

# Buddhist Action Month 2017 Handbook



**BUDDHIST ACTION MONTH**

*Get involved: your world needs you!*

## Buddhist Action Month 2017

*Connecting for  
change*



## Welcome to BAM 2017

***Your world needs you!***

**Buddhist  
Action  
Month 2017**

Buddhist Action Month (BAM) is a festival of Buddhist social action in many forms. It started in Britain but let's make it international - and it's fuelled by **metta...**

*Metta is the strong intention to create Loving Kindness for all, and it's embodied in the desire to act for the benefit of the world.*

In the world  
hate never yet dispelled  
hate.  
Only love dispels hate.  
This is the law,  
ancient and inexhaustible.

Dhammapada

***Adapted from the Triratna BAM Handbook***





*The intention to benefit all beings ,  
Which does not arise in othes even for their own  
sake,  
Is an extraordinary jewel of the mind,  
Its birth an unprecedented wonder.  
It is the panacea that relieves the world of all  
pain, ,  
And is the source of all its joy  
If even the thought to relieve  
Living creatures of merely a headache  
Is a beneficial intention endowed with infinite  
goodness,  
Then what need is there to to mention  
The wish to dispel their inconceivable misery,  
Wishing every single one of them  
To realize boundless good qualities?*

*Santideva, bodhicharyavatara ch 1*

## Metta at the heart of what we do

### **Metta is at the heart of everything we do as practicing Buddhists.**

Metta is rooted in our awareness of another's being and then allowing our hearts and actions to respond with goodwill and loving kindness. Metta is the first and most fundamental ethical precept we undertake to practice. It is not just limited to ourselves and the people we are in daily contact with - but *all* beings, everywhere!

The Karaniya Metta Sutta, one of the oldest Buddhist texts, encourages us to develop such a heart of unbounded love:

*May all be happy and feel secure.  
May all beings become happy in their heart of  
hearts!  
And think of every living thing without exception:  
the weak and the strong, from the smallest to the  
largest,  
visible or invisible, **nearby or far away,**  
**for those born and those yet to be born...**" –  
may all beings become happy in their heart of  
hearts!*

- so it seems that even the Buddha was encouraging us to include future generations in our metta! As well as those beings who might well live out of sight, on the other side of the world, but are the immediate recipient of the consequences of our actions.

### **Pratitya samutpada, the truth of conditioned arising, was the fundamental insight of the Buddha.**

All arises on dependence of a cause – that also means our actions have consequences – what we do, or choose not to do, has an effect. If we apply this insight to our consumption habits, it may lead to an 'awakening' as we become aware of the possible consequences of our actions: If, for example, I choose to purchase food that involves thousands of air miles as they are flown from across the world, or that involves suffering on behalf of the humans who may work in very poor conditions to produce them - then my actions have a *direct* effect on the life of future generations, have a direct effect on those communities the other side of the world.

### **Awareness is revolutionary**

Once we have become aware that our actions or non-actions contribute to suffering we will want to address this in some way. We may well feel that we simply cannot carry on as we have been.

### **Let's be 21<sup>st</sup> century Bodhisattvas!**

**Let's connect with others – from our own sangha, from other sanghas, from other spiritual traditions – and engage for positivity and meaningful change!**

## **The 21<sup>st</sup> century Bodhisattva**

Imagine that you're a Bodhisattva of old who's just been plonked down into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not a perfect Bodhisattva, perhaps, but definitely making progress. What a strange world you find! There are amazing things called cars, computers, aeroplanes... and so many people, mostly living in vast cities. You see a lot of people spending their days in things called offices. Wonderful that many people's lives seem easier – food, medicine and shelter seems easy to get, and reading, learning and so much more too. They seem free to live their lives how they choose. For others, it doesn't look so easy.

You look around some more. There are wars on a terrible scale. Some people incredibly rich and powerful, but many millions destitute with hardly enough to eat - often in the same countries. Many people with an empty look in their eyes. Some people living like slaves. Animals kept in terrible conditions. And where did the forests go? How can people live without them? Where are all the wild animals? And all these poisoned waters, and this plastic stuff everywhere. And crazy, foreboding weather. And people everywhere wanting to earn more to buy more things. Clinging to tribes or nation, race or religion, willing to kill others for these.

It's all so much. Part of you would like to recoil, but you can't. You're a Bodhisattva! If not you, then who? So you open your heart to embrace every living thing – the rich, the poor, the distressed and distracted. You embrace those who seem to be making things worse, and the brave ones who are trying to build something better. And animals, forests, rivers and oceans.

As a Bodhisattva in the making, you're not really surprised. You know that this is the nature of Samsara. You go to the root of suffering. Attending to your own needs as simply as you can, and not being distracted by the profusion of pleasures on offer in this world, you begin to show people how to love themselves and other people again. You share your path of inner contentment. And then, joy of joys, you find

some others on the Bodhisattva path. You join with them, sharing your life with them. You show the world a different way of living life, based on friendship and simple living. You become friends to the world, to people of all kinds. You immerse yourselves in nature, celebrating its beauty and sacredness. You point to a truer way of seeing the world, knowing one's own mind and heart to be woven into reality.

The world still suffers but now this only spurs you to go deeper. The worse things seem to get, the more you and your brothers and sisters purify your effort. You turn more wholeheartedly to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You live more and more simply and harmlessly. You assert the unity of life, showing people the bliss that comes from kindness to others, with animals and with nature. You try to protect beings from harm, and speak out with courage and kindness. You speak out against ideologies that bring harm, selfishness and division. You use what influence you can to bring about new ways of human beings coming together, based on kindness, friendship and the following paths of growth and freedom. Until your own freedom and your embrace of all those suffering beings seems to be forged into one blissful point.

***And together, step by step, you wake up the world.***

***by Akuppa, February 2016***

Whatever joy there is in the world  
All comes from desiring others to be happy  
And whatever suffering there is in the world  
All comes from desiring myself alone to be happy.  
But what need is there to say much more?  
The childish work for their own benefit,  
The Buddhas work for the benefit of others.  
Just look at the difference between them!  
*Santideva, bodhicharyavatara, ch8, 129-130*

## A Short History of BAM

BAM is the UK's Buddhist Action Month - a festival of Buddhist social action held across Britain every June. Conceived by the Network of Buddhist Organisations UK (NBO) ([www.nbo.org.uk](http://www.nbo.org.uk)), it keeps expanding, and it's gone international!

BAM invites us to make more conscious the connections between our ethical commitment as Buddhists and the needs of other beings – human and otherwise, our society and our environment; and it offers us the opportunity to explicitly explore and discuss the ethical issues facing Buddhists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**The essence of BAM is to encourage individual Buddhists and Buddhist Centres to take any action they wish that benefit the environment, other people, our local communities or society.**

Buddhist Centres of course exist for the benefit of others and to reduce suffering through teaching and sharing the dharma – but this month the invitation is to reach out to those needing help in other ways, which we may not focus on at other times of the year. We can also take the opportunity to reflect on the ethical issues that arise of living in a world that is dominated by individualism, materialism and consumer values.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ethics: Five Precepts for One World

Sometimes we may tend to see our practice of ethics only from a *personal* perspective (how my actions affect my own state of mind) and from an *interpersonal* one (how my actions affect other people I interact with).

But in our increasingly interconnected world our actions will often also have an effect on people living the other side of the world (who produce lots of our food and our consumer goods) as well as the beings of the future (the recipients of environmental destruction, climate change and species extinction).

How do we practice ethics from a more global perspective? And particularly with more imagination - so that we can really think through the consequences of our actions while keeping the whole world in mind: including those "*living far away and those yet to be born*".

***With deeds of loving-kindness I purify my body//  
undertake to abstain from causing harm***

Metta for people '*living far away*' might mean that I make a particular point in buying **fair trade** goods. I might even encourage a fair trade stall in the Buddhist Centre to make others aware! The Buddha was clear that our happiness cannot be built on the suffering of others. Enjoying consumer goods that have been produced causing suffering for others surely can't be compatible with the first precept?

Metta for those people '*yet to be born*' will mean that I will do what I can to reduce my personal carbon footprint – I'll aim not to buy air-freighted luxury vegetables; I will really think twice about flying.

Metta *for all beings* means that I face up more to the undoubted suffering involved in dairy industry

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as well as its significant negative effect on climate change. Can I move a bit more towards being vegan, perhaps at least 2 or 3 days out of 7, to start?

Metta for all beings means considering the consequences of my actions: If I keep forgetting my bags and have to buy plastic ones– even though I know that they exist for hundreds of years and most marine animals have stomachs full of plastic bits – is that not contributing to killing life?

Can I make a resolve that when practicing or teaching the metta bhavana I include *future beings*, aware of them being affected by my actions now.

### ***With open handed generosity I purify my body/I undertake to abstain from taking the not-given***

Can I make a point of buying clothes and products from companies with a clear ethical policy?

Am I taken the not-given if I buy non-fairtrade coffee, or chocolate, or tea, etc.? Even with a little bit of imagination I can be fairly certain that the estate workers are not voluntarily acquiescing to low living standards. It seems my western lifestyle is dependent on what might be described as an economic enslavement of much of the world's population – but do I *really* want to contribute to that?

*"natural resources are finite and we are using them at an alarming rate. More often than not, not only using them up at an alarming rate but using them in a wasteful fashion. SO Buddhist should be very aware of this this and should try to use everything natural origin very carefully indeed."*

Sangharakshita, Nature, Man & Enlightenment (1976)

The Buddha taught that everything arises in dependence on conditions. Every purchase we make is a vote for the kind of world we want. In every purchase we are commissioning more of the same – e.g. very cheap clothing has an effect of supporting that market. The good news is - we can have a real effect. Our purchases can

encourage many positive initiatives: the organic and vegan movements, fair trade, local produce, new solutions, and the work of ethically-aware people generally.

Can I consume less so that beings in the future have more?

### ***With simplicity, stillness and contentment I purify my body/ I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct***

What **IS** a simple lifestyle in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?! Do I even explore the concept of 'renunciation' - in my chapter, study group etc.? Do I deeply reflect on the objects of my craving? The dharma is a radical questioning of what actually leads to happiness and a true sense of abundance.

Can I become more conscious what the effects are on me of living in a materialist, market-driven economy: The Buddha said the cause of dukkha is craving. I live in a society where the entire economy is based on fuelling craving. Do I challenge and explore consumerism and the effect it has on the choices I make?

Effective renunciation comes from insight – the idea is not to give myself a hard time. If I really understood the consequences of my actions I wouldn't want some of them anymore, so I need to engage my imagination and think things through.

What about having a "not buying day/week/month" (except food or anything that is recyclable) - and really sit with the uncomfortable feelings that may arise?

Can I de-clutter?

Can I consider community living? Sharing one's living space and resources such as washing machines is kinder on the planet.

### ***With truthful communication I purify my speech/ I undertake to abstain from false speech***

Do I make use enough of my amazing political freedom to speak to those in power? Do I use my liberty to speak out on behalf of those who can't?

Can I do more to raise ethical issues that face us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in chapters, study groups, GFR groups to help us find our dharmic language around this and be clear about the ethics involved. We need to help each other – especially issues around climate change are such a minefield but there is a lot of info out there. Just because it is inconvenient and awkward is not a reason to close my eyes to things.

Is it part of truthful speech to acknowledge the truth that CO2 emissions are usually produced for my own benefit, but they disproportionately harm the poor and disadvantaged in the world (whose emissions are low). Can I face the truth that really reflecting on the environment entails connection with my fellow human beings that would challenge the way I live – so I prefer close my eyes.

But after all, the whole of the dharma is a radical questioning of what actually leads to happiness and a sense of abundance. Even if the answers aren't simple is it living truthfully to try and engage with these issues.

### ***With mindfulness clear and radiant, I purify my body/ I undertake to abstain from taking intoxicants***

Can I practice the mindfulness of seeing the consequences of my consumption actions.

Can I learn to see that whatever I buy or use has a **cause**: *"Someone has actually made this! Some person in Bangladesh has actually sat at a sewing machine for 12 hours a day for 20*

*pence for the trousers I am buying for a tenner"*.

It also has an **effect**: *"Every plastic bag I buy will end up existing for hundreds of years and may well end up in the stomachs of fish and animals and cause their death"*

To truly see the consequences of my actions is a practice of mindfulness and of the imagination.

Do I recognize that our current environmental degradation and much of climate change is essentially a spiritual issue:

***Our actions arise out of a lack of insight into the interconnectedness of our actions and the rest of life.***

May I undertake to strengthen my imaginative connection with other beings and consciously develop metta *"for beings living far away and those yet to be born."*

**by Mokshini, February 2016**

Vaddhaka, The Buddha on Wall Street, page 3-4:

"According to Zizek\*, what he calls 'Western Buddhism' is the 'perfect ideological supplement' to capitalism. He believes that the emphasis in 'Western Buddhism' on meditation encourages Buddhists to create an inner distance from the 'mad dance' of modern capitalism, to give up any attempt to control what's going on, and to take comfort in the view that all the social and economic upheaval in the world today is 'just a non-substantial proliferation of semblances that do not really concern the innermost kernel of our being'. Zizek's claim implies that when faced with injustice, pain, and suffering in the world today, Western Buddhists take cover in their meditation practice in order to avoid the full impact of this reality."

\* Zizek is a contemporary Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic



## Climate change – three spheres of activity

The very foundation of Dharma practice is ethics. This can be thought of in terms of realising the effect we have on others and acting kindly. These days our actions can have more of an effect than ever on other beings all over the world. What we eat, what we buy, how we vote – all of these can have a real effect on others. Realising the effect of our actions in this way is part of what it means to try to practice in the spirit of the Bodhisattva in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Without a doubt the clearest example of this is the climate crisis. In the next ten to twenty years we will determine what happens to almost every form of life on Earth, including our own. We are in an unprecedented race against time. Around 80% of fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground if we are to win this race. (For a good look at just how urgent it is have a look at the article in Rolling Stone magazine in July 2012 by Bill McKibben called 'Global warming's Terrifying New Math'. I strongly suggest doing a full length metta bhavana practice before doing so).

And, given the fact that it is the systems that we all participate in that are causing this – from crop fertilisers to electricity generation to how we travel – there is no moral basis for opting out of this race. This cannot be said by anyone to be “not my issue.” This problem, like no other, demands our attention and effort as part of our practice of the first precept. Indeed, given that the very web of conditions that supports life on Earth is being undermined so aggressively, this is a question of the first precept of an order perhaps never seen before.

Yet many of the solutions we hear about seem to be so small and seemingly insignificant. Very often we have heard that the answers are little things like changing light bulbs, recycling, going vegan or cycling instead of driving. While these

actions of this kind are important and even indispensable, addressing the climate problem solely in such terms can easily leave us wondering if these little actions will ever make enough of a difference.

Unfortunately, by themselves, they won't. The things that will make enough of a difference soon enough are systemic: a robust carbon pricing mechanism, stopping new coal developments, preventing investment in so-called 'non-conventional' fossil fuels like fracking and tar sands and deep sea oil drilling, finance for renewable energy projects, finance and investment in clean technology in developing countries so that they can get out of poverty without the need for fossil fuels and the rapid deployment of battery storage systems. Above all, we need to keep 80% of fossil fuels in the ground and never burn them.

Making a difference on such a systemic and societal level can seem out of reach. But there are many things we can do. **With this in mind, I would like to suggest that for BAM we consider acting in a way that makes a difference in three spheres of influence.**

These are:

1. The sphere of influence of one's own individual habits
2. The sphere of influence of our Sangha institutions
3. The sphere of influence of collective Sangha engagement with broader societal change.

..... continued

*“When we recognize the empty nature, the energy to benefit others dawns, effortless and uncontrived”.*

Dilgo Khyentse



There is plenty of advice available on how to make a difference on the first level, so I won't go into those here. However, I would like to make some suggestions regarding the other two.

In terms of our Sangha institutions such as your local Centre, business or community you might like to consider:

- Changing the bank that the Centre banks with to one that doesn't invest in fossil fuel companies
- Getting your Centre involved in Transition Towns
- Making use of the Sustainable Buddhist Centre Certification Scheme - you could well end up putting solar panels on the roof or simply making improvements in energy efficiency
- Re-thinking the way we do our big events that involve so much flying: how can we hold major gatherings like Order conventions and ordination retreats and reduce the massive carbon miles these involve?
- Including a reflection on the effect we have on the climate in our metta bhavana practice
- Holding outreach meditation classes for stressed out climate activists

When it comes to involvement on the level of societal change, you might like to think about:

- Organising a divestment day at your Centre, encouraging as many people as possible to get whatever money they may have out of any organisation that invests in fossil fuels. This includes your bank, your pension fund and any other investments. If you're involved with a professional organisation of any kind you could ask them to do likewise.
- Holding events asking people to consider climate change as a major priority in deciding how to cast their vote. In January the Dublin Sangha held a protest outside the Dail, the Irish Parliament, in the lead-up to the election there, doing exactly that.
- Holding a day at the Centre asking people to write to their local elected member. The best way to ensure the letters get read is to write them by hand. This works.
- The last one will be controversial for some but it's essential: blockading. This is the practice of physically joining with others in standing in the way of fossil fuel developments like new coal mines or fracking projects in a non-violent manner. Let us have strong Buddhist involvement in actions around the world that aim to do this. We can do it with awareness and metta, but this is what it means to practice these things in the world we actually live in.

**by Tejopala, Melbourne, February 2016**

*"There comes a time in all of our lives  
when silence is a betrayal"*  
Martin Luther King



Beautifying the local area around the Buddhist Centre in Cardiff

## Tips for organizing a successful BAM:

### Keep projects SIMPLE.

Buddhists can be busy people – engaged Buddhists even more so – that sometimes just the thought of taking on an extra responsibility can feel a little overwhelming! Here is a little teaching courtesy of Maitrisara on the **Three Actions: three things you can do even if you are busy**

**A swap action:** This is when you know you cannot do an extra thing in your week – but you may be doing a study group or a GFR group/mitra study/chapter anyway, so maybe you can do this group or event but with a different focus, e.g. the welfare of the planet, or ask if we keep in mind how our actions affect future generations, or discuss the ethics or our consumption habits?

**A virya action:** sometimes we THINK that doing 'another thing' is going to be tiring – but it is worth remembering that some actions give us MORE energy! They put us in touch with our vision and aspiration, they allow us to feel effective, in fact they unblock energy, so they are not just 'another thing to do'

**An adding action:** sometimes you really cannot do anything in addition to what you are already doing: but we can always make a point of supporting others who are doing something that you think is a good thing to do: encouraging someone else and showing your support can have a really big effect.

Even **really simple events** can be very effective as well as enjoyable: have a **picnic** in your local park or go for a **walk** with sangha members. Share times in nature that have been important to you in your life, talk about trees or animals that you love!

## Event Planning Guide

- Show a **film** at your Centre that addresses ecological or ethical issues and have a discussion after it

- go **vegan for a week** or month and have a discussion about the ethics of the dairy industry

- switch to **green energy**

- have a no buying week and share with your friends you're your experience

### Make sure your projects are FUN.

Or at least enjoyable. If you don't enjoy it you will not do it again, so what can you do to make sure you are enjoying yourself?

### It's handy if projects REPEATABLE.

You don't need to do something different every year – it is ideal if volunteers can repeat or build on their projects – you achieve more a sense of success and you and your participants can deepen your learning



BAM tree with personal precepts at Aryaloka USA

### Make sure your project aims are SMART:

**Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.** Go for what you can achieve successfully. Better to be realistic and successful than ambitious and fail and feel disheartened.



What are you doing for BAM?  
BAM Action Wall in Dublin

### CELEBRATE your project – communicate!

**BAM communications: acting locally, communicating globally**

An important element in BAM is communicating what's happening across Triratna as a whole, so that everyone learns from what you're doing locally. Your sangha is one potent little hub of activity in the marvellous worldwide network of relationships, actions and consequences that is Triratna. Letting others know what you are doing is inspiring, encouraging and supportive and is the way we can change our culture and become evermore effective in our intention to benefit the world.

Please share what you do not just on yourCentre's Facebook pages that nobody else sees, but to report your activities centrally on the dedicated BAM 2016 page [\[www.thebuddhistcentre.com\]](http://www.thebuddhistcentre.com), in writing, pictures, video and audio.

**Please use the page to share what you're doing, and report on your progress.**



'Rejoicing in Beauty' Sangha Walk  
Eastbourne UK

## Sustainability – Awakening Money – Caring for Others – Connecting for Change: **Your world needs you!**

Here are lists of **suggested actions** for BAM 2017. Other suggestions welcome too of course! Please add them to the BAM Facebook group ("BAM! Buddhist Action Month 2017"). Allow your imagination free reign.

### Sustainability - Suggested Actions

- [1] Switch your self/Centre/Group to Green Electricity, eg Good Energy.
- [2] Go Vegan at the Centre - and at home. For a day, for a week per month forever.
- [3] Take a 'no-fly' pledge: for a year, for three, forever...
- [4] Become a Fair Trade Centre/Retreat Centre.
- [5] Join Transition Towns and get active
- [6] Commit to becoming a "low-carbon sustainable community" - be part of the Sustainable Buddhist Centre Certification Scheme
- [7] Measure the carbon footprint –yours, and of your Buddhist Centre and share the results.
- [8] Set up a Carbon Reduction Pledge Scheme
- [9] Show some climate change movies
- [10] Produce a Centre newsletter devoted to issues around climate change / peak oil
- [11] Create a Centre BAM notice-board devoted to green initiatives for the month – ask for personal pledges
- [12] Set up cooking demonstrations of healthy vegan dishes using local produce or leftovers
- [13] Organise an Earth Hour
- [14] Do an Energy Audit
- [15] Promote cycling / public transport / car-sharing to get to the Buddhist Centre/Group
- [16] Run a local litter-picking day, or a beach clean - up
- [17] Make a difference in your own back garden - garden for wildlife – plant flowers in the area around the Buddhist Centre
- [18] Promote and perform the Flying and Driving Carbon Sadhanas
- [19] Send a delegation of your Young Buddhists to an EcoDharma event in Spain.
- [20] Other resources



*With other Buddhists at the Bristol climate change march November 2015*

## **Awakening Money – Suggested Actions**

**[21]** Decide to finally get real about money - bring awareness and clarity to your attitude to and use of money

**[21.1]** Establish your objective financial reality

**[21.2]** Understand your subjective financial reality

**[24]** Explore the third Buddhist precept: 'With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body'

**[25]** Live simply for June - Give something (or a number of things) up for the month eg coffees in cafes, chocolate, cinema, newspapers. Work out how much you save and give it away

**[27]** Notice whether you try to spend your way to happiness... Take up or do more of something that makes you happy but doesn't cost anything

**[28]** Live within your means, don't buy anything on credit

**[29]** Commit to being free of electronic devices (and web) for particular periods, eg mealtimes, after 9pm, or Sunday mornings

**[30]** Be more radical - only purchase essential needs for June, like essential clothing, shelter, food. Reflect on how this is how many millions of people live month after month, year after year...

See what you learn, and how you then want to respond

**[31]** Save your shrapnel - effortlessly (well nearly!)

**[32]** Write or update your will, and include a legacy to charities that matter to you. "If not now, when?"

**[33]** Watch Vaddhaka's barnstorming talk on 'Going Beyond Capitalism'

**[34]** Go on retreat

**[35]** Make (not buy) a gift for a friend

**[36]** Explore the second Buddhist precept: 'With open-handed generosity, I purify my body'

**[37]** Recognise where your views about giving have become habits that mean it doesn't happen

**[37.1]** Give away 10% of your income this month this month

**[37.2]** When you decide to give an amount to an appeal, double it

**[38] consider tithing this month**

**[39]** Have half a day each week, e.g. a weekend morning, with nothing planned and without doing anything 'productive'. See what gets freed up!

**[40]** Other resources



## Caring for Others - Suggested Actions

### [41] Spread the Dharma!



### [42] Set up a Carers' project at your Centre

[43] Set up dana (giving) networks in the local sangha - get in touch, find out where help is needed, and give it

[44] De-clutter your food cupboard - take in-date but unused items to your local food bank / collection point at your local supermarket

[45] Commit to a daily 'Five Minute Intervention' – FMI!

[46] Learn Non-Violent Communication

[47] Volunteer at your local hospital / hospice

[48] Learn First Aid

[49] Register as an organ donor

[50] Give blood, or platelets - both needed!

[51] Explore becoming a Buddhist chaplain

[52] Read, write & share poetry which moves you to connect with others - other people, other living beings, Nature, the world (and beyond)

[53] Don't forget the power of the metta bhavana meditation practice, and the other brahma viharas (metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha). Have an evening combining

music, images and meditation to stir the heart and connect more deeply with the life we all share; practice 'exchanging self for other', and do the Bodhicaryavatara puja.

[54] Stimulate your 'faith in capacities' by studying and discussing karma.

[55] Swap clothes with a (same-size) friend for a day - and put yourself 'in someone else's shoes'

[56] Read to someone who can't - or can't yet. Visit a local home for the blind, or your local library's story hour (many libraries have them), and open up a new world for someone else

[57] Write your will - putting your affairs in order (whatever your age) is an act of consideration and care for friends and family

[58] Get in touch with 5 friends that you've dropped out of contact with - and also one person with whom there's not been harmony recently

[59] Contact a sense of gratitude for benefits you have received (a traditional Buddhist practice) - and let that guide your actions today

[60] If you play a musical instrument, visit your local elders' care home and spend an hour playing for the residents and staff.

[61] Organise an Amnesty International letter-writing circle.

[62] Consider becoming a Dementia Friend/Dementia Champion.

[63] Get trained for volunteering / Befriending with Age UK.

## Actions for Buddhist Action Month

*pages 14 – 23 offer more detailed info on the suggestions above*

### Info on actions for Sustainability

**[1] Switch to Green Electricity.** Switching to green electricity is probably the most powerful single action you can easily take: it is quick, cheap, and has a remarkably positive effect on your carbon footprint. So it's our no.1 suggestion for action - and one approach is to set a target of persuading 20/50/100 people at your local Centre to switch during BAM in June 2015. Collect pledges and make it a sangha-building exercise! Recommended British green electricity suppliers are [Ecotricity](#) and [Good Energy](#); the ECA has become an Affiliate of Good Energy ([goodenergy.co.uk](http://goodenergy.co.uk)) and we invite everyone to quote our affiliate code **GE2190** when switching - we'll get £25 and so will the new customer! It is easy to register your own Centre as an affiliate at [www.goodenergy.co.uk/your-business/become-a-partner/sign-up-as-a-good-energy-partner](http://www.goodenergy.co.uk/your-business/become-a-partner/sign-up-as-a-good-energy-partner).



Paris Sangha BAM 2015 poster

**[2] Go Vegan at the Centre - and at home.** Another 'switching' action: a single decision with an enduring consequence. Go vegan for a day

or a week per month, or more. For a powerful exposition of why veganism is an ethical issue (and vegetarianism is not really enough), see 'Buddhism on a Plate' by Samacitta, at [thebuddhistcentre.com/vegans/buddhism-plate](http://thebuddhistcentre.com/vegans/buddhism-plate), or watch this clip on youtube

Matthieu Ricard on "Keeping a Vegan and

Vegetarian Diet":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7T7vZr0c6s>

**[3] Take a 'no-fly' pledge:** except in an emergency, decide you won't fly for a year, or three... Signing forms committing to Platinum/Gold/Silver standards of not flying are available at [http://www.networkforclimateaction.org.uk/toolkit/outreach\\_ideas/talking\\_to\\_people\\_on\\_the\\_street/flight\\_pledge.pdf](http://www.networkforclimateaction.org.uk/toolkit/outreach_ideas/talking_to_people_on_the_street/flight_pledge.pdf). The simple fact is that the carbon impact of a single flight for a single person wipes out any other environmental efforts they might make over the whole year.

### **[4] Become a Fair Trade**

**Centre/Retreat Centre (UK –**

there may be similar organisations in other countries?)

In December 2013 Taraloka became a 'Fairtrade Temple' (that's the official term - the Fairtrade people don't know what else to call Buddhist Centres). See

[www.fairtrade.org.uk/get\\_involved/campaigns/fairtrade\\_places\\_of\\_worship/fairtrade\\_and\\_other\\_faiths.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved/campaigns/fairtrade_places_of_worship/fairtrade_and_other_faiths.aspx)

### **Here's some details on how to become a Fairtrade Place of Worship:**

To become a Fairtrade Place of Worship, Buddhist Centre needs to meet three goals which are about pledging to use and promote Fairtrade products. The three goals are -

- Serve Fairtrade tea and coffee for all meetings and events (for which you have responsibility)
- Move forward on using other Fairtrade products such as sugar, biscuits and fruit
- Promote Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight and during the year at classes and events whenever possible.

To register as a Buddhist Temple just complete their 'Places of Worship' form ([fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2010/u/updated\\_other\\_places\\_of\\_worship\\_application\\_form.doc](http://fairtrade.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/u/updated_other_places_of_worship_application_form.doc)) and send it via post to 'Fairtrade Places of Worship', 3rd Floor, IBEX House, 42-47 Minories, London EC3N 1DY. Once they receive your application and it is approved, they will then send you an official Fairtrade certificate and other materials to help you get started with your campaign!

### **[5] Join Transition Towns**

(and get active!) The Transition movement aims to create local community networks to address climate change: their key words are 'resilience' and 're-skilling'. For them, local communities are intermediate in size between individuals (too small to be effective) and government (too remote to influence). Their main website is at [www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitionnetwork.org), and they have a great list of 'ingredients' for successful transition at [www.transitionnetwork.org/ingredients](http://www.transitionnetwork.org/ingredients).

### **[6] Commit to becoming a "low-carbon, sustainable community" - be part of the Sustainable Buddhist Centre Certification Scheme**

This is our primary suggestion to the Chairs (indeed, to all Buddhist Centres and Groups) if they wish to really take seriously the need to link our ethical commitments with environmental realities. It's also the way to make the most of the opportunities for action opened up by BAM, carrying them forward throughout the year. It's not only a specific measurable action but

## Buddhist Action Month 2017

a declaration of ongoing intent, out of which we hope many actions will flow in the future.

**For inspiration and some excellent practical points, here is some background on what the Quakers have done:**

At their British Yearly Meeting in Canterbury in August 2011, the 1500 people present made a collective decision the Quakers would become a low-carbon, sustainable community. They said: "Our actions have as yet been insufficient... We need to arrive at a place in which we all take personal responsibility to make whatever changes we are called to. At the same time, we need to pledge ourselves to corporate action. The action we are ready to take at this time is to make a strong corporate commitment to become a low-carbon, sustainable community. This will require a process to establish a baseline of current witness and a framework in which individual Friends and local meetings can share their successes.

We believe this corporate action will enable us to speak truth to power more confidently. Growing in the spirit is a consequence of taking action, and action flows from our spiritual growth; here is the connectedness we seek.



Only

Members of the Sheffield sangha on a litter pick in Ponderosa Park

Their commitment calls on all Quakers to "act personally, as meetings, and corporately; to be accountable to one another; and to celebrate the changes that we are able to make", also noting that they "need to allocate adequate resources to this process" and that "This process needs to be joyful and spirit-led, with room for

corporate discernment at local, area and national level".

Since the 2011 resolution they have been working systematically to incorporate this new commitment into their everyday behaviour, both individually and collectively, producing some great resources to help this happen: see their Sustainability Toolkit at [www.quaker.org.uk/files/Sustainability-Toolkit-Nov-11\\_0.pdf](http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Sustainability-Toolkit-Nov-11_0.pdf)

Few Buddhist Sanghas - have as yet done nothing like this, although Buddhist leaders in the US published a statement in 2015. The recognition that our personal ethical practice must take into account global environmental crises is just beginning to be more explicitly stated. So we have quite a lot of catching up to do: but 2017 could be the year we change!



It may still be a bit vague about what it actually means to become a sustainable community, but importantly it is about heading in the right direction rather than achieving total self-sufficiency overnight. For more inspiration from the Quaker journey and identify areas to improve: [www.quaker.org/sustainability-toolkit](http://www.quaker.org/sustainability-toolkit).

Changes won't happen overnight, it is an ongoing process!

Also worth remembering that greening shared spaces such as Buddhist Centres and retreat centres, may be a valuable way of working together, raising awareness and working out the aims of what becoming a



sustainable community means to you. Shared spaces represent us as a whole community and

are a better place to start than individual action as it leads to shared insights and decisions rather than individualistic ones.

One way to support this is to set up groups at  
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r Centres to talk about sustainability. And there might well be more green awareness among the mitras than the Order members! Sustainability is more than just going green in a flash. Sustainability, if it happens, will grow out of our communities, not just be imposed on them.

**[7] Measure the carbon footprint of you and your Buddhist Centre.** The Quakers began their journey towards sustainability with “a process to establish a baseline of current witness and a framework in which individual Friends and local meetings can share their successes”; we suggest we do the same. They have created two very easy-to-use footprint calculators, one for individuals and one for Centres, you'll find both at [www.quaker.org.uk/climate-impact-calculators](http://www.quaker.org.uk/climate-impact-calculators). Working through the calculations is both a powerful awareness-raising exercise and a sangha-building one. For lots of carbon-footprint information tidbits, try the book 'How Bad are Bananas?' - it's fascinating.

**[8] Set up a Carbon Reduction Pledge Scheme.**

Having calculated your present, i.e. baseline, carbon footprint, you can start looking for ways to reduce it. Hold a brain-storming meeting and as part of it, encourage people to pledge 'x'

amount of ways to reduce their personal carbon footprint e.g. “5 ways to reduce energy consumption” - this could include walking to work one day/week, using public transport, turning appliances off standby etc...

**[9] Show some climate change movies:** see page 23 for suggestions

**[10] Produce a Centre newsletter devoted to issues around climate change / peak oil.** E.g. Mark Wells, a Mitra in Sheffield, wrote this for 2014:

**The Dharma and Climate: How can Buddhists contribute to a safe Climate Future?**

As Buddhists we're all doing our best to live ethically, and underpinning our efforts is the fifth precept: we try to develop a clear awareness of ourselves, of other people and the world around us. I find all of these aspects of awareness can be challenging, and being aware of the condition of our planet is no exception. The picture can sometimes seem bleak and it's understandably tempting to look away, yet if we are brave enough to take an honest look, Buddhists can be part of the solution.

So please bear with me for the customary frightening statistics: 2014 was the hottest year since records began, both in the UK and globally [1, 2]. Fourteen of the fifteen hottest years globally ever recorded have occurred in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century [2]. The coal, oil and gas which the human race is burning are the main cause of this warming [3] and if humanity doesn't dramatically reduce the burning of fossil fuels then we're on course for warming of between 4 and 6 degrees Celsius [4] by 2080. This will leave the planet in a condition far less hospitable than the one we live on now [5].

When I imagine a child who is five years old now at the age of seventy, perhaps with their own grandchildren, I would like to imagine them nourished by a world that is similar to

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the one I've grown up on. The good news is that if the human race faces up to this challenge, and quickly, this future is still possible [4]. And now is a crucial time, the picture looks more positive than it has done for years, with a real chance of an effective political agreement in Paris later this year [6].

The Dharma offers the inspiring ideal of acting for the "benefit of all beings", and so asks us to weigh our choices in this light. I know I, like everyone else in modern society, am part of the climate problem, because fossil fuels are used to provide so many elements of my lifestyle, from petrol for my car, to

fertilisers for my food. For me, acknowledging this and finding positive ways to help to build a safe climate future are part of

being a Buddhist, and indeed a human being, at this moment in history.

What can Buddhists contribute? Truthful speech on this difficult subject within the sangha and the wider community will help. Its only when enough people care, and show they care, that politicians will feel empowered to act. And if society is going to accept the changes needed to wean ourselves off fossil fuels, we need an attractive vision to move towards. A sustainable society will require spiritual evolution alongside new technology, so we there is much we have to offer here too. We can exemplify

kindness by making choices that take future generations into



At the People's Climate March in Sheffield . We

can exemplify happiness and contentment based on a rich spiritual life and a sense of community, whilst owning less stuff, using less resources, and sharing what we have.

So I'd invite you to make a Safe Climate Future a theme for BAM in your centre. There's lots of things you can do:

**Awareness raising** – This is hugely important, as it's so easy to avoid looking at this problem. I'd like to encourage more conversations about what this issue asks of us as Dharma practitioners. How about showing films [7] or reading books, and discussing them within our Sanghas?

**Helping with the push for political solutions** – Ultimately only a strong global political agreement will provide a safe climate

future [8]. This year will see lots of activity across the globe from a wide coalition of groups aiming to make this a reality. Why not find out how your Sangha can help

support these efforts? [9]

### **Taking responsibility for our carbon footprints** –

Looking at our carbon footprints and finding creative ways to reduce our impact can be a great Sangha building exercise. There's lots of steps we can take.

### **Notes and for more information:**

[1] <http://www.giss.nasa.gov/research/news/20150116/>

[2]

[http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press\\_releases/pr\\_1009\\_en.html](http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/pr_1009_en.html)

[3] <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-guide/climate-change/why>

[4] Detailed information is available on climate projections and predicted impacts is available in the IPCC's Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report:

<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/>.

[5] Scientists predict this will have effects which are almost unthinkable. These include dramatically increased risks of extreme weather, reduced crop yields and water shortages for many parts of the world [4]. Combined with rising sea level [4] these consequences are likely to lead to mass human migration [4]. In

parallel the planet faces widespread damage to terrestrial and marine eco-systems and mass species extinction [4].

[6] <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/11/23/us-climatechange-lima-idUKKCNOJ70ER20141123>

[7] e.g. Inconvenient Truth or Disruption, <http://watchdisruption.com/>

[8] Grass roots efforts to cut carbon are important for our individual and collective ethical practice and just as importantly raise awareness of the issue. However, the global scale of the climate problem combined with the nature of the global economy means that a political agreement (ideally limiting extraction of fossil fuels at source) is necessary to keep warming within safe limits. A detailed exploration of this argument is given in The

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stion by Mike Berners Lee and Duncan Clark.

[9] e.g. 350.org, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and local climate groups in many cities

**[11] Create a Centre notice-board devoted to BAM and other initiatives.** This can be a great focus for a sangha-building campaign and helps make visible the Centre's commitment and the actions being taken. Find someone committed to keeping it up-to-date!

**[12] Cooking demonstrations of healthy vegan dishes.** There's a million ideas online at the vegan charity Viva! (recipes at [www.vegetarianrecipeclub.org.uk](http://www.vegetarianrecipeclub.org.uk)). Triratna

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s wanting to take up this suggestion. See also the [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com) website - it has lots of little videos, food preservation ideas, etc.

**[13] Organise an Earth Hour**, where all involved use zero energy for 1 hour either at the local Buddhist Centre or at home. Promote by

creating an 'I Will If You Will campaign' - slogan "CARE + DARE + SHARE". See

[www.earthhour.org/page/get-involved/how-organisations-can-help](http://www.earthhour.org/page/get-involved/how-organisations-can-help)

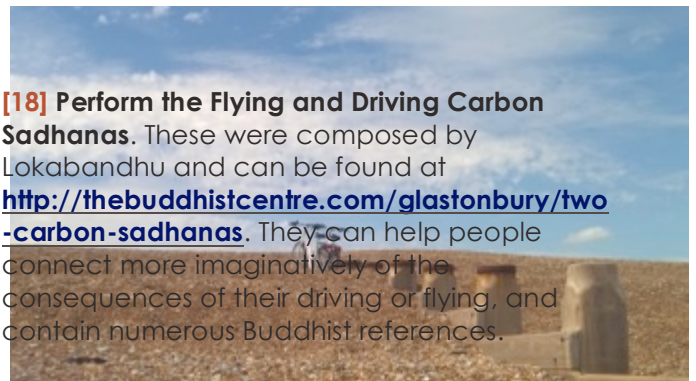
**[14] Do an energy audit** - for all the information you need to do it, go to <https://www.dropbox.com/s/svvre94e4xltfhy/Sustainable%20Buddhist%20Centre%20Guide.pdf?dl=0> or see the end of this booklet

**[15] Promote cycling** and/or public transport and/or car-sharing to the Centre. Freewheelers is a free online solution used by Buddhafield and others in Triratna, however it's fiddly to use and something in-house might be easier to manage.

**[16] Run a local litter-picking day.** In the park, on the beach, in local woods - no explanation needed - just do it!

**[17] Make a difference in your own back garden** or in the local area around your Buddhist Centre - the RSPB offer answers to your questions about how to make your space friendly to wildlife <http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/wildlife/howmesforwildlife/b/gardeningforwildlife/default.aspx>. In the UK, the Wildlife Trusts (every county has one of these) offer 'How to get started' factsheets and information on wildlife gardening on their website <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/how-you-can-help/wildlife-gardening>.

**[18] Perform the Flying and Driving Carbon Sadhanas.** These were composed by Lokabandhu and can be found at <http://thebuddhistcentre.com/glastonbury/two-carbon-sadhanas>. They can help people connect more imaginatively of the consequences of their driving or flying, and contain numerous Buddhist references.



### Info on actions for Awakening Money

**[21] Finally get real about money** - Use this year's Buddhist Action Month to finally get real about money - both objectively how much you really have and need, and subjectively in terms of your underlying attitudes and beliefs about money. You may find, as many people do, that your relationship to money mirrors your relationship to life. And from this understanding you can form positive intentions about how you want to live in relation to money... In particular you might decide to live more simply this month and to give more. Counter-intuitively, you may well feel happier and more connected to others, as well as directly helping them!

**[21.1] Establish your objective financial reality:** Look at the last three month's bank statements and calculate exactly how much you earn (including benefits or investment income), how much you spend, and how much you give away in an average month. Any surprises?

**[21.2] Understand your subjective financial reality:** Complete this short questionnaire <http://www.arthome.org/sites/default/files/documents/BrentKesselQuizArchetypes.pdf> to establish which of the eight money archetypes are predominant in you and how to balance them

**[24] Explore 'With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body'** Meditate each day this month to gain the stillness and clarity to know what matters to you. Committing to a regular slot really helps to actually do this. Try this led meditation with Kamalasila <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M10B>

**[30] Be more radical** Have a no-shopping day/week/month (apart from essentials like food/rent). Woman Order member Vajragupta had a no-shopping **year** in 2014! She talks about it here <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/norwich/vajragupta-dukka-unsatisfactorinessuffering> (from

4'44) in the context of experiencing dukkha (suffering) and sitting with the urge to buy.

**[31] Save your shrapnel** - At the end of each day, save the coins (either £ or € coins, or all the other coins except those) from your purse or wallet - put them in a tin. At the end of the month, be amazed at how much you've saved! And give it away!

**[32] Write or update your will** There's loads of free general advice on <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/free-cheap-wills>, or see the Triratna Development Team's website for more information <http://www.triratnadevelopment.org/making-a-will/ten-steps-to-making-your-will>

**[33] Watch Vaddhaka's barnstorming talk on 'Going Beyond Capitalism'** <http://vimeo.com/96757414> ... or here it is on audio <http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=LOC2032>

**[34] Go on retreat** Get away and see things more clearly for a while. See e.g. the Adhithana website for dates, details, and how to book <http://adhithana.org/retreat/?ev=57> For many more retreats, go to <http://goingonretreat.com>

**[35] Make (not buy) a gift for a friend** Make something with your hands, such as a cake, a card, or a present for a friend. Or make a shrine, and see the effect it has on you.

**[36] Explore the second Buddhist precept: 'With open-handed generosity, I purify my body'** Recognise the abundance that you enjoy by writing down at the end of each day five things that you have been given (it all counts!)

**[37] Recognise where your views about giving have become habits that mean it doesn't happen.** If you find those views have become habits, go against your non-giving policy at least once; eg 'I never give to homeless people'

**[38.1] Consider tithing this month** Other faiths such as Judaism and Christianity recommend



giving away 10% of your income. Try this yourself in June. There are many deserving projects in the world, with tons of publicity out there to let you know about them, and Triratna Dharma projects depend on our generosity (<http://www.triratnadevelopment.org/triratna-development-fund/how-the-fund-is-used>), or Karuna's social projects in India (<http://www.karuna.org>), or your local Buddhist centre.

### [40] Other resources.

#### Talks

Sangharakshita on Buddhist Economics (<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=129>) This lecture lays down the principles underlying the creation and use of wealth, and explore the principles of generosity and right livelihood as signified by the Goddess Sri's promise to give everything needed for spiritual life. (Audio, 76 minutes)

Also find out about his teaching on the New Society - The Nucleus of a New Society: 1978 talk by Sangharakshita

Or see Stirajyoti's talk as part of Manchester Buddhist Centre's BAM events in 2015: 'Why do we need the New Society?'

Amalavajra, a former City bond salesman and now the Triratna Development Team's fundraiser, on money and meaning:

- [Your Money or Your Life](#) (53 minutes)
- [Let's talk about money](#) (12 minutes)

#### Books

[Small is Beautiful: Study of Economics as If People Mattered](#) by EF Schumacher. The classic text on progressive economics from a former colleague of JM Keynes, including a chapter called Buddhist Economics.

[The Buddha on Wall Street: What's Wrong with Capitalism and What We Can Do about It](#) by Vaddhaka. The economic resources now exist to offer a realistic possibility of providing everyone with decent food, shelter, work and leisure, to allow each of us to fulfil our potential as human beings, whilst protecting the environment. What is it in the nature of modern capitalism which prevents that happening? Can Buddhism help us build something better than our current

economic system, reduce suffering and help the individual to freedom?

[It's not about the Money](#) by Brent Kessel. The book explores the Buddhist concept of the 'wanting mind', and explains the eight financial arche types

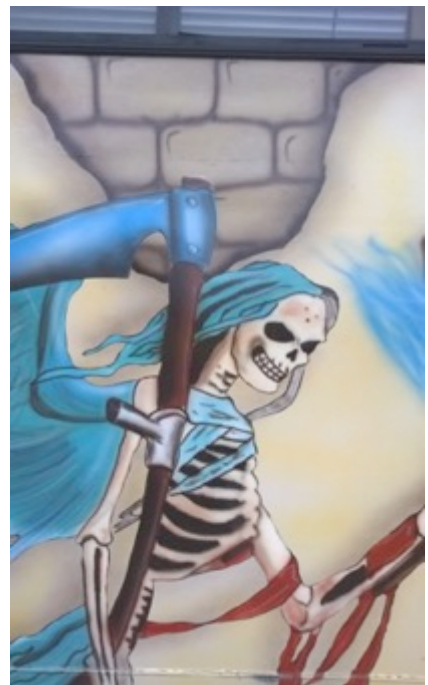
[What money can't buy](#) by Michael Sandel. Is it ethical to pay people to donate organs? Selling citizenship? Sandel argues that in recent decades, market values have impinged on almost every aspect of life - medicine, education, government, law, even family life. We have drifted from having a market economy to being a market society. Sandel asks: Isn't there something wrong with a world in which everything is for sale? And how do we protect the things that really matter?

[Money, Sex, War Karma](#) by David Loy. Contains a chapter with the most interesting take on money Amalavajra (Triratna Development Team's fundraiser) has found by a modern Buddhist writer, especially on what money symbolizes for us, and how we see it as the ultimate solution for our sense of what Loy calls 'lack'. This excellent short article ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-loy/the-lack-of-money\\_b\\_4061279.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-loy/the-lack-of-money_b_4061279.html)) by Loy summarises his argument.

#### [The Life you can](#)

[Save](#) by Peter Singer. Would you walk past a drowning child?

This book changes the way you think about giving (and fundraising). It shows what you can do, as an individual, about the fact that more than a billion people are living in extreme poverty.



## Notes on actions that focus on Caring for Others

**[41] Spread the Dharma!** - support or lead a class / course / day / retreat with your local Centre, or out in a local community group, and help make the Dharma available to an ever wider world. Awareness, mindfulness, metta, ethics - changing our minds is a crucial and radical step to changing the world...

**[42] Set up a Carers' project:** Several Centres have established projects offering meditation, mindfulness, body awareness, respite time, retreats, support and a listening ear to people who are involved giving essential help to others, a group of people often overlooked by society at large. The London Buddhist Centre has developed an impressive Carers' dimension to its work <http://www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk/help-for-carers/>. Here is a video of some of the Carers who come to the LBC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjRPP63YtYE#t=15>, based at its Breathing Space project.

Some Carers' Projects could form the basis for Buddhist businesses, known in Triratna as Team-Based Right Livelihood projects (TBRLs). We are some distance from this at present, though Order member Dayasara is working on it and updates his blog 'Buddhist and Long-Term Care' <http://www.dayasara.blogspot.co.uk>.

**[43] Set up dana (giving) networks:** Sangha members who live alone or are ill - that could be any of us at any time - can really appreciate knowing others can easily get in touch, or knowing who they can call if ill or needing a hand, even where they can leave a spare key... small practical helpfulness can mean a lot. Networks could be informal but clear arrangements between friends, or a wider database held at the Centre so that a bigger pool of people are involved.

**[44] Food banks** are increasing in number - find out if there is a food bank close to you, and support it - go through your own food cupboard, and anything that you're not using that is still in-date, take it to the food bank. You

weren't eating it anyway! and someone else could. See <http://www.trusselltrust.org> for loads of information about food banks and local need - even information about how to set one up.

### **[45] Five Minute Interventions**

We can be 'a friend to the world, a friend to all beings' - 'everyday Bodhisattvas' if you like! Bhante has talked about being able to be friends with anyone (animals included!). Offering friendship, attention, and unconditional positive regard to others is something all of us can do, regardless of our perceived skills or abilities. We can all just relate on a very human, very mettaful level and that is something of great value, and something which is lacking for so many people. So one of the things we could do is **pledge to engage in five minute interventions (FMIs) with people, friends, strangers, neighbours – anyone we encounter**. There is so much loneliness all around us, so many people really do live lives of quiet despair – let's share our metta!

**[46] Ask your Centre to set up a Non-Violent Communication day/weekend/retreat**, and learn skills that can spread understanding and prevent or reduce strife in the world. Have a look at [Speaking from the Heart \[PDF\]](#) an article by Bridget Belgrave, quoting Triratna Order member Aniruddha's experience of NVC; [The Day of the Giraffe](#) - an interview with Marshall Rosenberg about Nonviolent Communication, a creative approach to conflict resolution, human development and radical social change, in Triratna's now-defunct Dharma Life magazine; [BayNVC's Safer Communities Project](#) - NVC changes lives, say inmates in San Quentin prison – 3-minute video clip. [Empathy: The Human Connection to Patient Care](#) A 4 minute video clip on empathy (from a medical clinic in Ohio).

**[47] Volunteers** are always needed at your local hospital or hospice - get in touch and ask, or check out <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/working-in-the-nhs/joining-the-nhs/volunteering-in-the-nhs/> - volunteers needed for a wide range of activities from befriending to cleaning out fishtanks! Also see [www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org) or your local Citizens Advice Bureau for a wide range of volunteering

opportunities throughout the UK.

**[48]** A little bit of knowledge could save a life - **learn some First Aid**. Check out local free resources offered by St John's Ambulance in the UK <https://www.sja.org.uk>

**[49] Registering as an organ donor:** Says it all - just do it! For UK-related information and to register <http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk>

**[50]** Find all the info you need to make **blood donations** locally in the UK at <https://my.blood.co.uk> - the NHS's blood and transplant services website. Also catch <http://www.blood.co.uk/platelets/> - **Platelets** are tiny cells in the blood which stop bleeding by clotting and closing a wound. After major surgery or extensive injury, some people may need platelet transfusions to replace those lost through bleeding. Some people, eg with leukaemia or other cancers may have too few platelets as a result of their disease or treatment. Platelet donation is often life-saving - and just a little can help a lot of people - one donation can help up to 3 adults or even 12 children! As platelets can only be stored for a few days, regular and frequent donors are greatly needed.

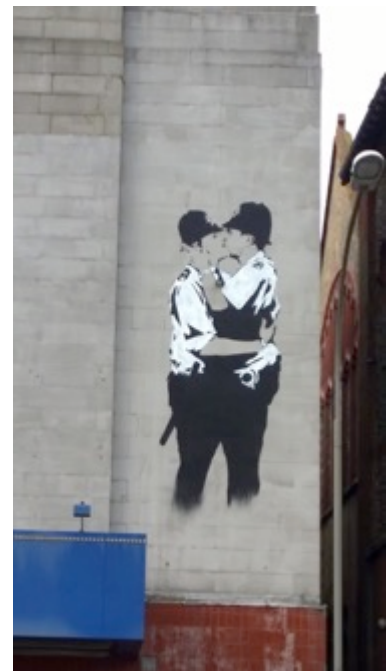
**[51]** See this great interview with Amitasuri from thebuddhistcentreonline about her experience of **chaplancy**, with links to find out more <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/features/buddhist-voices-amitasuri-buddhist-chaplancy>

**[57] Write your will.** Take responsibility for the fact there will be admin after you've gone, and help that be as straightforward as possible for those you leave behind. Also help enable good things after your death by considering legacies and bequests. There's loads of free general advice on <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/free-cheap-wills>, or see the Triratna Development Team's website for more information <http://www.triratnadevelopment.org/making-a-will/ten-steps-to-making-your-will>

**[61] Amnesty International's** current campaigns are at <http://writeforrights.amnesty.org>; a letter-writing guide is at [www.amnesty.org.uk/letter-writing-guide](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/letter-writing-guide). Join an Amnesty group at [www.amnesty.org.uk/groups](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups) or set one up at [www.amnesty.org.uk/set-local-group](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/set-local-group). Cait, a Birmingham Mitra, set up a Buddhist letter-writing group; Amnesty agreed to send her specific details of Buddhist-related people and projects. This could possibly be reactivated.

**[62]** The Alzheimer's Society offers a training day and ongoing support so that suitable people can become **Dementia Champions** and then increase awareness in workplaces, community groups etc. People in contact with a Champion become Dementia Friends, and the plan is to develop one million Friends this year. More information from [www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk).

**[63] Age UK** have local organisations throughout the UK, and offer volunteering opportunities. There is induction **training** and a request to make a minimum 6 month commitment. They have Befriending schemes to help older people who are seeking more contact with suitable other people. More details from [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk).



## Book and film recommendations

*please post further suggestions online @ [thebuddhistcentre/BAM2016](http://thebuddhistcentre.com/BAM2016)*

### **'The Age of Stupid'**

(subtitled versions available online at [vimeo.com/23597332](http://vimeo.com/23597332) or [youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ9DDkDKxDA](http://youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ9DDkDKxDA) or order a DVD from Amazon).

**'Home'** by Yann Arthus-Bertraud ([youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU](http://youtube.com/watch?v=jqxENMKaeCU));

**'An Inconvenient Truth'** by Al Gore, a classic though showing its age a little bit, ([youtube.com/watch?v=snJnoCzHz4M](http://youtube.com/watch?v=snJnoCzHz4M)),

**'Cowspiracy' 2014** - looks at how animal agriculture, diet etc effects the environment - a game changer!

**'Chasing Ice' 2012** - the undeniableity of climate change through photographic images

**'Samsara' 2012** - visually stunning movie

**'Who killed the electric car' (2006)** - y General Motor's efforts to bury its own electric-car research and development

**'Avatar' (2009)** might qualify too - James Cameron is a vegan!

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The next three films are more oriented towards our need to re-align our relationship with the planet than climate change per se:

**'An Ecology of Mind'** by Nora Bateson about the work of Gregory Bateson:  
<http://www.anecologyofmind.com/>

**'Animate Earth'** by Dr Stephan Harding at Schumacher:  
<http://animateearth.com/index.html>

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**'Do the math':** <http://act.350.org/signup/math-movie/?>

Naomi Klein's **'This Changes Everything'** (both book and film versions available)

**'Merchants of Doubt'** - film about the climate change denial industry

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**'Planetary'** - a provocative and breath-taking wakeup call; highly recommended

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What about choosing one or two of these books and offer a  
**BAM bookclub** at your Buddhist Centre during June?

## Books

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**'Don't even think about it: why our brains are wired to ignore climate change'**, an excellent book by George Marshall on how to communicate effectively about this issue

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David Abram's **'The Spell of the Sensuous'**

[http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48582.The\\_Spell\\_of\\_the\\_Sensuous](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48582.The_Spell_of_the_Sensuous)

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Evan Eisenberg's **'Ecology of Eden'**

[http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1468658.The\\_Ecology\\_of\\_Eden?from\\_search=true&search\\_version=service](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1468658.The_Ecology_of_Eden?from_search=true&search_version=service)

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Allan Hunt Badiner's (ed) **'Dharma Gaia'**

[http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/711657.Dharma\\_Gaia?from\\_search=true&search\\_version=service](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/711657.Dharma_Gaia?from_search=true&search_version=service)

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Stephanie Kaza's **'Mindfully Green'**

[http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5526111-mindfully-green?from\\_search=true&search\\_version=service](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5526111-mindfully-green?from_search=true&search_version=service)

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Mary-Jayne Rust and Nick Totton (eds) **'Vital Signs'**

[http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13066752-vital-signs?from\\_search=true&search\\_version=service](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13066752-vital-signs?from_search=true&search_version=service)

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[Small is Beautiful: Study of Economics as If People Mattered](#) by EF Schumacher. The classic text on progressive economics from a former colleague of JM Keynes, including a chapter called Buddhist Economics.

[The Buddha on Wall Street: What's Wrong with Capitalism and What We Can Do about It](#) by Vaddhaka. After his Enlightenment, the Buddha set out to help liberate the individual, and create a society free from suffering. The economic resources now exist to offer a realistic possibility of providing everyone with decent food, shelter, work and leisure, to allow each of us to fulfil our potential as human beings, whilst protecting the environment. What is it in the nature of modern capitalism which prevents that happening? Can Buddhism help us build something better than our current economic system, reduce

suffering and help the individual to freedom?

[It's not about the Money](#) by Brent Kessel. The book's first section explores the Buddhist concept of the 'wanting mind', showing how our minds create irrational links between money and fulfillment; the second explains the eight financial archetypes and how to break their ingrained habits; the last offers straightforward strategies for saving, investing and philanthropy.

[What money can't buy](#) by Michael Sandel. Is it ethical to pay people to donate organs? Selling citizenship? Sandel argues that in recent decades, market values have impinged on almost every aspect of life - medicine, education, government, law, even family life. We have drifted from having a market economy to being a market society. Sandel asks: Isn't there something wrong with a world in which everything is for sale? And how do we protect the things that really matter?

[Money, Sex, War Karma](#) by David Loy. Contains a chapter with the most interesting take on money Amalavajra (Triratna Development Team's fundraiser) has found by a modern Buddhist writer, especially on what money symbolizes for us, and how we see it as the ultimate solution for our sense of what Loy calls 'lack'. This excellent short article ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-loy/the-lack-of-money\\_b\\_4061279.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-loy/the-lack-of-money_b_4061279.html)) by Loy summarises his argument.

[The Life you can Save](#) by Peter Singer. Would you walk past a drowning child? This book changes the way you think about giving (and fundraising). It shows what you can do, as an individual, about the fact that more than a billion people are living in extreme poverty.

The website [www.ecobuddhism.org](http://www.ecobuddhism.org) contains many excellent articles.

*It is in this way that we must train ourselves: by liberation of the self through love. We will develop love, we will practice it, we will make it both a way and a basis, take our stand upon it, store it up, and thoroughly set it going.*

The Buddha, Samyutta Nikaya

## Top ten tips to reduce your carbon footprint

The following info is from a book called '**How Bad are Bananas?**'; by Mike Berners-Lee. This book compares the relative amount of the carbon impact of a wide range of daily products and activities and gives an estimate of the actual carbon produced from each to help us make more informed choices. The carbon footprint figures for each product are estimates - but the book makes it very obvious and easy to see where we can make choices that would significantly add up to reduce our carbon footprint.

Here are some suggestions, in no particular order.....but all quite easy to do! Especially in the context of what our carbon footprint is likely to be:

### Average emissions per a person

0.1 tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e per year the average Malawian

15 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year average UK inhabitant

30 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year average Australian - !!

**1. Shop bought water** in plastic bottles: it's not just the plastic in the bottle – but the many transport miles that have an effect! 160-215g CO<sub>2</sub>e per bottle VS drinking tap water 14g CO<sub>2</sub>e for 1 pint

**2. Cow's milk:** a large Latte: 340g CO<sub>2</sub>e VS an Americano with a shot of cow's milk = 53 g CO<sub>2</sub>e, or better still, try soya or hemp milk!

**3. Air-freighted vegetables or grown in artificially heated greenhouses** e.g. 250g asparagus from Peru in January (same with – baby corn/ carrots/ mangetout /green beans/okra/etc.) = a staggering 3.5kg CO<sub>2</sub>e! VS seasonal local vegetables - 250g asparagus grown locally and in season = 125 g CO<sub>2</sub>e. It makes sense to get a veg box!

(Mike B-L points out, btw, that apples/bananas/oranges are shipped not airfreighted so have a much lower CO<sub>2</sub>e)

**4. Tomatoes!** 1 kg of **out of season** cherry tomatoes, grown in artificially heated greenhouse in UK in March are the highest carbon food in the book at = a staggering 50kg CO<sub>2</sub>e!! VS Tomatoes, 1 kg grown locally & in season (July) = 0.4kg CO<sub>2</sub>e

**5. Load of laundry**, washed at 60C, in a combined washer-tumble-dryer 3.3kg CO<sub>2</sub>e VS same amount of washing, washed at 30C and dried on the line 0.6kg CO<sub>2</sub>e.

**6. A weekend 'quality' newspaper** with loads of colour supplements, sent to landfill averages around 4.1kg CO<sub>2</sub>e. Compare this to e.g. the Guardian Weekly, recycled: 300g CO<sub>2</sub>e.

**7. Flying...** there is no getting around the fact that flying has a major CO<sub>2</sub> impact; and as Mike B-L says, "*the impact is worse still because high-altitude emissions are known to have a considerably greater impact than low - altitude equivalents*". A return flight London - Hong Kong averages at 4.6 **tonnes** CO<sub>2</sub>e .

Options? Flying less often and use alternatives - is it possible to get there by train? Flying to closer destinations; and making a special effort not to buy air-freighted food and clothing.

**8. Cut flowers, bought out of season!** How many armloads of flowers have been bought for our shrines over the years?! One red rose grown in a heated greenhouse in the Netherlands = 2.1kg CO<sub>2</sub>e. Compare that to a red rose picked from your garden, using only organic fertilizer = 0 CO<sub>2</sub>.

**9. Leaving the lights on:** old style 100 Watt light bulb for 1 year = 500 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e. A low energy lightbulb for the same period = 90kg CO<sub>2</sub>e. Better still, let's remember to turn them off!

**10. And lastly - mobile phones** – just to remind us that all electronic gadgets have an effect and an energy cost: "*using a mobile phone an hour a day for a year is equivalent to flying from London to New York*" - wow! ( On the other hand, just insulating our loft could save 3.5 years' worth of our 10 tonne a year CO<sub>2</sub> 'allowance'!)

## 16-point statement on climate change

In 2013, a group of American Buddhists known as the US Dharma Teachers' Climate Collaborative issued a statement listing 16 ways in which Buddhists can engage with climate change in a meaningful way:

“1. Reverence for life: From this point forward climate disruption is the overriding context for all life on earth, including humans. What we humans do will determine what life survives and thrives and in what form and locations.

2. Happiness stems from helping others: Our greatest personal happiness comes when we give of ourselves and help others. For example, many people instinctually help our neighbors after a natural disaster, which indicates that altruism and the desire to help others is built into our genes. We must grow and apply this to the marginalized among us that are at least initially hit hardest by climate disruption. This is the very opposite of the greed and self-centeredness that dominates today.

3. We suffer when we cling: The very nature of happiness is dependent on our capacity to give up our attachments and help others. This same principle must now be elevated and applied to public policies of all types.

4. The ethical imperative: All beings matter. We should act in ways that are beneficial for both self and others, acting out of a commitment to altruism and compassion for others.

5. Interconnection and interdependence: We must dissolve objectification of other people and nature and overcome the belief in a separate self that leads us to limit our sense of kinship. Even as we let go of the delusion of an individual self that is separate from other people, we must let go of the delusion that humanity is separate from the rest of the biosphere. Our interdependence with the Earth means that we cannot pursue our own wellbeing at the cost of its well-being. When the Earth's ecosystems become sick, so do our bodies and our societies.

6. Renunciation, simplicity: To resolve climate disruption we must be willing to renounce attachments to things that contribute to the problem and live more simply.

7. The relationship between the First and Second Noble Truth and capacity to learn to work with difficult states: Understanding the suffering we have created symbolized by climate disruption and how it came about and that we can learn not to identify with it and instead work through distressing states such as fear, despair, etc.



8. Opening to suffering as a vehicle for awakening: The suffering caused by climate disruption provides an unprecedented opportunity for humans to learn from our individual and collective mistakes and manifest a great awakening. It is a special opportunity like never before. We can find ways to be happy—we can “tend and befriend” rather than fight (among ourselves), flee, or freeze. We can acknowledge that this is the way things are now, open to the suffering rather than becoming attached, and think and act in new ways.”

“9. The interconnectedness of inner and outer, the individual and the collective (or institutional): Climate disruption provides an unprecedented opportunity to understand the roots of the problem—which relate to the ways our minds work and how those patterns become embedded in collective and collective/institutional practices and policies. This awareness can open the door to new ways of thinking and responding that will eventually produce different institutional practices and policies.

10. Connection to diversity and justice issues: The dharma principles and narratives must also apply to issues of diversity and social inclusion and justice. The beliefs in separateness etc that has produced the climate crisis also leads to social inequity and exclusion. People of color and other marginalized groups must be included.

11. Buddhism as a social change agent: The principles of Buddhism help us engage with life, not remove ourselves from it. The Buddha was actively engaged with his social and cultural contexts and for Buddhism to have relevance today it must help people understand how to engage in today’s political and social contexts.

12. *Adhitthana* or Determination: We are called to develop resolve, determination, and heroic effort now. We must have the courage to realize that we are being called to engage in this issue and that living the dharma will see us through the hard times.

13. This precious human birth is an opportunity: We must always remember that it is a rare and precious thing to be born as a human and we have been given a rare opportunity to act as stewards because humans are not only the source of destruction—we are also the source of great goodness.

14. Love is the greatest motivator: Our deepest and most powerful action comes out of love: of this Earth, of each other. The more people can connect with and feel love for the Earth, the greater the likelihood that their hearts will be moved to help prevent harm. Children should therefore be a top priority. Need to help people realize what they love about life and what will be lost as climate disruption increases.

15. The sangha—and other forms of social support—are essential: The reality of climate disruption is a profound shock to many people and the only way to minimize or prevent flight, freeze responses is to be supported by and work with others so people will not feel alone, can overcome despair, and develop solutions together. We need to go through this journey together, sharing our difficult reactions and positive experiences in groups and communities.

16. The Bodhisattva: The figure of the Bodhisattva which is a unifying image of someone who is dedicated to cultivating the inner depths and to helping others, is an inspiring figure for our times.”

*“It’s a story about us, people, being persuaded to spend money we don’t have, on things we don’t need, to create impressions that don’t last, on people that we don’t care about.”*

Tim Jackson, Professor of Sustainable Development at Surrey University, quoted in Vaddhaka’s book

**Notes**

