

SOUTHERN INSIGHT

Newsletter of Southern Insight Meditation,
Christchurch, New Zealand

Newsletter 28

Summer 2007/2008

UPCOMING MEDITATION RETREATS 2007/2008

All retreats are suitable for both new and experienced meditators and are accessible to people of any or no religious affiliation. The cost of each retreat covers all food and accommodation. Teachers receive donations.

Dharma Dinner phone Julie 348 1462 or email angulijulie@gmail.com to book before Dec 7th	Sat Dec 8 th , 7pm	\$5
Dharma Gathering (10th Anniversary) with Subhana Barzaghi, Jeremy Logan and Geoff Simpson Registration Closing Date: 4 th January (discount if registered by Dec 1 st)	Fri 11 th -Fri 18 th January 2008	\$280(\$140*) Staveley Camp
Dharma Facilitator's Programme with Subhana Barzaghi Registration Closing Date: 4 th January	Fri 18 th – Sun 20 th January 2008	\$125 Staveley Camp
Awakening the Equanimous Heart with Sharda Rogell A non-residential interactive weekend exploring how we can open our hearts, towards both ourselves and others. The weekend will include periods of formal sitting and walking meditation, guided meditations on equanimity, as well as group discussions about our real life issues.	Fri eve-Sun pm, 14 th -16 th Mar 2008	\$125 (\$65*) Christchurch
Insight and Compassion with Jeremy Logan Through meditation our capacity to be compassionately present for our immediate experience grows. It enables us to be open to, and tenderly hold the most difficult parts of ourselves. It deepens and enriches our experience of life and also results in a spaciousness that enables us to respond creatively in situations we would otherwise react automatically from old conditioned patterns.	Thur 29 th May - Mon 2 nd Jun (Queen's B/day)	\$185 (\$85*) Governor's Bay

*The actual cost of the retreat is the higher figure, however it is possible to pay a subsidised rate anywhere from the actual cost down to the bracketed figure.

The Closing Date for registration is one week before the retreat starts.

IT'S TIME!

Time to plan your summer and get your registration in for the Dharma Gathering! Registration closes on Jan 4th, but if you know you're coming, PLEASE send in your form, it would really help us.

In this newsletter we've included a poster for you to pin up at work, or anywhere else that people might see it, a registration form and a small flyer to put on your fridge or give to a friend. Jeremy Logan writes about why he is looking forward to participating in his first dharma gathering, and we get answers to pertinent questions from people who have been to one.

It's also time to register for the Dharma Facilitator's Programme if you're wanting to participate in that – closing date is also 4th Jan.

An exciting year is planned for 2008 to celebrate our 10th Anniversary, with a visit from Sharda in March, Sutta Study with Shaila and a retreat with Jeremy at Queen's Birthday weekend. Sharda will be offering a non-residential interactive weekend (another first for us) looking at how we can open our hearts when we're with others.

In recognition that our practice is never just for ourselves, this newsletter offers you three opportunities to practice in a way that engages with the world, to take positive action to help people who are suffering, or to help the planet. Please consider writing/clicking/making changes to your daily habits.

A couple of social events are coming up in early December, and we'd love to see you there: a pre-Xmas dinner, and an opportunity to buy ethically sound Xmas presents this year (another manifestation of engaged practice).

We've been busy updating our website, so check it out, and if you live in Christchurch, we'd love to have you along to the meditation group on Wednesday evenings.

Go well, and have a happy summer...

DHARMA GATHERING: CHANGE YOUR MIND WEEK!

Cultivating a Mindful Engagement with Life
*with Subhana Barzaghi (Aus), Jeremy Logan (NZ)
and Geoff Simpson (Aus)*

When: 11-18 Jan 2008

Where: Staveley Campsite, Inland Canterbury

Cost: \$280

Early bird discount: \$250 if you register before 1st Dec 2007

Further subsidy is available down to \$140 for those on low incomes

Closing date: 4 Jan 2008 (not 15 Dec as previously advertised)

How to book: Download a registration form from our website at

<http://southern.insightmeditation.org.nz/RegistrationForm.html> or phone Paul on 03 381 0444 for a paper copy.

Getting there: We may be able to help arrange transport or put you in touch with others in your area so that you can share rides.

Info: Julie 03 389 5969 | angulijulie@gmail.com

DHARMA FACILITATORS PROGRAMME *with Subhana Barzaghi*

When: 18-20 January 2008

Where: Staveley Campsite, Inland Canterbury

Cost: \$125

Closing date: 4 Jan 2008

Booking: download a registration form from our website at

<http://southern.insightmeditation.org.nz/RegistrationForm.html> or phone Paul on 03 381 0444 for a paper copy.

Info: Julie 03 389 5969 | angulijulie@gmail.com

If you've had five years of committed contact with the dharma, you are eligible to join this dharma facilitator's programme. These requirements are flexible, so if you are uncertain please make contact and we can talk about whether it would be suitable for you.

Recent events suggest that a good theme for discussion during this weekend programme might be the issue of burnout. How do we avoid it? What factors encourage involvement and participation of others? Can we both have a vision and be sustainable in the longer term? Burnout is a problem that most of us who like to organise events will run into at some point, so perhaps we could use our collective wisdom to explore it.

The Dharma Gathering – Why?

Maybe you're thinking of joining us but have a few lingering questions. We asked some teachers and organizers of dharma gatherings here and in Australia for their views.

What is the purpose behind having a more integrated retreat setting such as a dharma gathering?

Subhana: A dharma gathering is a different model and way of sharing the dharma to the silent intensive meditation retreat model. A dharma gathering is not conducted in silence, and although it does have some silent meditation, it also includes workshops, discussion forums, dharma talks, open inquiry sessions which provide numerous opportunities for discussing the teachings. Another major benefit of such a gathering is that it cultivates a stronger sense of community and facilitates networking amongst like-minded people. It is also a lot of fun and there are plenty of opportunities to hang out with good friends. The purpose of the gathering is to cultivate a depth of inquiry into the heart of awakening with more emphasis on how these wise and compassionate teachings are integrated into the political, social, cultural and environmental spheres of our daily lives to bring about a culture of awakening for the welfare and benefit of all beings. There is a greater emphasis on engaged Buddhist practice.

Russell: There are three refuges in Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The term refuge can be understood as both being that which supports us living to our full potential in our life and a sanctuary in times of difficulty. The Buddha refers to the potential everyone has to be fully awake to what it means to be human. The Dharma is the teachings and practice which leads to awakening. The Sangha is the community of like-minded people on the path to awakening. Silent retreats emphasize the first two refuges however opportunity to develop the third on a silent retreat is more limited. A dharma gathering emphasizes all three refuges including community. Perhaps it should be called a Sangha Gathering?

What benefits/advantages are there for participants? Is a dharma gathering an appropriate entry point for people new to the practice? Why?

Subhana: The dharma gatherings are beneficial for both experienced practitioners and especially for people relatively new to Buddhist teachings. Experienced practitioners can feel freer to discuss

Upcoming Social Events

Dharma Dinner and Social Evening

Come and find out more about the Dharma Gathering and try out one of the meals we'll be serving! We mentioned really great vegetarian food, so come and check it out for yourself. Actually we're trying out a new recipe, and we need you to taste it! Dinner will be served at 7pm, cost is \$5. Booking is essential so we know how much to make...and please bring whatever you would like to drink.

When: Saturday Dec 8th

Where: 17a Harakeke Street, Riccarton

To book: Call Julie on 348 1462 by Dec 7th

Trade Aid Christmas Garden Fete

Buy beautiful and fair gifts and decorations from the Trade Aid Stall.

Enjoy the garden and native forest restoration project.

Afternoon tea available 2:30-4:30 p.m. \$5 - proceeds to Himalayan nutrition project.

Where: Western Valley Rd, Port Levy (follow the signs from the church corner)

When: Sunday, December 2nd, 2- 5 pm (Rain Day December 9)

More information: Christine 329 4067

and ask questions about practice as the workshops provide lots of stimulating opportunities to share ones experiences. For new students it is a gentle way of entering into the practice and establishing connections. A lot more young people tend to sign up for the dharma gathering as the first port of call before they step into an intensive retreat.

Russell: Participants benefit from the opportunity to integrate mindfulness into interactions with others. Also the opportunity to discuss and inquire into the teachings and the practice with other people in a more informal environment than a silent retreat.

Yes, it is an appropriate entry point for people new to the practice. People will have the opportunity to be exposed to the teachings and the practice without having to adjust to being in silence for the whole retreat. It could be said it is a more relaxed entry point, and allows for more personal connections to be made with other people on the retreat.

What has been the feedback from participants?

Will James (an organiser of the Australian Dharma Gatherings):

The most common feedback I have received about the Dharma Gathering is that it is such a unique event. On the one hand it is a wonderful relaxing holiday as well as encouraging deep inquiry into all areas of life and practice. Issues can be explored and insights shared with others and with this sharing comes a strong sense of sangha and connection. Strong friendships are developed and lots of networking occurs.

This style of practice is interesting in that it has this constant change from silence to speech and from stillness to movement. It has a challenging aspect to it, extending us and encouraging everyone to come forward and contribute to the inquiry. This format is very open to many possibilities of practice; at the Australian Dharma Gathering we have yoga, meditation, workshops, poetry, group art projects, music and performance as well as walks on the beach.

The other area that makes the Dharma Gathering so unique is the possibility of having access to a number of teachers from diverse backgrounds and with differing styles of teaching.

The Dharma Gathering is special in that it touches the stillness through meditation, explores the Dharma through inquiry and celebrates the interconnection of all life.

Meditation Group

An invitation to all of you who have sat a retreat or completed an introductory course to enjoy the wisdom and support of other like-minded people in sitting together and discussing how to live our lives skillfully and in accord with the Dharma.

The sitting group meets every Wednesday evening from 7.30pm to 9.15pm, with a 45 minute sitting followed by a discussion.

The venue is the staffroom of Ferndale School, 104 Merivale Lane. You can park your car or bicycle in the staff car park.

What would the Buddha say if he saw a Dharma Gathering?

Subhana: Holy Cow!... look what's happened to my song Ma! Or maybe he would say, "How wonderful that the dharma is flourishing in the great southern land". Actually, I think the dharma gathering is not unlike the old debating gathering that occurred in the Buddha's time, where teams of monks would gather in the forests or by the rivers and they would then hoist the flag, which was the signal that the debate was now on. These philosophical and spiritual debates, discussions and teachings would sometimes go on for days, if not weeks. It was an important aspect of the monks training and practice to hone their understanding and to deepen their practice in the spirit of inquiry. We are continuing this tradition in a contemporary form...it's that wonderful. I feel we owe a deep bow to Christopher Titmuss, a senior Vipassana teacher, for his creativity in developing the dharma gatherings, which are another innovative way of sharing and exploring the dharma.

Why would I want to go to a dharma gathering - what would I get out of it and how would that be relevant to my daily life? Is it really a good way to spend a week of my holiday?

Russell: A dharma gathering will give the opportunity to practice in an environment that is more similar to daily life than a silent retreat. And the richness which arises out of bringing all three refuges fully into the retreat is not to be missed! It is a very special kind of holiday. I have seen people just as stressed on holiday as at work, basically as the same patterns of thinking are still operating. Meditation gives the opportunity for you to take a break from unhelpful patterns and with insight their grip on the mind can be permanently loosened - with obvious benefits when back in the usual routine.

Why is it an important part of practice to go to dharma gatherings in addition to retreats?

Dermot: The emphasis at a dharma gathering is on being with people rather than just being in your head. Dharma Gatherings can help us to break through the trivial and superficial way we usually communicate with each other and to find a deeper place of connection. Workshops with skilled teachers create a supportive environment in which we can safely explore our needs and anxieties around living (and dying!).

Why would I go on a dharma gathering when I can go on holiday?

Julie: "It IS a holiday! With a really lovely group of people who like talking about the things in life that truly matter."

Russell: "Because on holiday you don't get a break from your mind!"

Rachel: "Because you don't have to cook and you get great food!" (Rachel is a mother of two young children, both of whom are coming on the Dharma Gathering)

Dermot: "You don't have to talk to anyone and no-one will think you're odd!"

An Ancient Dharma Gathering

Funny thing! I'd just read Subhana's comment that the dharma gathering is similar to the old debating gatherings that happened in the Buddha's time, when I read this month's suttas on the theme of community life for the sutta study group. Sutta 32 – The Greater Discourse in Gosinga, depicts just such a gathering.

A group of very senior monks are practicing together in the woods, and meet for a discussion. One of them, Sariputta, poses a question: "The woods tonight are so beautiful, the night is moonlit, the trees are in blossom, heavenly scents are floating on the air. What kind of monk could possibly illuminate this wood?" The monks give their answers, each according to his own personal ideal.

Ananda (the Buddha's attendant), who had a prodigious memory and would regularly repeat for the sangha any discourse given by the Buddha, speaks of a monk who is learned, who has listened to the teachings and investigated them well, and can pass them on to others.

Revata, the most revered meditation monk, speaks of a monk who delights in and is devoted to solitary meditation.

Anuruddha, who possesses special powers, speaks of a monk who has the divine eye and can see a thousand worlds.

Maha Kassapa, who likes to observe ascetic practices, speaks of a monk who has few wishes, arouses energy and has attained liberation from suffering.

Maha Moggallana, who likes to discuss the dharma, speaks of two monks who talk dharma and question each other.

Sariputta himself speaks in praise of wielding mastery over one's mind.

The group goes off to find the Buddha and tell him about their discussion. On hearing their various answers, he says "Good, good! Each of you has answered rightly, as each of you delights in what he has spoken of." The monks then ask the Buddha for his answer to the question, and he responds: "*when a monk has returned from his almsround, after his meal, he sits down, crosses*

Southern Insight Website

As members of the local sangha and steering committee lack skills in such high-tech matters the Southern Insight website has been up til now rather neglected and often out of date – a sorry state of affairs which some of you have pointed out. This has now changed! Lindsay Lyons (bless her) down in the deep south of Waikouaiti has kindly taken on the job of maintaining the website, and it will be regularly updated with upcoming events and information, as well as opportunities for engaged practice – taking action on injustice in the world (there are three opportunities later in this newsletter). So check it out, put it in your bookmarks and pop in to see what's happening!

<http://insight.orcon.net.nz>

his legs, sits upright, and establishing mindfulness, resolves 'I shall not break this sitting position until through not clinging my mind is liberated from the taints.' That kind of monk could illuminate this wood." He underscores the very purpose of our practice.

An ancient dharma gathering discussion group! And the answer to "What would the Buddha say if he saw a Dharma Gathering?" clearly has to be "Good, good!"

Julie

Bringing The Dharma Into Our Life

Many in the West who engage in a spiritual journey, have chosen to do so not as monks and nuns, but this does not mean that we do not aspire to finding ways of living a genuine spiritual life with depth whilst in the midst of daily life, jobs, relationships, families etc.

Yet what we find in the West is that forms, supports that let the spiritual life flourish can be hard to find. The culture that surrounds most of us is a culture against awakening, against developing mindfulness, in many ways it is a culture of distraction, a culture where rather than face our lives fully, we are encouraged to shop, to take a pill, to distract ourselves in busyness and superficiality.

One of the main supports for people wanting to deepen in their spiritual practice has been the silent, intensive meditation retreat. The opportunity to attend retreats on a regular basis for many of us

Who are the teachers?

Subhana Barzagli has practised meditation for over 20 years, is an acknowledged teacher in both the Insight Meditation and Zen Buddhist traditions. She teaches seven-day intensive retreats in India, Australia and New Zealand. In 1996 Subhana became the first Australian Zen Roshi and is the spiritual director of the Sydney and Melbourne Zen centres. She is also the founder of the Kwan Yin Zen Centre in Lismore. Subhana is the mother of two children and works as a counsellor and psychotherapist in Sydney.

Jeremy Logan has been involved in insight meditation for the last twenty-three years, spending several years in the east and in Europe learning and practicing meditation. He has been teaching retreats since 1991 in New Zealand and has taught in India. He lives in the Wairarapa, working as a counsellor and facilitating Stopping Violence programmes for men.

Geoff Simpson grew up in Christchurch. He now lives in Australia where his spiritual practice includes working in mental health and sharing dharma teachings. He has been practicing meditation since the late 80s and has helped lead dharma gatherings in Australia and India. A trained physiotherapist and Chinese acupuncturist, Geoff is currently in the final stages of becoming a psychiatrist.

has been incredibly valuable, giving time for slowing down, developing mindfulness, deepening our sensitivity and connection to and with ourselves, others and our environment, listening to teachings and giving time for inquiry and reflection on life.

For many the challenge has been in integrating the new understandings, depth of awareness and openness that is possible on retreat, into our daily lives in a genuine and liberating way.

In recent years new forms have been developing to support this integration. One particular form has been the dharma gathering, where times for meditation and silence are balanced with times for communicating, interpersonal relationships, family life, the studying and discussion of teachings, exploring creativity and friendship in a supportive community environment.

The matter of exploring spirituality in ways other than through silent meditation is of particular interest to me. I am interested in particular how we might bring the same awareness, presence and inquiry that is nurtured in meditation into our interpersonal relationships, in a way that may

support and strengthen our openness, our authenticity, our spiritual understandings and inquiry, the momentum for liberation.

In an environment that nurtures awareness and inquiry both through meditation and connection with others we may find ourselves exploring patterns, judgements, defences, helpful and unhelpful ways of relating that are not so easily seen or explored in intensive silent meditation retreats. Not only as a way to bring understanding of ourselves, but also to expand our connection to and understanding of others. Our work is that of deepening into our nature, ground of being and bringing that into relationship.

Genuine spiritual practice is never about fixing ourselves, because we're not broken. It's about becoming awake to who we really are, to the vastness of our true nature. As practitioners we learn to honestly and relentlessly observe our thoughts, emotional reactions, strategies and fears increasingly in a space of a non-conceptual silence, or knowing of reality as it is. With intensive meditation practice this becomes more and more possible or available to us, the challenge I believe is how we might bring this exploration into our interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal exploration has been an invaluable support in my own life and I am genuinely excited at the prospect of seeing how we may explore this further, amongst many other things, on a Dharma Gathering. I have not attended a Dharma gathering before so I look forward to participating in the gathering not only as a teacher but also as a participant interested in exploring the dharma, the truth in a wider context to see what might or might not emerge for each of us.

Jeremy Logan

Three Perspectives On The Dharma Gathering

A couple of years ago I attended a dharma gathering in Sarnath, India. There was a focus on meditation but less than on a retreat: the emphasis was much more on inquiry and discussion and one-to-one talks with the teachers. A core focus seemed to be quite intense inquiry into a wide range of topics. Some of the best inquiries happened when people opened up and talked about what was happening for them and the teacher led them deeper and deeper into their question.

There was a tangible atmosphere of sacred space – a space where openness and non-judgemental awareness were supported. A space of respect, of acceptance of each other, and much less of the

competitive relating that people generally engage in. The dharma underpinned everything: it all came back to the Buddha's central question of 'Is this it?' 'Is this all there is?' 'What is this?' This is what a dharma gathering is about – to open up to this question and to share that inquiry with others.
Dermot Sallis

Just as each of us has our own path in the dharma, so too do different teachers have their own individual ways of embodying and expounding the teachings. The Dharma Gathering format, with its interactive workshops offered by a variety of teachers, coupled with formal meditation instruction and practice, dharma talks and the opportunity to interact socially with fellow students of the way offers wonderful opportunities to forge and strengthen sangha connections and to open fresh perspectives on our own relationship to practice.

Sexton Bourke, member of the Insight Teachers' Circle of Australia

I haven't been on a dharma gathering but I have spent time at a retreat centre in England which I was helping to renovate. This provided an opportunity for formal sitting periods but also time to talk with others who were also inquiring into their experience, and seeking clarity, wisdom and open heartedness. I had many valuable discussions, hearing about others' insights, being able to talk about "mine" and exploring areas of the insight teachings and how they are relevant in our lives. I also remember a lot of humour in discovering the commonality of many of our experiences and thought patterns. I savoured the warm connections I made with others. I was also surprised at the insights that occurred during this period and there seemed to be something quite potent about the combination of sitting, mindful communication, listening and inquiry.

After this time at the retreat centre I felt energised, happy and spacious and noticed how several habits of behaviour had loosened or dropped away. I also noticed a shift in taking myself a little less seriously.

I am therefore thoroughly looking forward to this dharma gathering when I don't even need to be renovating (except inwardly!) but can just enjoy the flow of inner and outer, enjoy the wisdom and offerings of the teachers and other participants and to meet old and make new friends.... And of course all the good things about normal retreats of yummy food, no need to make plans, the beautiful forest, mountains and walks at Staveley and no deadlines!

Di Robertson

Coming Up Later In 2008:

AWAKENING THE EQUANIMOUS HEART

*A Non-Residential Weekend with Sharda Rogell
March 14th – 16th*

Each one of us wants a heart and mind that is balanced and spacious, and not reactive to the way things are. We would like to have more composure in our lives. Yet, we find ourselves oversensitive or closed even when we want to be otherwise. Opening our heart in a caring and balanced way, both towards ourselves and others depends on recognizing the difficult patterns that block this pure expression of our heart. With Sharda's engaging and interactive teaching style, we will ask the question, "How can I bring a more caring and equanimous response to myself and others?" The weekend will include periods of formal sitting and walking meditation, guided meditations on equanimity, as well as group discussions about our real life issues. There will also be some time for interactive inquiry practice with one or two other people. This weekend is for both new and experienced meditators.

SHARDA ROGELL is a member of the teacher council at Spirit Rock Meditation Centre in northern California near her home. She began meditating in 1976 and teaching Insight Meditation in 1986. She has also been influenced by the non-dual teachings of both Dzogchen in the Tibetan tradition and HWL Poonja during her many trips to India. She is currently a student of the Diamond Approach with A. H. Almaas.

SUTTA STUDY: PART TWO OF THE MAJJHIMA NIKAYA

Shaila has put together a course covering the second fifty suttas of the Majjhima Nikaya, to be read over a seven month period. If you would like to join a study group to read through these with Shaila's guidance, please contact Julie on 348 1462.

Shaila Catherine has been practicing meditation since 1980, with seven years of accumulated silent retreat experience. She has been teaching since 1996, in the USA, India, Israel, and England. Shaila studied at the Sharpham College for Buddhist Studies in England, and dedicated several years to studying with masters in Asia, including Poonjaji, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche and Tulku Urgyen Rinoche. She completed a one year intensive meditation retreat in 2004 with the focus on concentration and jhana.

What Would The Buddha Do?

Carrying Our Practice Into Acting For Change In The World

1. QUESTIONING THE MAITREYA PROJECT

Some of you who have been to Bodhgaya (India) might know of the struggle to protect the character of the place and the land of the residents by stopping the huge (500 foot tall) Maitreya Buddha statue from being built. That struggle had a good outcome and the project was abandoned. But it seems that the problem has just moved to another place, as the article below (excerpted) by Jessica Falcone explains:

“At the crossroads, an old, thick tree shades a small temple to the mother goddess, but Anirudhwa village bakes in the heat of the midday sun. We are surrounded on all sides by land under cultivation. It is green-green here - the bright verdant hue of crops in full bloom. Most of the villagers are out in the fields, but we meet a few people willing to sit and talk. They are unanimous - although farming life is hard, it's the only work they know, and without their lands they will have nothing.

What Are You Saving Yourself For?

Are you really in your hands, or do you move them from a distance? Are you present in your cells, inhabiting and filling your body? If you aren't in your body, what significance is there in your experience this moment? Are you preparing, so that you can be here in the future? Are you setting up conditions by saying to yourself, “When such and such happens I'll have time, I'll be here”? If you are not here, what are you saving yourself for?

Regardless of the stories you tell yourself, at this moment, this very moment, there is only this moment, here, now. Nothing else exists. For your direct experience, only the here and now is relevant. Only now is real. And it is always like that. At each moment, only that moment exists. So we need to ask why we put ourselves on hold, waiting for the right time, waiting for the right circumstances to rise in the future. Maybe the right time will never come. Maybe the conditions you have in mind will never come together for you. When will you begin to exist then? When will you begin to be here, to live? Regardless of the ideas about past and future that dominate your experience, right at this moment only this moment exists, and only this moment has any significance for you...

A H Almaas

“A woman in a saffron-colored cotton sari points to the southeast, and angrily tells me that the 500-foot tall statue of the Maitreya Buddha will go up somewhere over there. It will tower over the distant treetops, and cast its long shadow over these acres. But the people will be long gone - forced off their ancestral plots by the government on behalf of the Maitreya Buddha Statue Project.

“The Uttar Pradesh state government has offered to lease the Maitreya Project an expansive tract of land (660 acres) on which to build their giant statue. However, the tract of land isn't owned by the state government; it's owned by small local farmers. The Land Acquisition Act (LAA), an antiquated law first enacted by the British Empire in order to acquire farmland for the railway, allows the government to buy the land. Villagers from seven villages stand to lose some or all their farmland, and many will lose their homes as well. They've been told they will be "rehabilitated," but state officials have no plan yet to resettle them elsewhere. A government Land Acquisition Officer said that instead of being resettled, they will be given a cheque to compensate them and will have to find someplace else to move, whether they agree to the terms or not. The government officials are crystal clear: if the farmers refuse to budge, then police will be mobilized to clear the land. In their reliance upon the Land Acquisition Act, the Maitreya Project may be on the right side of the law, but they are on the wrong side of morality.

“The state government is offering farmers compensation at various rates, but from the farmers' perspective most of the land is being taken at around 10% of current market value. Kushinagaris wonder why the Maitreya Project isn't meeting with the farmers, working with them, negotiating with them privately for the land. Why is the Maitreya Project allowing the state government to forcibly acquire the land from poor farmers, when state officials are so often corrupt? The farmers want to know, why is so much fertile land being acquired from the poor? Why not take infertile land nearby? Why not take land from the rich instead? *Why haven't actual representatives from the Maitreya Project ever come to meet them?* Why are they now demanding several hundred acres when they originally said they only needed 35-40 when the project was to be in Bodhgaya?

“Village leaders of the farmers' organization, which is roughly translated as the "Save the Land Association," say that *the Buddha himself wouldn't want the statue to come at the cost of so much suffering.* The Save the Land Association is in trouble. The end game is approaching. The bureaucrats' paper pushing and the legal work, is nearly done, and at some point soon the police will be sent in to take the land from these many thousands of people. On 16 June 2007, many of the farmers restarted a united multi-village hunger strike.

As of September this year, the Maitreya Project has never, not once, met with the local people. To my knowledge this has not happened since.”

The Maitreya Project is the brainchild of a Buddhist organisation, the FPMT (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) and Lama Zopa Rinpoche of Kopan Monastery, just outside Kathmandu. They say it is not true that compensation is only 10% of market value, and that this perception is the result of a misunderstanding about the two-stage nature of the compensation payment. They imply that under Indian law they are not allowed to buy such a large piece of land and therefore have to lease it under the LAA. They say they chose this particular piece of land because it was largely unoccupied (but they agree it has seven villages on it) and not terribly fertile. They assert that most of the farmers concerned are happy with the compensation offered (even though they haven't met them and some have been hunger-striking). They say they will not accept the lease of the land until the farmers have been adequately compensated and relocated.

Certainly it seems some communication is needed between the Project and the local people. The farmers need to know exactly how much they are being offered, and what relocation help will be given, and they need to be given the chance to say 'no' and keep their land if they wish to. The Maitreya Project is quite capable of building the various clinics etc around them.

We in the world's Buddhist communities urgently need to send a clear message to the Maitreya Project that the way they have been going about things is not okay.

If you want to read more, go to www.wildriverreview.com/airmail_india.php and the Project website www.maitreyaproject.org

Please write a letter to the Maitreya Project at one of the addresses below. Call on them to meet with the farmers and satisfactorily answer their questions, including telling them what the full price offered will be in each case. Ask them to ensure the farmers who wish to move are compensated fairly and equitably, and adequately assisted in their relocation to similarly fertile land, and ask them to agree that no-one will be moved against their will. Let them know that even one person forcibly displaced or improperly compensated is unacceptable.

Peter Kedge : pkedge@maitreyaproject.org

**Tony Simmons : tsimmons@maitreyaproject.org
Lama Zopa : rkunsang@earthlink.net**

Maitreya Project Trust

Kanta House
Cinema Road
Gorakhpur 237 001
Uttar Pradesh, India

Maitreya Project International

3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton
Victoria 3187
Australia

Maitreya Project International

5800 Prescott Road
Soquel CA 95073
USA

Maitreya Project International

9 rue Mathelin Rodier
44 000 Nantes
France

The only way to achieve maximum openness is to arrive at every moment without a single preconception. Otherwise, we resist what doesn't fit our model. Regardless of how much we know, or how evolved we've become, we must put every bit of that aside. We must step into the mystery naked and undefended.

When we truly hate what's happening, our instinct is to flee from it like a house on fire. But if we can learn to turn around and enter that fire, to let it burn all our resistance away, then we find ourselves arising from the ashes with a new sense of power and freedom.

Sometimes, without any answers to hold onto, it seems like we're nothing at all. Other times, overwhelmed by life's roaring torrent, it seems like we're everything at once. These two impressions are actually flipsides of the same coin. They're a taste of what happens when the barriers to our personality become porous. We encounter life directly, without anything to mediate its intensity. We see clearly, in those moments, how the self we carry with us is no more or less than a tool of our organism, a system that allows us to function, but that also, miraculously, we have the ability to step right through.

Raphael Cushnir

2. THE BREAST CANCER WEBSITE

Some of you will be familiar with the Breast Cancer site, where a simple daily click is all it takes for someone to be given a free mammogram. The site is having trouble getting enough people to click to meet their quota of donating at least one free mammogram a day to an underprivileged woman. It takes less than a minute to go to their site and click on "donating a mammogram" (pink window in the middle), and doing it doesn't cost you a thing. The corporate sponsors/advertisers use the number of daily visits to donate mammograms in exchange for advertising – a very cool idea.

Please pass the web address along to people you know, as this is a very worthy cause and a small thing we can all do:

<http://www.thebreastcancersite.com/>

The same group runs similar websites to save the rainforest, and donate food to the hungry – there are links from the Breast Cancer Site to these – please have a look and start clicking!

3. 10 EXPRESSIONS OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Try these at home:

1. Use compact fluorescent light-bulbs.
2. If you're the last one to leave a room, turn out the lights.
3. Opt to walk, bike or take public transport before getting in your car.
4. If you see a faucet dripping, turn it off completely.
5. Put on another layer before turning on/up the heater.
6. Use your own towel instead of paper towels to dry your hands.
7. Invest in a few soft hankies that you wash and re-use instead of Kleenex
8. Stop and think about how much toilet paper you need.
9. Don't let the water run needlessly when you're brushing your teeth.
10. Believe that your personal choices and actions make a difference.

Hair-Braiding Meditation

Polly Trout

May I be filled with loving-kindness. May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease. May I be happy.

May my daughter, who wants a billion tiny little braids this morning, be filled with loving-kindness. May she be well. May she be peaceful and at ease going to school with a billion tiny little braids.

May her best friend, who got a billion tiny little braids put in her hair at Club Med Ixtapa last week, be filled with loving-kindness. Also her mother, may she be peaceful and at ease. And the woman the mother hired to do all that corn-rowing, may she be well. May she be happy.

May I be filled with loving-kindness as I put in these billion tiny little braids.

May I be peaceful and transcend greed. Also, may I go to Club Med Ixtapa next season, when the beach will be even more inspiring due to my newly enlightened and greed-free state. May I be happy.

May my co-workers be filled with loving-kindness as they wonder why I am late for work as I make these billion tiny braids. May they be peaceful and at ease.

May my daughter not notice that these braids are not nearly as cute as her friend's braids that got done professionally in Ixtapa, or if she does notice, may she be peaceful and at ease about that, please for God's sake.

May my toddler, currently trying to vie for my attention as I make these tiny braids for her big sister, be filled with loving-kindness. May she be peaceful and at ease.

May my mother, who did this for me when I was five, be filled with loving-kindness. May she be peaceful and at ease. I wonder why I never thanked her for that.

May I remember this day, sitting with my daughter, braiding her hair, late for work again, peaceful and at ease, happy.

Thanks to Marina Manning for sending this in.



Receiving our newsletter

If you did not receive this newsletter by mail and would like to be on our mailing list, please phone Dermot on 381 4617. Any donation towards the cost would be appreciated.

If you would like to receive this newsletter and retreat information electronically just contact us at

southern.insight.meditation@xtra.co.nz

Write 'SUBSCRIBER' in the subject box.

Useful phone numbers:

If you would like to ask about our retreats, sitting days, or would like some general information about the group and insight meditation (including lots of opportunities to help with our work) the following are phone numbers from the Steering group – all of whom would be happy to talk with you:

Di	332 8724
Meg	328 8052
Julie	348 1462
Russell	388 8951
Dermot	381 4617
Rachel	379 2548

Booking procedures

Please phone **Paul** on **381 0444** for a retreat registration form. The completed form and a deposit of \$50.00 should be sent to **6 Trent St, Christchurch**. Please make cheques payable to **Southern Insight Meditation**. Stamped addressed envelopes are appreciated when booking. Further information will be sent to you on receipt of your deposit.

Refunds of deposits

The deposit for retreats is refundable up to the closing date of the retreat booked, less a \$5.00 charge for administration costs. Deposits cannot be refunded after the retreat closing date, and the money will be put into the Top-Up Fund.

Top Up Fund

The top-up fund is for those who are unable to afford the cost of a retreat. Southern Insight aims to make retreats as accessible as possible to all, consequently it is possible to pay less than the lower amount in the sliding scale for a retreat. We encourage people to make use of this fund, which thanks to the generosity of others who attend our retreats, is currently in a healthy state.

Contact Addresses for Southern Insight

E-mail: southern.insight.meditation@xtra.co.nz

Post: 16 Ward Street, Christchurch

Website:

<http://southern.insightmeditation.org.nz>

Insight Aotearoa

Insight Aotearoa is an e-newsletter for New Zealand's insight meditation practitioners and communities. Posted monthly, it includes articles by and interviews with dharma teachers from around the world as well as a comprehensive listing of events in the insight meditation network across New Zealand. To subscribe (free) visit:

newsletter@insightaotearoa.org

or write to PO Box 6626, Wellington 6041, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Meditation Group at Diamond Harbour

When: Tuesdays 7.30pm

Phone or email for directions:

Christine 03 329 4067

christine.dann@clear.net.nz

Wednesday Evening Dharma Talks

Every third Wednesday of the month teachings are offered on the practice of insight meditation. These are held at Ferndale school, 104 Merivale Lane, off Papanui Road). The evening, which includes a guided meditation, starts at 7.30pm and runs until 9.15pm. All are welcome.

Donations are collected for the teacher and the hire of the room.