

## notes from the directors's desk



As you will see we have chosen to give space in this newsletter to a number of our regular teachers and retreat leaders talking about the importance of the body as the central aspect of our awareness.

Many people regard the modern world as very head orientated and use words like intellectualisation and alienation to describe what is sometimes called the malaise of modern society. It is interesting to me that this is not just a contemporary concern. Or, at least the suggested route to its resolution is not new.

If the evidence of the suttas is anything to go by even in the Buddha's day 2,500 years ago there was the same need to come back to awareness of the body and to the direct sensual experience as the foundation of practice.

Conceptual understanding of the Dharma is useful, but only in lived experience can it fully flower. Sangharakshita (the founder of the Triratna Buddhist Community and Order) is often quoted as saying that the spiritual life consists in finding emotional equivalents to our intellectual understandings. Given that the seat of our emotional experience is the body it is easy to see why awareness and deep receptivity to the body is so important.

As I write this most of the Order Members in the Dhanakosa community are away at an Order gathering at Adhithana in Herefordshire because Sangharakshita is celebrating his 90th Birthday. Although Dhanakosa

draws on a wide range of methods and approaches to make the Dharma accessible to the modern world the underlying principles and central guidance of what we do is derived from Sangharakshita's teaching and the living exemplification of that by the Order. You can find out more about Sangharakshita, his life and work on his web site Sangharakshita.org.

With this newsletter you should also have a copy of next year's programme. Much of the programme is unchanged although quite a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes developing retreat leading teams and skills. You will notice that "Dancing the Unknown" with Jayacitta is back.

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You will also notice that the Focusing retreat "The Body's Deeper Knowing" is now presented in the regulars programme, and the Shiatsu retreat team of Amoghavira and Diana Barnard are now leading Qigong instead.

We also have two new Going Deeper retreats; a women's meditation retreat "Looking into the Heart" led by Pasadini and Dassini, and "Elemental Awakening" led by myself and Siddhimala. For Order Members there is a precious opportunity to be on retreat with Prakasha. For more information and bookings visit our web site or phone the office. We look forward to welcoming you back. \$

## retreat highlights 2016

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 12 - 19 feb | opening to life <b>introductory</b><br><i>led by amoghavira and pasadini</i>            |
| 4 - 11 mar  | dancing the unknown <b>introductory</b><br><i>led by jayacitta and vajradevi</i>        |
| 01 - 08 apr | a living mirror <b>triratna</b><br><i>led by dhivan and nayaka</i>                      |
| 06 - 13 may | qi gong <b>introductory</b><br><i>led by amoghavira and diana barnard</i>               |
| 15 - 22 jul | going deeper - women's meditation <b>regulars</b><br><i>led by pasadini and dassini</i> |

check [www.dhanakosa.com](http://www.dhanakosa.com) for our full 2016 programme of retreats

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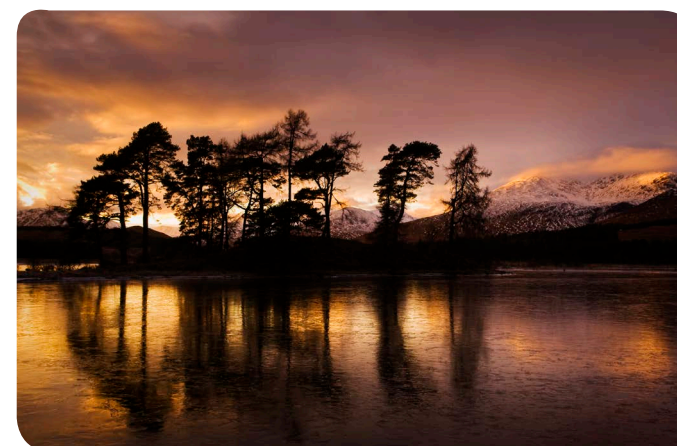


*In this issue:* This season our theme is 'perspectives on the body'. Dhanakosa retreat leaders share their views on how bodywork supports meditation and the experience of being on retreat. We also hear from Nayaka who introduces the 2016 programme. Enjoy and thank you for being part of Dhanakosa!

## a universe to explore

It is quite natural to arrive on retreat with various hopes and fears about the week ahead. Will I get on with the people around me? What will the food be like? Will my work and family be OK without me? I really want a peaceful mind! I want to be able to deeply relax! I want joy!

A theme that runs through the whole Buddhist tradition is the practice of mindfulness. Learning to be alert and knowing of present moment experience. As hope and fears, pleasures and pains arise and pass – we can gradually learn to be intimate with this flow in awareness – without being thrown about and tormented by such changing states of mind.



Once you start approaching your body with curiosity rather than with fear everything shifts  
Bessel Van Der Kolk

It may come as a surprise to the western mindset that a core aspect and foundation of developing such mindfulness is awareness of the body. Being conscious of its movements and its world of sensations as felt from within. In some ways experiencing our body can easily feel somewhat mundane and often uncomfortable, so habitually we may ignore it. But with practice, in learning to turn towards and abide with body sensations, we find that body awareness is gradually transformative.

Dhanakosa retreats offer a range of ways to help cultivate this body awareness. From feeling the movement of breath as you breathe in meditation, to feeling the pressure on your feet as you walk a hill to making various shapes in yoga. At Dhanakosa there is time to practice body awareness, and ride its challenges and opportunities, with support and encouragement from others.

There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy

Friedrich Nietzsche

The American Buddhist Reginald Ray has written about how western life has led many of us to live as 'floating heads' – alienated from our bodies and all that is held there. What is unconscious has control over us.

So we may then find ourselves acting and responding in ways we don't understand and maybe do not like. Closed off from our bodies, life is likely to feel quite black and white, with little to make us feel alive or fulfilled.

On retreat we can learn to reawaken our body as a universe of sensations to explore and benefit from. We can learn to come home into our bodies, into its feelings, emotions, and wake up to who we are more deeply.

We can taste the surprising vistas of freedom that a deepening body awareness unveils. From this inner richness, can come greater care and appreciation for this fragile life and all who we meet. \$

*Balajit leads several introductory level retreats at Dhanakosa each year. He lives in Birmingham and splits his time between working as a SHEN therapist and leading workshops and retreats across the UK. [www.shentherapy.co.uk](http://www.shentherapy.co.uk)*







## the flow of life



*Padmadarshini teaches yoga at Bodywise in Manchester and leads several bodywork retreats each year at Dhanakosa, including Body, Earth and Breath 18-25 March 2016.*

When I feel most fully engaged in the flow of life I sense that I am engaging my body, my heart and my mind and that all three aspects of my being are integrated. I am embodied, my heart and emotions are engaged and my mind is clear.

At other times maybe an aspect of my being is overlooked, ignored, not given what it needs and I am somehow out of synch with life, unintegrated and less fully all of myself.

I find this body, heart, mind map a useful tool for seeing where I am and what is needed to bring balance. I also love the word soma which means the living body. Our somatic experience is the unique experience we each have when we look at ourselves from the inside and become aware of sensations, feelings, perceptions, movements, emotions and intentions.

To others we are other, an outside object, a body. To ourselves we are not a body as object but rather all these sensations, feelings and living processes that only we can sense through our own nervous system.

So when we inhabit our bodies in meditation, a movement practice or in daily life this is what we become aware of, our living conscious body. Our somatic experience is

an ever present field of sensations, vibrations and inner visceral movements. Neurobiologist Dan Siegal says 'our mind is in our body and our relationships'. For me these few words express something true and important for our times.

Our bodies are the receivers of everything that happens in our lives. Our bodies hold our stories. Psyche and soma are deeply related. This is why bodywork practices can have such a profound effect. When we drop into our bodies with a willingness to pause, sense and really listen with curiosity, we find our body communicates all the time through these sensations, tensions, pain, movements, gestures, images and memories.

### Our mind is in our body and our relationships

Dan Siegal

As we listen and let our body speak its mind we may receive new understandings, insights and guidance for our lives. And as we listen to our body, our body changes. The energies held in bodily tensions on being received in this way find a flow again and our bodily symptoms may be eased. This is a practice of receptivity and deep listening and it is non-rational but it works!

When taking this approach into movement practices sometimes at times I like to let go of the familiar forms of practice such as yoga and follow my inner impulses for movement allowing new forms to emerge. Practices such as these start to allow a deeper listening where new things emerge from the body into consciousness and we come to know and express ourselves in fresh and unexpected ways. §

### Dhanakosa Shop

We've launched a new online shop for Buddhist rupas, singing bowls and more. Visit [www.dhanakosashop.co.uk](http://www.dhanakosashop.co.uk)

### An Invitation

Amoghavira, who leads our photography retreats and takes many of the beautiful photographs we use on our posters and publicity, has collaborated with poet Simon Millward to produce a book of poems and images.

Called 'An Invitation' it contains 25 colour photographs and accompanying poems bringing to life the area around Dhanakosa in the glen of Balquhiddie. It will be available from the Dhanakosa bookshop and online shop from 1st October 2015, priced £15.00.

## community news

### Open Day

Our annual open day this year in June was our most popular ever, with over 200 people coming through the gate. On offer were tours of the house and grounds, meditation tasters, delicious soup, scones and cakes and the chance to chat and relax with the community and other visitors.

Many people who came were locals, including the Trossachs National Park rangers and two women who remembered the building as the Ledreich Hotel and restaurant. Other people had been on retreat and were bringing friends and family to share this special place. Thank you to everyone who came and to all the volunteers who helped on the day.

## does the body rule the mind, or does the mind rule the body?

Morrissey of the Smiths once asked the question "Does the body rule the mind, or does the mind rule the body?".

Morrissey is not the only person to have pondered such a question – the 17th century French philosopher Descartes had asked similar questions. He is famous for his dictum 'I think therefore I am' – the idea that thinking proceeds experience.

In Western thought we generally view the body and the mind as separate entities. This results in a splitting and dualistic view of the mind and body. Eastern thought tends not to split the mind and body, which may be due to the practice of meditation having been an important part of Oriental culture for thousands of years.

When, in our practice of yoga and meditation, we bring our full awareness to our embodied experience we notice a complexity of thoughts, feeling, emotions and sensations – all coming into our awareness and then passing away.

The Buddhist view of mind holds a perspective that

includes our feelings, bodily sensations and emotions. As a yoga practitioner I have found it more helpful to view my mind as something that exists within my body rather than something that sits aloft at the top of my head. This latter experience can reduce me to experiencing the world within largely conceptual models (which often leaves me feeling more isolated and disconnected from myself and other people).

"So deep is our modern disembodiment, then, that many of us have no trust in the body whatsoever and content ourselves with disregarding it on every occasion and at every possible level. In all of this, not surprisingly, there is rarely a sense that the body, on its own and from its own side, might have something to offer us; that the body might, in some sense, be more intelligent than our conscious self or ego, or that the body might have its own designs from which – if understood – we might stand to benefit a very great deal."

Reginald Ray, Buddhist teacher.

By reclaiming our relationship to our bodies we experience a sense of arriving home again – of what it means to be truly alive and human on this planet. §



*Manjunaga teaches yoga in Manchester and at Dhanakosa. He is particularly interested in exploring qualities of stillness and spaciousness. [www.manjunaga.com](http://www.manjunaga.com)*

## Steve's climbing Mount Kilimanjaro!



This September Steve Hornby, a regular volunteer with us, is climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and he has chosen to fundraise for Dhanakosa. It's a big challenge, Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa at 5,895m above sea level. Steve tells us why he has decided to tackle the mountain and donate to Dhanakosa:

"I first visited Dhanakosa in 2014 for a Hillwalking retreat and it had a profound affect on my life. I've made many positive changes and become a Mitra at the Manchester Buddhist Centre. I want to raise money to help other people experience the magic of Dhanakosa."

If you'd like to help Steve raise his target of £5,895 for Dhanakosa then you can donate online at <https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/stevehornby> or call us in the office to donate over the phone or send a cheque marked 'Steve Hornby'. Many thanks.

## regular giving to Dhanakosa

Dhanakosa is supported by a growing number of regular standing order donors, who help us continue to provide a welcoming and supportive retreat environment for everyone who comes.

To set up a standing order visit our website and download the regular standing order form <http://www.dhanakosa.com/giving-dhanakosa>

