

Active Hope for Humanity

Dhanakosa Retreat

18-25 November 2023

Seeing the dangers confronting humankind these days, we can feel depressed, demoralised and helpless to avert disaster - or even to talk about such feelings. This retreat provides a space not only to talk but to explore an extraordinary sequence of reflections and communal practices that can rekindle an 'active hope' and vision for humanity. The retreat takes its title from a book called Active Hope co-authored by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnston. Check it out at <http://www.activehope.info/>

Having studied Buddhism, Joanna went on to develop this sequence of exercises and reflections to help us move from despair into an 'active hope'. Such hope is far more than something vague and passive ... more like a vision for humanity, a future to which we can contribute and actively help to bring about.

Joanna Macy calls her workshop sequence the 'Spiral of the Work That Reconnects'. Engaging with the suffering of the world can be distressing and we can turn away to avoid feeling powerless and despairing. Drawing on Buddhist ideas, living systems theory and deep ecology, the Work That Reconnects strengthens our capacity to give our best response to the global challenges confronting us. It involves a transformative journey through a spiral in four successive stages:-

- (1) When we **come from gratitude** and appreciation we become more present to the life around us and the gifts we receive. This calms the mind and opens the heart in preparation for wise and compassionate responses to suffering. Then we can ...
- (2) **honour our pain for the world**, by making space to hear our feelings in response to what is happening to our world. As we do so, a profound caring and interconnectedness with life can emerge. We begin ...
- (3) **seeing with new eyes**, with a deeper recognition of our mutual belonging on the living Earth. We come to understand the new kind of power this arouses and the many ways we can apply this to a life-sustaining society. We now get ready for ...
- (4) **going forth** into the world with a fresh vision and practical steps.

What can I expect from this retreat?

We'll begin each day with meditation. Then after breakfast we'll explore some of these special workshop exercises. After lunch there'll be time for resting, walking outdoors and optional recuperative activities led by the team. These will include yoga, communing with nature, possibly chi kung. In the evenings we'll meet in small groups to review the day and our experiences so far. Each day closes with mantra and meditation. No prior experience will be assumed and all necessary tuition will be provided.

All retreats can be stirring and challenging at times but this one more than most.

Emotional responses to environment destruction can include fear, outrage, grief or despair. To channel such energies constructively they must first be experienced emotionally. This can release and free the blocked energies and channel them into creative and positive action. Yet the transition can be turbulent and uncomfortable. Are you up for that? This is not for the faint hearted.

Useful Equipment

Bring waterproofs and boots as for any Dhanakosa retreat, also your own notebook and pen.

About the team

Sukhema and Smritiratna are experienced and skilled at integrating Joanna Macy's work with traditional Buddhist practice. Chandradhi and Amber Badyari are experienced yoga teachers with a longtime interest in the natural world. Amāyarāja has trained at Ecodharma and runs an organic smallholding. Most of the team are ordained Buddhists.