

## **REPORT ON THE MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION WORKSHOPS HELD IN DELHI AND DEHRADUN IN NOVEMBER 2010**

**Follow up on the mindfulness in education work Thay and the Sangha spearheaded in 2008.**

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We offered two retreats for teachers, one in Delhi for 3 days at Sanskriti School, New Delhi, and another in Dehra Dun for 4 days at the Doon School. Both were attended by nearly 150 teachers each. Most teachers at the Delhi retreat came from the Delhi area and were from more elite schools. However, half of the teachers at the Dehra Dun retreat were from government schools and colleges, most of them only Hindi speaking. And there were teachers, principals and directors of schools from all over India who attended this 2nd retreat: from cities like Pune, Mumbai, Trivandrum (a 3-day train ride from Dehra Dun), among others. At the Doon School we also gave an evening presentation to about a hundred Doon students.

Both retreats were very successful with teachers touching peace and wisdom in themselves more and more each day. Many had come to learn techniques that they could apply in their schools but the Dharma teachers emphasized that what was of primary importance was that the school teachers bring these practices into their lives. On the 2nd day of the retreat in Dehra Dun, one teacher shared that he had a stroke 5 years earlier and that the previous night was the first night he had slept well in 5 years, thanks to the mindfulness practice and relaxation he learned at the orientation talk! Many teachers also expressed that they now felt they had a number of very concrete tools that they were going to begin implementing right away in their classrooms: like the mindfulness bell, pebble meditation, the second body system, flower watering, mindful speech, belly breathing, and loving support groups to help deal with conflicts in the class. They also were more energized to begin creating sanghas with other teachers in their schools.

We also had planned to transmit the 5 Mindfulness Trainings and instead, we offered a guided meditation in which they were read and contemplated for some minutes in silence. Offering incense, wearing our sanghatis, and sharing the Three Refuges would have made it more religious than we felt was appropriate, given the sensitivity around religion in India.

Several teachers who have been successfully sharing various mindfulness practices in their classes (since Thay's retreat for teachers in 2008) gave presentations during each retreat which added a fresh and very applied perspective to both retreats. Because the retreatants learned how other teachers were specifically using pebble meditation, or mindful breathing, or mindfulness practice in their own daily lives to help them deal with difficult situations in school, they felt more confident to apply the practice as well.

A number of teachers and school principals asked us to come and lead retreats in their school for all their teachers to attend. Many expressed a strong desire for more regular training in mindfulness and on a larger scale. They asked for repeat Workshops in each of the 16 blocks around Dehradun. There was lot of interest and feedback across the board and the press was also very supportive with their reports.