



# staying at Dhanakosa

While living at Dhanakosa, I have tried to encourage the habit of sitting by the Loch; sending thoughts of gratitude to be carried with the water across the world. In a place where the presence, falling and flow of water are so powerful this practice has become very meaningful. I feel very grateful to have been at Dhanakosa, to learn the Dharma, to be part of an inspiring Sangha and to be able live in a landscape of such vibrant transcendent beauty.



I have spent most of my adult life living and working in nature across Scotland. The connection I have felt amongst the landscapes of my birth has felt so rich. I feel lucky to have had and share with friends many experiences which I could not fully describe; but seemed to take me out of myself and connect me with the flow of nature all around in a life altering way.

Encountering the Dharma has gifted me a context with which to frame such experiences. It also has given me a strong desire to live from a state of deep connection to all beings, and a desire to have a positive impact on all around.

Being at Dhanakosa; where I am close to the land, to people living deeply and to the Dharma seems the ideal place to try and live this way. I feel the effects of being here myself, and I see the value of Dhanakosa through witnessing experiences of people staying here. I feel Dhanakosa encourages lives of contentment, simplicity and generosity and encouraging this way of life is key to a harmonious existence for all. I feel grateful for all Dhanakosa gives to me, and grateful for a chance to contribute to a project which has such a vital beneficial impact on the world around.

*Iain Maclean has volunteered at Dhanakosa for a year, leaving March 2019. He has given a lot to the place and been a much-loved member of the community. You'll see his energy and influence in many outdoor projects around the place - including new gates at the top of our land and toward the loch shore. We'll miss his warm smile, open hearted presence and delight at working outside in all variety of Scottish weathers. He's moving on to other outdoor based and nature conservancy work in Scotland.*



## retreat highlights 2019

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| <b>12 - 19 jul</b> | <b>going deeper - women's meditation</b> - going deeper<br><i>led by Pasadini</i>                                     |
| <b>4 - 11 oct</b>  | <b>simply being</b> - meditation regulars<br><i>led by Tejananda, Upekshanandi and Amoghavira</i>                     |
| <b>18 - 25 oct</b> | <b>embrace tiger return to mountain</b> - introductory<br><i>led by Jayaraja, Larry Butler and Susanne Lin Jensen</i> |
| <b>15 - 22 nov</b> | <b>the root verses of the six bardos</b> - triratna/meditation<br><i>led by Amoghavira, Nayaka and Upekshanandi</i>   |

check [www.dhanakosa.com](http://www.dhanakosa.com) for our full 2019 programme of retreats



**In this issue:** Maitrivira talks about being ordained, Nayaka explores the experience of being on retreat and Abi shares about gardening as part of spiritual practice. Enjoy and thank you for being a part of Dhanakosa!

## ordination at dhanakosa

*Many of you who have been here over the years will have met Jamie Ward, who has been involved with Dhanakosa for many years and is a regular team member on many retreats each year. This December Jamie was ordained into the Triratna Buddhist Order and he received the name Maitrivira - a loving, kindly, benevolent hero. Here he writes about his experience of the time around his ordination.*

Sensing into my body (a practice called Focusing) to see how it all felt in that present moment around my ordination... What comes first are the words "Entering the Mandala of the Sacred and Non Sacred". These words feel connected to both ordination and my life right now. Something about the struggle of life being as much about Dharma practice as meditating and being on retreat.

Private ordination with Amoghavira at Kilmory, Mull Of Kintyre: remembering how Amitabha, Padmasambhava and Bhante Sangharakshita (who had died just 3.5 weeks before) felt very present and alive for me. Sense of connection and spaciousness. Simultaneously feeling a huge amount of terror.

*(Maitrivira being publicly ordained by Dhammarati)*



A sense of the land where we were... wildness and ruggedness, like Lord of the Rings... ancientness... with that a sense of a long history of spiritual practice with the old chapel nearby... and I felt connected to the druids of the Celtic tradition.

Remembering it being very harmonious and companionable with Amoghavira... as well as an intensity with it just the two of us... something about the depth and weight but also lightness and humour... we laughed a lot. Amoghavira's sensitivity and perceptiveness of what I needed... having a real appreciation of his qualities. A sense of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas being there, the land and space, and there also being pain, and suffering and complexity and it could all be there. I have my hands out and what comes is an image of Yama, the wrathful deity who holds the Wheel of Life.

Private ordination: I woke up feeling a deep stillness, solid and present, in my belly... sensing the Buddha touching the earth... I could relate to experiencing that feeling many other times but now ordination was finally taking place... was present all day... the gesture that comes is of going down, like the gateway into it... anxiety came and went but felt very superficial.

Amoghavira gave me the name Maitrivira. 'He who is a loving, kindly, benevolent hero'... as soon as he said my name I felt it 'land' on me and I knew it was my name... it was obvious! ... and a mystery as well.

I was given the Padmasambhava visualisation practice... had a strong connection with him over many years... Padmasambhava is not a figure that is easily summed up... to me he is guts, fire, heart, space, aliveness and potency.

Returned to Dhanakosa with Amoghavira for my public ordination on the men's GFR retreat. It felt good to be back in the glen on the land (a different kind of wildness)... where my Dharma practice first began many years ago and where I've done a lot of practice... sensing how important for me to be ordained at Dhanakosa.

Public ordination: remembering the day and my ordination... experiencing love, openness, connections...

*(continued over the page)*



friends, family, sangha... also tightness, anxiety, panic... people, crowds and being the centre of the attention. During the ceremony feeling focus, intent, wholeheartedness... how longing, Going for Refuge is the most important thing...the only thing that matters.

Sitting a few days after my public ordination, relief coursing through my body... beginning to absorb and arrive more fully. Finally, my being had gone through the ritual passed down from the Buddha through generations of practitioners culminating with Amoghavira and Dhammarati initiating me into the Triratna Buddhist Order...taking my seat in the world as Maitrivira.

*Maitrivira has a long-time connection with Dhanakosa. He has a connection with the landscape which both nourishes and weaves into his practice of meditation and love of ritual. He feels at home with the mysterious depths and resonates with poetry, the language of the heart.*

*He is passionate about both practising and teaching Focusing and is a qualified Focusing teacher who offers individual and group sessions in person or by phone/Skype. For more information contact [dh.maitrivira@gmail.com](mailto:dh.maitrivira@gmail.com)*



## notes from the director's desk

by Nayaka



Back in the early 1990's Dhanakosa was primarily conceived of as a retreat centre for the Glasgow Buddhist Centre, and for what was hoped would be a growing Triratna (then FWBO) community in Scotland. Although, even in those days Dhanakosa had an outward facing aspect to its programme too. As the project grew and developed it became apparent that this outward facing aspect of the project was much more important than was first realised, and that the retreats offered here really were of national and international interest.

Today we maintain around half of the programme as 'introductory'; that is retreats open to anyone, and where the teaching assumes no previous experience of Buddhism, retreats, or Triratna. The other half of the programme covers a spectrum of interests from our going deeper retreats, meditation retreats, special interest and innovative regulars' retreats, through to retreats for the Order and those specifically for the Scottish sangha community. And, although just under half the people who come on retreat are from Scotland, we have visitors from all over Europe and frequently from the rest of the world too.

Over the years, our understanding of what an introductory retreat can be has developed. They are often, but not always, coupled with yoga, hillwalking or another creative or physical activity. Simply providing an uncluttered space, free from outside influences, with a simple programme of introductory meditation and complimentary wholesome activities can be accessible and beneficial to such a wide range of people. Enabling them to soften into a fuller and richer understanding of themselves and their place in the world among their fellow humans.

There is something deeply human about this project. Dhanakosa is not about presenting an 'ideal home' retreat centre with slick courses delivered by eloquent professionals. It is true that we work hard to create a context where people can feel safe and that they can relax into. We do this by creating an environment that feels cared for, and with teams who are supportive and understand deeply the dynamics of self-discovery.

But it is your unfoldment that is at the heart of things. At this point of course I could spin off into a discussion about Buddhism, Dharma practice, and no-self-discovery. But I want to just hold us back a little in the open space of the quiet room, the wind in the trees, the rippling water of the loch, that felt presence of the care and support of the team that understands human emotion but holds back from trying to "fix" us. The friendship of that person next to us who's name we have forgotten but who's gentle smile lets us know we are seen and cared for.



Whether our retreat is life changing, earth shattering, challenging, or simply enriching, one thing I can say for sure is that the world needs us to love, and it needs us to know ourselves. Whether we conceive of this as the wisdom and compassion of the buddhas, or just a little bit more of all that is good in our common humanity is in a sense a secondary issue.





"what is truly a part of our spiritual path is that which brings us alive. If gardening is what brings us alive, that is part of our path, if it is music, if it is conversation...we must follow what brings us alive"

Benedictine brother David Steindl-Rast

This column will explore gardening as spiritual practice and talk about the gardens here at Dhanakosa. I've gardened here for 4 years or so, and been 6 months in the official role of gardener alongside Dharmavasini. We both really love what we do, neither of us experts, but very happy outside in all weathers, taking care and curating the beauty of this wild and precious place.

We look after the beds and pots around the retreat centre and other buildings, grow cut flowers for the shrines and house in the deer fenced garden, also some fruit, veg and herbs and have an eye to the wider 24 acres of grounds too.

The day of the funeral of Sangharakshita, the founder of the Triratna Buddhist Community, I was in the garden. A cold, clear day in November, tending the garden in a Triratna retreat centre running for 27 years, part of a worldwide Buddhist movement with centres in 27 countries around the world, thousands of people practicing in this tradition, all initiated by this one man in the late 1960's. I was very aware of folk gathered internationally to mourn and celebrate, and felt strongly that day my act of gardening as devotion, both to Sangharakshita and to the teachings of the Buddha he has shared with us.

"let the beauty you love be what you do" Rumi

Gardening is where I experience joy, can express gentleness, can take care of myself by doing what I love and give to others through offering beauty. It's where I don't know or fail and try again. I see plants grow, reaching for the light, dying back, becoming the compost that enriches. Impermanence in action. I feel less small, tight 'me' and more connected with life, flowing, growing.

We try to provide flowers for the shrines from early spring with the daffodils until late autumn and into winter with seasonal greenery. This year we've experimented with forced bulbs for the first few months of the year – crocus and muscari were the most successful, we've had muscari in the Quiet Room for most of February and March too.

This season we've been adding a few new shrubs to the driveway bed – Hamamelis and Forsythia for winter/early spring colour.

We've opened up the area below the stand of birches, to the left of the familiar path down to the loch, with a new gate courtesy of volunteer Iain. We are planning to add a bench in this area soon. Do explore next time you are here.



## community news

The new shrine link is nearing completion, the builders are finishing off during April and we'll be doing the final decor and interior touches after that. It's a beautiful space already and folk have been appreciating the easier access to the shrine room as well as the space itself to sit and enjoy the view out beyond the house to the gate and loch.

We had a work retreat in January and a happy crew worked hard painting the bedrooms at the front of the house and the extension. We usually run 1-2 work retreats a year, if you'd like to join us in future do get in touch with the office. We are looking for folk who are practically skilled or keen to have a go - we usually do painting, cleaning and basic DIY during these weeks.

In November we marked the death of Bhante Sangharakshita with a puja in the community shrine room

with local friends, led by Smritiratna. Several members of the community travelled to Adhisthana for the funeral.

The community shared a few days retreat together in February, on the theme of ethics. We usually come together for a team retreat once a year, it's a precious opportunity to practice together outwith of the day-to-day work and a treat to use the retreat centre ourselves in one of the rare closed periods.

*(view to the front of the new link in March - still some finishing work to do)*

