

A brief report on the Mindfulness workshops and retreats by the monastic and lay teachers from the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh in Delhi in October 2012.

During the month of October, 2012 Ahimsa Trust organised events, in coordination with monastics and lay teachers in the tradition of Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh, at various schools and colleges in Delhi, India. The focus of these events was to teach practical mindfulness tools in order to cultivate personal practices for teachers, students, parents and young people. These events are a continuation of initiatives started by Ahimsa Trust over 10 years ago that got a strong endorsement when Thich Nhat Hanh visited India in 2008 and another visit by the monastics and lay teachers in 2010. The 2012 tour is connected to two of Thich Nhat Hanh's initiatives, one being "Applied Ethics", an initiative to bring mindfulness into class rooms around the world (mindfulnessedu.org) and the second being "Wake Up", an initiative to bring the practice of mindfulness into the lives of young adults ages 16-35 (wkup.org).

The specific focus of these workshops was to teach tools of mindfulness and applied ethics that teachers, administrators, parents and students could use in their everyday lives to cultivate their ability to be calm, handle strong emotions such as anxiety and stress, while also developing skills to heighten their awareness, concentration and critical thinking. A pedagogical approach that places an emphasis on self awareness and awakening.

The month of events started off with a book launch at 'N' Block, Greater Kailash Market Park on October 2nd, (Gandhi Jayanti) launching the Indian addition of "Planting Seeds, Practicing Mindfulness with Children", a book with activities, songs and games for teachers, parents and young people, published in India by Full Circle Books. The launch was a unique event, as it included a guided meditation by Dharmacharya Shantum Seth and a talk given by Brother Phap Dung, the Abbot of Deer Park Monastery with the support of other monastics in the Plum Village tradition.



*Monastic's from the tradition of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh pose at the book launch with "Planting Seeds".
From left: Sister Hoi Nheim, Anamika, Sister Mai Nghiem.*

The book launch was followed by workshops at Vasant Valley School, New Delhi and Step by Step School, Noida. Workshops on mindfulness were given separately to the teachers, students and parents. Some of the activities at these workshops included guided, eating and walking meditation along with lectures on dealing with strong emotions, technology and sexuality, motivational “practice” songs and deep relaxation.

At the end of each workshop participants were given a feedback form and the responses were overwhelmingly positive. One student in class 10, Vasant Valley wrote, *“These workshops have helped me a lot. It has taught me what actual happiness is about and how one can achieve it.”* A student in class 11A, Vasant Valley shared *“...I learnt how to relax, control my stress, and untie the knot in my head, express and share”*. The teachers also received feedback forms and like the students their responses were overwhelmingly in support of the workshops. One teacher wrote: *“This workshop made me think and taught me to look within myself. This made me thoughtful and has certainly made me quieter. I think it will give more meaning to my life, not only to my professional life but also to my personal life. Thank you.”* Another teacher shared *“Wonderful two days! Nice balance of meditation with teachings. Very useful and applicable to all areas of my life.”*



Final assembly with students at Vasant Valley School in Delhi



Final assembly with students grades 3-8 at Step By Step School in Noida.

In between the workshop at Vasant Valley and Step by Step Schools a Wake Up day of mindfulness for young people was held on October 12th at the Ambedkar University that is part of Delhi University. The turnout of young people interested in mindfulness practice was quite substantial. For more information on the Wake Up India movement you can visit the Wake Up India facebook page.

Following the workshops at Vasant Valley School and Step by Step School the monastics and lay teachers went on to give a four day open retreat, focused on education, at Lady Shri Ram College for Women and Bluebells International School. Besides teachers and lay people from all walks of life, over one hundred college students attended this retreat. Inspired by this retreat they have organized to hold meetings at the college to continue their practice.



Posing with college students during the educators retreat at Bluebells School.

A day of mindfulness for families was also offered on October 24th at the Indian International Centre. Many families attended with a separate programme for children and adults. The final event was held back at Vasant Valley School in the form of a day of mindfulness for parents of the school on October 27th.



On the school bus heading for our last event, a day of mindfulness for parents at Vasant Valley School, of the India 2012 tour.

Our take away from the series of successful and transformative events over the month of October was that there is a clear interest and need for mindfulness to be incorporated into the classrooms of India. It provides tools that support the teachers, administrators, parents and students ability to communicate with not only each other but also themselves, greatly increasing their capacity to successfully complete the tasks which they have to perform. From handling a class of loud students while still retaining one's own energy, to completing homework on time without feeling stressed or finding the time to remember to listen to one's own children, the practice of mindfulness can provide support and practical solutions. The tools of mindfulness come from the long and rich tradition of mind training and cultivation that has existed in India for thousands of years. The overwhelming response from participants shows that this history, which has been transmitted through India's ancestral heritage, is still alive in the people living here. The seeds are there, they just need to be watered.



Indian Tour 2012 team poses, along with some friends from Washington DC, at Sanskriti Kendra

ahimsa trust
offers

Workshop Retreat, Talks and
Day of Mindfulness with the
monks, nuns and lay teachers from
Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition



October 2012

'Planting Seeds'

*An evening of Meditation,
Songs and other
Mindfulness Practices'*
(Open to all ages.

No registration required)

Venue: N Block Market Park
(opposite Full Circle),
Greater Kailash Part I,
New Delhi

Date: 2 October 2012,
Tuesday (Gandhi Jayanti)

Time: 4.00 pm

**'True Passion -
Mindfulness in
Modern Times'**

4 Day Workshop Retreat

(Open to all ages
above 18 yrs.

Registration required

1st preference to Educators/
students-over 18 years)

Venue: Lady Shri Ram College/
Bluebells School International,
Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi

Date: 20-23 October 2012

'Wake Up'*

*A morning of Mindfulness
for Young Adults*

(Open to ages 18 to 35

No registration required)

(Please bring some packed
lunch, water and a mat)

Venue: Ambedkar University,
Lothian Road, Kashmiri Gate,
Delhi 110006

Date: 12 October 2012, Friday

Time: 10.30 am - 2.00 pm

**'A Day of Mindfulness
for Families'**

(Open to all ages /children above
6 yrs. Limited seats, No charge.

Registration required

Please bring some packed lunch,
water and a mat with you)

Venue: India International Centre,
Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi

Date: 24 October 2012,
Wednesday (Dussehra)

Time: 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

'Wake Up'*

*A morning of Mindfulness
for Young Adults*

(Open to ages 18-35.

No registration required)

Venue: To be confirmed
(Please call/email us for details)

Date: 28 October 2012, Sunday

Time: 11 am onwards

*Wake Up is a worldwide network and a programme to enthuse and expose young people to concrete mindfulness practices of true love and compassion, clearly showing the way towards a life in harmony with each other and with the Earth. It encourages people who want to help their society - a society overloaded with intolerance, discrimination, craving, anger and despair.

These sessions are spontaneous gatherings ranging from a one to three hour programme - with meditation, songs, and other mindfulness practices (mindful eating, total relaxation, sharing from the heart, Questions and Answers), helping to release the tension in one's body and feelings, use of compassionate listening and loving speech to help restore communication and to live and enjoy each moment more deeply.

It has worked very well with British youth in Cambridge, Oxford (5000 people gathered at Trafalgar Square) and US Ivy League Colleges like Harvard and Yale, leading to a number of Wake Up groups across the world.
<http://in.wkup.org> **Facebook page:** www.facebook.com/wkupindia.

There are limited spaces for the 24th of October event and the 4 day workshop (20th-23rd of October). If you are interested in participating in either of the two events please register with us & send an email to: ahimsa.trust@gmail.com
For more information please email/ refer to our website www.ahimsatrust.org or call 9873226869