



living at Dhanakosa

I have been crossing over with and weaving my life into Triratna since 1993, when I came into contact with the movement in Ipswich, having moved there from South Africa a couple of years earlier.

This is largely because I am drawn to the complete lifestyle offered in the form of the 'three c's' of community, centre and 'co-op' (right-livelihood), pervaded by the system of practice which gives structure and vision to the spiritual path through meditation, devotion, ethics and insight.



Community and team-based right-livelihood have featured most strongly for me out of the 'three c's', mostly thanks to Windhorse:Evolution (still can't quite believe it has gone!), for whom I worked part time, full time and casually from 1994-2009, mostly in Ipswich Evolution, with spells at Windhorse and Hammersmith Evolution.

A particularly appealing feature of Triratna's is its eclecticism, which introduces the varied splendours of the Buddhist universe and also how it relates to Western civilization. I was struck recently by the sheer breadth of Sangharakshita's reading when reading his autobiographies. It was also pleasant to swing by Tooting and get

some sense of where he grew up.

It was 'biography', in the form of Pilgrimage, which rebooted my wish to engage with Triratna in 2011, after a fair few years of 'arting around'. I went to India with the Ipswich and Colchester sanghas and loved getting a sense of the landscape and the world the Buddha grew up in and influenced. Highlights for me were Kushinagar, Stupa of the Buddha's begging bowl and Kapilavastu, all situated on the expansive Indo-Gangetic plain dotted with forest, brick kilns and villages.

Landscape and trees, with a religious/spiritual twist, have been among my main themes when painting and it must be said, the glories of the Trossachs played a role in my coming to Dhanakosa in 2011.

I came up to cover the books during Priyadasa's Ordination, was kept on to help out with a couple of projects and stayed on longer in a mixed admin/maintenance role until 2014, when the temptation to try art as a career got the better of me. So, I moved to Cambridge, back to the flat lands! Three and a bit years later and the pendulum has swung the other way and I am back at Dhanakosa in a supportive role mixing admin/reception with maintenance/housekeeping.

While living in Cambridge, I came up to support the Photography retreats at Dhanakosa, I have long appreciated the interest that various contemporary Buddhist masters have taken in photographing nature, especially in the Zen tradition.

And being in the land of mountains and rivers is perfect for getting into Basho, Ryokan and a spot of Dogen.

by Chris Langley



retreat highlights 2018

22 - 29 jun **going deeper - women's meditation** - going deeper

led by Pasadini and Viryadevi

31 aug - 7 sep **simply being** - meditation regulars

led by Tejananda, Siddhimala and Pasadini

28 sep - 5 oct **mindfulness path to freedom** - introductory

led by Balajit and Shraddhadharani

16 - 23 nov **padmasambhava's Invitation** - triratna/meditation

led by Srisambhava and Vimalacitta

check www.dhanakosa.com for our full 2018 programme of retreats



In this issue: reflections from introductory and regular retreats, living at Dhanakosa, privacy rules and community news. Enjoy and thank you for being a part of Dhanakosa!

the mindful heart

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.

T.S. Eliot

I woke up the other day in my bed, and thought, "What's the point?" I could go into all the ways that I question the point of myself, or others, or situations, but really the content is not the point, as it were.

With the thought, I felt the familiar feeling of tightness in my belly, the tensing of my hands and back, and my eyes darted around the room, looking for something to grab hold of. It was starting to be believed and I was literally tensing against life, the thought, everything. But in it all I stopped and decided to turn towards the thought.

As I learned in inquiry work, I turned the thought around to include myself. I tried "I am the point." Instantly there was a release, and a knowing that there was more truth in that. That, yes, this life force, which we call Pasadini, has a point, or else, I wouldn't be here. So, this, this experience, this body, this moment, is the whole of the point. There is nothing more than this. In this turnaround, I was able to taste freedom, and see the world from a different, more connected, viewpoint.

So how do we sit with our loneliness, our sadness, grief, anger, hatred, joy, pain, delight, our failures, our loathsomeness? How do we sit with it, and turn towards it, and (*gulp*) accept it? Oh gosh. And, dare I say, how do we love it?



When we feel we've failed, how do we find the space to take a deep breath and then get up and try again?

In the Satipatthana Sutta, the Buddha taught that the quality of sati (mindfulness) can be used to investigate our moment by moment experience, no matter what it is. From this non-reactive, curious attitude we can respond with compassion and ultimately wisdom. The Sutta says if we practice diligently in this way then we are assured of success. Wow. And if we practiced wholeheartedly for just seven days, it says we would be well on our way to awakening.

Is it really that simple? Well, yes. Easy? No. This is because we have so many layers of resistance in our minds that we need to patiently and persistently work with, with mindfulness and kindness, again and again. Slowly turning towards each and every one of them, leaving no stone unturned. Or unloved. Opening our heart to all the parts of ourselves, and others, that we habitually turn away from, that we abandon or even have banished.

So this is the good news, that we can apply the teachings of metta and mindfulness all day, every day, to our experience, and if we keep doing that, then we will be more wise and more compassionate. And the key is we need to keep doing it.

I find it hard at times to remember this, and I have been doing this for almost 20 years now. But that's ok, I just keep picking myself up, with confidence that this process of turning towards continues to reap benefits, that over the years I am more comfortable being with my own vulnerability, my own failures. More layers of the onion get peeled back, revealing deeper work. And I turn my heart/mind towards that, with honesty. Again and again.

Please join Pasadini and Viryadevi in a week of practice turning towards your own heart on the women's meditation retreat, **The Mindful Heart**, 22-29 June, 2018.

Pasadini has been a practicing Buddhist/meditator since Y2K. She lived at Dhanakosa for two years and now stays in Glasgow full time with her wife and dog leading retreats at Dhanakosa several times a year.



'This land like a mirror turns you inward.'

A few days in, Paramananda's echoing voice dropped into the silence this first line by Gwendolyn MacEwan, leading in the beautifully spectral poem 'Dark Pines Under Water'. Fully immersed (Total Immersion retreat, lead by Paramananda and Tarakarunya), little encouragement was needed to find the mirrored reflections of the perfectly still loch, shooting tall green towers of trees down to the sky reflected depths below, echoed also throughout our now less than solid bodily form.

Surely we can locate the elements wherever we practice, but need I say why Dhanakosa's spot, embedded as it is beside that mysterious stretch of water, offers an opportunity to experience oneself as an elemental being in a way quite luxurious and rare for one more commonly sitting in a terraced house? Having said that, back in London, I am haunted still.

Speaking of echoes... I had brought on retreat with me my copy of Ted Hughes' 'Tales From Ovid', Romanised Greek myths bringing to life the shape-shifting beings who inhabited the groves and lagoons of the ancient imagination that still seem so unusually familiar despite our insanely complex modern lives.

I had been asked if I would like to read some stories aloud in the evening ritual, which I did. And so inevitably the

already mythic landscape became a story book to me, living out its destiny as the arbiter of secret rites.

The narcissi bloomed on the lawn, the loch was still and so arose the tale of Echo and Narcissus, who fatally fell in love with his own reflection.

As we sank deeper into darker ground, each battling with our own inner trickiness, antlers lying on the ground and the sound of stags running across damp green grass heralded a call from Diana, goddess of hunting, and so we heard the tale of her uncompromising punishment of Actaeon, lest we forget our own duty to honour the Wild, whichever way we find her.

And finally Proserpina signalled to me by her mother, Ceres, goddess of Earth and harvest, who spoke through gold shimmering stones littering the shores.

This was my first time at Dhanakosa in spring, previously only visiting in the winter, and these shimmers had previously been hidden to me without a glaze of sunlight to bring out the gold, much as Ceres ensures her darling Proserpina may return from the underworld each year, heralding the summer, before she returns below to pay her due. Elemental and shapeshifting indeed.



by Lucy Shaw
West London Buddhist Centre

notes from the director's desk

by Nayaka



It's been a long winter at Dhanakosa with plenty of snowy adventures but spring feels well and truly here now. It's an extraordinary transformation!

Speaking of transformations we have also finally moved into our new office and meetings room space which we are not only enjoying as a work environment but also its a real transformation for the community house which feels like it can finally start to breathe easy and become a private residential space at last for those who live there.

The new meetings room is a great space too. We christened it with the retreat leaders meeting in March and since then it has been used for team meetings, discussion groups, meditation reviews, day retreats and as a private meeting space.

The next project is going to be the shrine room link

project. This is scheduled for the autumn and will create a transition space and new main entrance between the main retreat centre shrine room and the retreat house significantly reducing congestion and easing disabled access.

A less obvious but also important piece of work underway is changes to privacy and data protection. This is driven by changes in what are called the general data protection rules that come into force on the 25th May. As a practice community its always difficult to determine the boundaries between the organisation, and the people who participate in it. We think in terms of developing a community of interest and sharing Dhanakosa, rather than selling a service or fundraising for a cause. But, the principals of being fair, transparent, and respectful in how we handle people's data remain.

The new rules do allow for a degree of what is called "soft opt in" for paper mailings but in general we will need explicit opt in to communication, particularly things like the e-news and fundraising appeals. So, if you want to continue hearing about Dhanakosa do opt in! you can find opt in options on the web site along with our new privacy notice, or just get in touch with the office and they will update our records.





Settling into Danakosa. We arrive. Chattering. Sharing our excitement, anxiety, fear, expectation. We divulge our particulars – sometimes to fill the uncomfortable space, sometimes to try to define unknown – either way, out of silly habit.

We relax a bit as names are said, locations, possible inclinations for coming. As the week passes, we will learn more about ourselves than our regular introductions generally cover. The night comes on and the bunkmates giggle themselves to sleep, tossing and turning; taking off a first layer of arrival. The morning breaks. A first sit.

Anticipation smooths into experience. Bellies gurgle and still, gurgle and still. Breakfast. PORRIDGE!! Chatting about our humanity. And then, I have a job:) Yoga fairy! Setting up the space. Then the class. 2 hours of gentle, gorgeous inhabitation of body, breath, mind, emotion. I relish the thirst my body has for movement and stillness.

Time blends into meditations and mealtime bells. There is space to walk, to sit, to wander, to be aware of the moment and tend to the breath. What a gift to unwrap over many days away from the rhythm of life and responsibility outside this lovely glen. Space and time grow in different ways as the days pass, allowing for my

mind to relax and gain necessary perspective. Every being around me is me.

Back home now, Danakosa seems far away until I pause and pay attention to my breath. In and out.

Settling, arriving in the moment, allowing the mind chatter to recede. At once, I am back in the shrine room, sitting on a cushion, feeling my body root down to the earth and aspire upwards like a mountain. I recall my fellow retreatants, feeling gratitude for the unspoken commitment we all made to come and find the peace of this place, to commune together and let it bake in, and then to bring that perspective back out past the glen to rejoin the world we briefly left behind.

This retreat is a gift I have taken back home. It has given me a chance to reconnect with that place of peace and stillness to hold in my day-to-day. I am grateful for the remembrance of the importance of community, however long or short it lasts, and for each breath, however long or short it lasts. I'll go and pay attention to it just now for a bit.

I hope to come back to Dhanakosa before too long.

by Heather MacLaren

Heather lives in Canada, she is a language teacher, gardener, dog-mum.



retreat reflections

As you step through the door
you know, you are welcome.
Welcome to a tranquil heaven called Dhanakosa.
It must be good; cos here I am again.

A week of Yoga and meditation beckons;
of bells, mantras and chants.
of yoga mats and Downward Facing Dogs

A week of glorious food; 'glorious food'.
Of sunrises over the loch
and peaceful walks.

Meeting new people and sharing life stories
or sitting in the Quiet room; contemplating.

Can words truly express this experience?
Not really; it has to be 'lived'.

by Irene Lavery

*Irene is retired and enjoys cooking,
walking, photography, opera and
travel*



dhanakosa community



Pictured: the team at the end of 2017, from left to right - Leif, Ben, Lisa, Dharmavasini, Upekshanandi, Pamela, Iain and Nayaka. And of course Padme the cat.

