

Dhanakosa News

Goodbye Old Carpets



This May Dhanakosa was closed for almost the whole month. The day after the May hillwalking retreat ended, a group of eager men in protective clothing started tearing into the fixtures and fittings with gusto! Before long, the shrine room carpet had been ripped out, the old stove in the lounge had gone, various baths had

been removed and a cloud of grey dust descended over the building. The work had begun, too late to turn back now!

Thankfully for the local roofing company we had hired to fix a section of the roof, the weather was fine and sunny, which allowed them to get on with their task of replacing tiles and rotten woodbeams.

Throughout the month various willing helpers came and gave what they could to the project, while a core team steadily completed job after job. It must be said that having volunteer cooks making hearty food every day really helped our morale and strength.

The result of such activity is nothing short of a transformation: a heated wooden floor fitted in the shrine room, a new carpet in the lounge/ dining room, a new bathroom in room 3, a new shower unit in room 8 and a brand new roof on the west side of the building. All this was achieved in a month followed by the mother of all clean-up operations! Thank you and sadhu to all who came and gave generously to Dhanakosa.

– Neil

Retreats to look out for in 2006

Glancing through our 2006 programme, a number of retreats stand out as worthy of a special mention. We like to experiment with new retreats at Dhanakosa and the 2006 programme is no exception.

The first new retreat in the calendar is the Dance and Meditation retreat led by Jocasta. Jocasta regularly teaches yoga at Dhanakosa and is also a professional dancer. The combination of dance improvisation and meditation should stir up the depths! We have Kamalashila returning in March after the success of this year's Total Immersion to lead two meditation retreats looking at Buddha Nature and Sadhana respectively. Parami will be leading a retreat in October called "Inner peace, Outer peace". Here Parami will be exploring living in harmony with others using Joanna Macy's work as inspiration.

Following on from Parami is Vessantara leading a 10-day meditation retreat called "The Open Heart". Coming into a fuller relationship with our own heart centre is the theme here. This also the theme of Vessantara's new book "The Art of Meditation - The Heart", to be published in the spring. So if you enjoy the book this retreat is a great chance to go further into this approach with the man himself. Karunacitta and Siddhisambhava are leading a retreat for the first time at Dhanakosa called "The Wisdom of the Five Dakinis". This promises to be a dynamic exploration of these mysterious feminine archetypes.

There are also retreats reappearing in the programme by popular demand. For Pure Awareness fans Vasumitra continues with his enquiry into the nature of mind in "Tracing Back the Radiance", while Tejananda and David Smith lead retreats in July and November respectively. Finally Padmadarsini and Sudaka return to lead 3 yoga retreats. They are SO GOOD! Their retreat in November is an intensive yoga retreat for those who want to take their yoga practice further.

– Dhiraka

Fund raising news

Amoghavira's sponsored run up mighty Ben Vorlich is scheduled for late November/ December and has so far raised £847. Keep the sponsor money coming in, lets make it £1000! Our shrine room appeal has raised £2565.

Healing and Renewal

It's autumn 2001 and I am at Dhanakosa somewhat apprehensively for the first time, attending the first of many of the monthly day retreats. Somehow I had found myself here at a time when I needed to be. Some elements of my family life were becoming increasingly demanding and I had been working for the previous 19 years as a nurse, 14 of which had been in the field of intensive care or cardiac care.



My experience of working in the area of intensive care as a senior nurse was becoming gradually more difficult. I was overworked and suffering from the effects of stress. Fortunately I had realised that I was bogged down by unrealistic work expectations and that I had less and less time to express the compassionate and sensitive nature of my work, which for me had always been an important aspect of the job. My daily experience on a 12.5 hour shift in the intensive care unit could revolve around caring for someone who was dying, dealing with a new patient who needed all of your instant energy and adrenaline and then speaking to a person who had come back to say an emotional thank you.

It is my experience that the way nursing has evolved in recent times has altered the balance from a holistic approach to one that is driven by cost, value for money and an attempt to quantify what nurses do. But I would ask: how can we quantify the time spent talking to someone who is dying or dealing with a family who have consented for their loved one's organs to be donated? I witness daily, caring people who are too pressured and too busy to make a genuine human connection. The NHS has become increasingly demanding but the system has not responded well to the needs of nurses working in difficult environments. For me there was never any space, no time for sharing, no support to integrate and discuss challenging experiences and sadly the time spent with patients had become rushed and lacking in any real value; it was a matter of getting the job done and moving on.

Going to Dhanakosa at this point in my life was like entering an unseen refuge, something began to support me and open my feelings, my heart and my mind. What has occurred and is still evolving is being able to relate to this deeply felt refuge. Relating to the gift of humanity, the gift of being together in peace and silence, being touched by the peace of a shrine room, the delight of Balquhiddar glen and learning to bring my breath into these moments.

In essence my life hasn't changed too much but something has and that is me. I am prepared to be more open and vulnerable yet I am stronger and more connected to the significance and meaning in my life and my experiences as a nurse. The foundation of this change has been the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Dhanakosa has been and is a spiritual space, a home where I have been able to gently explore and reawaken my compassionate nature. I am grateful for its presence in my life.

– Jim Gardner

A Stirring In the Depths

John went to Spain and never came back. However, someone called Dhiraka did return. Here he reflects on Ordination and Sangha.

I had a great time in Spain. On the whole the retreat went well for me. I got into the programme, made plenty of new friends, got 'ordained' (whatever that means!) and had some inner experiences that I will treasure for the rest of my life. Many thanks to all who sent cards welcoming me home.

What happens to those folk who go to get ordained, some of you may well be asking? Well, sorry, but I can't tell you! Ordination is by nature a very mysterious thing. I think it is best to accept the mystery rather than explain it away. There either is, or isn't, a 'stirring in the depths of our being' that moves us into a deeper relationship with the Dharma. This stirring in the depths very naturally led me to ask for ordination, ask to participate in the Dharma Life within an order of similarly devoted Buddhists. After training for six years my ordination 'happened' in July this summer. The mystery continues.....

One thing I realised in Spain was the need for Sangha. The lovely thing is that the stirring in my heart is the same experience that others in the Sangha have. In Spain this was very clear. I was bowled over by the diversity of characters and deeply moved by the fact that we all, nevertheless, arrived at that place. Here was an odd assortment of guys all practicing the Dharma together and supporting each other. There is no highway to Nirvana, no quick and easy route. It is most likely the toughest task you could set yourself: to turn around deeply ingrained habits and views. One cannot underestimate the need for that support.

We are all far more capable, more potent, than we normally think we are. However, my experience in Spain leads me to believe that only through supportive relationships does that potential begin to be drawn out. Encouragement and support is perhaps what we fragile, ego-centred, fearful human beings need most. It might not be too far fetched to say that if we have this, the rest of the spiritual life will take care of itself.



Having returned to Dhanakosa, the demands of everyday life have kicked in again. There is a real culture shock in returning from four months of the truly simple life. However, I'm not a monk and life in the world is complex, so I'll just have to get on and keep practicing.

Strive on Dudes!

The name 'Dhiraka' means he who is courageous, self-possessed, energetic, brave, steady and constant.

The Truth About the Body

– A Shiatsu and Meditation Retreat with Diana Barnard and Prajnananda

“The more consciousness you bring into the body, the stronger the immune system becomes. It is as if every cell awakens and rejoices. The body loves your attention. It is also a potent form of self-healing. Most illnesses creep in when you are not present in the body” – Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*, P103

Having intimate knowledge of our Chi (Ki) energy body is our path to wisdom and healing. Through listening deeply to the elements in ourselves we can touch on the stillness which really speaks to us, uncluttered by conditioned mind and learn the Truth about the Body.

Opening to that still point as a healing process is becoming familiar to me particularly through the practice of Shiatsu, Qi Gong and Meditation. The Spring Shiatsu and Meditation Retreat at Dhanakosa is the focal point of my year, bringing me much healing and much learning. Why does it work? What does it give people?

There is something very close to my heart in this awesome Scottish Mountain Glen. Here I can live out my own mythic and elemental journey in a fairy realm where the veil is thin between heaven and earth... Support comes from the very Earth itself, forceful and huge yet benign, full of healing Chi with its soft, sweet water and clean, pure air.

And the Dhanakosa community embrace and support our retreat fully just as they guide hundreds of people every year back towards their true selves through their dedication to meditation, mindfulness and community living.



The Retreat revolves around the Five Elements: water, wood, fire, earth and metal: each one being strongly represented here with water, woodlands, mountains, sunshine and clean air (metal). We invoke and saturate ourselves in the energies of each element (one per day). We build colourful and beautiful shrines representing the day's element and eat foods and drink teas that strengthen it.

Apart from shiatsu work in the Shrine Room (working with one meridian connected with the days element



e.g. gall bladder for wood) our programme is offered outside in nature in a ritual space: Qi Gong on the lawn in the early morning surrounded by great mountains connecting with Mother Earth; sitting by the loch on water day; on mossy banks in bluebell woods (wood); by blazing fires at night (fire).

Breath, mindfulness and compassion embodied in the structure of daily meditation practice help us cope with the strong feelings that arise and overwhelm us at times. The act of giving and receiving often holds great difficulty for people and helping them stay present with the experience can be a strong lesson.

By living closely in Sangha for a week, sharing so much, we all taste a sense of deep connectedness, a sharing of pain, desire, fear and separation as well as well-being, contentment and love and unity.

On the last day there is a long shiatsu swap where I let go of any guiding or reminding and the quality of work is always outstanding – a sense of giving and receiving that is now real and effortless.

Finally, renewed and strengthened, we must say our farewells not simply to each other or to our generous hosts but also to Dhanakosa's awesome mythic realm of nature spirits where heaven and earth may unite with us and be embodied on our healing journey.

– **Diana Barnard MRSS**

Diana Barnard practices and teaches Shiatsu at the Bristol Cancer Help Centre. She co-leads annual Shiatsu, Qi Gong and Meditation retreats at Dhanakosa in Scotland and Roseven in Devon. Her life, healing work and facilitation of retreats is inspired by her deep commitment to the Buddhist path of liberation from suffering. Her next retreat with Prajnananda at Dhanakosa will be 21st –28th April, 2006

Arboretum Up-Date

Things are starting to take shape in the Arboretum. Since returning from Spain I have planted 8 more semi-mature trees in the arboretum. We now have one of each of the following trees in the ground: *Sophora japonica*, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Prunus padus*, *Malus tschonoskii*, *Sorbus commixta*, *Sorbus cashmiriana*, *Sorbus hupehensis*, *Juglans regia*, and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*. This is all thanks to the generosity of several friends of Dhanakosa – many thanks to you all.

I made two changes to the arboretum plan before these new additions went in. Firstly, I decided not to arrange the trees spatially according to country of origin. This allows me to plant them in the best position both aesthetically and in terms of their preferred conditions. Secondly, in order to give the arboretum some unity and cohesion I have decided to pepper the collection with a number of *Sorbus*. *Sorbus* is a genus we are familiar with in the shape of Rowan trees. The Rowan's Asian relatives will also serve to link the arboretum into the surrounding landscape. If you would like to see this collection increase please consider supporting this brand new arboretum. This is a collection of specimen trees from India, Tibet, China and Japan (the countries of the great Buddhist teachers of the past). It will be a fantastic feature on all our retreats well into the future.

– **Dhiraka**

Dharma Doodles

by *Rosie Balyuzi*, aspiring poet & illustrator living in Edinburgh.



Dharma Doodle Doo!

There is a pocket sized booklet available featuring 20 *dharma doodles* in beautiful ink on paper (b&w) for you to contemplate and enjoy like the one above. Priced £2.50 – contact Rosie@doodlehut.com

Dhanakosa Questionnaire

If you still have one of these lying amongst that pile of magazines by the sofa then rescue it, fill it in and send it to us. We would like to hear your views.

Garden News

Although I wasn't here this spring and early summer I hear that it was fabulous weather and I hope you all enjoyed lounging about in the garden. Christine did an excellent job of maintaining the garden and Dave did a great job of the lawns. Jamie did crash the lawn mower but gladly survived to tell the tale.

I've also got big plans for the cutting garden next year. It is maturing nicely and each year I have learnt something new. With luck next year will see the best crop of flowers yet. This time I plan to experiment with more Lilies, Dahlias and sweet peas, as well as the usual mix of annuals. – **Dhiraka**

Retreat Calendar

05/06

Men's winter

Women's Winter

Yoga & Meditation

Dance & Meditation

Introduction to Meditation

Yoga & Meditation Weekend

Tracing Back the Radiance

Yoga & Meditation

Spring Open

23-30 Dec - *fwbo* regulars

30 Dec-06 Jan - *fwbo* regulars

13-15 Jan - *introductory*

27 Jan-03 Feb - *introductory*

03-05 Feb - *introductory*

10-12 Feb - *introductory*

24-26 Feb - *for regular meditators*

17-24 March - *introductory*

24-31 March - *introductory*