

# The Inner Dimension of Climate Change

## *A Retreat for Young Contemplatives*

May 12 – 16, 2010

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association Retreat Center  
Pine Bush, New York

From December 5-13, 2009 The Global Peace Initiative of Women led a delegation of spiritual and religious leaders to the United Nations conference on climate change in Copenhagen, Denmark. GPIW's aim was to help deepen understanding of the moral and ethical dimensions of climate change. In addition to being an observer delegation to the COP-15, the spiritual and religious leaders spoke at several public forums throughout Copenhagen with the goal of mobilizing civil society to take action in their everyday lives. GPIW believes that spiritual leaders are key to fostering the change in mindset so necessary to alleviate the impact of climate change. One of the most moving aspects of the COP-15 Summit was the number of young people who came to Copenhagen to participate. They, more than any other group, feel the urgency of the issue because it is their future that is at stake.

While many activists have highlighted the negative impact of climate change, spiritual leaders can be the force for creating a vision by showing the potential this issue has to unite the human community. Each individual can make a difference. This is the message we want to convey to America's young spiritual practitioners. They must know that the best way to address climate change is through spiritual awakening, through practice and inner transformation. Their practice will inform the values and lifestyle in a way that will be beneficial to all. They must be encouraged to see the potential to steer our society in a better direction, with less focus on consumerism and more focus on personal growth, compassion and sharing.

This spiritual retreat will bring together between 40 and 50 young people, ages 25-35, who have a dedicated spiritual practice and who are seeking to be a force for positive change in their community, especially with regards to environmental issues. A group of about 5 mentors will lead the retreat. The retreat will consist of circle discussions, meditation and prayer time, walking meditation, observing nature and the sharing of sacred music. We will share spiritual practices from various spiritual traditions that help interiorize the mind.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this retreat are to convey the deeper spiritual significance of climate change and how our individual spiritual practice can affect the outcome. We also will seek to deepen understanding of interconnection and how compassion applies to the climate change issue. Convening the group in the peaceful environment of the retreat center will help these young leaders connect to nature by learning to see and feel the life forces of the natural world. The questions we will seek to answer are:

- How does our spiritual practice impact the world around us?
- What are the changes that need to take place internally for us to shift our perceptions and relationship with nature?
- What are the values we need to cultivate to create a more sustainable society and what is the spiritual science of interconnection?

## **Expected Outcome**

Although it is difficult to predict how the group will be moved to act as a result of their experience at the retreat, it is anticipated that some network of young contemplatives focusing on climate change will be formed.

## **Facilitators/Mentors**

Venerable Chang Ji - Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, USA

Sr. Miriam MacGillis - Co-founder, Genesis Farm Ecological Learning Center, USA

Sraddhalu Ranade - Sri Aurobindo Ashram, India

Pir Zia Inayat Khan - Founder, Sufi Order International, USA

Venerable Chang Wen - Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, USA

Dr. Amir Al-Islam - Professor of Islamic and Religious Studies, USA

Native American leader - *To be determined*

## **Agenda - Program Themes**

*The Science and Message of Climate Change* – What may lie ahead and how do we interpret this, looking at some of the major issues, such as food and water.

*Inner Dimension of Climate Change* – What is the spiritual response to the environmental changes and how can we best address them?

Relationship between spiritual practice & the larger world community.

Methods & techniques for tapping the spiritual resources needed to understand, address and adapt to climate change.

*Young Leaders Contemplative Network* – Awakening awareness of climate change issues in young people.