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Programme



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Views Matter

Every one of us, you, me and all the others, holds a view. More correctly, we hold onto a whole web of views. Though unable to see them, so deep and instinctive are they that they inform how we act, think and live. Views are how we organize and interpret experience, how we 'stand back' and think about it. Views are both individual (this is me, I am this sort of person) and collective (this is our country, this is our tradition, this is what we stand for). These patterns express themselves in what we do individually – our-day-to-day actions – and manifest collectively as social structures, groupings and beliefs. What in Buddhism are known as 'wrong' or unwise views, are based on selective interpretations of experience and tend to serve our best interest over and above the interest of others (those who hold different views). These views lead straight to suffering.

The writers in this second edition of *The London Buddhist* are exploring views. Manjusiha calls into question the prevalent views of neoliberalism and points out their consequences: gross inequality, segregation, caste and class. What, he asks, is our response to the increasingly divided society in which we live? Do the views that we hold on to blind us to the social effects of greed?

Indeed, even the commonly held view that anything we can't see is a fiction, and was created by humans for a strictly utilitarian purpose, is challenged by Ollie Brock in the book review.

Continuing with literature, Maitreyaraja takes a close look at Maitreyabandhu's bookshelf. Together they explore how reading can broaden one's views as well as bring much pleasure and meaning.

Echoing this, Vishvantara considers the sublimating power of music. If the spiritual life is one ultimately not attached to any view or ideology, can music be a way of communicating this?

The bottom line, of course, is that one needs to affect skilfully the course of one's life in order to live with views that are increasingly helpful. Kusalasara shows how this can spring from a moment of beauty.

This radical way of living, as exemplified by the Buddha, is not a life passively lived within the views of society (consumerism, nationalism, liberalism, racism, sexism etc.) but by wise views that are actively beneficial for self and other, resulting in ways of living that serve the highest and greatest possible good. As we continue to publish our new magazine, I hope it is an aid to a greater awareness of this ideal.

– Vidyadaka

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Neoliberalism as the Religion of the Economic Elite

Examining parallel examples of segregation and inequality, *Manjusihā* explores the possibility of a spiritual revolution

One of the first things we had to do, when we organised our Tower Hamlets mayoral debate last year at the LBC, was decide who to invite. It might seem straightforward: just invite the candidates and be done. But there were ten of them (all men). This was the first time we had organized such an event and we wanted to make it manageable. There were also concerns about what we would be bringing into our shrine room. In a Panorama programme aired just before the election, BBC reporter John Ware said that with ‘a long history of bare-knuckle politics,’ Tower Hamlets may well be the most political borough in Britain. He added: ‘Those who have done twelve rounds here tell me it’s rarely been more brutal than it is today.’

We decided, in the end, to invite just the candidates from the main parties. The questions then became, ‘Who are the main parties?’ and, ‘Is UKIP one of them?’ David Cameron once described the party as ‘mostly a bunch of fruitcakes and loonies and closet racists’. Yet the answer to the second question seems obvious in retrospect, given how far UKIP has come. Now, following success in the European elections and with representation in Parliament, UKIP leader Nigel Farage’s claim that his party could find itself holding the balance of power in May is quite plausible.

The rise of UKIP, together with the fallout from the Scottish referendum, means that independence will be a major theme in the coming general election. Another big theme, made most visible by the Occupy movement and receiving ever more academic and political scrutiny, is inequality. An Oxfam report from two years ago found that, by January 2013, the richest eighty-five people in the world had as much wealth (\$1.7 trillion) as the poorest half of the world’s population (3.5 billion people). These are incendiary statistics, and they are only getting worse. Danny Dorling, a Professor of Geography at Oxford University, notes in his book *Inequality and the 1%* that by March 2014 ‘just the 67 richest ... held as much wealth as the poorest half of all humanity.’ It is not hard to see why a growing number of people, including Dorling, recognize ‘growing income and wealth inequality ... as the greatest social threat of our times.’

London displays a concentrated version of this global trend. The capital has become home to more of the super-rich than any other city on the planet, according to Dorling, yet it also has ‘the highest proportion of poor households to be found in any region of the UK.’ According to the *Financial Times* the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, where the LBC is based – to focus in a little further – is the third most deprived in the country, while having the second



Dr. Ambedkar submitting the first draft of the Indian constitution to Dr. Rajendra Prasad in February 1948

highest average yearly salary. In other words, it is one of the most unequal boroughs in the UK, which would go a long way to explaining why it is also one of the most political.

How, as Buddhists, should we engage with these issues – and with the often rancorous political discourse that surrounds them? We have, I believe, an invaluable guide in Bhimrao Ambedkar, the Indian social and spiritual revolutionary, who converted to Buddhism at the end of his life. Coming from the bottom of the heap of the Indian social hierarchy, from a so-called ‘Untouchable’ community, it is unsurprising that Ambedkar fought against inequality. He described the Indian society of his time in a chilling metaphor – as ‘a multi-storeyed tower with no staircase and no entrance. Everybody had to die in the storey they were born in.’¹ He also has much to tell us about independence and nation-building: he was

the architect, in the wake of independence from Britain, of the constitution of India, the world’s largest democracy. What can he teach us, as we approach perhaps one of the most important general elections in a generation? In his book *The Untouchables* Ambedkar tells us that ‘Hindu society insists on segregation.’ The caste Hindu would not live in the quarters of the Untouchables and would not allow Untouchables to live inside Hindu quarters. This ‘fundamental feature of Untouchability as it is practised by the Hindus’ is not a temporary suspension of social interaction – it is ‘a case of territorial segregation and of a cordon sanitaire putting the impure people inside a barbed wire, into a sort of cage.’ Ambedkar was speaking out against a ghettoization that continues in many parts of India to this day.

Closer to home – looking at a housing crisis in London that has been brewing for thirty years

– is the increasing economic stratification we are seeing effectively causing social cleansing in our borough? It is often through housing and the taxation related to it that the poorest are punished, according to Dorling. And ‘today it is easy for right-wing councillors to suggest that there should be no council housing in inner London boroughs [i.e. including Tower Hamlets], that only the rich “deserve” to live there, and that the poor should travel in the morning from far away to service the rich, clean the streets, work as security guards and staff the shops.’ An episode of Channel 4’s *How to Get a Council House* that was aired just before our mayoral debate showed that this is happening on the ground. Set in Tower Hamlets, and centred on the council’s housing office diagonally opposite the LBC on Roman Road, it showed council officers remarking: ‘Nobody who is benefit-dependent, and not in a permanent property, will be able to live in Tower Hamlets, and this is going to happen in the next six to twelve months ... The heart’s going to be ripped out of the borough, with a lot of people who closely identify with Tower Hamlets being forced to move way out of the area.’ Are we moving, then, to ghettoization – to having a servile, poor majority living on the periphery and serving a privileged interior?

The housing situation was paralleled in the world of work. The Untouchables were forced to do the dirtiest, most demeaning tasks whilst living outside the village in a condition of economic and political slavery. ‘The only reason they were not actually bought and sold in the market place,’ according to Sangharakshita, was that they were, in effect, public property – ‘meaning that the Caste Hindus could do with them as they pleased.’ Our employment prospects are surely quite different to this. Talk to many UK residents under twenty-five, however, and you may start to see similarities. A fifth of under twenty-fives were out of work at the start of 2014, according to Dorling. Of the remainder

who were employed, ‘most were working part-time or on zero-hours contracts, or were on probation, or otherwise without any security. Many were working for free as interns, under the guise of training or “work experience”.’ Wouldn’t these people be paid, he asks, if our economic system were working well? Forcing people to work for free through schemes such as the euphemistically titled ‘Help to Work’ ‘puts the UK in danger of breaking international laws on slavery’. Ambedkar has said that slavery is not merely a legalized form of subjection; it is a state of society in which some are forced by others to accept ‘the purposes which control their conduct’. This, he says, is a condition that ‘obtains even where there is no slavery in the legal sense.’

Then there is education. The Untouchables were not allowed into the Hindu schools, ‘which in any case were in effect Brahmin schools, being run by Brahmins – who were the learned class – mainly for the benefit of Brahmins.’ Sangharakshita goes on to say that the main reasons the Untouchables were barred was because contact with them was seen as polluting and because what was taught was not for their ears. These are very different to the reasons for the extreme polarization we see in our own education system, where children are more segregated than in almost any other comparable country. But could it be producing similar outcomes? Almost all of the UK’s richest one per cent are privately educated. This ‘creates an elite that often has little respect for the majority of the population [and] thinks that it should earn extraordinarily more than everyone else.’ Yet countries committed to high-quality comprehensive schools tend to top the international education tables.

What underpins and perpetuates this segregation and inequality? The subjugation of the Untouchables was sanctioned by the Hindu scriptures. The equivalent, in our

materialist, consumer society, is neoliberalism. Core doctrines of this religion tell us that welfare and state intervention are counterproductive. That a well-functioning market is all that’s required to protect the weak. That privatization and the corporates are to be followed in all things. And that the measure of the worth of all things is economic, rather than whether something is right, beneficial or humane. Who are the promoters and protectors of this modern-day doctrine? The Brahmins of neoliberalism are, in a word, the establishment, which Owen Jones, in his book *The Establishment*, characterises as being organized around ideology rather than around class or caste. Neoliberalism is a faith that serves the interests of its most ardent devotees because it allows them to milk the state for their own benefit and protection rather than for the common good. The rise of UKIP and other anti-establishment groups across the western world is, in this analysis, no surprise.

Given the gulf in wealth between the UK and India and the centuries of oppression experienced by the Untouchables – now referred to as the Dalit community, ‘the downtrodden’ – these comparisons might seem stretched. At the same time, deeply stratified societies are bound to feel strong resonances with each other. And if the comparisons are valid – if Ambedkar’s tower is an apt image for the economic, political and social stratification we have seen developing in many western and westernizing economies in the last thirty years – what is our equivalent Ambedkarite revolution? His solution was, in effect, to leave the oppressive social system that he had been born into, by becoming a Buddhist along with nearly half a million of his followers. ‘It is hardly surprising’, as Sangharakshita puts it, ‘that on the occasion of his conversion ... Ambedkar should have felt as though he had been delivered from hell’. On the momentous day, Ambedkar said: ‘I renounce Hinduism which is harmful for humanity, and the advancement and benefit of humanity, because

it is based on inequality, and adopt Buddhism as my religion.’ Having enshrined equality into the constitution, having fought politically in support of human potential, he took his final, decisive step, and left the social system altogether.

What is our equivalent of this peaceful revolution? Boycotting the polls altogether and participating in a programme of mass civil disobedience, as advocated by Russell Brand? Or perhaps Ambedkar would encourage us instead to agitate for a written constitution in the UK, and for reform of our wider, European, community. To enshrine in law the values that we, as Buddhists, see embodied in every human’s highest potential: courage and connection instead of fear and fragmentation in the face of a more interconnected, globalizing world; radical self-responsibility and moral leadership instead of blaming others – the poor, immigrants ... even the superrich, the establishment – for the problems in our society; truth rather than superficiality, spin and the cult of personality; growth in general wellbeing instead of in GDP and inequality.

I think Ambedkar would tell us, in our own situation here in twenty-first century London, that we can use the ‘tools’ we are given at the Buddhist Centre in whatever way we like. That we will, with application, experience some success. He would tell us that these tools only really work, though, if we apply them to a much larger organism – a divided society – that is also of our own, collective, making, and to look beyond that, in turn, towards self-transcendence.

1. Quoted by Arundhati Roy in her introduction to a new critical edition of Ambedkar’s *Annihilation of Caste* (Verso Books, 2014)

The shrine room that was

The straw-bale shrine room at Vajrasana was always intended to be a temporary structure. After twelve years of service it is now making way for the new purpose-built retreat centre.



The Hum of Truth

What else is to be discovered from the world? And why did this search culminate for *Kusalasara*, in joining a Buddhist Order in the Spanish mountains?

I've had a book on ancient Mexican art for many years. In it there's a photograph of a parrot carved from stone that amazes me whenever I look at it. The parrot is all head and is highly abstracted. It's pretty much cuboid and of a memorable and striking design, with clear contours and fine carving. I could never have come to thinking of a parrot like this: it's so different from the shape of my own concept of a parrot. And yet I understand it. I relish the combination of surprise and understanding, that moment of something new and beautiful entering into my consciousness and of my consciousness responding, accommodating this new way of seeing parrots, or this new way of seeing stone. If a person, or better to say a culture, can come to create something so beautiful and so far away from my own language, and I can receive it, what else is there to be discovered from the world? This kind of encounter assails the complacency I have about my own life and views. There have been many such encounters: other people's heroism and ordinary kindnesses; someone forgiving where I cannot.

I was ordained into the Triratna Buddhist Order last summer. This involved considerable preparation over some years – a training in love and friendship (a training which is by no means over). It culminated in a three-month

retreat in the Spanish mountains and the public ordination ceremony in which my new name was announced.

I came into contact with Buddhism through my family and have been lucky to have it present in my life from a young age. It has been something, like the parrot, that shows me at once my own limits and my own limitlessness. It gives me a way to respond with discernment to the beguiling charade that is the world around me, with all its greed and violence – to see what is of value and what is not, without having to rely completely on the untrustworthy guide that is my own mind (with all *its* greed and violence). When I'm in touch with what the Buddha taught, I feel a kind of hum of truth which I want to commit to as fully as I can. Joining an order is a way to clarify and celebrate my values, to be among others who are living them out and to contribute to something important. It is something to live up to and a challenge; to need less for myself and be more useful to others. The more I am able to live from Buddhist values, the more radical my life becomes. I'm thirty four now and I hope that the older I get, the more radical I'll become.

Marvelling and Weeping

Vishvantara looks ahead to the Southbank Centre's Bach Weekend in March – and back to her own discoveries of some of the music that has been most important to her

In the music room, a Dansette Monarch took pride of place – over which Miss Brown, silent as was her preference, ritually divested an LP of its cover and inside sleeve, and prepared the machine. Crackles ensued. The orchestral opening, the energetic build-up of the long slow introduction, presented a clue to the vigour and joy that were soon so momentarily to arrive. This culminated in a playful, teasing octave exchange before the wild and ecstatic theme of the first movement of Beethoven's 7th Symphony unleashed itself into the unsuspecting classroom.. All the cells in my body vibrated as I listened. Where I had to sit completely still, they danced.

When the bell rang I ran out of the school gates and onto Marlow Hill, a half-mile-long descent. I skipped vertiginously down this for ten minutes, pigtails and satchel bumping, nothing but the symphony in my head. On a YouTube recording of the piece one user has commented, 'I am sure this music has the power to make people feel and behave better. It should be compulsory to listen.' I think Miss Brown would have agreed.

After suffering a serious illness he believed might have been fatal, Beethoven gave the slow movement of his Quartet in A minor (op 132) the title 'Hymn of Thanksgiving

of a Convalescent to the Deity'. T S Eliot describes the effect of such music as 'the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering'. I first experienced something of its profundity at university, at a tutorial with the late, great, Derrick Puffett. I'd finished reading out my apology for an essay on Italian Opera; on which Derrick made no comment. In silence he wheeled himself over to the record player and extracted a record to play. He let fall the needle on to the vinyl. Then in silence he wheeled his wheelchair round to face the window, his back towards me. There emerged such music! A language I had never heard or conceived of filled the room. It was eternal – it did not come dressed in the garments of a particular time-period.

When it finished, the needle did not lift automatically but stayed put, repeating its hypnotic jerk between the paper centre and the end of the recording. Derrick remained looking out at the summer roses, still without speaking. I crept over to the record player and managed to decipher the label's spinning revelation. From there I tiptoed to the door, made my way to the music library, and borrowed recordings of all the Beethoven late quartets I could. I shut myself up in my college room with the recordings and scores, marvelling and weeping.



When, at 28, I discovered Buddhist meditation, I fell in love with it for many of the same reasons I had fallen in love with Beethoven, Handel and Bach. Bach – what can I possibly say about him? His music has fuelled much of my wonder at the world. It has been compared to great architecture, such as the great cathedrals. Or you could compare the intricacy, the power and the dramaturgy of his harmonic language to Shakespeare’s use of the English language. His music is the apotheosis of the Baroque period, a period in which music used the contrapuntal method of composition. You could think of this as being like a conversation between true individuals, all speaking their overlapping versions of the truth in harmony with each other – as opposed to the image of a solo singer with band and backing vocals supporting them.

Bach was born in Eisenach in Germany in 1685. For the last twenty-seven years of his life held the post of Music Director at the principal churches in Leipzig. He died in 1750. He married twice – his first young wife dying in 1720 after bearing seven children, four of whom survived into adulthood. The following year Bach met and married a gifted young soprano seventeen years his junior – Anna Magdalena Wilcke – and they had thirteen more children, six of whom survived. Thus of the twenty children Bach fathered, only ten survived.

Bach must have felt these deaths – his first wife, and his children – deeply, and surely all the more because both of his own parents had died before he was ten. There is a beautiful thesis by the German musicologist Helga Thoene which holds that because Bach was away from home when his beloved first wife died, and because when he returned home she had already been buried, the pieces he wrote immediately after this event were encoded – filled with references to Chorales (Lutheran hymns) that dealt specifically with death, resurrection, and faith

amidst great suffering. She argues that the great Chaconne from the D minor partita for solo violin was woven around such a Chorale, and my experience of listening to the partita with the Chorale sung above it was indeed one of hearing Bach’s hidden, raw but sublimated emotions.

There is a wonderful opportunity to immerse oneself in Bach’s music coming up in the South Bank Centre’s Bach Weekend, from Friday 13 March until Sunday 15 March 2015. The opening concert features the Double Violin Concerto (tickets for that particular event will go fast). I defy you to remain unmoved listening to the slow movement of that Double Violin Concerto. It’s just possible that the relationship of the two solo violins – their questioning and communion, their intertwining and their separation, one’s call and the other’s answer – will speak to your soul with a subliminal teaching about the possibilities of human communication and our capacity to experience the spiritual in music – two things the pianist and concentration camp survivor Alice Sommerherz said were ‘umbilically intertwined’. In my experience, music is conducive to the growth of self-intimacy, self-knowledge and self-compassion in the same way that practising meditation is. During my first practice of the Loving Kindness meditation, when we were encouraged to respond with kindness towards ourselves, I experienced this as a bucket of warm clear water emptied over my head, streaming down my arms, exhilarating and warming. Just as with the showing of the ‘hidden’ Bach chorale, I had been initiated into a great and powerful secret.

Bach Weekend 2015

Bach and the Concerto: 13-15 March
An exploration of the concerto, juxtaposing Bach’s concerto output with the masterpieces of his main inspiration, Antonio Vivaldi. Includes the ‘Sunday Concertos’.

More info at www.southbankcentre.co.uk

A Buddhist's Bookshelf

Maitreyabandhu shares with us his recent reading, from the novels of Penelope Fitzgerald to Sangharakshita's seminars. Interview by *Maitreyaraja*

Maitreyaraja: *Could you start off by telling us what you're reading at the moment?*

Maitreyabandhu: I'm reading a new biography of Philip Larkin called *Larkin – Life and Art*, and Larkin's complete poems. I'm having a bit of a Larkin time. I'm reading, re-reading all the poems including his unpublished poems. I'm reading the new biography and I'm also reading his prose.

So why Larkin?

I think Larkin and Elizabeth Bishop have got every right to be thought of as the greatest poets of the late 20th century. I don't mean poets like Eliot and Auden and Frost – later than that. Larkin is extraordinary in that none of his poems need explication. He's always talking about the primary issues of life, and he's very concerned with death, like his great mentor, his great influence, Thomas Hardy. He's concerned with love, death, nature; with life, really. And every poem is a stand-alone poem. I just find him so absolutely honest – rigorously honest about his experiences – and I find the work itself beautiful. Not sweet, not sentimental but very beautiful. He's actually much more than a slightly sour, curmudgeonly figure. Much more than that. He

has got that side – sardonic and so on – but he's much more than that. He's got a real vision of life. Like Hardy – Hardy is quite miserable in a way, but he's got a real vision of life.

What else are you reading?

Well, novels I read less frequently now but my current novelist of choice is Penelope Fitzgerald. I've just finished the last of all of the novels that she wrote. She only published her first novel when she was sixty, when she won the Booker prize with *Offshore*. Apparently journalists were so sure that V S Niapaul had won it that they'd all written their articles about it and gone off to the pub, and everyone was completely amazed that this little old lady, as they saw her, had won the Booker prize. I think she'll become a major modern novelist. I'm constantly trying to persuade my friends to read her books and see the value of them. She's got a sort of eagle eye for things, so they're very accurate. They're incredibly well researched – she's renowned for her research – although they never *feel* well-researched, they feel very light. They're poignant and they're often very tragic. She's a bit like Austen – less ironic but just as intelligent. You feel in the company of someone who's amused, gentle, highly intelligent and slightly distanced.



'He's always talking about the primary issues of life.'
The poet Philip Larkin

Quite a recommendation then. Are there any other books that have particularly inspired you this year?

Well it's not really a book, but the other thing that has inspired me this year is re-reading the early seminars of Bhante Sangharakshita, the founder of our Order and movement. Bhante would gather his disciples around him, and there weren't that many back then. And he would be looking at the Pali Canon suttas. The seminars are unedited, so you get Bhante talking in gorgeously phrased paragraphs and everybody else saying 'um' and 'ah' a lot, often asking terrible questions! Bhante makes wonderful use of them, so what you get from the seminars is his peculiar spiritual genius. We cut the seminars down into little books and tried to make it look like they all stick together. But the seminars don't stick together, they're not supposed to. They're Bhante's, they jump off from Bhante's incredible vision of what life is about, what Buddhism is about, what the Buddha's trying to teach, how he's trying to teach us now. Bhante just will not behave himself. He wants to do much more than be a good, pious Buddhist. So his approach

to the Pali Canon is exactly what you want. Someone who's completely with the Buddha but who's not relating to Buddhism as a kind of heritage site. He wanted to ask, what is the Buddha trying to say in this mode that we may or may not like? But he's trying to get at what's really essential universal value to us.

Was there a particular teaching or perspective that Bhante gave in that seminar which you found particularly illuminating, or useful to you personally?

Well, one of the bits I remember I when he was talking about the Buddha's early followers, called Bhikkhus, and asking, what was a Bhikkhu? In my mind a Bhikkhu was someone who was celibate – you know, with a shaved head and robes. I sometimes feel attracted to that – I think I definitely have an inner monk – but it doesn't excite me deeply. But when Bhante talks about the Bhikkhu that it's someone with this Ancient Greek attitude to life. He calls it an 'Ancient Greek seriousness', 'a philosophical, emotional seriousness', one that asks, What's life about, and what should we do about it? How do we live? That kind of seriousness about those primary questions. And when I hear that I get excited, and I think, well yes, I want to be like that – yes it's my life's aim to live at that kind of pitch, with a real seriousness. Not a portentous seriousness but a genuine human seriousness. Bhante uncovers that again and again and liberates you from a sort of cartoon of what you think a Buddhist should be like. I get a sense of uplift from the seminars, a sense of pleasure which, as it deepens, unifies with a sense of meaning. But anything genuinely pleasurable is also meaningful. Things that are pleasurable but aren't meaningful are only titillating, really. Real pleasure in reading is where you feel a natural sense of the two things coming together, the pleasure and the meaning, and I get that in bucketloads from reading Penelope Fitzgerald, I get it from reading Larkin and I get it very much from reading Bhante.



'She's a bit like Austen – less ironic but just as intelligent.' The novelist Penelope Fitzgerald

If you were on a desert island and you could only have three books with you, which would you choose and why?

(Laughs) Well I'd have Bhante's *Survey of Buddhism* probably. When I first read the Survey, it was one of the strongest experiences I've ever had of reading, of feeling my mind being opened up. I was probably 28, something like that. I was on retreat, and I literally wanted to run around the retreat centre holding it above my head like it was the FA Cup. At times I was ecstatic with a kind of religious reading. So I'd definitely want that. I would take the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, which is probably the great anthology of poetry. It goes from the earliest poetry to contemporary poetry. I took it on my four-month Ordination retreat. I'd choose that book because it's got a very good selection of poetry in the English language. I'd actually take one of Bhante's memoirs as well: I'd need Bhante's company. When Mahananda, a friend of mine, was dying, I was sitting by his bed. In

the Tibetan tradition you would guide someone who was dying through the bardo, and you'd talk to them about what happens when they die. But really I've no idea what happens to you when you die and I can't guide anybody through a bardo, so I was trying to think of what to suggest as he died. Of course he was unconscious by then, but hearing is the last sense to go. So I said, Think about Bhante, think about your teacher – because I know that my teacher represents my direct apprehension of spiritual life. Bhante's been centrally important to my life as a human being. So if I was on a desert island I'd want his company, and I wouldn't be able to have it, and the best way round that would be to read the memoirs I think. There's something about the rhythm of his speech in those books of somebody emotionally in touch with something undefinable, something un-pin-downable – it's not an idea. It's not a theory and it's not something that's 'good for you'.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say about your reading life?

I wish I were reading more, I'm getting too sucked into the computer and I need to be more disciplined with that. I want to say that there's so much to enjoy – and let's remember that reading is for pleasure. My diet of pleasure has got steadily healthier, and if I don't have that healthy diet I get unhappy. So I want to just remind myself, and anybody else, to read – and to read for no good reason.

Poetry East Events

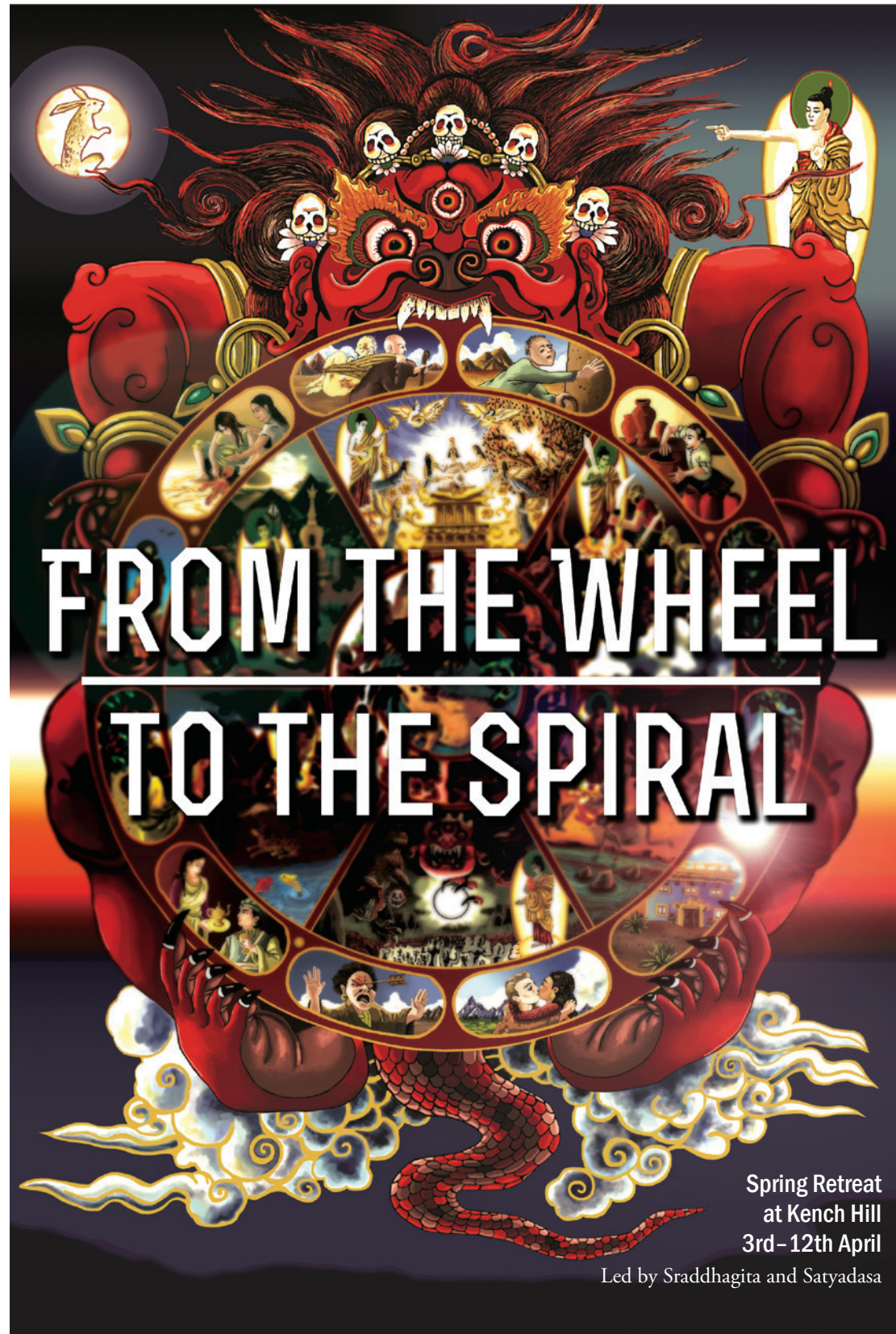
With Maitreyabandhu

Sat 24 Jan: **David Harsent**

Sat 7 Mar: **Masterclass with David Constantine**

Sat 21 Mar: **Blake Morrison**

See page 34 or go to poetryeast.net



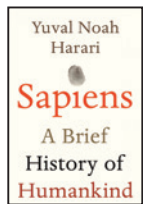
FROM THE WHEEL TO THE SPIRAL

Spring Retreat
at Kench Hill
3rd–12th April

Led by Sraddhagita and Satyadasa

‘Fictions’

Does the species have a purpose? *Ollie Brock* finds that ‘history’ is as subjective as ever as he reviews this new account of the human story



Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind
443pp. £14.99

A landmark exhibition at the British Museum last year, Ice Age Art, displayed some of the oldest known artworks in the world. They included portraits between 10,000 and 40,000 years old, some of them highly symbolic, of humans and animals carved from mammoth tusk, reindeer bone, limestone and other materials. Sometimes a figurine would be found intact alongside tiny broken fragments of many others at the same site. One theory for why this might be suggested a practice of ritually smashing some figurines and burying the pieces with the surviving sculptures; it has also been suggested that while some clay figures were left to harden by the fire, others were deliberately left to overheat and explode, also for ritualistic reasons. The overwhelming message of the curators seemed to be that they knew almost nothing about how the artefacts on display were used, what they had represented. I found that a deeply satisfying principle for an exhibition. In the half-dark around the glass cases with their tiny, spot-lit figures, the air was thick with mystery.

Because archaeology can only show us what was carved, written down or built, everything else that must have characterized ancient lives – beliefs, myths and social norms – will always be a

matter for speculation. Yuval Noah Harari knows this, but does not acknowledge it enough in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. While he does sometimes nod towards gaps in knowledge of human history, only occasionally will that be convenient to a project with a subtitle like ‘A Brief History of Humankind’. The book attempts a synthesis not just of our own species but of the whole genus *Homo*; and not just of its past but of developments still to come, up to the eventual extinction of the species and its possible replacement by artificial intelligence. So the title contains a kind of joke: this is the history of a species that was.

The book is in four parts. ‘The Cognitive Revolution’ covers the emergence of abstract reasoning and the sea-changes it brought about in our history; ‘The Agricultural Revolution’ charts our transition from a nomadic life to settled domesticity. ‘The Unification of Humankind’ looks at the development of cultures, their increasing contact with each other, the arising of empires and religions. And ‘The Scientific Revolution’ explores the post-Enlightenment world, over which industry, capitalism and materialism have reigned. The book offers an accessible, broad sweep of the human story. And it is one that weighs opposing arguments, often refusing to side with one theory over another. Harari criticizes, for instance, a theory that the Agricultural Revolution and the

emergence of private property turned us into an envious and therefore violent species; but he is also impatient with the counter-argument that our ancestors were savagely brutal, and farming made us meek. What this adds up to, in the book’s best moments, is a refusal to subscribe either to the ‘romantic’ model – we were noble savages who roamed wild, in touch with nature and our senses, an ideal we have lost irrevocably – or to the ‘progressive’ one, which holds that we have emerged from savagery into a noble, civilized modernity.

Harari does have a view of how and why we are developing, though. For him there is no causality except evolution. He can make it sound, in fact, as though everything that has happened on the earth has happened so that a species could expand. ‘If a species boasts many DNA copies, it is a success, and the species flourishes,’ he writes. ‘From such a perspective, 1,000 copies are always better than a hundred copies.’ But Darwin was clear that species do not hatch plots for their evolution and expansion; he argued only that certain characteristics are unconsciously preserved because they survive better. Harari’s language is nonetheless full of suggestions that *Homo sapiens* is very slowly executing a grand plan. This happens because it is hard to talk about the history of a species without suggesting an overall purpose to its existence. And as purpose is an abstraction (you can’t pick it up or smell it), this necessitates metaphorical language.

In our last issue I reviewed a book by the American writer Curtis White. White rails against certain scientists and outspoken atheists for rubbishing ideas not based on ‘fact’, but for having recourse to metaphorical language – ‘wiring’ in the brain, and so on – when it is convenient to them. If White has read *Sapiens*, he must have had a fit. Harari writes that for early humans to make the first crossing from Eurasia to what we now know as America, ‘Sapiens first had to learn how to withstand the

extreme Arctic conditions of northern Siberia.’ He is talking about genetic advantages that emerge over millennia, but his use of ‘learn’ makes it sound like a sort of elite Darwinian training course. Other examples abound. If Harari had to suspend this tongue-in-cheek metaphorical language entirely, he would have to acknowledge much more mystery in our existence than he does here.

Things that you cannot pick up or smell, however, are all ‘fictions’ to Harari (as opposed to ‘things that really exist, such as rivers, trees and lions’). Myths, stories and ideas are rolled into this all-consuming causality of species survival. ‘Fiction has enabled us not merely to imagine things, but to do so collectively.’ Sentences like this sometimes allowed me to think we might hear something in praise of the imagination, of creativity, even self-transcendence in this book. But I was hoping for too much. What is the purpose of these myths, stories and dreams? ‘Such myths give *Sapiens* the ability to cooperate flexibly in large numbers ... That’s why *Sapiens* rule the world, whereas ants eat our leftovers and chimps are locked up in zoos and research laboratories.’

Only in the sixth edition of *On the Origin of Species* did Darwin change his description of evolution from ‘natural selection’ to ‘survival of the fittest’. His original phrase suggested a passive process of preservation. Tellingly, the more competitive, even aggressive-sounding ‘survival of the fittest’ was borrowed from an economist called Herbert Spencer, a contemporary of Darwin’s, who tried to apply the principles of evolution to other disciplines, including his own. Harari has been seduced by this same reductionism. Couldn’t the Cognitive Revolution, rather than the moment we learned to cooperate in large numbers with the help of ‘fictions’, be thought of instead as the development of enough consciousness in us to be receptive to a deeper reality?

Programme

One aim of the London Buddhist Centre is to help people achieve their highest potential by introducing them to Buddhism and meditation. The centre runs on generosity: all teachers and teams offer their time, skills and experience voluntarily and we rely on regular donations to keep our charges free, or as low as possible. We are keen to promote a culture of generosity (dana) so you will see that for many of our events a donation is suggested, which is an invitation to give what you feel you can.

Alongside our programme at the LBC, we run drop-in classes and courses on meditation and Buddhism at St Martin's Lane in Central London and in Balham, South London.

We also run retreats throughout the year which offer excellent conditions in which to explore and deepen your awareness of yourself, of other people and of the world around you away from the habits and restrictions of your daily routine.

London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, E2 0HU

Booking Info

For many of our events, booking is essential.
You can book online at lbc.org.uk
drop in to reception 10am-5pm Mon-Sat
or call 020 8981 1225

Twitter @LDNBuddhist
Facebook [facebook.com/LondonBuddhistCentre](https://www.facebook.com/LondonBuddhistCentre)

Getting started

For anyone interested in getting a taste of Buddhist meditation and those new to the mindfulness of breathing and metta bhavana meditation practices

Where you see two prices or donations, the first indicates a full rate and the second a concessionary rate

Spring Retreat

From the Wheel to the Spiral

Learning to live a creative life: On this retreat we will be exploring how to move from a life characterized by cycles of reaction, known as the Wheel, and how Buddhist practice can bring about a process of positive transformation and growth, known as the Spiral. It is an opportunity to learn and deepen meditation, enjoy springtime and investigate Buddhism so that you experience life in a new way; unfolding positively into more and more creativity.

Led by Sraddhagita and Satyadasa

3–12 Apr, at Kench Hill. £425/315. Booking essential.

Introduction to Buddhism & Meditation

An essential overview of Buddhist principles, introducing two meditation practices which offer a means to self-awareness, change and spiritual insight. These courses are a step-by-step guide to Buddhism that can transform your perspective on the world and provide you with tools you can use for a lifetime.

6 weeks from Mon 12 Jan or 23 Feb, 7.15–9.45pm. £90/£70. Booking essential.

Not About Being Good

Buddhist ethics are not about conforming to a set of conventions. Instead, they are about coming into greater harmony with all that lives. A systematic approach to cultivating love, clarity and contentment. Using the book *Not About Being Good* as our guide to daily practice.

Led by Padmadhara and Suryagupta

6 weeks from Wed 11 Mar–15 Apr. £100/£80 (price inc. book)

Outreach: Courses & classes at St Martins Lane, London, WC2

Newcomers' Classes

Every Saturday 1–2.15pm: Introduction to Meditation One. 2.45–4pm: Introduction to Meditation Two. £7/£5

Four-week Foundation courses in Buddhist Meditation

Four Saturdays starting 10 Jan, 7 Feb, 7 Mar, 11 Apr. 10am–12.30pm. £75/£55. Booking essential.

Weekly drop-in classes and courses are also happening in Balham, **South London**

For more details visit lbc.org.uk/SouthLondon.htm or in **Hornchurch**, Essex check hornchurchbuddhistgroup.org.uk

Classes

Lunchtime Meditation

Monday to Saturday

Drop in and learn the basics of two crucial meditation practices in a lunch-hour.

1–2pm. All welcome. Donation/dana.

Evening Meditation

Tuesday and Wednesday

Ideal for newcomers. Drop in any week to learn two fundamental practices that cultivate clear awareness, peace of mind and emotional positivity.

7.15–9.45pm.

Free. Suggested donation £10/£5.

Drop-in Class for Men

Tuesday Daytimes

Drop in for a friendly, informal exploration of the Buddha's teachings, starting with a short period of meditation.

Tuesdays from 13 Jan, 10.30am–

12.30pm. All men welcome. Donation/dana.

Daytime Class

Wednesday Daytimes

Meditation and the Buddha's teachings can have great benefits in our lives; more clarity, self-awareness, open-heartedness and peace of mind. Our focus this term is on Buddhist teachings on Wisdom, with meditation, talks, workshops and discussion.

Please note that the first Wednesday of every month is Practice morning with

meditation and puja, especially suited to more experienced meditators. 10.35am–12.30pm. Creche facilities for under 5s, supported by experienced staff. Donation/dana.

Body Mind Meditation

Thursday Evenings

A meditative evening starting with yoga and chi kung, followed by sitting meditation, to bring harmony to the mind and body. Suitable for beginners. Wear warm comfortable clothing.

7.15–9.30pm.

Free. Suggested donation £10.

First Friday

Sub35 Class

The alternative Friday night!

Meditation, discussion and connection. An evening of practice with time for hanging out after the class. Everyone welcome, especially newcomers.

7.15–9.45pm (tea bar till 11pm) Free.

Suggested donation £6.

Lunchtime and Early Evening Yoga

Drop-in sessions of yoga for meditation. These yoga classes encourage flexibility, strength and awareness of bodily sensations, to improve our ability to sit in meditation and to encourage concentration. All levels.

Starts again on Mon 5 Jan

Weekday lunchtimes 12–12.45pm.

Free. Suggested donation £5.

No need to book, just drop in Mon/Tues/Wed/Fri evenings 5.45–

6.45pm. Free. Suggested donation £7. No need to book, just drop in.

For more yoga events, including Saturday mornings and Sundays, see the *Going Deeper* section

Days and Retreats

Open Day

Come and discover the LBC and what it can offer you. Find out about Buddhism, learn to meditate and try a taster session in Breathing Space, our project offering mindfulness for well-being.

Sun 18 Jan, 11am–5pm. Refreshments are provided and all events are free. No need to book.

Introductory Days

One Sunday a month. Learn how to keep both your mind and heart in steady focus, with meditation practices that help cultivate openness, clarity and courage.

Sundays 11 Jan, 8 Feb, 8 Mar, 19 Apr. 10am–5pm. Lunch provided. £45/£35. Booking essential.

Introductory Retreats

A weekend of meditation. Learn two fundamental, far-reaching meditation practices, while living communally with diverse but like-minded people. Explore the Buddhist vision of reality.

20–22 Feb, 27–29 Mar, at Kench Hill. £160/£120. Booking essential.

Going Deeper

If you know both meditation practices or are a Mitra or Order member, all these events are for you

Seminar

Eros and Beauty

We will be following the thread of desire and exploring where this inner life-force can take us. Each week Jnanavaca and Subhadramati will be exploring different forms of desire and how it can manifest at higher and higher levels of experience, leading us all the way to freedom.

With Jnanavaca and Subhadramati

12 Jan–9 Mar, as part of the Monday Class.

7.15-9.45pm. Free. Suggested donation £6.

Mandala Evening

The Diamond Throne

2015 sees the creation of the new Vajrasana Retreat Centre, a major and innovative building project for the LBC. The myth of the Vajrasana is the 'diamond seat' on which all Buddha's of past and present have entered reality. Jnanavaca will introduce the year of practice and explore the inner meaning of this Buddhist vision.

Mon 19 Jan. 7.15-9.45pm. Free. Suggested donation £6.

Meditation Toolkit

Going Deeper in Life

Six teachings on consecutive lunchtimes about working with your mind in meditation.

Led by Maitreyabandhu

Mon 9–Sat 14 Feb. As part of the lunchtime drop-in meditation class.

Donation/dana.

Classes

Lunchtime Meditation

Monday to Saturday
Drop-in meditation for regulars.

1-2pm. Donation/dana.

Dharma Night

Monday Evenings

Explore Buddhism through lively seminars and talks with meditation and puja. Whether you have undertaken one of our introductory courses and want to learn more, or you have learned to meditate with us and are wondering what being a Buddhist is all about, you can drop in and participate any Monday evening.

Mon 7.15-9.45pm.

See lbc.org.uk/DharmaClass.htm for full listings.

Free. Suggested donation £6.

Mantra Meditation

Tuesday Early Morning

Open chanting group for regulars, followed by breakfast in Breathing Space. Arrive between 7.15-7.25am. No late admittance - please do not ring the bell after 7.25am

7.30-8.30am then breakfast.

Donation/dana, no need to book.

Drop-in Class for Men

Tuesday Daytimes

Drop in for a friendly, informal exploration of the Buddha's teachings, starting with a short period of meditation.

Tuesdays from 13 Jan, 10.30am-12.30pm. All men welcome.

Donation/dana.

Evening Meditation

Tuesday and Wednesday
Meditation is more than just a technique. After learning two fundamental practices, explore how to work with your mind more deeply and thoroughly. With led meditation, further teaching and guidance.

7.15-9.45pm.

Free. Suggested donation £10/£5.

Sangha Meditation

Wednesday Mornings

An open, un-led meditation for regulars. Stay around for tea and cereal afterwards.

Every Wed 7-8am. Donation/dana.

NB: enter only through Breathing Space entrance 6.45-6.55am.

No late admittance possible.

Daytime Class

Wednesday Daytimes

The Buddhist three-fold path leads beyond suffering, towards greater open-hearted awareness and freedom.

This term we are focusing on Wisdom, Buddhist teachings on reality and getting in touch with how things really are, with meditation, talks, workshops and discussion.

The first Wednesday of every month is practice morning, devoted to meditation and ritual practices – a wonderful way to start the month!

10.35am-12.30pm. Creche facilities for under 5s, supported by experienced staff. Donation/dana.

Body-Mind Meditation

Thursday Evenings

A meditative evening starting with yoga and chi kung, followed by sitting meditation, to bring harmony to the mind and body. Wear warm comfortable clothing. All welcome.

7.15-9.30pm.

Free. Suggested donation £10.

Meditation and Puja

Friday Evenings

Bring the week to a contemplative close with meditation and ritual. Devotional practice helps us to engage with the Sangha and strengthen confidence in the Dharma.

7.15-9.45pm.

Free. Suggested donation £6.

Women's Class

Monthly Saturday's

A meditation and Buddhism class for women who know the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana meditations.

3-5.30pm. Last Saturday of each month 28 Feb, 28 Mar, 25 Apr.

Led by Mahamani, Sudurjaya and Svadhi

Free. Suggested donation £7/4.

Going Deeper...

Continued

Courses

Drop-in Course

Core Teachings of Meditation

Meditation is not primarily a technique, although technique helps; it's more of an art, even a magic spell. Maitreyabandhu will be exploring six fundamental approaches to meditation as well as guiding you in your home practice.

Led by Maitreyabandhu and Shraddhasiddhi

14 Jan–18 Feb, as part of the Wednesday Class. 7.15–9.45pm. Free. Suggested donation £10/5. No need to book.

Drop-in Course

Who Hates the Metta Bhavana?

In this six-week drop-in course we explore how to creatively and effectively transform hatred into love. Led by Maitreyabandhu and Subhadramati

25 Feb–25 Mar, as part of the Wednesday Class. 7.15–9.45pm. Free. Suggested donation £10/5. No need to book.

Images of Enlightenment

What does enlightenment look like? How do images of enlightened beings help us in our practice and our lives? Through meditation,

discussion and using the Buddhist images in the downstairs shrine room, we will explore what these beautiful figures can teach us about different qualities of Enlightenment – and ourselves. Come and dive into these magical and inspirational worlds.

Led by Maitripushpa
6 weeks from Tues 17 Feb–24 Mar, 7.15–9.45pm.
£90/£70. Booking essential.

Days & Evenings

Meditation Days

For Regulars

It is easy to fall into a 'maintenance' meditation practice, and to stop deepening your connection. Why not come and renew your inspiration? For meditators who know both the Mindfulness of Breathing and the Metta Bhavana. Sundays 25 Jan, 22 Feb, 22 Mar, 12 Apr. 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. Free. Suggested donation £25.

The meditation day on 22 Mar will be in complete silence and will be based around the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. There will also be periods of reflection and possibly walking meditation. This day is for those who know both meditation practices. Led by Sudurjaya and Shraddhasara.

Heart of Mantra Day

Mantra & Meditation
Mantras are sound symbols and they can point towards the mystery and beauty of Enlightenment. The day will be an exploration of this mystery through mantra and will include chanting, discussion and meditation. Suitable for those who know both meditations.

Led by Dayabhadra
Sun 1 Feb, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. Free. Suggested donation £25. No need to book.

Deep Ecology Day

A day of meditation and contemplation exploring our relationship with the natural world, highlighting its importance in spiritual practice. Using music, prose, poetry and imagery we will be taking inspiration from the work of Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher and environmentalist.

Led by Sanghasiha
Sun 29 Mar, 10am–5pm. Free. Suggested donation £25. No need to book.

Full Moon Pujas

This monthly ritual gives a regular point of devotional focus and the chance to explore the expansive scope of Buddhist ritual.

Mon 5 Jan, Tue 3 Feb, Thu 5 Mar, Sat 4 Apr. Times to be announced. Donation/dana.

Sangha Walk

An easy walk of about 10 miles along the beautiful Stort Valley in the Hertfordshire countryside with your friends in the Sangha. Bring vegetarian food for a picnic.

Led by Priyavajra
Sun 19 April. Free, but allow £16 for fares from Liverpool Street. Booking essential.

Entering the Dream

What do dreams bring to us so that we may understand ourselves and our relation to the world, our community and others? Explore the mythic, symbolic world of dream and enter the imagination. Dreams are doorways into the life within and gateways into creativity.

Led by Atula.
Sun 12 Apr. 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. £40/£30. Booking essential.

Buddhism and 12 Steps

How can you practise the Dharma and work your programme at the same time? A day of exploration with talks, discussion and meditation for those in 12 Step programmes who know both the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana practices. We will be investigating the Buddhist path and integrating it with the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions. A day of

deepening friendship and Sangha.

Led by Sanghasiha & Shraddhasiddhi
Sun 26 Apr, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. Free. Suggested donation £25. No need to book.

Compassionate Communication

Communication gives us many opportunities to practice bringing awareness and compassion into our interactions with others. During this day we will focus on communication and look at ways in which we can move from reacting to others to developing the strength to respond with compassion.

Led by Vajraghanta
Sun 1 Mar, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. £40/£30. Booking essential.

Before I Die

Paying attention to thoughts and feelings about death makes it possible to appreciate what is most important in life. By exploring experience we begin to see that impermanence makes life possible; without it we cannot breathe. We will reflect on what is important to us and identify our requests for an appropriate send-off helping those involved in making our funeral arrangements. The

day is not about making Wills, but includes meditation, reflection, talks and examples of a range of send-offs and some short films.

Led by Ambaranta and Kalyanavaca
Sun 8 Mar, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. Free. Suggested donation £25. No need to book.

Aikido & Meditation Day for Men

Aikido not only teaches practical self-defence but that a unified mind, body and spirit have a positive effect on everyday life. No need for a high level of physical fitness to start.

Led by Nandaraja (2nd Dan).
Sun 22 Mar, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. £40/£30. Booking essential.

Buddhist Sunday School

Encouraging and developing our children's mindfulness and kindness through Buddhist practice and storytelling. Includes meditation, chanting and craft activities. For 3–10 year olds, parents/carers welcome.

Led by Jyotismati and team
10.30am–12.30pm on the last Sunday of every month.
25 Jan, 22 Feb, 29 Mar, 26 Apr.

Going Deeper...

Continued

Retreats

Regulars' Retreat

The Power of Desire

How do we access the desire for life, for love, for the world and allow it to lead us to what is most valuable, beautiful and true?

Led by Jnanavaca, Subhadramati and Vidyadaka
13–15 Mar, at Kench Hill.

£160/£120. Booking essential.

Women's Retreat

'Those who enter the path, and practise meditation are released from the bondage of Mara' (*The Dhammapada*). A weekend retreat for women who know the two practices, exploring how the Buddha's path can transform our lives through talks, meditation and ritual.

Led by Vanaraji, Mahamani and Svadhi

24–26 Apr, at Kench Hill.

£160/£120. Booking essential.

Men's Event

Beyond Capitalism – Radical Dharma for the Modern World

How can the Dharma help transform our Capitalist culture of personal wealth and greed. We'll explore this through talks and discussion. Jayaka, the men's mitra convener at the LBC, goes to all the men's events and

encourages men from the LBC to join him. Suitable for men familiar with both meditation practices and the sevenfold puja

Led by Akuppa and Vajrashura and guest speaker Vaddhaka
16–18 Jan, at Padmaloka.

Book at www.padmalo.org.uk

Sub35 Events

First Friday

Sub35 Class

The alternative Friday night! Meditation, discussion and connection. An evening of practice with time for hanging out after the class. Everyone welcome.

7.15–9.45pm (tea bar till 11pm)
Free. Suggested donation £6.

Second Saturday

Sub35 Practice Morning

A chance to practice together, explore meditation more deeply and cultivate stillness and friendship.

10am–12.45pm.

Meditation experience recommended.
Donation / Dana .

Final Friday

Women's Night

Explore Buddhism as it relates to young women people within the context of friendship and connection With teaching from Order members, meditation training and Dharma discussion.

7.15–9.45pm. Free. Suggested donation

£6. Experience of both meditation practices required.

Sub35 men run a programme of events, for those who want go deeper in their practice. For an invitation email nextgeneration@lbc.org.uk

Sub35 Retreat

A New Beginning

Come and join the Sub35 team for a weekend of reflection and practice at this poignant time of year. We will create the space to reflect on our lives, how they are now and how we want them to be. We become what we speak, do and think, so let's let take stock and ensure we are moving towards our deepest values and aspirations. We become what we go for refuge to.

30 Jan–1 Feb, at Kench Hill.
£140/110. Booking essential.

Sub35 women's retreat

The Mind Dancing in Emptiness

Buddhism says everything is impermanent and lacks any fixed essence. Yet we cling the illusion that we can control our experience, and cause ourselves untold suffering. Join us to explore how we can let go, free our minds and glimpse the fullness and beauty of reality. Open to women under 35 - with provision for newcomers.

Led by Kusalasara and Sarah
20–22 Mar, at Kench Hill.
£140/110. Booking essential.

Festivals

Open to all

Buddhist festivals at the LBC are celebratory days that focus on the primary qualities of the Buddha and his teaching.

Parinirvana Day Festival

When we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings about death it is possible to find and appreciate what is most important to us in life. By exploring experience we begin to see that impermanence makes life possible, without it we cannot breathe. On this Festival Day to mark the death of the Buddha there will be talks, meditation, and reflection on the qualities of the Buddha. Our intention for the day – to take a calm, steady and joyful look at our experience, the relationship between life, death and the impermanent nature of life.

Led by Ambaranta, Kalyanavaca and Vishvantara

Sun 15 Feb, 10am–10pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share.

Check the programme for the day nearer the time. No need to book.

Akshobhya Day

Akshobhya is the deep blue archetypal Buddha of the eastern realm and is associated with the Enlightened qualities of unshakeable confidence and mirror like wisdom. On this day we will be exploring the significance of this deeply mysterious figure, and seeing how we can cultivate those qualities in ourselves. All proceeds from the day will go to the new Akshobhya Garden at Vajrasana.

Led by Dayabhadra

Sun 15 Mar, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share.

Check the programme for the day nearer the time. No need to book.

Vajrasattva Day

A day dedicated to the Primordial Buddha and symbol of innate purity.

Led by Jnanavaca

Sun 19 Apr, 10am–5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share.

Check the programme for the day nearer the time. No need to book.

Jan

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5 Full Moon Puja Buddhist ritual	6	7	8	9	10	11 Intro Day Learn to meditate 10am-5pm
12 Intro to Bud & Med 6 week course starts. 7.15-9.45pm Seminar Drop-in starts until 9 Mar	13	14 Core Teachings of Meditation Drop-in course starts until 18 Feb. 7.15-9.45pm	15	16 Men's Event Weekend at Padmaloka	17	18 Open Day Free talks, meditation and more. All welcome. 11am-5pm
19 Mandala Evening The Diamond Throne 7.15-9.45pm	20	21	22	23	24 Poetry East David Harsent 7.30pm	25 Yoga Day 10am-5pm Meditation Day For regulars 10am-5pm
26	27	28	29	30 Final Friday Sub35 women Sub 35 Retreat Meditation Weekend	31	

Not all of our events are listed in this calendar
Our daily, weekly, daytime and evening classes can be found in the *Getting Started* or the *Going Deeper* section, near the start of this programme. Retreats are also listed there.

Feb

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
2	3 Full Moon Puja Buddhist ritual	4	5	6 First Friday Meditate, discuss, connect. For under 35s 7.15-11pm	7	8 Intro Day Learn to meditate 10am-5pm
9 Meditation Toolkit Lunchtime Course 6 lunchtimes Mon-Sat. 1-2pm	10	11	12	13	14	15 Parinirvana Day Festival 10am-10pm
16	17 Images of Enlightenment 6 week course starts 7.15-9.45pm	18	19	20 Introductory Retreat Meditation weekend	21	22 Yoga Day 10am-5pm Meditation Day For regulars 10am-5pm
23 Intro to Buddhism and Meditation 6 week course starts 7.15-9.45pm	24	25 Who Hates the Metta Bhanava? Drop-in course starts until 25 Mar. 7.15-9.45pm	26	27 Final Friday Sub35 women	28	

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Not all of our events are listed in this calendar
 Our daily, weekly, daytime and evening classes can be found in the *Getting Started* or the *Going Deeper* section, near the start of this programme. Retreats are also listed there.

Mar

2	3	4	5 Full Moon Puja Buddhist ritual	6 First Friday Meditate, discuss, connect. For under 35s 7.15-11pm	7 Poetry East Masterclass David Constan time 10am-5pm	8 Intro Day Learn to meditate 10am-5pm Before I Die 10am-5pm
9	10	11 Not About Being Good 6 week course starts. 7.15-9.45pm	12	13 Regulars Weekend Retreat Power of Desire	14	15 Akshobhya Day 10am-5pm
16	17	18	19	20 Sub 35 Women's Retreat Meditation Weekend	21 Poetry East Blake Morrison 7.30pm	22 Meditation Day For regulars 10am-5pm Aikido Day For men. 10am-5pm
23	24	25	26	27 Final Friday Sub35 women Introductory Retreat Meditation weekend	28	29 Yoga Day 10am-5pm Deep Ecology Day 10am-5pm

Monday Mar 30	Tuesday Mar 31	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 Meditation Day For regulars 10am-5pm Entering the Dream 10am-5pm
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 Intro Day Learn meditation. 10am-5pm Vajrasatva Day 10am-5pm Saanga Walk
20	21	22	23	24 Final Friday Sub35 women Women's Retreat Meditation Weekend		26 Yoga Day 10am-5pm Buddhism and 12 Steps 10am-5pm
27	28	29	30			

Apr

Yoga for Meditation

These new yoga classes encourage flexibility, strength and awareness of physical sensations. Loosening up the body and deepening into awareness can be a way into sitting meditation. Yoga and meditation are complementary practices – through yoga we can develop a language to speak to our bodies; with meditation we learn to attend to our bodies and to each other with kindness.

Lunchtime and Early Evening

Drop-in sessions of yoga for meditation. All levels.

Starts again on Mon 5 Jan.

Weekday lunchtimes 12-12.45pm.

Free. Suggested donation £5. No need to book.

Mon/Tues/Wed/Fri evenings 5.45-6.45pm.

Free. Suggested donation £7. No need to book.

Body-Mind Meditation

Thursday Evenings

A meditative evening starting with yoga and chi kung, followed by sitting meditation, to bring harmony to the mind and body.

Suitable for beginners. Wear warm comfortable clothing.

7.15-9.30pm. Free. Suggested donation £10. No need to book.

Saturday Mornings

These classes will start with yoga and finish with sitting meditation practice. Wear comfortable, warm clothes

Saturdays from 5 Jan 10.30am-12pm.

Free. Suggested donation £10. No need to book, just drop in.

Sundays

Whole days suitable for beginners in either or both yoga and meditation.

25 Jan, 22 Feb, 29 Mar, 26 Apr. 10am-5pm. Bring vegetarian/vegan lunch to share. £40/£30. Booking essential.

Poetry East

Showcasing the work of well-known contemporary poets and the relationship between poetry and spiritual life.

David Harsent

David Harsent has published ten collections of poetry. Night was a PBS Choice and was shortlisted for the Costa, Forward and TS Eliot prizes and won the Griffin International Poetry Prize. His new collection *Fire Songs* is shortlisted for the TS Eliot Prize.

Sat 24 Jan, 7.30pm. £9.

Book at www.poetryeast.net

Masterclass

with David Constantine
A day exploring the poems and letters of John Keats (1795-1821), led by David Constantine. David has published ten books of poetry, five translations and a novel. His book of short stories won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award.

Sat 7 Mar, 10am-5pm. £9.

Book at www.poetryeast.net

Blake Morrison

Blake Morrison's non-fiction books include *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* which won the J. R. Ackerley Prize, *As If*, about the murder of James Bulger, and a memoir of his mother. His poetry includes *Dark Glasses*, winner of a Somerset Maugham Award.

Sat 21 Mar, 7.30pm. £9.

Book at www.poetryeast.net

Volunteering

There are many opportunities for volunteering at the centre and it can be a satisfying and energetic way of supporting its work.

To see more visit

lbc.org.uk/volunteers.htm

Monday and Thursday afternoons

2.30pm. Straight after the lunch class join in with the work period, cleaning the centre and looking after the shrines. Afterwards, if you would like, there will also be a Dharma discussion group with meditation.

If you would like more information or would like to chat with someone about this, please contact Vajrabandhu vajrabandhu@lbc.org.uk or drop in at one of these times.

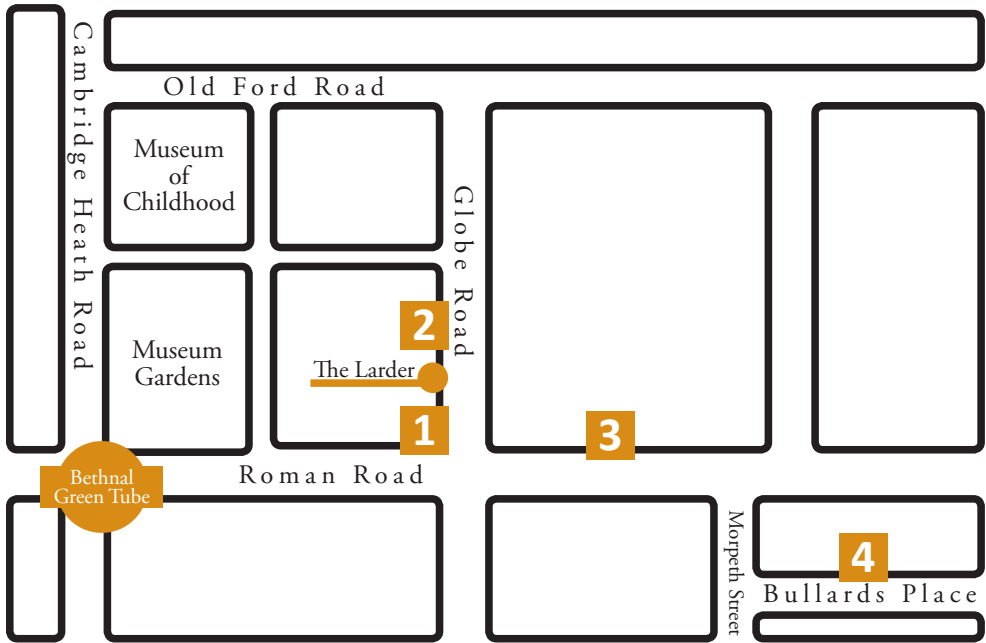
Other areas where you can help include reception, administration and IT support, creche and shrine keeping.

If interested please contact

volunteers@lbc.org.uk

Around the Buddhist Centre

in Bethnal Green, London E2



1 London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road E2

020 8981 1225 / www.lbc.org.uk

2 Jambala Charity Bookshop, 247 Globe Road E2

020 8709 9976

3 Lama's Pyjamas Charity Shop, 83 Roman Road E2

020 8980 1843 / www.lamaspyjamas.com

4 London Buddhist Arts Centre, Eastbourne House, Bullards Place E2

020 8983 6134 / www.londonbuddhistartscentre.co.uk

LBC Reception & Bookshop

Book a retreat or a course. We also sell books, incense, greetings cards, art reproductions, meditation cushions and Buddha rupas.

Open
Mon-Sat
10am-5pm

Jambala

Used books, vinyl records cd's, dvd's and jewellery.

Open
Mon-Sat
10am-6pm

Lama's Pyjamas

Vintage clothing, bric-a-brac and more.

Open
Mon-Fri 12-6pm
Sat 10.30am-6pm

The Larder

Coffee, pastries and vegetarian food
241-243 Globe Road, E2
020 3490 1404.

www.worldslarder.co.uk

Open
Mon-Fri 8am-7pm
Sat 9am-5pm
Sun 10am-5pm