



GAIA HOUSE

INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

autumn 2010
NEWS

Welcome...

...to Gaia House's Autumn 2010 newsletter.

We have a number of interesting articles and news pieces for you, and prominent amongst these is an article by Stephen Batchelor. The piece was originally a chapter to be included in his recent book, *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. It did not make into the final edition but is printed here for you.

As you leaf through the newsletter, you will notice that Gaia House is having yet another make-over – online, at least. The new website – due around the time of this newsletter, accompanies a new online booking system. I hope that our service to you is enhanced and improved by it, but read more inside.

Accompanying the newsletter will be the 2011 programme, where you will be able to see our range of retreats for the coming year. Our regular and popular teachers are present as ever, but a number of new teachers are also programmed in.

David Loy is a US academic and Zen teacher who has written on ethics and philosophy, including *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*.

Noah Levine, author of *Dharma Punx*, will bring a more street-level approach to his teaching, much influenced by his work in prisons. Read more about these two retreats in our *Retreats In Focus* piece. Another new arrival for us in 2011 is Gregory Kramer, an increasingly popular teacher whose interest in *Insight Dialogue* brings a more relational understanding to meditation and the Buddha's teachings.

Finally, Jean Wilkins brings her long experience in working with mindfulness around illness, with Joan Halifax at Upaya, to 'living with illness': a retreat for those suffering from long-term illness or experiencing it in someone dear to them.

I trust that you will find something to interest you amongst our offerings for 2011, to persuade you to come and stay with us. While we always ask for and value feedback from people as they finish retreats, we do not always get much feedback from people at other times.

If you wish to comment on our programme, our website, our communications, our retreats or anything else, please email me at director@gaiahouse.co.uk, and I will be keen to hear what you have to say.

Andy Power
Director



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A word from our Trustees

The Rumsfeld Legacy

"Awareness" for a trustee involves the past (how have we done in the last six months?), the present (are we ready for today's retreat?), and the future (what are we planning?). As we put the 2011 programme to bed, this newsletter gives us the opportunity to share some of the future issues we face.

Firstly let it be said that in the past we have spent too much time worrying about current issues, but the arrival of Andy Power just over a year ago has meant we can happily leave the day-to-day running of the House to him and the Gaia House (GH) team. And from all reports and feedback from yogis, this is going very well. For trustees this is a huge bonus and has meant that we can start to concentrate on the big issues facing Gaia in the future. To that end we have just drafted a paper which asks over 100 questions which need to be answered, to enable some strategic planning for the future to take place. We shall be involving all our stakeholders in this process.

The great warmonger Donald Rumsfeld did at least leave us with a neat way of categorising future issues: known-knowns, known-unknowns and unknown-unknowns; and all are present when we look at the opportunities for, and threats to, Gaia House.

The Known-Knowns

We know that we are committed to a Gaia House with a zero carbon footprint. The exciting project of installing the woodchip boiler is under way and once in commission we will gradually be able to replace the creaking (literally!) Victorian central-heating system. We know that we shall make savings from changing to a woodchip boiler and these will contribute to the replacing of the pipes. What's more we have planned the funding, with your help, from reserves and from different grants.

We know it is no exaggeration to say that we attract some of the best teachers in the world. We know we will have to support them in many different ways in the future to ensure their continued commitment to Gaia House.

We know that our building has been adapted many times to meet expansion but in many ways it falls short of being ideal. The GH accommodation too often comes in for criticism in your feedback following retreats and more "meditation" space would enable us to run parallel retreats.

We know that the accommodation we offer to teachers and volunteer coordinators is inadequate. We also know that we will need funds to achieve these things.

The Known-Unknowns

How long will it be before the roof needs to be replaced? When will we have to completely rewire the house? How much longer will the windows last before they have to be replaced rather than just painted over yet again? (You might be glad to hear that we have the funds for replacing those in the Hermitage Wing and that work will begin shortly). The timespan available to us is unknown but we have to put funds aside for when they are needed for these major repairs, and indeed we have started to do just that by creating a "Cyclical Maintenance" fund.

We know that there are things that can close down GH, another foot and mouth outbreak for example, and we have to create a contingency fund to ensure that we can stay open and keep the team at full strength for at least three months with no yogis.

Then there are the unknown-unknowns and these have not yet shown up on our risk analysis.....but let's not go down that road quite yet!

Funding

You will appreciate that all plans once agreed need prioritising and resourcing, and that begs the question "Are our finances robust enough to carry us forward?". Have we sufficient reserves? How much can we rely on fundraising? Can we borrow? Are our present margins sufficient? Do we still give value for money?

What usually happens is that our current operations give us a small surplus or "breakeven" but once we include plans for the future and contingencies for what might happen, the surplus changes rapidly to a significant deficit.

The trustees' job is to find the balance between the need to plan for the future, reduce risk, recognise what we can afford, and at the same time ensure that the Gaia House offering provides retreatants with the best possible conditions for their retreat. It is by no means an easy one.

By the way, we are looking for new trustees!



Am I a Believer?

Stephen Batchelor



Can I be a Buddhist without believing that I will survive the death of the brain to be reborn in the womb of a jackal or the egg of a parrot? Can I be a Buddhist and not believe in the existence of a hell where I could be roasted alive for thousands of years in a human body with a fish's head until I have expiated my misdeeds? Can I be a Buddhist and doubt that the Buddha's body-hairs are coloured deep blue like corrylium and grow clockwise in rings? Can I be a Buddhist and not believe that adepts in meditation can multiply their bodies, walk through walls and mountains, dive through earth as if it were water, fly through space like a bird, and touch the moon and sun with the palms of their hands?

These examples are not taken from an esoteric Tibetan text. They are found in the Buddha's earliest discourses recorded in the sober Pali canon. And I do not believe in any of them.

In the minds of some Buddhists, such a disavowal would disqualify me from being a member of the faithful. They would find it puzzling, if not offensive, that I would want to think of myself as a Buddhist. For many, Buddhism is a religion like all the others, with its own share of weird and wonderful dogmas. It is certainly not my business, as a mere Western convert, to question truths that have been verified, again and again, by people far wiser and more accomplished than myself. Instead, I should abandon the conceits of my ego and humbly acknowledge that I share in a far grander destiny

extending over millions of lifetimes in myriad realms, compared to which our brief sojourn on this paltry planet pales to insignificance.

From a traditional perspective, to reject such a view of the world is not only erroneous but immoral. To believe there is no rebirth and no law of moral causation, is an evil act that will lead to confusion and anguish in this life and hellfire in the world to come. One doesn't need to say or do anything to commit it. All you have to do is form an incorrect opinion in the privacy of your mind. It is a thought crime, yet listed in the classical texts alongside murder, robbery and rape. Indeed, "wrong view" is said to be the heaviest of all evil actions, since it establishes the viewpoint from which every other misdeed stems.

If I do not believe in potentially endless future lifetimes governed by the inexorable laws of karma – so the argument goes – what would prevent me from indulging every desire to lie and steal, while expressing each angry impulse in an act of violence?

What conceivable motive would I have to do good if all that awaits me at death is oblivion?

Like most other religions, Buddhism teaches a mechanical morality of punishment and reward, the fruits of which are primarily reaped after death. If you do good, you may be reborn in one of various heavens; if you do bad, you will be scheduled for one of many hells. Such justice is underwritten not by an omniscient and omnipotent God but by an impersonal and inexorable moral law, immanent in the very make-up of reality itself. Fortunately, Buddhist hells last for mere millennia rather than eternity. Unfortunately, this is also true of their heavens. The aim is to escape the round of birth and death altogether by bringing to a stop the craving that results from ignorance and keeps the cycle of cosmic misery spinning. Rather than seek to improve conditions here on earth, the most loving and compassionate thing one can do is help others find their way off the wheel. In the grand scheme of things, the fate of this world is of relatively little importance.

A major weakness of this metaphysics is that it is so transparently and crudely anthropomorphic. That which is invoked to explain what lies beyond the range of human experience turns out to be a distorted reflection of the human condition itself. For what are the gods if not just long-lived, conceited humans, enjoying the sort of utopia yearned for by dreamers and children? What are the titans but vain, ambitious people who cannot bear the success of others but are powerless to vanquish them? What are the peta (ghosts) but caricatures of human beings tormented by unquenchable desires?

What are hell-beings but people racked with horrendous pain? The only realm that does not betray its human origin is that of the animals, which, unsurprisingly, is the only one of which we have direct experience. As for the law of moral causation (“karma”): this is human justice dressed up as cosmic justice and then imputed to the impersonal workings of the natural world.

The natural world is no more fair or just than it is cruel. “Fairness,” “justice” and “cruelty” are human attributes, which we are prone to project onto non-human realities. When the lion sinks its teeth into an antelope’s neck, it is not committing a cruel and evil act that will result in punishment in an afterlife, any more than the antelope is getting its just deserts for something nasty it did in a previous existence. Yet this is how classical Buddhism would understand it. Of course it is tragic that a gifted young musician should die a slow, agonising death from multiple sclerosis, just as it is offensive that a corrupt, murderous politician should live a long and healthy life in luxury. But to explain these facts as the consequence of actions done in past lives and to reassure oneself that justice will be done after death is to clutch at consolations. As long as one adheres to such a metaphysics, the less one will be inclined to devote oneself to finding a cure for MS or to campaign for transparency and accountability in politics: the only things that might actually make a difference.

My first Tibetan teacher, Geshé Dargyey, once told us that we would gain more “merit” (i.e. karmic credit) by building a monastery than a hospital. It was not that he disapproved of hospitals – I have no doubt that he would have applauded their construction and commended the work of doctors and nurses. But in the bigger picture, the most a hospital can do is delay by a few years the inevitable breakdown and death of the body, while providing others with a good opportunity to practise compassion. Far better, therefore, to sponsor a monastery and fund the training of monks, who can teach you how no longer to be reborn, which, instead of merely curing the cancer of a body that will die anyway, goes to the very root of the problem. “No head,” I recall Geshé-la saying with a twinkle in his eyes, “then no headache.” From the standpoint of orthodox Buddhist doctrine, this is a reasonable and cogent argument.

In terms of its ability to explain why the world is the way it is, belief in rebirth and karma is no different from belief in God. Both function as ways

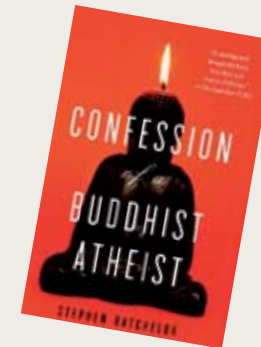
of giving meaning to what otherwise appears to be meaningless and unfair. If a Christian couple give birth to a brain-damaged child, this is the inscrutable will of God, whereas, for a Buddhist couple, it is the result of the baby’s actions in a past life. Both explanations are equally indemonstrable or refutable. Yet both render the tragedy meaningful and situate it within a well-defined frame of moral obligation and responsibility. Perhaps this is one reason why such beliefs have been selected by evolution and are so deeply entrenched in the human psyche. Otherwise, would life not be too bewildering and painful for rational animals to bear?

As a Buddhist atheist, I reject the doctrines of karma and rebirth, just as a Christian atheist would reject belief in a transcendent God. Yet I do so as a Buddhist, as one who has adopted the template of values, ideas and practices laid out by Siddhattha Gotama more than two thousand years ago.

I reject karma and rebirth not only because I find them unintelligible, but because I believe they obscure and distort what he was trying to say.

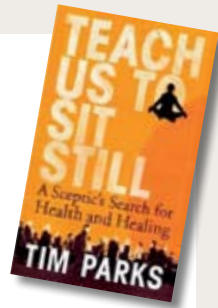
Rather than offering the balm of consolation, the Buddha encouraged us to peer deep and unflinchingly into the heart of the bewildering and painful experience that life can so often be.

Stephen’s most recent publication is *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist* (New York: Spiegel & Grau)



BOOK REVIEW

Tim Parks.
Teach Us to Sit Still: A Sceptic’s Guide to Health and Healing.
Vintage Books, 2010.



Tim Parks is a British-born writer, who lives and works in Italy. This finely-crafted memoir opens by describing what it is like to live, day and night, with chronic prostate pain. We read, in graphic detail, of Signor Pax’s encounters with doctors, surgeons and other specialists, the various tests and scans he undergoes, none of which are of any help in reducing, let alone removing, the debilitating pain. Eschewing surgery, he sits at his computer trawling the internet for something that might help. He discovers a form of relaxation therapy, taught by a doctor in California, which, to his surprise, actually works. Over time, Parks realizes that the effectiveness of these simple exercises is not only due to retraining and strengthening muscles, but also because of the way one is encouraged to relate to the pain itself. This new-found openness to “alternative” forms of healing leads him, via a remarkable shiatsu therapist, to the practice of Vipassana meditation. The book culminates with a vivid and moving account of a ten-day retreat in Italy with John Coleman (a teacher in the U Ba Khin tradition, who taught at Gaia House in the 1990’s).

Teach Us to Sit Still is not, however, a self-absorbed account of successful pain management that ends with a ringing endorsement of Buddhist meditation. It is a work of literature (the book is praised on Parks’ website by the Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee) that subtly weaves together diverse narrative threads – details of Parks’ childhood in England, his family life in Italy, his hobbies, his work in the university, as well as an ongoing reflection on Velazquez’s painting “The Water Seller of Seville.” From a Buddhist perspective, Parks’ story offers a striking illustration of the progression of the Four Noble Truths (and that this is almost certainly unintentional only strengthens its impact). For here is the story of a man who fully knows dukkha, lets go of grasping, experiences moments of genuine insight and peace, which lead to a transformation of his everyday life. The book ends not in a blaze of spiritual realisation but with a matter-of-fact account of Parks invigilating an exam.

Stephen Batchelor

Teacher in focus – Jake Dartington

Why did you begin to meditate?

I started to meditate when I was 23 and studying for an M.A. in Philosophy. Looking for a clearer understanding of myself and the world, I had become interested in the ideas of Wittgenstein and found studying philosophy exhilarating. However, I also noticed that my body became tense while studying and had a sense that yoga might help. I very much valued the relaxation at the end of the yoga sessions, which included a guided awareness of the body. This led me to meditation which I loved straight away. It provided a way of exploring experience in a much more experiential and embodied way than I had encountered in philosophy. I was immediately struck by how differently I felt after meditating, despite the lack of outward activity, and was inspired to develop the practice.

Why did you want to become a teacher?

Well, I knew that I wanted to explore this practice more deeply. During a three-month retreat at Gaia House I got to know Christina Feldman well and developed a great deal of respect for the warmth, depth and clarity of her teaching. I joined a study group and some time later was invited to train as a teacher. This seemed the best way to continue to deepen my own practice and to develop ways to share this with others. I'm confident that the practice really helps people and it's good to be able to support other people's explorations of meditation as best as I can.

What is your practice now?

In terms of formal meditation, my practice involves working with the breath to cultivate some sense of balance and stillness. This provides the anchor for a broader awareness of the arising and passing of other aspects of experience. I also tend to work with mindfulness of the body a lot and find the body-sweeping method very powerful. Outside of formal practice, there's still an on-going exploration of the Four Noble Truths - recognising the arising of suffering, exploring what is sustaining it, and finding ways to let go. When faced with things that don't go my way, I find it helpful to ask the question 'where's the suffering in this?' This helps to bring mindfulness to the extra dimension of suffering that arises when we resist experience. It provides a doorway to letting go of this resistance and cultivating peace, stillness and joy.



How do you apply your practice?

As is often mentioned, every aspect of life offers an opportunity for practice. One area that I have been focusing on particularly is wise speech in the workplace. As well as Dharma teaching, I teach Philosophy and Religious Studies part-time in a college. I have strong ideas about how education should be holistic, emotionally literate and go beyond a narrow focus on exam results. It has been quite a practice to learn how to express these ideas in a way that helps, rather than in a judgemental manner. Over time, I have increasingly found ways to bring meditation into my work – having silence at the beginning of the lessons, running lunchtime classes for students and training sessions for teachers. I am heartened by the fact that others seem to share a wish to bring mindfulness practices into the education system and am delighted to hear about the work of Mindfulness in Schools.

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

I think that the cultivation of a culture of joyful, voluntary simplicity would have enormous implications for so many of the personal, local and global issues we face.



FOCUS ON RETREATS...



Awakening the Heart – Through Training the Mind



Noah Levine

Fri 1st – Mon 4th Apr 2011

In this retreat of Insight Meditation (Vipassana), we will bring mindful attention to the breath, body, heart and mind. Instruction will follow the traditional Four Foundations of Mindfulness, combined with training in Lovingkindness and compassion, through a daily schedule of silent sitting, walking, Dharma talks and interviews.

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.

Insight Dialogue: The Four Noble Truths Come Home



Gregory Kramer

Wed 28th Sept – Tues 4th Oct 2011

Insight Dialogue is a fully interpersonal, wisdom-based meditation practice based on a relational understanding of early Buddhist teachings. This retreat brings together the clear mindfulness and calm concentration of traditional meditation with the power of mutuality. Combining Insight Dialogue with silent Vipassana & Metta meditation, walking, time in nature, and talks on the relational Dharma, we will explore the Four Noble Truths where they are closest to home: interpersonal suffering, relational hunger, the liberative power of mutual support for mindfulness, investigation, and concentration, and the Eightfold Path as it unfolds fully embedded in our lives with others.

Role Change around Teacher Guidance at Gaia House

Over a period of nearly five years from 2005, I had the privilege of serving Gaia House as Dharma Director. In that role I was the teachers' representative within the administration and running of the retreat centre. My primary functions involved providing the trustees and administrators with input and guidance with regard to the teachers' perspective on administrative matters, and facilitating decisions around the various matters for which the Teacher Council was responsible.

Towards the end of last year I decided that the time had come for me to relinquish that role and, as of this year, these functions have now reverted back to the collective responsibility of the Guiding Teachers' Council. This currently comprises Christina Feldman, Martine Bachelor, Stephen Bachelor, John Peacock and Rob Burbea, as well as myself, and I look forward to continuing to support Gaia House as one of the Guiding Teachers.

Over nearly 20 years I have had the good fortune to work closely with the trustees, administrative staff and the volunteer coordinators, in the running of Gaia House. I would like to extend my ongoing appreciation to these wonderful people, all of whom contribute immensely to making Gaia House the remarkable and precious resource for Dharma practice and spiritual transformation that it is.

Yanai Postelnik

Technology and what it means to us

Technology and Gaia House haven't always been two entities that have fitted together particularly well. This year the impact of technology became very apparent when we lost our broadband connection entirely – everything seemingly ground to a halt. I found myself becoming a little cautious of relying too much on new technology. However, at its basic level, having a website presence and managing that effectively has become an absolute necessity in ensuring we move Gaia House along the path towards the future.

And so technology has arrived with bells and whistles at Gaia House, we have a new satellite broadband system with a network throughout the building, and now we look forward to launching our new website and online booking system on 1st November.

It's been a huge learning curve for me and I am under no illusions that the new processes will involve many of you learning how they work and what they can offer. For most of you it will be a seamless transition to a new efficient and friendly system that you've probably wished for us for some time. For others it will be slightly disconcerting and somewhat unnerving to have to "login" and enter your own information on your record. I wish to reassure all of you on all levels – it will be OK.

As I write - our new website and new systems are in the "building" stage and the developers working with us are busy deciphering our complex booking requirements. The new website, having been extensively tried and tested, will go live on 1st November, and the main benefit to you, our retreatants, is that you will find it an easier and faster way to get information about Gaia House, and most importantly to book your retreats.

Retreat bookings will no longer need to be "downloaded" via our reception team and then re-entered on our own systems – bookings will be made direct onto a bookings system and database, and payments taken via an online merchant account.

Personal and work retreatants will be thrilled to know that they will no longer need to complete a Retreat Application Form (RAF) every time they wish to come on retreat. They will hold one on our system, via the "login" system and confirm its accuracy each time they book a personal or work retreat.

Once you have been on a retreat of any type you will have a login and you will use this to "manage your account" on all retreats from then on. Following the launch you will all be given login information and a password, which you will then be able to change as appropriate.

"But what about me?" – I hear some of you cry. Those of you who don't use a PC or have regular access to computers, please don't worry. Our reception team will continue to be on hand to take your bookings over the telephone and book you via our own access system here at Gaia House.

The Reception Coordinators, Gerald Virtbauer and Juliet Grace, always work extremely hard at trying to care and look after everybody who wishes to come on retreat, and so over this transition period I ask you all to be patient with them and allow them to guide and help those that need their assistance – there will be the inevitable problems and Gerald and Juliet will do their best to sort out any problems that we might encounter – they'll be learning too.

I am reassured by those around me that are working on this project that "it will all be OK" and I do trust that it will – eventually – so thank you for your continued support and patience.

Sarah Abdy
Admin Manager
Owner protector of the new online booking system ...

There are some key things you need to know:

Transfers – as from 1st November we will no longer be able to do transfers under any circumstances. If you need to cancel a booking you will be able to book onto another retreat, but it will be a cancellation and rebooking rather than a transfer. The cancellation policy will apply in all cases and we ask you all to be clear about the cancellation policy when you make a booking.

Changes to bookings – as from 1st November when you make a booking online you won't be able to make any subsequent changes, i.e. changing from the standard to supported rate, changing your booking in any way, dates, length of stay etc. If we do have to make any changes, this may be subject to an administration charge. This makes it really important to have all the information you need to make the booking. Once it's confirmed that's it!

Single Rooms will continue to be in demand and our Household team always do a sterling job in fulfilling as many requests as they possibly can. Please remind yourself of the requirements of our policy so we can accommodate as many requests as possible.

Food Policy is always very clear and again there will be a place for you to remind yourself of this policy and ensure that you know what we are able to offer to support any specialist dietary needs. If you think this is relevant to you please check the policy.



Reception Team
Gerald Virtbauer, Juliet Grace & Sarah Abdy

making our footprint smaller...

As many of you are hopefully aware, we have recently launched a fundraising appeal to pay for the installation of a woodchip boiler and solar thermal panels, to replace the old twin oil-fired beasts which lurk shamefully at the back of the house. It feels long overdue.

If you are interested in the technical side of things, the woodchip will be delivered by tipper trucks into an underground silo outside the Hermitage Wing. Adjacent to the silo is the boiler room, from which an auger – a rotating screw – pulls the chip up inside its wide thread, through an aperture and into the boiler. Inside the 190kW HDG compact boiler, a closely regulated and very efficient burn will heat water which will in turn heat the water inside a 4000 litre, well-insulated accumulator tank. Clean effluent is passed out through the flue, while a relatively small amount of ash is deposited, to be emptied out every week or so.

The heating for the house is drawn from the accumulator tank, and passes through an underground heat mains (which only loses 1°C of heat per km) into the house. In the summer, solar thermal panels on the Hermitage Wing roof will take on the main burden of heating up hot water.

If you are still bearing with me, well done! We expect to halve our heating bill and to benefit from the new Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) next year, so we see this as a good investment as well as an important step in reducing our carbon footprint. We have been greatly helped by the receipt of a £45,000 grant from the Community Sustainable Energy Fund. When you next visit us please have a look at our new boiler house, semi-submerged and turf-roofed, hiding behind the house.

When all this is done, we will be refitting pipes and radiators over the course of a number of years, to make a more efficient, better and more easily regulated system. Beyond that, we have ambitions for a community project to generate renewable electricity. Ultimately, we intend to be carbon-neutral in the house's energy requirements.

Cutting to the chase, this is all really expensive. So, it would be really appreciated if you could donate generously to help us pay for it. Getting the boiler in will cost us £140,000, the solar thermal a further £10,000, so we really do need your help. We want to make Gaia House a place which fully lives up to its name.



Back row: Emma Burleigh, Isla Macdonald, Gerald Virtbauer, Tony O'Connor, Maggie Feeny.
Front: Rae Davies. Inset: Juliet Grace & Owen Barnett

Working at Gaia House: Love made Visible

Reading through Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* recently, I was struck by what is written about work: *'When you work you are a flute through whose heart the whispering of the hours turns to music... Work is love made visible'*.

I've reflected many times on what makes working at Gaia House so special and I think it is to do with a shared intention to 'work for love' – for the love of the Dharma, and what is offered here at Gaia House. As well as the coordinators, Team Gaia also includes paid staff, volunteers, trustees and teachers, and I think that this intention runs throughout. The expression of this intention becomes "love made visible".

But also there is a shared sense of being practitioners together, and though our paths might differ slightly, our working lives become the ground for insight and wise ways of being in the world. This I also see as 'working for love'. Spirit Rock Meditation Centre in California has recently announced that they are adopting a 'Dharma-centric' model of governance where all aspects of work and decision-making are proactively recognised as opportunities for insight. These shared intentions about the way we work make for a nourishing environment in my experience.

And so, the seasons roll on and the coordinator team shifts again. We said farewell to Cari Stubbs, our most recent Garden Coordinator. Cari brought gentle friendliness and kindness to her role here, and the plants in the garden have responded with a verdant vibrancy this year. Cari is moving to a house on nearby Dartmoor with plans to renovate the building and tame the grounds. Thanks to Cari for all her hard work and service. Taking over in the garden is Emma Burleigh, who had previously been working in a secondary school as head of department. I wonder if the garden will be as much of a handful as a class of teenagers? One does wonder about these runaway runner beans. Welcome, Emma.

If you have an interest in living in community, offering Dharma service, and 'working for love', we would like to hear from you. We are currently looking for someone with DIY skills to take over the Maintenance Coordinator role at the end of this year. Contact admin@gaiahouse.co.uk, or call Rachel or Sarah on 01626 335256 for an application pack, or if you have questions.

Rachel Davies
Retreat manager

SANGHA NEWS

Sanghaseva Dates for 2011

Leprosy Community Work Retreat

Dates: 28 Nov – 28 Dec 2010

Location: Anandwan, Maharashtra, India

Facilitators: Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

Living and working in a vibrant community of the abled-disabled while exploring our own hearts and what connects us to each other

Dharmalaya Sustainable Living Work Retreat

Dates: 14 – 24 Mar 2011

Location: Himalayan foothills, India

Facilitators: Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

We will participate in the creation of a centre combining meditation retreats and green building education in the foothills of the Himalayas. Reconnecting to a gentle way of living on the earth and with each other.

Tree Planting Work Retreat

Dates: 2 - 9 April 2011

Location: Scotland

Facilitator: Caroline Jones

Joining the charity Trees for life we will explore our connection to all life through planting trees in the highlands of Scotland

Earth Care Work Retreat

Dates: 13 – 21 Aug 2011

Location: Devon, UK

Facilitator: Zohar Lavie

We will explore reconnecting to ourselves and the earth through working in and with nature. We will work with Trees for Health, a local Devon charity, combining work in their tree nursery with time for meditation and reflection.

All dates to be confirmed,
For more info see www.sanghaseva.org

Volunteer Coordinator in Maintenance needed at Gaia House

Potential start Dec 2010 / Jan 2011

A DIY expert is NOT required but an ability to make small repairs and minor alterations will be needed.

Visit our website for further information and an application pack.

Deepen your practice, Deepen your knowledge

Join the Committed Dharma Practitioners Programme 2011-2012

The recent Committed Dharma Practitioners Programme has just come to an end. The programme is an integrated approach to the study and practice of the Dhamma that is rooted in the Buddha's teaching of the path to liberation. It offers a number of different yet interwoven strands within its framework – teaching, discussion, community, reflection and investigations applied to daily life.

As part of showing appreciation for the teachers at the end, the participants each wrote a short verse about the course. Each verse was then printed onto a prayer flag and the whole string of prayer flags was presented to the teachers on the last day of the course.

Here is a (much!) shortened version:

Here they come, a motley sangha
Full of greed, delusion, anger
Hoping John, the dharma master,
Will lead them to nibbana - faster!

Amidst the lovely trees and birds
We struggle with the Pali words
The same refrain's heard, on and on -
"We need it on the board, please John!"

We copy down each faithful letter
And offer diacritics metta-
By dinner time each dharma bum,
Both big and small, has gone quite numb!

The disappointing truth we're taught
Our minds are murkier than we thought
Clogged up with fetters, leaks and taints
With hindrances the top complaints

Commitment comes
Commitment goes
But CDPP
Keeps us on our toes

So pass the modules one by one
In winter rain and summer sun
Rich in teaching, friendship, talks,
Blessed by nature, peaceful walks

Hearts and minds seem so much brighter
Selfing's grip a little lighter
The seeds are sown, the path is clear:
We'll "strive on diligently" from here!

This two-year programme will be running again in 2011 – 2012, with John Peacock, Christina Feldman, Stephen Batchelor, Ajahn Sucitto and Akincano as the contributing teachers. All participants will have previous experience with Dharma practice and a working knowledge of core Buddhist concepts. If you are interested in applying, email sharphamcdpp@yahoo.co.uk, or for initial telephone enquiries call Sharpham on 01803 732542.

Insight Talks

If you are new to discovering the teachings of the Buddha, going on retreats and practising meditation, or if you are a seasoned 'yogi', listening to Dharma talks at home can be a precious resource and offer a great support for practice in daily life.

Insight Talks is a non-profit service which maintains a library of over 2000 recordings, with a mission statement to make the Dharma talks given at Gaia House as widely available and as affordable as possible. In the service of that, we are now beginning to publish our talks for download by donation on the Gaia House website. But before I go into that, I would like to offer a potted history of Insight Talks (or Insight Tapes as it was known until we went digital in 2006).

Insight Talks has sold thousands of recordings on a non-profit basis since 1983 when Gaia House was based in Denbury, a few miles away from its present location. Various people have been involved with running the service, including some of the original coordinators in the early years of Gaia House, plus Rose Deiss, Catherine McGee, Kim Clancy and Andrew Broadhead. The talks were originally in cassette format, then in 2006, when I took over the helm, we began offering audio CDs. In 2008 we were able to afford professional-quality recording equipment and since then have been able to offer talks of a consistently high sound quality.

Now, in line with many other Dharma centres around the world, we are publishing talks for download via the Gaia House website at www.gaiahouse.co.uk. We hope to be able to offer talks within one month of any retreat ending. All of 2010 talks are already online, and we are slowly working backwards, uploading all of the talks from 2009 back to 2006.

All talks previous to 2006 were recorded on cassette, and in 2011 we will begin digitalising selected sections of our extensive cassette library, using the magical machine we have purchased that converts cassettes in three minutes. If you download talks online, there is an opportunity to offer a donation for this service. You can do this by sending us a cheque made payable to Gaia House Trust, stating clearly that the payment is for downloaded talks, or by paying online. If you would like to order hard copies in the traditional audio CD format to play on a normal CD player, you can either order them through Insight Talks by putting an order form and a payment in the box in the library at the end of your retreat, send a cheque payable to Gaia House Trust and a covering letter outlining the talks



you require, or order by email. We have published a selection of recent talks at Gaia House with details of prices on the opposite page, all of which will also be downloadable from the Gaia House website (if they are not online already they soon will be). If you have any queries about the availability of talks then please contact me at insight.talks@gaiahouse.co.uk

At present when you look for talks on the Gaia House website you will be directed to a page on Dharmaseed website (go to 'Resources' on the Gaia House homepage, and follow the links for recorded talks online), but by the time this newsletter gets to you there should be a page on our own website where you can directly access all of the talks given at Gaia House and also donate online.

Faith Burch
Insight Talks

Insight Talks Catalogue 2011

CHRISTINA FELDMAN

- Spaciousness
- The Journey from Aversion to Kindness
- Renunciation
- Joy
- The Hindrances
- Papanca

STEPHEN BATCHELOR

- Introduction to Secular Buddhism
- The Elephant, the Arrow and the Raft
- Conditionality
- Turning the Wheel
- Entering the Stream
- The Middle Way
- Self and Others

MARTINE BATCHELOR

- Appropriate Thinking
- Appropriate Speech
- Appropriate Action
- Appropriate Concentration
- Appropriate Effort

YANAI POSTELNIK

- A Path of Peace and Happiness
- An Unconditional Engagement with Life
- The Radiant Heart
- Love

CATHERINE MCGEE

- Coming Home, parts 1 & 2
- Motivation
- Openness, Judgement, Rejection, Acceptance
- Not Knowing, Curiosity, Self and Silence

AKINCANO

- The Wilderness of the Heart

JOHN PEACOCK

- The Origins of Distress
- Letting Go of the Known
- How we Incline our Minds becomes the Shape of our Lives
- Who Am I?

ROB BURBEA

- Blessing Life (The Power of the Generous Heart)
- The Self and its Search for Security
- Freedom, Reality and the Razor's Edge
- The Wisdom of Non-Duality
- 'There are Hundreds of Ways to Kneel and Kiss the Ground' (a talk on Devotion)
- Heart Work
- Selflessness and a Life of Love

MARTIN AYLWARD

- Making Space Around the Inner Critic
- Fear and Freedom
- Self, Soul, Psyche, Space
- Unravelling Layers of Experience
- The State of the World

LEELA SARTI

- To Fall Awake
- Emptiness

REB ANDERSON

- Seven talks from the Retreat Entitled Zen Koans and Bodhisattva Precepts (these talks are available as a set of MP3 files only (£21) and do not include Reb's inquiry sessions with retreatants)

CAROLINE JONES

- Impermanence
- The Five Hindrances
- The Five Aggregates
- Right Livelihood

ORDERING RECORDINGS

Talks can be downloaded for donation from the Gaia House website, or be ordered as hard copies in usual audio CD format or in the form of MP3 files (multiple talks on one CD) which can be played on a computer or on a hi-fi with an MP3 playing facility.

The prices below include postage and packing costs.

	GB	Rest of World
Up to 3 CD's	£5.50 each	£6.00 each
4 or more CD's	£5.00 each	£5.50 each
MP3 Files of talks	£3 per talk	£3.20 per talk
Minimum order of	two MP3 talks	

Ordering hard copies from within the UK: send a cheque payable to Gaia House Trust with an accompanying letter clearly outlining your order, to Faith Burch, Insight Talks, Gaia House, West Ogwell, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6EN.

Ordering from outside the UK: please email Faith Burch at the email address below and request instructions on how to organise payment.

We cannot accept credit card payment at the moment but this should be available within the next 2/3 months – please review our website for the latest information.

Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.

Insight Talks is a non-profit organisation.

Further enquiries to: insight.talks@gaiahouse.co.uk

One Day Retreat Information 2010-11

BRIGHTON

23/24 Oct Geshe Lama Ahbay Rinpoche
28 Nov Yanai Postelnik
22 /23 Jan Ken Jones
26 Mar Jake Dartington
17 Apr Ajahn Candasiri
7/8 May HE Dorje Dhenpa Rinpoche
29 May Bhikkhu Bodhidhamma
Venue: until 30th April 2011
The Bodhi Garden, 7a Ship Street
Gardens, Brighton BN1 1AJ - please
see website for venues for May retreats
Times: 10am - 5pm (registration from 9.30am)
Minimum suggested donation: £20 day,
£30 weekends (concessions available).
Booking in advance is required.
For booking and information call: 07531 556616,
email: info@bodhigarden.org or visit website:
www.bodhigarden.org

CUMBRIA

6 Feb Jake Dartington
Times: 10am-5pm
Venue: The Fellside Centre, Low Fellside,
Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4NH
Please arrive and register from
9.30 am)
For further information please contact: Adrienne
Frazer on adiefrazer@hotmail.com

MANCHESTER

27/28 Nov Jake Dartington
Venue: Dover Street Building,
(University of Manchester),
Dover Street, Manchester
Time: 9.15 am - 4.30 pm
(registration 9.15-9.45)
Cost: £15 - £30 depending on 1 or 2 day
attendance – concessions available
Further information: Mary Walsh (mary.walsh@manchester.ac.uk)

CAMBRIDGE

4 Dec Christina Feldman
15 Jan Yanai Postelnik
19 Mar Martine Batchelor
28 May Bhante Bodhidhamma
Venue: Friends Meeting House, 12, Jesus
Lane Cambridge
Time: 10am - 5pm, registration 9.30 am
Cost: £8 in advance/ £10 on the day +
teacher dana
Concessions: students/unwaged/retired £5
Contact: Advanced booking by cheque for
£8 payable to DeMarrais/Retreats
to Liz DeMarrais, 9 George Street,
Cambridge CB4 1AL
Further information tel: 01223 460 966 [or
01353 659 082 for May 28th retreat only]

LONDON

13/14 Nov Christina Feldman
5 Dec Rob Burbea
9 Jan Martin Aylward
27 Jan Catherine McGee
19/20 Feb Christina Feldman
20 Mar Martine Batchelor
9/10 Apr Noah Levine
22 May Jake Dartington
19 Jun Yanai Postelnik
Venue: King Alfred School,
Registration from 9.30am, prompt start 10am
finishing at 4.30 pm. London Insight also offers
other courses, classes and events. For further
details see www.londoninsight.org

OXFORD

13 Nov Simon Child
5 Feb Catherine McGee
26 Mar Martin Aylward
24 Apr Martine Batchelor
May Please see website for details
June Please see website for details
Venue: Headington Parish Hall
Time: 10am-5pm, registration from 9.15am
Cost: £10 (£5 concessions)
Contact: www.oxfordgaiahouse retreats.co.uk
(for booking form, information about
the retreats, contacts for sitting
groups).
For other enquiries, ring Mat or Ravi
on 01908 562483

SHEFFIELD

2 Nov to 6-week evening course
7 Dec Tuesdays, 7.15 - 9.15 pm
Teacher: Jake Dartington
Venue: Quaker Meeting House, Sheffield
Costs: £20 - £40 plus dana
Contact: 01433 631350
rwolton@phonecoop.coop
19/20 Mar Rob Burbea
Venue: Stillpoint Practice, Sheffield
Times: Sat/Sun 10am - 5pm
Costs: £10 - £30 plus dana
Contact: 01433 631350
rwolton@phonecoop.coop

Last weekend retreats in 2010

Compassion and Insight

John Peacock

Fri 3rd – Sun 5th Dec 2010

Retreat Code: 10165

Cost: £102 (£87) £122

There is a deep relationship between the practices of compassion and insight. Compassion and love, when this is understood, become expressions of deep insight into the nature of life and all its complexities. When compassion and insight come together in this way we begin to “embody” our understanding of the world. This weekend will explore practices that bring about the cultivation of these two essential dimensions of practice.

Lovingkindness Weekend Retreat

Yanai Postelnik and Kirsten Kratz

Fri 10th – Sun 12th Dec 2010

Retreat Code: 10166

Cost: £102 (£87) £122

Learning to live with an open heart is the invitation of lovingkindness meditation, known as Metta in the language of the Buddha. Through this practice we can free our hearts from fear and contraction, open to forgiveness, and connect with a natural caring for ourselves and a boundless love for all beings.

Young Persons' Retreat – The Four Noble Truths (Aged 16 – 25)

Chris Cullen, Caroline Jones & Jake Dartington

Fri 17th – Sun 19th Dec 2010

Retreat Code: 10167

Cost: £28

This retreat welcomes young people to explore meditation and the Buddha's teaching on the four noble truths. Through sitting and walking meditation we will explore how this teaching sheds lights on our own difficulties and opens up the possibility of deep freedom. There will also be opportunities to discuss how to develop spiritual practice in everyday life.

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.

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BRISTOL www.bristolchan.co.uk
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Sabrina Piergrossi 07887 910121

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

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SWINDON hughie@carrollonline.co.uk
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WORCESTERSHIRE

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Sally Dean & Robert Wilkins 01905 352065

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SHEFFIELD rwolton@phonecoop.coop
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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 for more information on how to feature in our bi-annual newsletters.

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GAIA HOUSE
INSIGHT MEDITATION IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION

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