

DHARMA E-NEWS

Christopher Titmuss

In seeing -
What utter joy!
The small mind becomes
transparent, empty,
without foundation.

Christopher



DHARMA E-NEWS ISSUE 21 - May - August 2010 & INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULE

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Dear Friends in the Dharma,

Welcome to the 21st **Dharma e-News**, and to our new subscribers. **Dharma e-News** goes out to more than 3000 people in some 30 countries, including many centres, dharma teachers, dharma networks, and groups.

We send out the **Dharma eNews** every about every three or four months.

Dharma e-News endeavours to bring a fresh Dharma perspective to contemporary issues and encourage us to keep questioning. The newsletter will be kept to a maximum of 10 items per issue.

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If you wish to print out the Dharma e-News to read over a cafe latte, then highlight the whole

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thing (control-A), copy it (control-C), then paste after opening a Word Document (control-V), then Save (control-S) then delete spaces between sections. Make narrow margins to use less paper. It will make about 25 pages in total. Or simply highlight particular sections of interest and print out.

One page of A4 paper is about 500 words.

[My International Teaching Schedule](#) from Summer 2010 to August 2011 is on my websites, as well as available at the end of this **Dharma eNews**.

In the Dharma

Three Bows
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1.

Report on the Palestinian Tragedy. April, 2010 Meeting with Mothers and Wives of the Martyrs

Christopher Titmuss

6686 words

Extracts from poems of Mahmoud Darwish*

*Heavenly, this land like weightless clouds
Evaporated out of jasmine*

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We sat together in a large circle of chairs in the conference room. Apart from myself, women occupied every seat. Their ages ranged from young women in their early 20's to women in the 50's and 60's. Some wore black. Some wore the hijab, the headscarf; others neither wore the colours of mourning nor the hijab. Rawda Basir, director of the Women's Studies Centre in Nablus, the main Palestinian city of 200,000 residents, told me an hour before the workshop with me got underway. "Christopher. Prepare yourself. You will listen to stories of terrible suffering today."

The road to Nablus from Tel Aviv nestles between soft, rolling hills of sparse vegetation, and gatherings of rocks and stones formed together as symbols of the area's long, pre-Biblical, history and as testimonies to countless generations. Villages with minarets nestle in valleys situated intimately close to the land sharing much the same colours, if not contours, of surrounding hills. Farmers work in their beloved olive groves while small businesses function and shepherds mind the goats and sheep. As we drove into Nablus around 8 am, I could spot Israeli settlements perched on the top of hills. Built as if for middle class city suburbs, these houses look ugly and crude when located in the austere beauty of Palestinian countryside.

I arrive in Nablus, an ancient Palestinian city, located in a long valley wedged between two high hills for the past three thousand years. It is a land of a burning sun, intifada and intense levels of suffering, amidst a people's determination not to sacrifice their freedom of the spirit to the occupation. A Samaritan driver with the necessary travel documents, had picked me up early in the morning from the Sangha House in north Tel Aviv and drive me through to Nablus, via various checkpoints, controlled by heavily armed Israeli soldiers, well-fortified roadblocks, concrete buildings, towers, and inevitable questions about the reasons for my visit. I say as little as possible as the Israeli army officer checks that my account in English matches the driver's account in Hebrew. A smiling soldier waves us through into the Occupied Territories saying, "Have a nice day." I take out an annual worldwide travel insurance. About five years ago, I rang the travel insurance company to ask whether their travel insurance applied to all countries. The insurance company told me their travel insurance covered everywhere in the world except one place: the Palestinian territories!

I recalled on a previous visit to Nablus the story a beautiful 20 year old Palestinian woman, wearing the hijab and a long narrow cut coat, told me. She had to go through the checkpoints daily to reach her university. One day a soldier took an eye to her. He demanded that she hand him her mobile phone, and when she refused he took it from her and rang his number so that he had her number. He began ringing her in Nablus. At the checkpoint in the following days, he and other soldiers would walk up and start talking to her as if she was friends with them. She told me she felt sick to the stomach and afraid of what others in long queue would think, as well family and friends in Nablus. She stopped going to university and got rid of her phone number.

Soldiers at the check points are clearly under orders to give the occasional Western visitor to Nablus some sense of normality – as if the checkpoints were just some kind of international border while passing from one country to another. Far from it. The

checkpoints function as the walls of the prison, a Palestinian ghetto for 2.4 million Palestinians in the West Bank and another massive blockage for the citizens in the Gaza. You think you have passed through the last checkpoint when there is yet another leading right to the very edges of Nablus.

I had been unable to travel to Nablus in April 2009. Three months earlier the Israeli Government had launched its murderous assault on Gaza killing more than 1400 citizens, men, women, and children, maiming thousands of others and emotionally traumatizing thousands more. Ten Israeli soldiers died in the Gaza, three killed by accidental fire from an Israeli tank. A Palestinian shot dead a 20-year-old soldier - the last of the 10 soldiers to die. His father is the partner of a Dharma* practitioner attending my retreats, who is pregnant. There is the father's tragedy of losing his beloved son while trying to look forward to starting his second family.

The Israeli government prevented Western media from entering Gaza to act as eye witnesses on the death toll and the Israeli army's massive destruction of public buildings, including schools, criminal courts, ministries for running Gaza, as well as the fragile communication infrastructure. There is a mountain of overwhelming evidence that the invasion exposed major war crimes as well as worldwide condemnation - apart from the White House in Washington DC. The White House maintains the silence of the dead in such matters. The United Nations has received hundreds of documents of testimony as evidence. For much of 2009, the Israeli army made it virtually impossible for Westerners to go to the occupied territories, except for the Palestinian town of Bethlehem, a popular point of pilgrimage for Christians worldwide. The siege of Gaza and the West Bank continues.

On April 20, 2010, I travelled on the Day of Nakbar (Day of Catastrophe) for the Palestinians that serves as Memorial Day for the time 700,000 Palestinians fled their homeland when Zionists established the state of Israel in 1948. Recently, the Israeli government have issued a law banning the use of the word "nakba" throughout Israeli schools as the government actually regards the word "nakba" as a threat to the state of Israel. The banning of a word from public discourse or from children's education reveals the extreme measures to try to ensure the negation of the Palestinian view of history.

Army officers visit children in Israeli schools on a regular basis to glorify the achievements of the Israeli army (know in Israel as the IDF - Israeli Defence Force). All young men and women from the age of 18 must engage in compulsory army service - except for students of Yeshiva (orthodox Jewish studies of the Torah and ancient texts). Those who prove to army psychologists that they have severe mental health problems and feel suicidal also escape conscription. Any refusal to join the army makes a black mark on their CV for future employment prospects. Those who refuse to join the army on moral grounds or refuse to enter the Occupied Territories receive prison sentences from months up to years. Several Dharma friends have had to behave in a crazy manner at their interview for conscription and consistently lie to avoid army uniform.

Young Israelis compete for selection for a top army unit to become air force pilots or

helicopter pilots or join a commando unit for "special missions" in the Occupied Territories. Due to loyalty and years of indoctrination, criticism of the IDF remains virtually muted in Israel. One has to endure waves of resentment when questioning government and army methods. I do not regard inquiry into conditioning as a political issue but an inquiry into suffering, its causes and its resolution. Once again, silence on these matters continues to be deafening in Israel. Yet there are exceptions such as the well-known *Pilots Letter* of September 2003 signed by 27 pilots and former pilots. "We, for whom the Israel Defence Forces and the Air Force are an inalienable part of ourselves, refuse to continue to harm innocent civilians. These actions are illegal and immoral, and are a direct result of the ongoing occupation which is corrupting all of Israeli society."

The Israel air force rained down white phosphorous over various areas of Gaza during the invasion of January 2009. This substance causes an incendiary impact burning people alive as well as setting fire to homes, shops, offices and fields. Soldiers use dum-dum bullets that explode on impact to maximise the number of wounds. International law banned years ago the use of white phosphorous and dum-dum bullets.

On the way to Ein dor, where we have our retreats and other Dharma programmes, I pass by one of several Israeli prisons for conscientious objectors. Not all are pacifists. Many simply refuse to support the checkpoint beatings, summary arrests, use of Palestinian, young and old, as human shields during invasions, application of mental and physical torture on Palestinian prisoners, killing of unarmed adults and children during incursions and the wide-scale massacres in southern Lebanon and Gaza that received worldwide condemnation. I once heard in Jerusalem that certain orthodox Jews claim that the commandment of Moses that states "Thou Shalt Not Kill" actually means "Thou Shalt not kill another Jew." Amnesty reports that Israel holds around 11,000 Palestinian political prisoners, including more than 300 children, in military prisons, mostly in isolated desert regions of Israel. Ex-Palestinian prisoners tell me the condition in these prisons are grim as well as the methods of interrogation and punishment.

Israeli friends advised me not to use the word "nakba" publicly in Israel. "It will cause a lot of resentment to you. You will be immediately identified as a 'left winger'." On the *Day of Nakba*, Israel celebrates its *Day of Independence* at the forming of the state of Israel. Israel's Memorial Day (Yom HaZikaron) is devoted to the memory of those soldiers who died for the existence of the State of Israel. Israel's Independence Day (Yom HaAtzmaut) begins the minute Israel's Memorial Day ends, and the switch from sorrow to joy is sudden. Most Jewish Israeli citizens celebrate Independence Day – wining, dining, partying, dancing – on this public holiday. Palestinians only know sorrow for the whole day. Arab Israelis as well as the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza remain at home and mark the day with prayers, remembrance and sadness while some engage in non-violent walks for human rights. There is a heightening of tensions on Nakba/Independence Day. Israeli friends expressed concern about the safety of my travelling to Nablus on such a day.

*"The siege transforms me from a singer into..
a sixth string on a violin"*

I took my seat in the meeting room of the Women's Centre, a non-government human rights organisation that promotes gender equality, dignity and freedom for women, publishes reports and *Sawt El Nisa*, (Voices of Women). Besides me sits Rawda Basir, director of the centre, who acts as translator. Rawda introduces me. I first came to Nablus in 1993 and brought with me around 18 Israelis – lawyers, army psychologists, business people, activists, respected Dharma practitioners, Israeli ex-army officers, to meet with Palestinians in a three day meeting. I have been back regularly ever since when the director general of the Palestinian National Council in Nablus and Rawda agree it is safe for me to come. Rawda and I have been friends for 17 years.

I remember several years ago, we had a meeting with Palestinians in another Nablus clinic. The day after we left the clinic, the Israeli air force launched a helicopter to ground missile directly at the clinic located right in the heart of Nablus killing eight citizens including two children. The Israeli always put out the same reply – they are assassinating members of Hamas. It is not unusual for the helicopter pilots to send in another air to ground rocket at the people who have gathered to remove the dead and assist the maimed and traumatised at the scene of the explosion.

The director of a Nablus Hospital told me on the current visit that when the Israeli army invaded the old part of the city in April, 2002, citizens brought numerous injured by car to his hospital for treatment because soldiers refused the use of any ambulances in the city. Despite terrible wounds, soldiers arrested many wounded, smashed the operating theatre and then barricaded the front of the hospital to stop treatment of the wounded. Pregnant women and sick people died at home due to the curfew during much of the month of April, 2002. There were numerous corpses on the streets of Nablus for two weeks. The army cut off water supplies, blew up the sewerage system, destroyed satellite and communications to stop phone calls and arrested hundreds.

*"We store our sorrows in our jars, lest
the soldiers see them and celebrate the siege"*

You can imagine the depth of painful emotions for Palestinians. I asked each the mothers and wives of the martyrs to give me three points of information so that I had a sense of their personal history and motivations for attending the workshop. In this report, I have used only the initial of the participants, as there is always fear of night raids of homes of families of the martyrs – men, women and children who have died as a direct result of Israeli government/military policy. I asked three questions:

- "What is your first name?"
- What is your suffering?
- Why are you here today?

I listened. I responded. I engaged in inquiry. I have never listened to such concentration of emotional pain and trauma in 35 years of teaching. I have listened occasionally to the terrible anguish of Israeli parents who lost a son in the war in Lebanon, the occupied territories or lost a son or daughter who committed suicide during the compulsory training

in the IDF from the age of 18-20. This is hard enough for such families to bear. It is important to understand that Palestinian women have to endure systematic assassinations, indiscriminate killings, abuse and arrests of loved ones over years while continuing to live in fear and terror that soldiers will break into their homes at night for further arrests or intimidation. There have been commando raids on the same homes on numerous occasions. The oppression and humiliation never seems to stop.

*"You standing at the doorsteps, enter
and drink Arabic coffee with us
(you might sense you're human like us)
you standing at the doorstep of houses
Get out of our mornings
we need reassurances that we
are human like you.*

Readers may want to think that Palestinians exaggerate events inflicted upon them. There is that possibility if a woman spoke to me in private. I cannot believe that wives, sisters and daughters of martyrs would engage in collective distortions of their experiences in front of women who share the same nightmare. I have years of experience to know when people report the truth of experiences and when they engage in irresponsible projections.

Here is a brief summary of what I heard. I took notes immediately after the workshop and consulted with Rawda. I have only used the first initial or any initial of the woman rather than the first name. Under Israeli policy, a suspect in one family makes the whole family a threat to the state of Israel.

"I" (initial of the mother). Israeli soldiers shot and killed my son who tried to flee from arrest. I have five sons held in gaol.

"Y" Soldiers killed two of my sons. I have three other sons are in gaol.

"In" Soldiers killed my son. Israel keeps his body in a grave with a number somewhere in Israel. (Palestinians refer to these graveyards as the Cemeteries of Numbers). I have begged and begged for the return of his body to Nablus for his funeral and burial. I long to kiss my son's hand and say goodbye," she told me amidst her tears.

"H" has lost three sons, one aged 14 years.

"M" A sniper sitting on a tank in Nablus shot and killed my 11-year-old son as he walked alone to school one morning. The bullet blew the boy's brain out."

"Im." My husband has been in gaol for 15 years. He is kept in an administrative prison. Israel has not charged him with any offence. The Israeli authorities refuse to issue me with a pass to visit him. The authorities keep postponing his date of release. (This is a common policy to inflict as much anguish on Palestinian families as possible. Israeli authorities say they plan to release a prisoner and then extend his sentence).

"T" A quietly spoken mother, aged around 25, of three small children. Israeli soldiers assassinated her first husband. Two years later, she remarried. The following year, Israeli soldiers then came back and assassinated her second husband. "I cannot stay alone, even for a few minutes. I start to think. I feel terribly lonely. I only live for my children" she told me though her deep sadness.

"W." A sniper shot dead my husband on his way to the mosque to pray.

"U" – "My daughter blew herself up and killed Israel soldiers at a checkpoint." The daughter told friends she did not want to live anymore following the deaths and humiliations of loved ones at the hands of the Israeli army.

"D" My 14 year son, a small teenager, who looked 10 or 11, arrived at a checkpoint in July 2004 with explosives trapped to his body. He shouted out to the soldiers "Go away. I am carrying explosives." Soldiers shouted "Stop Hussam." They arrested him and he has been in prison ever since. "

Palestinians told me that the Israeli army must have informed the media beforehand of the boy's arrival at the checkpoint so photographers could photograph and film the boy. There are more than 600 checkpoints and barriers in the West Bank. The Palestinian authorities and the mother believe the Israeli secret services used a West Bank collaborator to set the boy up as a suicide bomber so the world would condemn Palestinians for sacrificing its children. The boyish teenager told the BBC he wanted to die because he didn't like school. Photographs and film of the boy at the checkpoint made television and newspapers throughout the world. The world condemned Palestinians for allowing their children to become suicide terrorist.

The trauma of Palestinian families does not end there. Israeli units engage in night raids on the homes of families searching for individuals who they believe have engaged in street demonstrations, organised non-violent protests or members of organisations that Israel seeks to destroy. Palestinian families told me they often go to bed in their clothes as the soldiers refuse to allow the arrested ones to dress before they take them away. I heard of two soldiers who broke into one house demanding to know the whereabouts of a young Palestinian. Holding her son in her arms, the mother pleaded with the soldiers to leave. Her fearful son told the soldiers he had no idea where his friend was hiding. The soldiers continued to scream at the teenager for information. One of the soldiers pointed the gun at the boy's head and shot him. He died in the arms of his loving mother.

The regular night raids on Palestinian families constitute one of numerous forms of abuse. Over the years of visits to Nablus, I have listened first hand to the terrifying accounts of these raids. Living in the state of constant terror, mother, father and children will all sleep in the same room waiting night after night waiting for soldiers to smash open their front door. Families are often forced to stand all night huddled together refused even permission to use the toilet. Soldiers rip out hard drives of any computers and destroy electrical equipment. Soldiers throw refrigerators and televisions on the floor. Tanks smash down homes and crush cars, sometimes several homes and cars together. Sometimes residents are trapped in homes. Soldiers will defecate and piss in homes, force fathers and sons to stand virtually naked and utter crude sexual remarks about their daughters or sisters. It is part of the campaign to terrorise and humiliate the Palestinians.

"The cypress trees, behind the soldiers, are minarets that protect the sky against declivity. And behind the iron fence the soldiers are urinating – under a tank's guard and the autumn day completes its golden stroll.."

Many of the women seated in the circle come to the centre on a regular basis where Rawda and her team offer personal support, counselling and therapy, as well as guidance in practical matters at home. On one wall is a very large mural of drawings by children and young people illustrating their suffering and their hopes with poems and prayers for peace and justice, and lines from Palestinian poets. Throughout the meeting my eye kept drifting across to the mural, to this collage of suffering and its resolution. On another wall, a Palestinian woman has painted a large collage of young women huddled together to give support to each other.

After each woman responded briefly to my questions, I then asked the women as a collective many questions about their feelings, their pain and what matters to them today after enduring such devastating losses in recent years. Some of the women brought with them photographs of their late husband, sons or daughter.

"I couldn't stop eating. I was trying to fill a terrible hole inside at the death of my children. The food had no taste at all in it. I just ate and ate.

"I could not eat anything. I was wasting away. I wanted to die when the soldiers shot and killed my wonderful husband. I got thinner and thinner."

"The settlers shot my husband dead as we were driving home with the children. The children were on the back seat. We were trapped in the car."

"I cried and cried and cried. At night, my husband cried and cried as well in another room. "

"They killed my children. I walked and walked around the streets of Nablus until late into the night. I felt nothing. I had lost all feelings. I was in the land of the dead."

"Our boy was shot dead for throwing stones at tanks. We did everything possible to keep our children away from trouble spots. How could soldiers shoot defenceless children?"

*"If you'd contemplated the victim's face
and thought, you would have remembered your mother in the gas
chamber, you would have liberated yourself
from the rifle's wisdom
and changed your mind: this isn't how identity is reclaimed."*

As the hours went by, I began to develop a sense of these women's determination to transform their lives rather than fall into suicidal depression. I sat in the chair for five hours without getting out of the seat. My questions covered a range of issues.

- What are your feelings now?
- What supports you in your anguish?
- Do you see yourself as a victim?
- Do you still live in fear?
- Where does your empowerment to live come from?
- Do you miss the warmth of your husband beside you in bed at night?
- Does it upset you if others say you should be happy to have a martyr in the family?
- Do you find yourself living in the past or in the present?
- How do you survive financially?
- Do you experience domestic violence?

- What enables you to carry on?
- What makes you happy?

The women insisted that I speak on my perceptions of what I had heard over several hours. I reflected back a lot. I told them that if they lived feeling sorry for themselves they built up an identity of being a "victim." I said "This is a dangerous identity. Firstly, it means that the Israeli occupation has succeeded in the occupation of your inner life. You have become victims of the victimisers. You will feel depressed, anxious and unable to support others and yourself. "

"Some of you describe yourselves as "survivors" and wonder why you survived. I describe the word "survivor" as another unhealthy emotional identity. This happens when families carry pain and trauma after the killing of loved ones. The identity of the survivor arises through clinging to memory, to past terror, to past abuse, no matter how obscene." I explained that clinging to memory inhibits expressions of love and compassion in the present. "An authentic human being stands free from being a victim or a survivor. You then rediscover your dignity. Please remember this."

*In siege, life becomes the time
between remembering life's beginning
and forgetting its end.*

I added: "It is the great task of facilitators and counsellors to open up the past, expose the terrible anguish, without creating an identity out of it for the individual, family or society. If you are a "victim" or a "survivor", you give the Israeli government and its army power over your lives. You submit to the view that the strong rule the weak. I reminded the women that the Women's Centre in Nablus provides an invaluable service for dignity and empowerment in every area of their life.

"Secondly, victims will become victimisers at a later date. The abused will become the abusers. A small example. The soldiers at the checkpoint start abusing your husband threatening to arrest him. Perhaps they don't like the look of his face. If he shows any animosity to the soldiers, he faces serious consequences." (I remember a couple of years ago at one checkpoint witnessing a soldier grab a Palestinian man in the long queue, throw him to the ground, turn his rifle around to smash the butt of the rifle in the man's face. Other soldiers pulled the violent soldier away. "Your husband arrives home upset and angry at the way the soldiers treated him. He shouts abusive language at you for the smallest thing. He knows the consequences of saying anything at the checkpoint. So his repressed frustration and anger comes out on his family when he arrives home."

*I will scream in my solitude
Nor to wake up the sleeping
But for my scream to wake me
From my imprisoned imagination*

I asked the women: "What do you say? What do you do?" The abused will become the

abusers – unless there is insight and self-understanding. “It is not possible for it to be otherwise. We have to find a mature and wise response to the depths of trauma and bereavement. We have to move from the unspoken to the spoken and apply skilful means to the resolution of such suffering. There is nothing more important than that. A true liberation movement ends the victim and survivor identity.

It also ends the subsequent reaction to it by making others victims of unresolved aggression.”

Westerners often ask me if Palestinians are interested in the Dharma of spiritual practice. I reply that the Palestinians I meet are profoundly committed to the Four Noble Truths of suffering, causes for it, resolution and the means to resolve it. I witness their dedication to these Four Truths, morning, noon and night, primarily through speaking, listening, inquiry, reflections and guided meditations.

*The siege, my metaphorical siege, will extend
until I teach myself the ascetics of meditation:
before myself – an iris cried
after myself - an iris cried
and the place is staring at the futility of the ages.*

Some fathers find themselves torn between conflicting emotions about their wife and children. If a father speaks up for his family when soldiers arrive at their home, the soldiers will arrest him, force him into the back of an army vehicle and take him away. He cannot then support his family for years. If he says nothing, he feels he is not a real man but a weak person who cannot protect his family from abuse.

By the end of the workshop, the room was full of animated conversation in all directions... The young woman, who had lost two husbands, smiled more often. The Women’s Study Centre in Nablus serves clearly as a place of refuge for hundreds of women every year. We talked. We smiled. “Christopher, we want you to be our delegate. We are trapped in Nablus. Please tell the world about our terrible situation,” said one of the mothers who lost two sons.

I promised to write this report to send out in the West. The lovely staff then provided us with Turkish coffee, cups of tea, cakes and biscuits. I believe most of the mothers, daughters and sisters of the martyrs as well as myself enjoyed the taste of the drinks and the biscuits.

“With language you overcame identity

A MEETING WITH PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES IN NABLUS

In the evening, I met in the same conference room with representatives of the Palestinian citizens living in and around Nablus. I had the opportunity to listen, to learn and to

respond. These representatives included the director of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), director and imam of the Islamic Ministry, a judge, an organiser of a Palestinian political party, a journalist, an archaeologist, an officer for an international aid organisation based in Nablus, director of the Women's Centre, head of communications in the university, a public relations officer, a retired member of the Palestinian Authority, a much respected Nablus resident who had been in Israeli gaols for 16 years and a Nablus businessman. Several spoke English. The representatives included several women. (Fifty five percent of students at Nablus University are young women). Five women have been elected to the Palestinian government.

We explored three primary areas of concern in terms of Palestinian life – the struggle for freedom from occupation, the desperate state of the economy /welfare with unemployment rate around 30% upwards, and trying to ensure the basic requisites of food, clothing, housing and medication, and finally and equally important, Palestinian culture/community life.

Some of the representatives were especially critical of Britain's historical role in the current conflict, especially the Balfour Agreement of November 1917 when the British government gave full support to establishing a state for the Jewish people without any consultation of Palestinians. Foreign secretary, James Balfour made the declaration in a letter to Baron Rothschild for forwarding to Zionist organisations. More than 90 years later, that fateful letter still hangs heavy in the air among Palestinians. Yet respected Palestinians know only too well that there is no point in blaming all their troubles on the British, the Israelis or the Americans. They know they have to sustain their determination to liberation, to live in a financially viable society and develop and deepen their cultural/community traditions.

Israel has adopted the British policy of divide and rule (*Latin. divide et impera*) that successive British governments had used world wide to ensure colonial domination. Governments engage in such a strategy to create divisions among the citizens, arrest leaders who form organisations, block travel within the country and terrorise the population to discourage organised protest. The policy shows as tight control over the economy while sewing divisions between groups to stop the development of any alliances. The central view is to maximise daily hardship while allowing minimal functioning of necessities such as work, religion and culture. Israel adopted many of the draconian laws used against the Palestinians at the time of the British mandate.

The representative knew that I had just spent three weeks in Israel. They asked me whether I believed that Israel wanted a just solution to the conflict. I said "No." The Israeli government continue to jeopardise even the start of peace talks whether by invasions, building the Wall of separation of Palestinians from Palestinians as well as from Israel, cutting off East Jerusalem, endorsing the building of more and more settlements or blocking travel. There is no sign of any commitment to any kind of solution. I said I could only report on the continued expansion of Israel and the policy of divide and rule matters above all else.

I told the participants that from my observation, the voices of compassion, the voices of

human rights in Israel, get quieter and quieter. There surely can be no country anywhere where the citizens remain so obedient to the ideology of its government as the citizens of Israel. It is not that people in Israel do not want peace. Israeli citizens, whether in government, Zionists, army, settlers and religionists, claim to want peace. Meditators, yogis and spiritual practitioners want peace. Sadly, the desire for peace is mostly empty rhetoric, a meaningless application of language.

I said that it is vitally important the Palestinians acknowledge Jewish people within Israel and outside Israel who listen to the voices of the Palestinians and know that Palestinian suffering is a 1000-fold greater than Israeli suffering.

I told the men and women in the room there are Jewish lawyers, trained in human rights and international law, who have been foremost in preparing the documentation at the UN to bring the charge of war crimes to the Israeli government and IDF. There are Jewish networks and artists who are true friends of Palestinians. Jewish organisations, Jewish academics, Jewish intellectuals and rabbis have to endure rants of prejudiced and racist Jews in Israel and overseas. You can see on YouTube numerous statements of respected Jews around the world who condemn Israel's policy towards Palestinians. Many of these fearless Jews lost family members in the Holocaust. A few have lost close family members in terrorist attacks on Israel. Some of these Jews have received death threats and hate mail while some Israelis treat them as traitors. These Jews bravely speak up for all Palestinians.

You can also see on YouTube some of the rabid comments from Israeli citizens towards those Jews who wish to hold the state of Israel accountable for its crimes against Palestinians. I mentioned that in the morning that Rawda had showed me on YouTube a clip of a Jewish professor at an American university charging the Israeli government with war crimes. Some applauded in the large lecture hall while other Jewish students hurled abuse at him. The foot of the clip showed an Arabic translation for viewing in the Arab world.

*"All the angels that I love
took spring away from the place yesterday
morning and bequeathed me the volcano summit*

"There are Jewish people in Israel who fully support and give financial backing to refusniks, pacifists, peace organisations, dialogue groups, inter-religious organisations, social and political networks for political justice and reconciliation, as well as international solidarity movements on behalf of Palestinians.

Nelson Mandela, perhaps the most respected living person, wrote in letter to Thomas L. Friedman, the New York Times columnist. "Apartheid is a crime against humanity. Israel has deprived millions of Palestinians of their liberty and property. It has perpetuated a system of gross racial discrimination and inequality." <http://www.nowpublic.com/world/nelson-mandela-speaks-gazan-crisis>

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of Israeli politicians, army generals, diplomats, as well as citizens, show no real interest in a just solution. Rhetoric remains. "We all want peace" is the give away one-liner devoid of significance unless accompanied with action.

Nobody around the table interrupted me when I spoke about my perceptions about Israel. I spoke for several minutes.

"Just as we are sitting this evening around a table examining the Palestinian struggle, social welfare and culture, there are Israeli politicians and senior army offices sitting around tables in Tel Aviv planning fresh strategies to ensure the continuity of divide and rule, harassment and punishment of all Palestinian people. Powerful voices in Israel have demonised you."

Every year when I come to Israel, I see that the authorities have found new ways to inflict as much hardship as possible on Palestinians.

The latest new order of the Israeli government concerns Palestinian travel permits. Israel will regard any Palestinian entering the West Bank from elsewhere in the West Bank or Gaza, who does not hold the correct permit, issued by the Israeli authorities, as an "infiltrator." So Israel has introduced a law to make criminals of Palestinians who live in different parts of their own land.. If caught at a checkpoint or elsewhere, Palestinians will face being "deported" or up to seven years imprisonment. The Israeli authorities will now decide who is a resident of what area rather than how long a Palestinian has been living in a certain area. The new order can also block foreigners from entering the West Bank unless Israel has granted the foreigner a permit. The order does not apply to the 250,000 Jewish settlers living illegally on Palestinian land who do not have to pass through checkpoints.

At the meeting, one teacher told me he has been living in Nablus for 20 years with his wife and family but has a Gaza residency card. He cannot step outside of the city of Nablus, as the soldiers at checkpoints may never allow him back home. Israeli authorities refuse to register change of addresses. One senior person in Nablus cannot leave because she came from East Jerusalem years ago. Families and individuals are arriving at checkpoints to Nablus from another part of the Occupied Territories. Soldiers refuse permission for families or certain members of families to return to their homes because they do not have the "proper residency documentation." The siege of villages, towns, cities, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, continues. It is a slow strangulation of 2.5 million people. Divide and rule. The Israeli policy is to detain and deport families or members of families from one part of their own country to another.

I spent three hours walking around Nablus with a local businessman. I did not see a single other Westerner in my stay in Nablus. We visited the markets, the old Roman heart of Nablus dating back 1000 – 2000 years and wandered the lanes and streets. The atmosphere remains full of past and present history oozing out of the cobblestones and alleyways. Posters, some torn and fading, of the martyrs hang from the walls of the old city. Palestinian built shrines built where Palestinians died at the hands of the soldiers.

Despite the relentless siege, there is a buzz in the town of communication. I witnessed a demonstration of hundreds of parents, teachers and children waving placards in Arabic calling for an end to child labour in Palestine. No country in the world holds as many nonviolent demonstrations as the Palestinians. Palestinian women and children are bold and outspoken. It's in their blood.

The businessman told me: "It's not so simple. I have shops. My father opened his first shop in 1935. Mothers and fathers come to me begging me to give their children a little work so they can earn a few shekels so their children do not join stone throwing demonstration, get beaten or, worst of all, get shot. Some businesses here exploit child labour, too. It is not always easy to tell whether it is kindness or exploitation of children."

I could sense from the morning workshops with the women and the evening meeting with the representatives that the Palestinians place more and more faith in the non-violent struggle for human rights, for decency and for self-respect as well as for an independent state. Very, very few Palestinians have any faith left in armed struggle or acts of terror. I was told there is an overwhelming consensus in Nablus that violent struggle, including the use of stones, brings untold depths of suffering upon Palestinian families, due to the brutality and acts of revenge of Israeli army units, as well as suffering on innocent Jewish families. Soldiers will pursue some young people throwing stones, beat them up or fire rubber or live bullets at them.

Rawda told me that men, women and children in the West Bank sobbed in front of their television sets as Arab television channels brought them live broadcasts in early 2009 of the Israeli massacre on the streets of Gaza. I heard in Nablus of growing concerns that the next Israelis attack by air and land will be against the people of Nablus to punish them for being the centre for the two intifadas. All services then get cut including electricity. I saw people in Nablus being buying old and rusty oil lamps in a market in preparation for the worst.

*A hole in the wall was enough
for the stars to teach you the hobby
of staring into the eternal.*

MAY ALL BEING LIVE IN PEACE AND HARMONY

Mahmoud Darwish (1942 – 2008) is the foremost Palestinian poet, whose words express the love, struggle, and reality of the Palestinian people. He is revered in his homeland and throughout the Arab world. Extract of his poems used in this article come from *The Butterfly's Burden* Mahmoud Darwish, Translated by Fady Joudah Bloodaxe Books, Northumberland.UK. 2007

*Dharma – teachings of the Buddha to resolve suffering

Photos of Nablus. See <http://www.christophertitmuss.org/index.php/welcome/eng/photos>
Then click on Palestine folder, then click on slideshow above right and options for fast viewing.

2.

Summer Programme.

French Yatra near Limoux. 10th Year July 22 to August 1, 2010

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ENGLAND, DEVON

Wednesday July 14 to Sunday July 18 2010

DHARMA DOME, BUDDHAFIELD FESTIVAL

DHARMA TEACHINGS, INQUIRY AND WORKSHOPS

Christopher Titmuss (Thursday, Friday, Saturday speaking)

The site address is:

The Gallops, Clayhidon, Nr Wellington, North Devon, England (roughly six miles south of Taunton and three miles from Wellington)

Around 3000 adults and children go to this festival with numerous workshops, one to one sessions for mind, body, spirit, plus music and dancing.

Must book in advance.

www.buddhfield.com

FRANCE

July 22 to August 1. 2010

Come to the 10th annual French Yatra. It will start on late afternoon of Thursday, July 22 to **Sunday, 12 noon on August 1, 2010** .

It will be held in the lovely region of Limoux in southern part of France. Limoux is situated south of Carcassonne and Toulouse – easily accessible by air, train and coach.

Teachers: Christopher Titmuss, Christelle and others.

In 2009, we had a total of 95 adults and children. For 2010 we are not setting a limit on the numbers. We would like to encourage all those who have been on a past yatra to join with us in our celebration of the 10th Yatra.

A Yatra is a pilgrimage. Men, women and children have gone on walking pilgrimages for thousands of years. Our Yatra is run entirely on donations (dana) to cover all the running costs, and donations for teachers etc.

If you require further information about the Dharma Yatra, and you cannot locate it in this website, then send an e-mail to the address below. Please keep your e-mail with any questions rather precise. Thank you.

Do join. It is a wonderful event.

Please ensure you register so we have knowledge of numbers. Retreat will begin from near Le Moulin de Chaves Meditation Centre

To register, please send €50 or £35 or more to support initial costs or pay upon arrival. For further information contact Muriel in France murielbansard@laposte.net

www.dharmayatra.org

info@dharmayatra.org

Do join the Yatra. It is a wonderful event.

GERMANY

Thursday 18.00 August 26 to Sunday 13.00 August 29, 2010

A SILENT RETREAT - INSIGHT MEDITATION (Vipassana)

Christopher and Tineke Osterloh

with Christopher

This classical Vipassana retreat will include comprehensive meditation instructions in Vipassana (Insight) meditation, a daily talk and regular one to one meetings with Christopher. The retreat offers the opportunity to go deeply into ourselves in a supportive and caring atmosphere. The retreat points to inner renewal, a deep sense of presence and the emptying of the mind for fresh perceptions and insights. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. No groups. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. There will be opportunity for one to one meetings with the teachers. The retreat will be taught in English/German.

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3.

Confession of a Buddhist Atheist *Review of Stephen Batchelor's new book*

Christopher Titmuss
2532 words

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Confessions of Buddhist Atheist

Stephen Batchelor

Spiegel and Grau Publishers,

March 2010

New York

£16.87

\$26.00

While at Ein dor in northern Israel in April 2010, Eran Harpaz, one of our Dharma teachers in Israel, kindly gave me a copy of the newly published *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, by Stephen Batchelor that became available in bookshops the previous month. Phew. It is

gripping reading as Stephen relates his first hand experiences of Buddhism during his ten years as a Buddhist monk (five years in the Tibetan Mahayana tradition, mostly in India and Switzerland, and five years of practise in Zen, mostly in Korea) and in the subsequent years after he disrobed and returned to the West.

It an intimate, warts and all, account of his personal anxieties, doubts and conflicts with Buddhism, especially the orthodoxy of Tibetan Buddhism's view of the world and the taking for granted of beliefs such as rebirth.

There are no fresh revelations about Stephen's inner life for those who know him or have read his previous works. I have had the privilege of knowing Stephen since 1974 when we were monks together in Elysium House, McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, the Indian town where the Tibetan community set up its headquarters with the Dalai Lama after he fled China in 1959.

In the early 1980's Stephen, Alan Wallace, Roger Wheeler (all three ordained in the Mahayana tradition) and myself engaged in correspondence about the application of the Dharma in the West. At this time, Stephen and his future wife, Martine, were practising in Zen Master Kusan Sunim's monastery at Songgwangsa in Korean. I had encouraged Roger Wheeler (whom I had met at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, before and after he disrobed) to come to live in the Sharpham House community that Maurice Ash, the owner of this large Palladium House, and I started to set up in 1982. This impressive historic building is about 50 minutes walk along a country pathway from my home in Totnes. I was equally pleased when Stephen and Martine agreed to join the community in 1985 (see page 77). Guy Armstrong and Sally Clough, now senior Dharma teachers at Sprit Rock meditation centre in Marin County, California, USA, were two of the first residents in the community.

Gaia House opened in 1983 and The Barn Community opened in 1984, More and more dedicated Dharma practitioners worldwide came to live in and around Totnes. We set up a variety of programmes including an annual yatra along the coast, workshops, evening talks, peace vigils and non-violent protests. A number of Dharma friends gave me immense support when I stood for Parliament for the Green Party in Totnes in April 1986.

We became a small network of post-monastic Buddhists, along with other Western practitioners returning from India, Thailand and Burma, and others from the UK and worldwide who we knew through our international teaching programme. Stephen and Martine were pillars of this Dharma community around Totnes and lived at Sharpham House for about 15 years until they moved to France in 2000 (Page 238.)

Stephen's doubts, struggles and questions about Buddhism have been his ongoing theme ever since I have known him, and his new book is the latest exploration of this struggle. Titles of some of his previous books indicate Stephen's angst around Buddhism – *Alone with Others*, *The Faith to Doubt*, *Buddhism without Beliefs* and *Living with the Devil* (about the Buddha and Mara). He has used **agnostic@...** for his email addresses since he opened his first email account in the 1990s. Chapter titles in his new book again convey his doubts

and perplexities: *Buddhist Failure*, *Eel Wriggling*, *Great Doubt* and *A Secular Buddhist*.

Nevertheless, his anxieties and personal torments have not prevented him from making a very valuable contribution to our understanding of the Buddhist tradition, past and present, in the above books and others such as the award-winning *The Tibet Guide*, *The Awakening of the West* and *Verses from the Centre*, and his translation of the much-loved text of Shantideva "A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life." In his current book, he tells readers that upon the publication of that translation in 1975: "The paperback (of Shantideva's book) gave me a sense of self worth and fulfilment that meditation alone had so far failed to provide." (Page 56).

Stephen's concerns and doubts are never far away in his personal and public reflections on Buddhism. He has concentrated on his relationship to Buddhism throughout his adult life. He has used his doubts and questions to valuable effect to support his insights and honest appraisal of numerous expressions of blind faith and unquestioning obedience to authority found in Buddhism.

Articulate, perceptive and an enormously gifted writer, Stephen is, in my view, probably the foremost champion of agnosticism in the Buddhist world. I suspect, though, that the orthodox followers of Tibetan Buddhism, both Asians and Westerners, will regard *Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist* as a diatribe against their faith as much as an autobiographical account of Stephen's soul searching (if I can use such an expression in the Buddhist context) in relation to what his Buddhist masters expected him to believe, if not swallow. The Dalai Lama and his staff do not escape criticism (page 205).

A group of Western teachers met with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1999 over several days. The Dalai Lama declined to sign a letter that he had originally endorsed, prepared by Stephen on behalf of 22 Western Buddhist teachers, which would have amounted to a "name and shame" policy on certain Buddhist teachers if a teacher "shows no sign of reform" in terms of any sexual involvement with their students. I agree with the Dalai Lama for his decision to step back from placing his signature on the statement. The Sangha around the teacher must make decisions on matters relating to their teacher (s), not a centralised body of teachers.

A Book of Two Halves

Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist falls primarily into two halves with some ebb and flow between both sections. The first half explore Stephen's spiritual journey starting with his upbringing, mostly from his mother, and his journey to north India, where he engaged in Buddhist meditation practices and then took full ordination. Stephen then shifts over to the second half of his book where he reveals his reflections and research on the life of the Buddha looking at the Buddha in humanist terms rather than as a religious icon of absolute enlightenment. Stephen's impassioned and thoughtful voice with his agnostic views on religious authority permeates both halves of the book. It is important for readers to bear in mind that the book is a highly personal view of Buddhism and the Buddha – as Stephen himself acknowledges.

You can get the sense of Stephen's struggles from various perceptions about himself over the years from childhood and adulthood:

"My insincerity kept nagging away at me. By the lights of my Tibetan teachers I was a Buddhist failure." Page 7

"From an early age I was troubled by how rarely I experienced genuine contentment." Page 10

"Vacillation and doubt seemed locked in a perennial struggle with faith and conviction." Page 28

"I would be waking up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat agonising." Page 36

"I am struck how much time I spent wallowing in anxiety, doubt, insecurity and unrequited longing." Page 40

"I resolved the dilemma by adopting an agnostic position on rebirth." Page 41.

"By the end of my stay in England, my inner turmoil was no more resolved than when I arrived. If anything, it had increased." Page 44.

"No matter, how I practised this meditation, it failed to undermine my tendency to fall wretchedly in love with beautiful young women who attended the class at Tharpa Choeling." Page 47.

"Throughout my years as a monk, I had often suffered the disquietening suspicion that I was an imposter." Page 90.

Stephen writes that when he told Geshe Rabten, his Tibetan master, he was leaving: *"In an agony of guilt and remorse, I mumbled something about only staying (in a Zen monastery) for a year or so." Page 59.*

I must say I squirmed a little at the title of the book. *Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist*. It's the sort of title used by those desperately seeking public attention to confess their behaviour or as a big front-page headline from a tabloid newspaper. Go to Amazon and see the list of book titles starting with *"Confessions of..."* The back of this book includes an endorsement by Christopher Hitchens, (a neo conservative English journalist and lecturer who is well known in Britain for being a vociferous supporter of the war against Iraq, and who speaks of Islam as *Islamofascist* while rubbishing the concept of God). In Hitchen's endorsement on the back jacket, he proclaims that we "are now giving way to ethical and scientific humanism in which lies our only real hope." Really?

But we should not assume from Hitchens that Stephen has been converted to humanism – he continues to write lucidly and thoughtfully on the Buddhist tradition and offers invaluable Buddhist retreats with Buddhist meditation practices. Stephen continues to be a very important voice in the Sangha, and, I believe, has the intellectual integrity to move out of the Buddha-Dharma-Sangha to become a humanist if he felt so disillusioned with the Triple Gem. The cheap title of the book and Hitchen's endorsement fail to convey Stephen's serious, insightful and perceptive recollections. There is no hint of sensationalism in its pages but a personal account of one's man ongoing doubts.

It appears that Stephen, always charming and consistently warm hearted, has changed his view from being merely agnostic about rebirth and has become a firm disbeliever in it. He

offers readers the usual scientific analysis for disproving rebirth (Page 38). I would part company with Stephen here as he appears to assert we have only one life. I cannot see the evidence for the self having even one life, let alone numerous lifetimes. There is no evidence to show the self has anything at all, or is anything whatsoever. To believe the self has one life or many lives misses the whole point of understanding the nature of dependent arising.

Stephen writes: "I realized then to pursue my vocation as a Tibetan Buddhist monk, belief in rebirth was not optional but obligatory. ...I could not, without being a hypocrite, present myself in public as a Buddhist monk." (Page 39.) As a former Buddhist monk myself, I think that Stephen would have been far more at home in the the foremost expressions of Theravada Buddhist tradition, for all of its flaws, than in Tibetan Buddhism. For example, I asked my teacher, Ajahn Buddhadasa, the foremost Dharma teacher in Thailand of the 20th century, about rebirth. The heart of my questions to Ajahn Buddhadasa boiled down to the following:

CT "Is there rebirth?"

AB "Yes."

CT "Is it important to believe in rebirth?"

AB "Yes."

CT "Do you believe in the end of rebirth?"

AB "Yes."

CT "What is reborn?"

AB "The ego."

CT "How do I know there is rebirth?"

AB "Through your own experience."

CT "What do you mean?"

AB "The Buddha teaches the end of rebirth of the ego when it arises in the here and now."

CT "So you are not talking about belief in future lives?"

AB "No. Talk of future lives is for simple minded Buddhists. There is one priority. End the rebirth of the ego. It will keep being reborn in nama/rupa (mind/body) in your daily life until there is the realization of the emptiness of "I" and "my."

I also cannot recall my other teacher, Ajahn Dhammadhara, Thailand's foremost vipassana teacher in his day, showing the slightest interest in rebirth. He had next to no interest in the past or future of this life, let alone past or future lives. If Stephen had met with these teachers in southern Thailand in the early 1970's, I suspect he would not have had to write this book or feel he was an "imposter" in Buddhism. My two venerable teachers may not have eliminated Stephen's ongoing doubts in rebirth but they would consider holding to any views of future lives, for or against, as a distraction to practice and liberation.

Those of us who had a contented and happy childhood, remained free from fears and anxieties in adulthood, and have not bothered too much about the weird and bizarre views of others, especially religious and secular authorities, may find Stephen's personal account a little hard to relate to. We draw upon the wisdom, ignore the wacky, and endeavour to

practice and live the Dharma. I had two or three meetings with Geshe Rabten, Stephen's teacher, in McLeod Ganj. I left the room shaking my head but I never gave these meetings a second thought.

Writing about Gotama, Stephen explains "As my familiarity with the Pali Canon (collected discourses of the Buddha) grew, not only did my understanding of Buddhism begin to change but also my understanding of what kind of person Siddhartha Gotama was." In his fascinating analysis of the Buddha's life (page 167), Stephen comments on the Buddha's residence of 19 vassas (three months retreats during the monsoon) at the city of Savatthi, during his 45 years of teachings."

During this period, King Pasenadi, the violent, manipulative and unpredictable ruler of Savatthi, had married a slave girl sent by the Governor of the Sakyan kingdom. Pasenadi thought she was a member of the royal family. It became a complex royal soap opera. Stephen concludes that the "survival of his (Gotama's) community depended on the acting skills of a slave girl." (Page 171). He also claims that Gotama did not criticise the king. He writes: "Gotama found his position compromised by the ambitions, lies and pride of his relatives in Sakya" and "the success of Gotama's work depended on his maintaining cordial relations with the churlish King Pasenadi." These are suppositions. Gotama gave 844 discourses in Savatthi examining such themes as ethics, virtue, caste, violence, greed, hypocrisy, egotism, selfishness, mood swings and unresolved personality issues.

In a very small city like Savatthi, citizens would have known whom Gotama was referring to, directly or indirectly. Besides, Gotama knew intimately from his upbringing the politics of royal families. Stephen's muses about whether the Buddha compromised his teachings over the royal scandal. Frankly, I doubt if the Buddha cared one iota about pleasing King Pasenadi. Is Stephen perhaps telling us a little about his own relationship to authority?

Throughout the closing chapters, Stephen explores some of the religious politics of Tibetan Buddhism, his views of the Buddha's lifelong struggles with Mara (if this is such a nightmare for the Buddha as Stephen implies, be grateful you are not the Buddha) and Stephen's view of himself as a secular Buddhist.

Confessions of a Buddhist Atheist goes along at a breathtaking pace. A totally absorbing read, which I would thoroughly recommend to anyone. Somehow, I don't think we have heard the last of Stephen's struggles.

4

Evolving into Hell

American Guru: A story of Love, Betrayal and Healing
Book Review

Christopher Titmuss
2712 words

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American Guru
Former students of Andrew Cohen speak out
William Jenner and contributors
Forward by Stephen Batchelor
Published by Epigraph Books, USA.2009
£11.00
\$14.95

In 1997, the New York publisher of *The Mother of God* by Luna Tarlo sent me a copy for review of her book about her son, Andrew Cohen, an American guru. She described Andrew as an "arrogant, power-hungry, dangerous figure who practices mind control over adherents."

Seven years later, another New York publisher sent me a copy of Andre Van der Braak's book, *Enlightenment Blues*, an account of his 11 years of suffering abuse as a disciple of Andrew Cohen.

Seven years on again, I received recently yet another book published in New York for review about Andrew Cohen titled "*American Guru. A story of Love, Betrayal and Healing – Former students of Andrew Cohen speak out*" written by William Jenner and contributors. Wendy Smith, Karen Merigo, Susan Bridle, Richard Pitt, Mario Puljiz and Luna Tarlo contributed their harrowing experiences.

I hesitate to review yet another book exposing the scandals around Andrew involving power and money, and I have no intention to review any more after this one. Will Andrew's current cult members feel compelled to write a book in a few years following their disillusionment and departure? Maybe.

American Guru includes accounts of the experiences of former followers who fled the cult. Report after report reveals a horror story of emotional brutality, punishment, threats and acts of terror with followers having to give significant sums of money or expensive gifts to regain Andrew's approval.

Here are some quotes of Andrew Cohen violent treatment of his followers or treatment he is said to have endorsed.

Page 31: "*Andrew would direct one student to slap another; in others he administered the slaps himself.*"

Page 32: "*He (Andrew) called her evil and ordered that the walls floors and ceiling of her office, be painted red to signify the spilled blood of her guru.*"

Page 33: "*There she was met by four female students who, having guided her onto a plastic sheet on the floor, each poured a bucket of paint over her head as a 'message of*

gratitude' from Andrew."

Page 34: *"At Cohen's instigation repeatedly called her a coward."*

Page 34: *"I could hear her (Andrew's wife, Alka) screaming at Stan and punching him. It was a chilling experience to listen to him crying and moaning his apologies as Alka beat him while screaming: 'How dare you betray Andrew? How dare you?'"*

Page 35: *"Andrew had him start digging a deep 6' by 8' foot trench in the woods using only a shovel.' At that time, Andrew was into making videos of students who 'weren't doing well.'"*

Page 35: *" He wrote in a desperate letter to Andrew: 'If I don't come through (in terms of writing an introduction to a book Andrew was publishing), I will cut my finger off.' Andrew called Mikaela, a physician to come to see him, she was instructed to tell Jeff that Andrew was taking him up on his offer to sacrifice his finger. She should take out her scalpel, her mask, her gloves, a sponge – everything she would need for such an operation – and lay them all out. When Mikaela visited Jeff, he had barely slept for a week. She had followed Andrew's instructions precisely... He left Andrew a few weeks later."*

Page 36: *"Andrew occasionally sent close students individually to the lake to chant some affirmation or repentance while repeatedly submerging themselves in the water...the lake was not yet frozen but it was very, very cold....they remained in the lake for the whole hour... The next thing I remember was regaining consciousness propped up in a shower. I lost consciousness for 50 or 55 minutes."*

Page 39: *"Andrew by his own account had then suggested that the three of them drop their women and spend the following evening with some prostitutes.... He (Andrew) ordered him to visit prostitutes frequently as a formal 'spiritual practice.' John begged him repeatedly to be relieved of his obligations."*

Page 44: *"You (Andrew) actually said to me that when a 'committed' or a 'senior dharma' student 'blows it,' it'll cost them \$20,000 in karmic retribution."*

Page 45: *"I cashed out a \$60,000 IRA (Individual Retirement Account) and gave it to Andrew under severe pressure."*

Page 46: *"Vicious verbal attacks from other students took such a severe toll on my emotional state that I felt that I might break down completely. In desperation, I offered everything that I had to Andrew; an inheritance of \$80,000 that I had recently received following my father's death."*

Page 50: *" Men I considered my brothers became adversaries. They shouted in my face, chided me, insulted me and abused me verbally. They accused me of resisting my master and ruining his vacation."*

I have not seen Andrew since the 1990's. In the early 1980's, he sat retreats with me in the USA, Switzerland, India and Gaia House. To his credit, he practised as a dedicated Dharma student. In the mid 1980's, he attended satsang with Poonja-ji, an Advaita teacher living in Lucknow, North India, who told Andrew that he was the student he "was waiting for his whole life." However, Poonja told numerous other students the same thing about them.

Around that time, Poonja and I used to correspond. Poonja described me as "an enlightened master" in one letter to me. It was, at best, a sweet thing to write although we never actually met until years later! Poonja liked to engage in flourishes of language. Sadly, Andrew took everything Poonja-ji said about him as literal truth. These three books reveal the consequences.

In his foreword to this latest book about Andrew, Stephen Batchelor recalls the formation of the cult Andrew Cohen first created in my home town of Totnes, Devon, England during the mid 1980's. Stephen, who lived at the time in the Sharpham Community, just outside Totnes, attended a satsang that Andrew offered one evening. Stephen writes: "It was one of the most tedious evenings I can remember."

Stephen goes on: "I regret now not having spoken out more strongly against what was going on around Andrew Cohen at the time. " There is some implication here that if Stephen and others had spoken out it might have made a difference. I doubt it. People frequently expressed their concerns to Andrew including messages from Poonja-ji and students. I spoke to him on a number of occasions. Andrew had become obsessed with his own hubris. His organisation claims **(page 134)**"Andrew has always been an innovative teacher using all kinds of contemporary cultural expressions to help illuminate to his students ways in which individuals can support or derail their own higher aspirations."

American Guru includes a nine-page interview with Andrew Cohen's mother, Luna Tarlo. In the interview, William Jenner asks Luna of her memories of her visit to India some 25 years ago (in the mid 1980's). Here is an extract from this interview where she recalls Andrew "got very hard, very aggressive forcing me to go Christopher Titmuss's retreat in Bodh Gaya."

WY. *What are your memories of the time in India before Andrew met Poonja?*

LT. I once said to Andrew, before he met Poonja, "When you go to India, I would love to come and visit for a few weeks, if it's OK with you." I was being careful, not wanting to force the issue. At the end of a year, he told me to come, and it was on this trip to India that I met Alka, who was to become Andrew's wife some years later. When I arrived, it seemed to me, within a day or two, that this woman hated me. Andrew admitted later that she suffered from extreme jealousy, but as if it were just a bad habit. However, once he even used the word, paranoid. But she regarded me as an enemy from the beginning. She knew that Andrew really loved me. I was very shocked at everything that happened after that.

WY. *What happened?*

LT: This was a turning point. He suddenly got very hard, very aggressive forcing me to go to Christopher Titmuss's retreat in Bodh Gaya. He gave me no choice. I felt intimidated by him for the first time in my life, very uneasy at the change in our relationship. This retreat was for four out of the six weeks I was to be in India. He wanted me to spend a month with Christopher Titmuss, a narcissistic meditation teacher, I disliked. But Andrew admired Christopher enormously. He wanted to be like him: Titmuss was his ideal. Of course, this was before he met Poonja. What is interesting here is that this characteristic of being so insistent completely regardless of my wishes, seemed a sudden aberration on his part. After all, I had been invited to see India with him and I got the impression that he wanted to show me why he loved it. By the end of the retreat, Andrew and Titmuss were enemies and Andrew and Alka were estranged. There was an incident when the two of them – Andrew and Christopher – had a fight and were actually, fists, raised going to hit each other.

WY: *Was this the trip when you first met Andrew's friend Murray Feldman who had already met Poonja? And was this when Murray first told Andrew about Poonja?*

LT: Yes, Andrew, Alka and I had gone to spend a couple of days at Ramana Maharshi's ashram before going to the retreat. That's when we met Murray. I think Murray had met Andrew before or had heard about him from someone. The conversation they had was private, but Andrew told us a little about it. Murray had raved to him about a fantastic guru he called "Poonja-ji."

WY: *Andrew looked up to Murray at that point?*

LT: Oh yes, very much. Later on, after Murray had become Andrew's disciple, I remember saying to Andrew that Murray was going to be his "John the Baptist." It seemed like that at the time. This was not long after Andrew's "transformation." I'd gone back home after Christopher Titmuss's retreat, leaving Andrew pretty miserable about Alka and not knowing what to do next. About three months later, Andrew wrote, telling me to come back. He had already sent me several 20-page letters describing what had happened to him. ..I went back...My son seemed to have been elevated in the eyes of others to the state of a man of great wisdom, a holy man...

WY. *In The Mother of God, you write that Andrew demanded complete surrender from you. You made some very big concessions to him – you intended to get rid of your apartment in New York, you submitted to his public berating of you, and you threw out all of your unpublished writings. In the book, you wrote, "From the filing cabinet to the incinerator, it took five trips to annihilate a total life's work."*

L.T. That was the worst thing I ever did in my life. But I couldn't not do it. It represented my independence and Andrew wanted me to destroy my work as an act of surrender to him. It was completely self-destructive, but there could be no other legitimate love for

Andrew in his cult. It really was horrible. I burned everything. Three novels. The enormity of it shocks me even now. It was the worst thing I ever did to myself...A real miracle happened. I found out years later that I had given my daughter-in-law copies of the novels. I screamed with joy....

WY: You write in your book that Andrew turned the ordinary not only upside down but into something villainous."

LT: What I mean is that little ordinary pleasures like tap-dancing or playing the piano or seeing old friends, somehow, in Andrew's eyes became evil distractions that took us away from him... Once I met U.G.(Krishnamurti, author of *The Mystique of Enlightenment*) my infatuation with Andrew and his cult was over. I knew my life with Andrew was over.

WY: How did you feel after leaving Andrew?

LT: Every time Andrew had done something I considered shameful, I'd have to stuff it away somewhere inside myself. Lots of things happened that bothered me, particularly the use of physical abuse as a way of breaking the ego. ..The way he treated people I thought was horrible. And what about using humiliation to break someone – to take away someone's dignity. That's what he did over and over again, not just to me, but to everybody. And I didn't know then how far he was going with people.

WY: When did you last see Andrew?

LT: I last saw him in about 1988 when we met for a dinner in New York. At the dinner, we could not talk about anything. Everything was too loaded. The only thing we agree upon was a movie. As I walked home after dinner I realized how heartbreaking it was to know I would probably never see him again, but I knew it was the truth.

WY: Final thoughts?

LT: I'm not angry anymore. It's just that this man is damaging people. It's the old story of power corrupts etc. I don't know how it all happened, but I hold Poonja responsible - to what extent I don't know. Andrew naively swallowed up everything. I guess it was what he wanted to hear. But Poonja was playing with fire. One day I'm Andrew is going to go too far and get into a lot of trouble." (Note to readers: No recollection "of fists raised" as Luna Tarlo claims. Usual confidentiality apply for teachers in one to one inter-views with meditators). Years ago, I sent my mother a copy of Luna Tarlo's book. "Why do the mother and son believe they are spiritual?" my mother asked.

I have some sympathy for Lorna's view about Poonja-ji (1910-1997) taking responsibility to some extent for his authorisation in a matter of a month of Andrew as a spiritual teacher. However Poonja-ji would never have sanctioned the kind of behaviour that

Andrew's ex-followers describe.

If it was not for the anguish and despair that Andrew has heaped upon the lives of vulnerable people, we could dismiss these three books as a spiritual soap opera. Ken Wilbur, the American writer on the evolution of consciousness, finds his credibility taking a nosedive the more he feels compelled to defend Andrew's bullying and cruelty towards his followers. See [God Bless the Whole World](#)

First hand experience of the tyranny of power and the emotional pain of innocent devotees needs acknowledgement. Major organisations like the Catholic Church have started to realise this and teachers and followers in tiny American cults need to wake up as well.

Two important elements contribute to the transformation of the human being: love and understanding. Then men and women, adults and children can engage in supportive communication, share depths of experiences, act free from fear and realise liberating insights. Realised human beings stand free from idealisation of authority and engage in a liberated and compassionate way of life. Andrew Cohen articulates with conviction his views on spiritual evolution, the essence of his teachings but this is not confirmation of being evolved. An evolved person has long since left behind the use of violence, bullying and intimidation, products of the primitive mind. Cult leaders inhibit liberation. They live in their little jungle with their unresolved need to be in control.

This book serves as a salutary warning for those who fall under the spell of authoritarianism. "Of 130 of Andrew Cohen's original students, 123 have left him." (**Page 63**). I hear that due to dwindling numbers in his cult, Andrew Cohen, now 55, has been forced to put up for sale his \$7,000,000 centre at Foxhollow in Lenox, Western Massachusetts, USA. He has cut down on his American teaching programme and spends more time playing the drums in a small band, his teenage passion. It's a good step for Andrew to take. He should leave evolved human beings to beat the Drum of the Deathless.

May all being lives in peace and harmony

5.

Dear Readers, I invited Tom Riddle to write about his work as a filmmaker/photographer to communicate acts of service around the world.

Trying to Save the World through Film

Tom Riddle

726 words

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Once on a retreat, I remember that Christopher encouraged everyone there to save the world and enjoy doing it. I like to think that if I'm not exactly saving the world I'm at least

helping it a little bit as I travel around the world taking pictures and making documentaries for various charities, meditation teachers, and meditation centers. And I enjoy it

There is a small development project in northern India that was started thirty years ago by an Indian man who had once taught statistics at the London School of Economics. These days, three times a year, he welcomes Western visitors to his project for three-week stays. It's a wonderful way to experience rural India. The documentary that I made for his project, "Amapurkashi" begins with what I think is the most remarkable 30 seconds I've ever filmed. You can see it at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bd0hl9mDpeQ> and <http://thomasriddle.net/apk/> .

I have made two documentaries for meditation centres.

In a beautiful part of France fairly close to Limoges there is a very picturesque meditation center called, "Le Moulin." You can watch the documentary I made for them by clicking on "Film Tour" at http://www.moulindechaves.org/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,51/ or by searching Google for "Le Moulin" and then clicking the link to the documentary.

In an equally beautiful part of the Swiss Alps is the Meditation Center Beatenberg. The video that I made for them can be viewed at http://www.karuna.ch/xs/cms/index.php?lg=2&id=&sec_id and clicking on "Videos" or, again, you can just search Google for the name of the meditation center.

This year I visited India and made five documentaries.

"Bodh Gaya and the Pragma Vihar School" is a nine-minute fund-raiser that shows some of the charm of Bodh Gaya and describes a small inter-religious school there. You can watch the documentary, which Christopher narrates, learn more about this school, and see a Bolly-wood-style dance piece that the students presented at their annual cultural presentation at <http://thomasriddle.net/pv> . The documentary about the school and Bodh Gaya is also on my Youtube page, " <http://www.youtube.com/user/thomasariddle> ."

On my Youtube page you'll find another documentary about Bodh Gaya called, "Village Life in Bihar." The documentary is my response to the over-sexed Indian music videos that are so popular today. In my documentary there is no sex and no glamour, but there is something very precious. Have a look and see for yourself.

For the last few years I've been urging Christopher to make an audio/sideshow about his life. This year, with the two of us staying in the same hotel in Sarnath, he finally found an opportunity to do it. Dedicated to his grandchildren, "*Christopher Titmuss - a 65 - Year Pilgrimage*" shows some 80 pictures of Christopher as a child, a newspaper reporter, hippie, monk, meditation teacher, and grandfather. It lasts for eight minutes. You can see it at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/denysroad> .

For years I've also urged Jaya Ashworth and Gemma Polo, of Open Dharma, to speak on film about their Open Dharma programmes. They agreed it was a good idea, but somehow we never had the time and place to do it until this year. I filmed them walking down the main street of Sarnath and explaining a little about Open Dharma. The only real difference is that Jaya's is in English and Gemma's is in Spanish. You can see on the opening page of their website, <http://www.opendharma.org/> .

Over the past two years I've been helping a yoga school in Australia, <http://Knoffyoga.com>, make a series of DVDs that teach their style of yoga. I've practiced yoga for 30 years and find that these two yogis are unequalled in their dedication to yoga and in their ability to teach it. You can see sample clips from the DVDs I've produced for them at http://thomasriddle.net/09/yoga_clips.html .

Also, don't forget to take the "Yoga Alignment Flex Test"

at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyFhN-UqDAc> , or just search Youtube for ThomasARiddle, and you'll find it.

It's always a pleasure serving the dharma and to make documentaries for worthy causes who might not otherwise be able to afford a more commercial production team. If you or your organization needs a documentary, kindly contact me at tomriddle@att.net or thomasriddle@gmail.com.

My e-mail address is Tomriddle@att.net or Thomasriddle@gmail.com.

For pictures and documentaryps from Asia and beyond, see <http://www.thomasriddle.net/>. For my Youtube documentaryps see <http://www.youtube.com/thomasariddle>

In the Dharma

Tom Riddle

6.

Update of Christopher's Audio website
www.christophertitmuss.org

Nadamo
217 words

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I have received from Christopher all of his Dharma talks and inquiry sessions from Bodh Gaya and Sarnath, late January and February, 2010, DFP in Germany, March 2010, Ein dor

retreats and Tel Aviv Dharma Gathering, Israel and his silent 7 day retreat at Waldhaus, near Bonn, Germany at the end of April. This amounts to around 40 Dharma talks, meditation instructions, question and answers between January and May, 2010.

I have also more than 20 hours in total of inquiry sessions with Christopher on retreats covering this period.

Many CDS are available of Christopher's teachings addressing a wide variety of themes.

An update has been made concerning the audio website and a new page 'Special Offer' has been added.

<http://www.christophertitmuss.org/index.php/welcome/eng/special>

Please have a look from time to time for some special offers.

See Tom Riddle's item in the Dharma eNews about Bodh Gaya, Christopher's slideshow audio for his grandchildren.

The Information about the school in India (Pragya Vihar school in Bodh-Gaya, India) has been updated.

See this link: <http://www.christophertitmuss.org/index.php/welcome/eng/pvschool>

There is also a link to the Australian website where you will find a newsletter, which is published once a year and a lot more information.

<http://www.dharma.org.au/bda/>

You will find a PayPal button here to give your kind support: <http://www.christophertitmuss.org/index.php/welcome/eng/pvschool>

I wish you all many beautiful days!

Nadamo

Website Audio/ DVD manager

7.

Hands in Lap. Outstretched Hands.
Pete Sketchley

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I am just back from Germany for an experimental operation on my partner Margot - a six hour taxi ride in a wheelchair taxi. The latest high-tech scans and keyhole surgery into the veins deep in her head... You can imagine, we both feel so very grateful that we have free access to such blessings.

Now consider this: of the one million new cases of cancer in India this year, only three percent (3%) of patients will receive effective pain relief medication, and in many states morphine based medication is simply non-existent.

Behind that statistic lies unspeakable suffering as a cancer eats into a bone or liver...

I first stumbled upon those selfless souls at the heart of the Ganga Prem Hospice following the guidance of a wise woman after a retreat in Rishikesh as I made my little yatra up the Himalayas towards the source of the Ganga.

It is a cause that has become... I confess... slightly obsessive... and a journey which has taken me further than my pilgrimage up the mountain.

I realised that one of my many self-delusions is that '*I am a generous dude. I practice generosity*'. I give to emergency appeals... coins to buskers...

Bullshit! These are less than the crumbs from my table!

I am sure I am not alone amongst people who are reading this to admit that, for me, the squirmiest part of any retreat is to sit through the dreaded *Dana Talk*.

I invite you to consider something which proved quite illuminating to us. Think of a number.

What would be an appropriate donation to a sound cause with a dedicated impeccable team?

Now add a nought to the end of it and stand back as your mind reacts!

'But we live off Margot's sickness benefit allowance... We don't even have a car... What if...'

That last one is a killer eh? Well **what if** we lived in some of those mountain village communities frozen to death in the winter, or in the sweltering monsoon... electric wheelchair... pass the paracetamol... What if for sure.

What I came to realise (Gulp) is that I DO ***practice*** generosity.

In my Metta practice I am ***oh so very generous***. I realised that until I integrate generous intentions into my 'everyday life' it is only 'practice' for something to be performed tomorrow, one-day, never.

Now I have found a new confidence to be able to look you in the eye and say dear reader... *'Please amongst all the thousands of good causes, will you consider **this one** as an opportunity to really practice generosity?'*

Incidentally, what gives me the confidence to say this is that I have let go of any expectation or identification that it is in any way for *me*.

Finally I invite you to visit <http://www.gangapremhospice.org/index.htm>

To see more of these wonderful souls and inspiring vision.

You might go via <http://avehicleforgangapremhospice.blogspot.com/> and see that we have a modest appeal for a vehicle which would make 'Hospice in the Home' a reality. You will also see that I am trying to sell my artwork for Ganga P. If any of you have contacts to sell book covers or magazine illustrations etc please forward details on for me. Consider writing an article about this - I was saying to Christopher that our blog is the best kept secret on the net... Or maybe a group of yogis might take up this challenge?

Pete Sketchley
petesketchley@yahoo.com
Zaandijk,
Holland

8.

More Land for Pragya Vihar School, Bodh Gaya
Rick Peterson

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On 20 April , 2010, at 8pm we finalized the purchase of the land adjacent to our school (which is about 15% bigger than our current land). Sr. Shoba, our head teacher, signed the registration deed at the court house at 5 pm and got on a train for Delhi for our Society meeting.

Meanwhile Wajid, our teacher who has been working on the purchase, finished the paper work at 8pm.

The total cost of the purchase was 2,448,483 rupee, (42,705 €, £36,300, \$=\$54,280, A \$60,503)

On 21, April, 2010, we held a society meeting at the home of Ranji and Prama Bhandari. Sr. Bindu, Sr. Shoba and Princy came up from Gaya and I came up from Tiruvannamalai for the meeting. Kabir is now staying in Delhi. Sanjay Kumar, a social worker in Bihar also attended the meeting. Prama was away on some business.

We discussed the purchase of the land and Sr. Shoba informed us of the details and the costs. Then we discussed about building four new classrooms on the land, Sister will draw up the initial proposals..

New Salaries and Providence Fund, (Retirement fund) were explained for those who were not at our meeting in February in Bodh Gaya, along with teaching project as proposed by Kerstin and the addition of a music and dance teacher.

We confirmed that the signatories to the FCRA bank account would be the President, Ranji, the secretary, Sr. Shoba, and the treasurer, Princy.

We wish to thank our many supporters around the world for your kind and generous support. We have been gradually over the years been collecting numerous small donations to make it possible for the outright purchase of the land. Teachers and children are thrilled to see the size of the school area has doubled.

Educational tour to Rajgir and Nalanda

Sr Shobha
Head teacher of Pragya Vihar School
Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India

According to Jawaharlal Nehru, "Education without travelling is not perfect." Travel fulfils the purpose and gives all round development of the students. The school arranges every year a tour to different places of historical importance.

This time, we took our pupils to Rajgir and Nalanda which are the places of great historical significance. Our schoolchildren were very happy to visit these both places. Most of the children went out of Bodhgaya for the very first time in their lives.

Rajgir was once the capital of the ancient dynasty the Maurya dynasty. The great King Ashoka was the greatest King of that dynasty who did a lot of work for the welfare of the people. In Rajgir the Stupa is seem to be established by Japan at the top of the mountain. The place is surrounded by mountains which presents a charming sight .

There is a famous hot water spring in Rajgir .It is said that the water has such chemical which is able to cure skin problems. At the distance 12 km. to the north of Rajgir .there

situated the remains of great ancient university of the world known as Nalanda University. It was the greatest University of the world - famous for imparting quality education?

One can see the joy of their travelling on the faces. They all had a thrilling experience, and gained lot of knowledge about the Guta Dynasty and Nalanda University.

www.bodhgayaretreats.org. See About Bodh Gaya in menu for links to film, photos. Go to www.christophertitmuss.org to make donations, via Paypal, for Pragya Vihar School. It costs €40 per year for the full education of a children. We have 560 children in the school. THANK YOU.

Voted best email of the Year

<http://blogs.muxlim.com/siecantik/voted-the-best-email-of-this-year-and-deservedly>

50 Enlightening Buddhist Blogs

<http://onlinechristiancolleges.net/50-enlightening-buddhist-blogs/>

Christopher's Dharma Blog

<http://christophertitmuss.org/blog/>

9.

Open Dharma Programme

June to October 2010

Jaya, Gemma and Ajay

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The facilitators of Open Dharma (Jaya Ashmore from the US, Ajay Singh from India, and Gemma Polo from Spain) offer silent Deep Rest retreats and year-round teachings to encourage people to find their own unique ways of lighting up with life.

Open Dharma has been offering teachings and retreats since 1999 to contribute to a fulfilled life.

For more information about Open Dharma please watch our 3-minute youtube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pV49WeEjuU> or visit our website: www.opendharma.org

You can also download recorded Dharma talks and guided meditations on a donation basis from our website.

OPEN DHARMA EVENTS IN 2010 with Jaya and Gemma:

13 - 20 June, 2010

Deep rest retreat at Le Moulin de Chaves, near Cubjac, France.

For information and registration, write to:

mail@moulindechaves.org

7-14 July, 2010

Deep rest retreat in North Carolina, USA at the Stone House, home of "radical hospitality."

For information and registration, write to:

opendharma.nc@gmail.com

24-31 July, 2010

Deep rest retreat in Holland

For information and registration, write to:

opendharmaholland@gmail.com

20-22 & 22-29 August, 2010

Deep rest retreats in Catalonia, Spain.

Teachings will be in English and Spanish

For information and registration, write to:

retirosopendharma@gmail.com

September, 2010

Weekend Retreat in Brighton

For information and registration, write to:

opendharmainfo@yahoo.com

1-8 October, 2010

Deep rest retreat in Austria

For information and registration, write to:

opendharma.austria@gmail.com

If you want to stay in touch with Open Dharma, please join one or both of our e-groups:

1) EVENT UPDATES: To hear about Open Dharma events 3-4 times a year, please send a blank email to:

opendharma-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

2) Our MONTHLY e-NEWSLETTER offers teachings, articles, photos, and videos on awakening, meditation, rest, ecology, creativity, the human heart, mind, and more. We also share news about Open Dharma and about Dharmaloca, our small eco-hermitage on a holy mountain in Catalonia, Spain. To join, please click on to the link below: <http://www.opencentre.es/newsletter/?p=subscribe>

Visit our website: www.opendharma.org

SanghaSeva schedule: June to December, 2010,

June 5-15, 2010

Silent meditation retreat, India

A time for silence and reconnecting to ourselves through meditation and contact with nature, high in the Indian Himalayas Facilitators; Ajay Singh, Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

October 5-15, 2010 (dates to be confirmed)

Being Peace work retreat, Palestine and Israel Working towards inner and outer peace by engaging in olive harvesting with Palestinian farmers and supporting peace activists from both communities.

Facilitators; Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

November 26-December 6, 2010 (dates to be confirmed) Silent meditation retreat, India A time for silence and reconnecting to ourselves through meditation, set in the heart of a flourishing disabled community in central India.

Facilitators; Ajay Singh, Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

December 7-28 , 2010(dates to be confirmed)

Anandwan leprosy community work retreat

Living and working in a flourishing community of the abled-disabled. Exploring our own hearts and what connects us to ourselves and to each other.

Facilitators; Ajay Singh, Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

For more info please see www.sanghaseva.org or contact info@sanghaseva.org

August 3 -12, 2010

SANGHA HOLIDAY

Nature invites the sangha to spend a summer holiday together in the south of France. Camping on the river Orb, in the beautiful Parc Naturel du Haut Languedoc, near the village of Vieussan. There won't be any formal teaching, management or schedule. Love for meditation and wisdom is the only requirement to attend to this event. Children welcome.

Denis

www.dharmanature.org

www.myspace.com/denistian

10.

**International Teaching Schedule
Of Christopher Titmuss**

June 2010 to March 2011

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ENGLAND, DEVON

Wednesday July 14 to Sunday July 18 2010

DHARMA DOME, BUDDHAFIELD FESTIVAL

DHARMA TEACHINGS, INQUIRY AND WORKSHOPS

Christopher Titmuss (Thursday, Friday, Saturday speaking)

The site address is:

The Gallops, Clayhidon, Nr Wellington, North Devon, England (roughly six miles south of Taunton and three miles from Wellington)

Around 3000 adults and children go to this festival with numerous workshops, one to one sessions for mind, body, spirit, plus music and dancing.

Must book in advance.

www.buddhfield.com

FRANCE

July 22 to August 1. 2010

Come to the 10th annual French Yatra. It will start on late afternoon of Thursday, July 22 to Sunday, 12 noon on August 1, 2010 .

It will be held in the lovely region of Limoux in southern part of France. Limoux is situated south of Carcassonne and Toulouse – easily accessible by air, train and coach.

Teachers: Christopher Titmuss, Christelle and others.

In 2009, we had a total of 95 adults and children. For 2010 we are not setting a limit on the numbers. We would like to encourage all those who have been on a past yatra to join with us in our celebration of the 10th Yatra.

A Yatra is a pilgrimage. Men, women and children have gone on walking pilgrimages for thousands of years. Our Yatra is run entirely on donations (dana) to cover all the running costs, and donations for teachers etc.

If you require further information about the Dharma Yatra, and you cannot locate it in this website, then send an e-mail to the address below. Please keep your e-mail with any questions rather precise. Thank you.

Do join. It is a wonderful event.

Please ensure you register so we have knowledge of numbers. Retreat will begin from near Le Moulin de Chaves Meditation Centre

To register, please send €50 or £35 or more to support initial costs or pay upon arrival.

For further information contact Muriel in France murielbansard@laposte.net

www.dharmayatra.org

info@dharmayatra.org

Do join the Yatra. It is a wonderful event.

GERMANY

Thursday 18.00 August 26 to Sunday 13.00 August 29, 2010

A SILENT RETREAT - INSIGHT MEDITATION (Vipassana)

Christopher and Tineke Osterloh

with Christopher

This classical Vipassana retreat will include comprehensive meditation instructions in

Vipassana (Insight) meditation, a daily talk and regular one to one meetings with Christopher. The retreat offers the opportunity to go deeply into ourselves in a supportive and caring atmosphere. The retreat points to inner renewal, a deep sense of presence and the emptying of the mind for fresh perceptions and insights. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. No groups. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. There will be opportunity for one to one meetings with the teachers. The retreat will be taught in English/German.

Pauenhof e.V.

Pauendyck 1

D - 47665 Sonsbeck Hamb (40 minutes from Düsseldorf)

Germany

Tel. +49-(0)2835 / 44133

www.pauenhof.de

info@pauenhof.de

ENGLAND

Saturday, October 2, 2010. 10 AM TO 5 PM.

Listening to our Feelings

Christopher

We refer a lot to listening to our feelings. We find it necessary to take notice of what our feelings are saying about ourselves, another or a situation. Can we rely upon our feelings? What happens if our feelings keep changing? The Buddha referred to purity of heart and purity of intention. Is this a very different priority from listening to our feelings? The Buddha referred to worldly feelings and spiritual feelings, physical sensations and mental feelings, pleasant and painful and in between the two. The workshop will consist of teachings on the theme, sharing in small groups and inquiry into the benefits and limits of feelings.

Bodhi Garden

7a Ship Street Gardens (three minutes walk from the beach)

Brighton BN1 1AJ

Sussex,

England

+44 07796 331167

info@bodhigarden.org

www.bodhigarden.org

GERMANY

Tuesday evening October 12, 2010 to Saturday Oct 16, 2010

Dharma Facilitators Programme (DFP).

christopher@insightmeditation.org

Anyone with Dharma/inner work experience can join the DFP at any time. We meet twice a year.

There are places for 35 people to look into and share the depths of the Dharma. Please register with Waldaus.

Do pass the word onto others who might be interested to attend the residential DFP in Germany, Australia, Israel and New Zealand. For DFP in Germany, contact myself

christopher@insightmeditation.org

See also website DFP website. www.dharmafacilitators.org

Saturday evening October 16 2010 to Thursday lunchtime October 21, 2010.

A SILENT RETREAT

with Christopher

This classical Vipassana retreat will include comprehensive meditation instructions in Vipassana (Insight) meditation, a daily talk and regular one to one meetings with Christopher. The retreat offers the opportunity to go deeply into ourselves in a supportive and caring atmosphere. The retreat points to inner renewal, a deep sense of presence and the emptying of the mind for fresh perceptions and insights. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. No groups. Suitable for new and experienced meditators.

AUSTRALIA

Friday November 12 at 6.00 p.m. until lunch time Wednesday, November 17, 2010

DHARMA YOGA RETREAT

retreat will consist of dharma teachings, insight meditation, two yoga classes per day with yoga teachers, silent periods reading of Patanjali Sutra, and dialogue of practical application of Dharma and Yoga in daily life. All are welcome.

Gunundi Centre, Ballina, norther NSW, Australia

Christopher and [Radha Nicholson](#) at Gunundi, Ballina, NSW

Organisers: Judy Baderle jbaderle@bigpond.net.au

Dharma Teachers Meeting

November 18 14.30 to November 19. 14.00.

BUDDHA BY THE SEA

6th Dharma Gathering

November 19 to November 26, 2010 at noon.

Christopher, Subhana, Radha, Patrick Kearney and other Dharma teachers

Yarrahapinni Rainforest,

near Coffs Harbour,

NSW, Australia

Yarrahapinni Ecology Centre is situated on coastal rainforest.and five minutes walk from ocean

Coffs Harbour is the nearest major airport and Macksville the nearest major town.

Families welcome.

Contact: Will James wvjames@yahoo.com.au

www.insightmeditationaustralia.org

[Dharma Facilitators Programme \(DFP\)](#)

November 26 – 30. 2010

Christopher and [Radha](#)

Yarrahapinni Rainforest,

near Coffs Harbour,

NSW, Australia

Yarrahapinni Ecology Centre is situated on coastal rainforest.

jbaderle@bigpond.net.au

www.insightmeditationaustralia.org

www.dharmafacilitators.org

Friday December 3, 2010

Stress, Mindfulness and Liberation

Christopher Titmuss

Evening Talk. 7 pm to 9pm

Dharma Talk Cloudroom

147 Richmond Road

Morningside

Brisbane

Australia

Stress arises through desire for results, fear of not finishing and excessive thinking. Mindfulness and insight are the antidote. In this workshop, we will inquire into stress, mindfulness and the function of liberation.

www.insightmeditationaustralia.org

www.insightmeditation.org

INDIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

Our India programme will probably run through from November, 2010 until May 2011

Every month during this time, there are teachings and practices in very different environments all over India including Jaya, Gemma, Ajay, Sanghaseva and others.

See also www.openDharma.org email openDharmainfo@yahoo.com www.sanghaseva.org
email: sangha_seva@yahoo.co.uk

Do come to India to join all or part of this extraordinary and truly unique six month programme, much of it run entirely on your donations (*dana*). Our retreats in Bodh Gaya (started 1975) and the Dharma Gathering in Sarnath (started 1999) are run entirely on *dana* (donations) from participants.

TO REGISTER FOR BODH GAYA RETREATS

See www.bodhgayaretreats.org for more information on our programme for Bodh Gaya
bodhgayamanagers@yahoo.com

PLEASE REGISTER YOUR NAME FOR BODH GAYA BY E-MAIL. Bodh Gaya manager is Dominika Zwyrtek and Ben Barnes. You are also guaranteed a place if you simply arrive in Bodh Gaya for the start of a retreat.

No need to register for Sarnath.

INDIA JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2011

January 6 18.00 to January 12 2011 12.00

3rd DHARMA GATHERING IN TIRUVANNAMALAI

Five minutes walk from Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram

Mountain Breeze Guest House

Tiruvannamalai

Tamil Nadu.

Radha Nicholson

Radha Nicholson teaches the cultivation of wisdom and compassion through insight. Her teachings focus on inquiry and non-duality. Radha first met Christopher in India in 1975 where she participated in extended retreats. She was one of the founding members of the Australian community, Bodhi Farm, where she lived for 13 years. She is a Registered Psychologist with a private practice in Bangalow near Byron Bay, NSW. She has been co-teacher of the Bodh Gaya retreat with Christopher for five years.

For further information, please contact Radha

radhanicholson@ozemail.com.au

37th ANNUAL DHARMA RETREAT IN BODH GAYA. These retreats consist of comprehensive teachings in meditation (calm and insight, samatha and vipassana), silence, one to one interviews, daily teachings, inquiry, guided meditations. Suitable for new and experienced meditators.

January 17 - 27, 2011

BODH GAYA RETREATS

Radha Nicholson

Thai Monastery

Bodh Gaya, near Gaya, India

www.bodhgayaretreats.org,

bodhgayamanagers@yahoo.com

January 27 - February 6, 2011

BODH GAYA RETREATS

Christopher Titmuss, Radha Nicholson,

Thai Monastery

Bodh Gaya, near Gaya, India

www.bodhgayaretreats.org,

bodhgayamanagers@yahoo.com

February 9 - 19, 2011

12th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL DHARMA GATHERING

Christopher, Jaya, Radha, Zohar and Jess

Sarnath, near Varanasi, India

Come any day, leave any day. Dharma Gathering offered on donation.

www.bodhgayaretreats.org

No need to register for Sarnath.

See also www.insightmeditation.org

We have printed a beautiful flyer with colour pix to promote Bodh Gaya and Sarnath.

Families welcome.

Germany

Thursday morning 9 am March 10 to noon Sunday March 13, 2011

Dharma Facilitators Programme (DFP).

Pauenhof e.V.

Pauendyck 1

D - 47665 Sonsbeck Hamb (40 minutes from Düsseldorf)

Germany

Tel. +49-(0)2835 / 44133

www.pauenhof.de

christopher@insightmeditation.org

Anyone with Dharma/inner work experience can join the DFP at any time. We meet twice a year.

There are places for 35 people to look into and share the depths of the Dharma. Please register with Pauenhof to stay. There is no need to register with myself.

Three Bows

In the Dharma

Christopher

Dear One and All,

E-mails are checked very irregularly when teaching overseas. See teaching schedule on websites. Websites regularly updated. Control and click on website name below.

Christopher's dharma blog is www.christophertitmuss.org/blog. Type in name in flkr for photos of Sangha worldwide.

See www.youtube.com for five minute Dharma clips of Christopher.

1. www.insightmeditation.org International teaching schedule of Christopher Titmuss, to subscribe to freely distributed quarterly Dharma e-News, Dharma teachings, guided meditations, Dharma reflections, articles, social-political-analysis, 150 linked sites

2. www.christophertitmuss.org Audio library of world-wide talks and inquiries. Listen to audio guided meditations, poems, extracts from books and see more than 1500 photos of Sangha around the world on *flickr*. Listen to teachings and opportunity to download or order on CD.

3. www.dharmafacilitators.org Meet for four days twice a year to explore the depths of the Dharma and develop facilitation skills - DFP held in Australia, England, Germany, Israel and New Zealand. Limited to 35 people in a session.

4. www.livingdharma.info Twice a month personal e-mail contact with a Dharma mentor. To develop your meditation, practice and wisdom in daily life. Around 28 mentors from 12 countries. See photos, bio, article of mentors and how to join. Donation based with modest registration cost.

5. www.bodhgayaretreats.org How to register for the two annual 10 day Bodh Gaya

retreats in Bihar, India, dates and information. 37th annual retreat in January 2011. Join also the 13th annual 10 day Dharma Gathering in Sarnath, near Varanasi in February 2011. All run on donations

6. www.dharmayatra.org Join the Dharma Yatra (pilgrimage) in France starting one hour from Bergerac in southern France on July 22 afternoon and finishing at lunch on August 1, 2010. Places for 120 adults and children. Run on donations with modest registration cost.