



## fundraising update

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our plumbing campaign last year. In late November we had the plumbers and carpenters in to install 3 new bathrooms at the back of the house, which meant a sad goodbye to the 1970s gold taps. New carpets were fitted at the back of the house in January and a team of volunteers on a work retreat did sterling work re-decorating the area.

Our generous supporters help to make all this work happen, many through monthly standing orders which helps us continue to provide a rewarding retreat environment for everyone who comes here, including those who may not otherwise be able to afford to come on retreat. To set up a standing order visit our website or call us in the office.

We've ambitious and exciting plans for the future of Dhanakosa and we'll be sharing more with you in the next newsletter and are looking forward to making the journey together.

## moving to Dhanakosa

It was a very big new beginning for me late last year to make the decision to move to live and work at Dhanakosa. My previous life was as a public librarian in East Sussex, so about as far as you can get from the Trossachs, and a long way from family and friends.

### ... a fantastic opportunity to work with a great group of people...

My job now is in the office team at Dhanakosa where I work on reception and am responsible for fundraising and marketing.

I had felt a desire to live differently for a while and this met an increasing commitment to Buddhism, and my own experiences on retreat were a big part of this. It's a huge privilege to live somewhere as beautiful as Dhanakosa and to work every day to support the retreat centre where people can explore their own deeper responses and experiences within a Buddhist context.

So, what's it like living in the community? Well, we work as a close team with daily meetings and regular check-ins. Our work is divided between the office staff and the house and grounds staff, and we all come together on checkout days to prepare the retreat centre for our new arrivals. We also meditate together, study the dharma and support each other in our shared Going For Refuge, which means deepening our commitment to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Most of us live together in the community house behind the retreat centre, and we spend social time together too – cooking, watching films and going out to explore the local area. We all get time away too, on retreats elsewhere and visiting family and friends.

It's a fantastic opportunity to work with a great group of people, and live in such a stunning location which amazes me daily from the friendly birds outside the office window to the epic skies above the glen. §

*Abi Luthmann moved to Dhanakosa in November 2014 from Lewes in East Sussex. She loves photography - analogue and digital - and being out cycling and walking.*



## retreat highlights 2015

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>26 jun - 3 Jul</b> | <b>the path to freedom</b> <b>intro</b><br><i>led by Balajit</i>                                       |
| <b>14-21 aug</b>      | <b>Padmasambhava's invitation</b> <b>triratna</b><br><i>led by Srisambhava</i>                         |
| <b>4-11 sept</b>      | <b>who's living your life?</b> <b>intro</b><br><i>led by Suryacitta</i>                                |
| <b>2-9 oct</b>        | <b>going deeper - awakening to reality</b> <b>going deeper</b><br><i>led by Smritiratna and Nayaka</i> |

check [www.dhanakosa.com](http://www.dhanakosa.com) for our full 2015 programme of retreats

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# DHANAKOSA® news

Spring 2015 Issue No. 31

**In this issue:** We talk about new beginnings at Dhanakosa: the freshness of every moment, new friendships, stepping outside of yourself and we introduce the new community team. Enjoy and thank you for being a part of Dhanakosa!

## our lives are full of new beginnings

There's a 50/50 chance that you made some New Year resolutions back in January; there's an even better chance that you've already abandoned them. Or perhaps you're one of the people who never makes New Year resolutions because you've learned through experience that they're forgotten almost as soon as they're created.

Whether we make resolutions or not, we see each new year as an opportunity for new beginnings: not just new years, but new months, new weeks, and new days. Our lives are full of new beginnings. But the most significant new beginnings take place at a much finer scale.



When we meditate, for example, we're forever catching the mind having gone off and become distracted. We find, for example, that we've been mulling over some old hurt, or worrying about some upcoming event, or telling ourselves stories about how we think other people feel about us.

Those moments in which we've realised that the mind has become distracted are important new beginnings. Each time we notice that we've been caught up in a spiritually unprofitable train of thought, we have a crucial opportunity to let go of it, to reconnect with our present moment experience, to start over.

Sometimes there are so many of these new beginnings that it seems like we're making little progress.

But each time we let go of an unskillful train of thought, returning mindfully and compassionately to our present moment experience, we're changing who we are. We're changing our habits, weakening unskillful patterns and strengthening skilful ones. We're even, at a cellular level, rewiring the brain.

Each new beginning may not change us very much, but, as the Buddha said, "Drop by drop, a water pot fills."

An ongoing commitment to moment to moment change such as this is more powerful than any number of New Year resolutions, precisely because they involve such small steps. We can't climb a mountain in one bound — thousands of small steps over time are what's needed.

Sometimes we might feel that our practice is repetitive. You realise you're distracted, let go and return to the breathing, realise you're distracted and return to the breathing. You breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out, repeat. But in fact each experience we have is a new beginning. No two breaths are the same.

Try noticing your next in-breath. See how it comes into existence, is present in your experience, and then comes to an end. Try that again with the next out-breath. Now follow each in-breath and out-breath with an awareness that you'll meet this breath only once in your entire existence. Follow the whole cycle of your breathing: beginnings and endings, endings and beginnings.

Now as you observe your in-breaths and out-breaths coming into existence and passing away, notice how each breath is composed of a series of moments. There's this moment then this moment then this moment — no two the same, and none ever returning. There's just this endless series of new beginnings and new endings, coinciding in time, each one precious and deserving of our full attention. §

*Bodhipaksa runs the popular meditation website [www.wildmind.org](http://www.wildmind.org) and is the author of several books and audiobooks. He is a former member of the community at Dhanakosa and is running a retreat in July 2015 called 'A love as deep as the world'.*



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## step outside of yourself

Every now and then something seems to turn within me; perhaps in a place I hadn't even known was there before and sometimes it does so with such a "clunk" that it's almost audible! It reverberates, this felt understanding and there's a tangible sense of dropping down, down into something richer, something surprisingly expansive and yet somehow also more integrated.

In this process I discover newly explored parts of me for the very first time and meet them as though they were old friends. I've developed new passions including a childlike joy of cycling (everywhere), been moved by art and find myself hearing music like never before. Life is becoming simpler, yet also warmer and more vibrant.



I was introduced to Buddhism one spring a few years ago at Dhanakosa on a week-long yoga and meditation retreat, change began then but it took time to put down roots and gain courage.

Twice I returned for the yoga and meditation retreat in the summer and each time I was struck by the beauty of Dhanakosa, of Loch Voil and the valley filled with life, the team leading the retreat and running the centre and the other retreatants themselves. In this space away from the conditions of everyday life people blossom and I felt welcomed, accepted and connected; aware that I too was opening up.

When I felt brave enough to cross the threshold of the Glasgow Buddhist Centre my journey continued with the classes there and I was devouring dharma books absorbed on a quest for the truth, what has become an ongoing endeavour to understand the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, and to live them out. My practice truly began to warm and flow with the development of close friendships and since then I've been aware of a growing, collective flourishing.

'From darkness into light', this was the theme of the Women's Winter retreat where a group of us turned in this New Year together and as my first regulars' retreat at Dhanakosa it beckoned me to go deeper.

The silence, talks and meditation were strongly felt and lightly held by the delightful celebrations including music, poetry, stories, sparkling pujas and wonderful company. One poignant "clunk" moment arose when I was out in the hills alone in the wind and the rain I felt completely connected with all that was around me and completely free, so much so that I ran and ran until I gulped in the fresh air and called out, alive and truly happy.

## I felt welcomed, accepted and connected...

I became a mitra early this year to rejoice in this journey and returned to Dhanakosa for the Glasgow Sangha weekend, to a world brilliant white with snow. At home in Glasgow I now help to facilitate our Young Buddhists group and through our bountiful social and creative meet-ups I hope that more people might find the dharma and the joys of spiritual friendship.

I've come to recognise that these significant moments of change, along with more subtle day-to-day realisations and shifts in habits, arise through feeling connected to other people.

Good friendships allows you to step outside of yourself; it's liberating like going forth into the wild and breathing great gulps of fresh glen air, captured perfectly in this poem which has been with me since New Year:

### Everyone sang by Siegfried Sassoon

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;  
And I was filled with such delight  
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,  
Winging wildly across the white  
Orchards and dark-green fields; on - on - and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;  
And beauty came like the setting sun:  
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone  
Was a bird; and the song was wordless;  
the singing will never be done. §

*Helen Chalmers is an avid cyclist who goes everywhere on two wheels and enjoys cooking vegan food for friends. She came across Buddhism four years ago at Dhanakosa and since then has experienced wonderful changes in her life.*



## notes from the director's desk

by Nayaka

When I started to work as Centre Director at Dhanakosa I took a bit of time to try and figure out what the job was. In many ways I feel like I am still trying to figure it out eight years on, but that's another story! One of the ways organisational management theory understands this sort of role is in terms of managing change. Of course, it does not take much reflection to realise that firstly I cannot make things or people change and, secondly they are changing all the time whether I like it or not. This change is of course not random, and is amenable to influence.

As a manager I look for things I can influence that will, I hope, move Dhanakosa as a whole in broadly the desired direction. You can think of it as a complex network of conditions. Tweak some of the conditions and I have an effect. It might not be everything my ambition hopes for, but hopefully it will be in a broadly positive direction at least in the long run.

As a Buddhist the same principles apply. Just as I have briefly outlined a management approach to change in a Buddhist organisation, the Buddha articulates his insight into the nature of change as the principal of "paticca samuppada", that is conditionality or, conditioned-co-production.



Broadly speaking, things are not things, but networks of conditions. Renditions of this central principal are often highly abstract (as is my description of Buddhist management) but, he also tells us it's not enough to have an abstract understanding of this principle. It must be deeply inhabited; lived.

Conditionality describes how our past bears down on our present and how our present forms our future. We can never control our present, or indeed any part of the continuum of our lives. But, this is the bit we can influence; the present. It is in this moment that all new beginnings begin.

Sangharakshita helpfully draws out from the Buddha's teaching on conditionality's two aspects; the cyclic or reactive tendency and the creative or spiral tendency. I admit that to learn to choose between the two is not easy.

## Change...must be deeply inhabited; lived.

Particularly when that choosing takes place in the all too ephemeral moment of embodied present awareness. But it's equally true, that it's happening all the time! So the opportunity to make positive change exists in every moment, all the time. It may be that the change we feel we can make seems too little, too late.

Actually what matters is being open to the possibility of making change, and taking that step however small it may seem, then trusting conditionality to unfold. §

## community news

### Arrivals

Several new faces joined the community at the end of last year. Ruth and Darren joined the house and grounds team and Abi and Ben are working in the office. Acharasaddha will also be joining us soon to work as housekeeper.

We'll be writing more about the team and what it's like to live and work at Dhanakosa over the coming months and we hope you'll enjoy hearing from us.

The new team, from left: Darren, Dharmavasini, Abi, Siddhimala, Ruth, Monika, Nayaka and Ben.

### Keep up to date

You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter to keep up to date with retreat news and life in the Glen:

[www.facebook.com/dhanakosa](http://www.facebook.com/dhanakosa)

[www.twitter.com/InfoDhanakosa](http://www.twitter.com/InfoDhanakosa)

### Open Day

Come and see us on our annual open day, Saturday 13th June from 11am-4pm. There will be refreshments, soup and scones available all day, meditation taster sessions and the chance to enjoy the beauty of the grounds and glen. Free and open to everyone, no need to book.

