .*

*so beautiful! Why do I care? But I do.*

*'Life in all its beauty', John said. 'It gets revealed beneath the stories of fear and delusion.'*

*Do I care because I know my own suffering and resonate?*

*The bell - the rakers are gone - all impermanent.*