



Autumn rain on still waters:

Contemplating the five Skandhas

About the retreat

The five skandhas are a description of human experience often evoked in both early and later Buddhism to point to the nature of reality through reflection. When tackled experientially this list, that at first glance seems rather dry and abstract, becomes rich and wondrous. And, has the power to lead us to deep transformation. On this retreat we will take a three levels of wisdom approach to the topic; using study to conceptually understand our topic just enough to support reflection, then diving into our direct experience we will familiarise ourselves sufficiently to support deeper meditation, enabling us to witness the unfolding of experience with a new sense of freedom.

The Skandhas are of course a description of the whole of our experience so as well as a substantial amount of time in the shrine room we will be encouraging an integrated and wholistic approach to practice specifically including periods of meditation and reflection outdoors where the full and sensuous experience of nature can gently lead us deeper.

In the afternoons there will be an optional movement session where we will explore the skandas in our embodied experience through movement and dance, usually with music.

Is there anything special I need to bring?

Please bring warm clothes, outdoor footwear and waterproofs, as we will be doing some retreat sessions outdoors. Loose comfortable clothes if you'd like to take part in the movement sessions.

What can I expect from the retreat programme?

The retreat day will start with a double meditation before breakfast (most meditation sessions will be about 40 minutes). After breakfast there will normally be a short seminar session, followed by a period of reflection and further meditation including a lead introduction to meditative reflection on the five skandhas. There will also be some ritual practice each day as well as opportunities for group exploration. Optional movement sessions will also help ground our experience in our bodies and retreat reviews will give opportunity for personal guidance.

You can expect there to be some periods of silence every day to support going deeper, and a block of three to four days of silence in the middle of the retreat. You can also expect

there to be four to five hours of meditation and ritual each day some of which is likely to be outdoors.

About the team

Nayaka came to Dhanakosa in 1996 after learning to meditate with the Newcastle Buddhist Centre. Drawn by the mountains, he quickly felt at home here and became increasingly involved in the running of the centre. He became part of the management team in 1999, was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order in 2001 and became Centre Director in 2006. He has a background in earth and life sciences, a long standing interest in natural history and a love of the wilderness.

Subhanaya looks after the garden and is part of the management team, she was ordained in 2021 and has worked at Dhanakosa since 2014. The big landscape here holds her heart and provides a reflection of spaciousness which nourishes her practice. Dance and movement is an important part of her life and she is currently training to teach Open Floor movement practice, you can find out more on her website here: www.subhanayadance.com