



Encouraging Words from the Teacher

Subhana Barzarghi

Opening the Door to Liberating Our Emotions

At the February zazenkai Peter Bursky and I along with about 20 people explored some creative ways to work with some new contemporary koans, that I am calling Embodied Emotional koans. We designed a process to explore and transform habitual negative emotional reactions into a compassionate wise response. We were heartened by the enthusiasm, response and feedback from the seminar.

Peter started the day inviting us to sit with Basui's koan, '*Who's hearing*'. The bell sounded at irregular intervals to set the ground and open the mind to just listening and the experience of uniting with the sounds themselves. Jet planes, dogs barking and the chatter of people passing by the window, filtered into the room, dissolving the hearer and heard into a seamless porous symphony of a Sunday morning at Annandale.

Embodied emotional koans are designed to gain insight into our deep seated conditioned emotional reactions like anger, ill-will, the tug of greed, the agitation of anxiety and fear. Who of us is not at times caught up in the cycle of those conditioned reactions that just seem to cause further alienation, constriction and sorrow? These emotions tend to block the heart from opening as well as hijack us away from our practice, they side swipe us from a natural focused presence and

equanimity of mind.

A traditional approach to working with anger for example would be to ask, *Who's Angry?* This koan can open us out into the vast empty field and dimension of who we are, where we realise there is no one, no fixed entity who is angry. However this transcendent approach does not resolve anger or fear and does not open up an inquiry to its deep roots or resolve the conditioned patterns around anger and anxiety.

To gain insight and transform our emotional states we need to be able to mindfully attend, stay focused and befriend the direct felt experience of the emotion in the body. This is not dissimilar to the sensations and vibrations that we experience when hearing the sound of the bird. However we usually have less judgement hearing the sound of the bird but are rather harsh and critical with ourselves about our emotions. We tend to put another head upon the one we already have, thinking I shouldn't be feeling that way or I should not be anxious, what's wrong with me. Judgement, avoidance, denial and dismissal hinders insight into the complex thought/emotion cycle. It hinders understanding of dependent arising and the fact that we actually have a choice in how we react. This insight is the first step to taking full responsibility for our thoughts, feeling and behavior.

In order to explore an emotion as a koan, like all koans one needs to have established a focused attention, an attitude of curiosity, inquiry, presence, groundedness and openness. Be mindful not to get lost in the drama or story. Be very alert to how the story loops through the mind, recognise the underlying belief that needs to be seen through to free yourself from this limiting belief. Direct your attention to the felt sense of the emotion and notice how it is manifesting on a physiological level. This requires a degree of radical acceptance and compassionate presence to what you are experiencing.

The feelings of anger or anxiety are simply information, it is our response to this emotional information that is important. Either acting out, suppressing or being overwhelmed by ones emotions keeps you repeating the cycle over and over, it disturbs to no avail. The spirit of inquiry allows us to unravel what lies beneath these emotions, or what they are connected to or what they are protecting.

Some of the inquiry questions we worked on in regards to anger and anxiety were:

What am I really afraid of? How do I know that I am feeling anxious?

What's your anger protecting?

What other emotions are underneath anger?

What do you deeply value or is really important to you?

What do I really care about and love?

The insight that arises out of this inquiry process, changes our understanding and transforms our relationship to these emotions. We are then able to respond and communicate from a place of clarity about what truly matters to us, rather than a defensive or reactive position.

Through this process of steady zazen, coupled with inquiry we can find a wise and compassionate response to our emotional life and not get caught, overwhelmed, or dismissive of our emotions. All of this is new territory. We look forward to your response and feedback so we can continue to create a harmonious community based on mindfulness and a wise compassionate presence and action.

Subhana Barzaghi

Reports

Koan Seminar February 21 led by Subhana and Peter Bursky

On February 21 Subhana and Peter Bursky led a koan seminar at Annandale (see above). It was found very helpful by many, even old timers. It is hoped to hold another later in the year.

Samu at Kodoji February 27-28 coordinated by Tony Coote

The samu weekend was a great success. Regular Samuans Greg, Carlynne, Mark, Gilly, Tony, Will, Sue, Lily, Maggie, and Jill were joined by new-comer Sean with his two amazingly hard-working children, Curtis and Chiyo. First-timers Yuliana and Yuliana and second-generation Samuan Ruby Stevens all rolled up their sleeves to lend a hand. Locals, Georgina and Ameli came up from Birdford Cottage where they have been house-sitting. Old time Samuan Patrick came all the way from Bathurst – it was fabulous to see him with paintbrush in hand back on the job after some years away.

Jobs completed included clearing around the buildings, mowing, weeding, painting, inventorying and cleaning plus, of course, the essential jobs of food preparation for the meals (huge thanks to Carlynne) washing up afterwards, hot shower provision and dojo leadership. Years of zazen were fitted into the morning and evening periods and a great time was had by all.

At the beginning the place looked somewhat unkempt and tired. After samu it looked spick and span and fully ready for the upcoming retreats.

Tony Coote

Womens Retreat March 5-6



Twelve of us met for the annual Womens Retreat at Kodoji, including Yuliana, and newcomers Rebecca, Abbey and Novi.



Our schedule is devised when we get there and this time we decided on lots of sitting and silence until mid-afternoon on the first day. There were two wonderful cool morning walks in the bush, where tracks of wallaby, wombat and goanna and tiny little paws too small for possum, were visible in the sand of the drying creek. A lyre bird was glimpsed. At night sugar gliders and powerful owl were heard.

We saw and heard the trickle at the waterfall and stood around David's pole remembering dead sangha members whose traces are at Kodoji.



Creative feasts were made from the food we'd all brought to share. Bush regen, zafu planning, haiku writing, Caroline's story from Arnhem Land and some of her poems were also enjoyed, as was our sharing circle. The paddock was golden brown, the night sky filled with stars.

Photos: Jill Steverson

Neuroscience and Meditation Weekend March 12-13 at Kodoji

Twenty seven people from SZC, Macquarie University and other places gathered for a weekend of Zen and research into meditation, organised by Britta Biedermann. Professor Peter Sedlmeier was visiting from Germany. He and Carl Hooper had met at Father Ama Samy's Bodhi Zendo in Tamil Nadu, India, where Peter first heard about Britta's research. Soon Britta and Peter connected and eventually she got a grant to bring him to Australia.

As well as the various presentations, both Zen and science, which were extremely interesting, It was a weekend of connections and synchronicities. Kerry has recorded the proceedings for 'All in the Mind' program on RN - stay tuned.

Gilly Coote

Photos: Gilly Coote



Autumn Sesshin March 25-29 led by Subhana and Allan

It is too late to report in this Newsletter – the report will feature next time.

Coming Events

Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Ceremony April 10

Led by Gilly Coote

Our annual celebration of the Buddha's Birthday begins at 11am, with the bathing of the Baby Buddha and a Baby Naming ceremony for Rohan Thomas Miller, Maggie and Tony's most recent grandchild. Rohan's extended family will be there and both baby Buddhas will be offered flowers and small gifts, made by the children in Annandale's back garden from 9 am with Janet Selby's guidance.

Bring flowers, as well as poetry, songs or stories to share to this family-friendly birthday ceremony. It will be followed by a potluck lunch, so bring something to share.

Introduction to Zen Buddhism, Saturday April 16 from 1- 4pm

Led by Paul Maloney

A wonderful opportunity for newcomers to the practice to find out more and have more time for questions with a very experienced teacher. Cost \$20.

Winter Sesshin June 10-17 (Queens Birthday Long Weekend)

Led by Paul Maloney and Jeff Ward

Experience the warmth of the heater in the dojo, the mist in the hills, the sounds of silence. Coordinator Jane Andino, janeandino@yahoo.com.au.

News from the Board

Dana – Thank You

The Board expresses gratitude for Yvonne's bush regeneration efforts at Kodoji, particularly over this summer when she has done a huge amount of weed pulling. Also, thanks to all bush regen people who have maintained over decades, the land we care-take for all beings. We would also like to acknowledge the many acts of dana that people offer daily to the sangha through their work and time.

New Resident at Annandale

Lily Lampis, a member, is welcomed as the new resident at Annandale. She joins Neryl and Diego.

Orientations

The Board and the teachers have decided to change the way we orientate newcomers. From March we will be conducting orientations once a month on a Thursday from 7 to 9pm. This will coincide with a new Beginners' Night, bi-monthly on the Thursday after the orientation. On alternate months the newcomer will be able to go to Dharma Café in the week after their orientation. We're hoping this will

be an opportunity for newcomers to discuss their practice and find out a bit more about Zen in a relaxed manner. Allan Marett and Paul Maloney will alternate as the teachers for Beginners' Night, and everyone is welcome to come to these evenings of exploration! The schedule for the year is available on our website.

Facebook

Alex Buskovski has sent out invitations to all Sangha members, to join a "Sangha Only" Facebook to run in parallel with the present yahoo list.

Website

Georgina Reid is working on our new website. The new website will have links to other Diamond Sangha groups in Australia and NZ.

Ethics Committee

SZC Ethics Committee has adapted and updated the 2007 document 'Resolving Grievances and Complaints' and sent it to the Board. The Board has sent their comments and suggestions to the committee for their approval. Brian Gutkin will report to the Board.

Kodoji Developments

Tony Coote is looking into plans for increased accommodation at Kodoji.

Donations

Donations to Asylum Seekers Centre, Newtown need to be put in the special box upstairs in the library at Annandale.

They would like:

- mobile phones, laptops and tablets (not PCs)
- headphones with big earphones
- kitchenware including rice cooker, deep fryer,
- good adult shoes and clothes
- shampoo and shower gel (large or small)
- sewing supplies such as: patterns, buttons, cottons, zippers, materials for skirts etc
- seeds or plants for the garden (preferably fruit and veg)
- paper napkins
- plastic bags, plastic food containers with lids
- canvas bags, shopping bags, travel bags on wheels
- clean good sheets and pillow cases, tea towels.

If you have other things that you think could be useful PLEASE CHECK with Lesley, email lesley.treleaven@gmail.com or 0410 621756, as there is limited space for storage and time for disposing of unaccepted items.

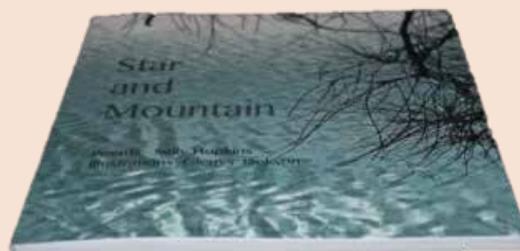
Thank you all so much, recycling makes so much sense for people and planet. *Lesley*



Photo: Glenys Jackson

Gift Idea For Sale

Star & Mountain - a little book with art by Glenys Jackson and poems by Sally Hopkins, is on sale at the Zendo for \$20 contributing to the SZC funds.



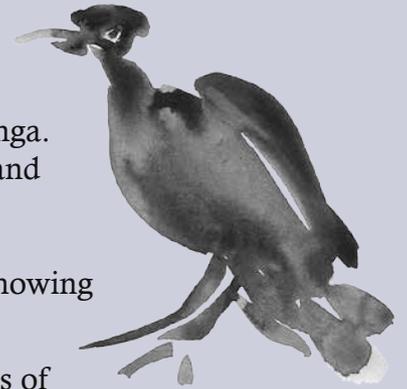
North Shore Zen Group

From January 21, there is regular weekly zazen on Thursday nights from 7-9 pm at the *Quaker Meeting House*, 59 Boundary Road, Wahroonga. It is a lovely setting, adjacent to bush and very close to National Park and walking tracks. Street parking available. Bus # 575 from Hornsby and Turramurra train stations.

(The Friends' website www.nswwordpress.quakers.org.au has a map showing where to get off.)

The evening begins with a short sutra service, followed by three periods of zazen, ending with Great Vows and tea. Dokusan is available. Sometimes there will be a brief talk or discussion, modifying the schedule a little. And every other month there will be a Full Moon Ceremony.

Please bring your own zafu/stool and zabuton. Contribution \$5 - \$10 towards hiring the venue. Newcomers to Zen practice please contact Maggie to arrange a brief orientation before the evening meditation begins. magpiewarble@yahoo.com



Notice Board

Dokusan

Mondays: Subhana : April 4, 11, 18
May 9, 16, 30

Wednesday: Gillian: April 6, 13, 20
May 4, 11, 18, June 1

Dharma Café

May 23, 25 7-9pm

Full Moon Ceremony

April 27, May 2

Precept: Not Stealing

Zazenkai

April 17 8.30-12 noon

Teisho and dokusan Paul Maloney

May 15 8.30-12 noon

Teisho and dokusan Gilly Coote

Board Meeting

Second Tuesday of each month, 6pm zazen
6.30pm start. April 12, May 10.

All members welcome.

Womens Group

April 8 at Lesley's

May 10 with Mari at Jean's

Open to all Women Members of SZC



*Womens Group making zafus and what they do with them.
Photo:s Janet Selby, above; Glenys Janckson, below.*



The women who mistook their zafus for a hat

Regular Notices

Gift recipient status for SZC Building Fund

The Australian Tax Office has confirmed that we are a DGR, or Deductible Gift Recipient for a fund (the Sydney Zen Centre Building Fund). This restores the status of gifts to the building fund as tax deductible for the donor. If you would like to make a donation to the building fund, simply flag it as such and we will issue a receipt against which you can claim a tax deduction from your income.

Books for sale

Robert Aitken's books: *Taking the Path of Zen*, *Mind of Clover*, *The Dragon that Never Sleeps*, plus other titles.

Use of Kodoji

Kodoji is available for use by members of the SZC and guests (if accompanied by a member). It can also be hired by other groups if approved by the Board. Fees are \$20 per night for members and \$25 for non-members. There is a \$100 booking fee for non-member groups. Booking of Kodoji is essential and it is also essential to receive instructions about use of the facility before going there. Please note that the local Fire Brigade has advised restrictions during summer. Try giving the family a wonderful weekend, or yourself a few days of private retreat. Enquiries to Brendan Stewart, phone 9879 7290, email stewarts34@bigpond.com

Blue Mountains Zen

The Blue Mountains Zen Group meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month, from 3-5 pm, at Paul Maloney's home, 19 Russell Road, Leura. Phone 4784 2136. The meeting is occasionally held at another venue, so it is best to check some days before.

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings.
Please contact Gary for more details: 0429 635 412
email gcaitcheon@gmail.com

North Shore Zen Group

Meets on Thursday nights 7-9pm.
Please contact Maggie Gluek for more details:
magpiewarble@yahoo.com

Ashfield Morning Zazen

SZC members interested in morning zazen and dokusan are invited to join a small group that sits regularly on Wednesday mornings from 6.30am - 8.00am. Contact either Allan Marett allan.marett@gmail.com 0409712767
or Kim Bagot kimballb7@gmail.com 0402321277.



Heart Mind, Calligraphy by Glenys Jackson

Members of the Board

Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) stewartkerry4@gmail.com; Jill Ball (secretary); Jason Koh (treasurer); Sue Bidwell (assistant secretary); Alex Budlevskis; Georgina Reid; Helen Sanderson; Brendon Stewart; Brian Gutkin.

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

SZC: info@szc.com.au, www.szc.org.au

SZC Calendar April - May 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
April 3	4 ZAZEN 7-9pm	5	6 ZAZEN 7-9pm	7	8 Womens Group - Lesleys	9
10 Buddha's Birthday Baby Naming 11am	11 ZAZEN 7-9pm	12 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	13 ZAZEN 7-9pm	14 Orientations with Janet 7-9pm	15	16 INTRODUC- TION to ZEN Buddhism 1-4pm led by Paul
17 Zazenkai 8.30-12 noon Teisho + doku- san Paul	18 ZAZEN 7-9pm	19	20 ZAZEN 7-9pm	21 Beginners Night with Paul 7-9pm	22	23
24	25 ANZAC DAY holiday NO ZAZEN	26	27 Full Moon Ceremony "Not Stealing"	28	29	30
May 1	2 Full Moon Ceremony "Not Stealing"	3	4 ZAZEN 7-9pm	5	6	7
8	9 ZAZEN 7-9pm	10 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	11 ZAZEN 7-9pm	12	13 Womens group - Jean's	14
15 Zazenkai 8.30-12 noon Teisho + doku- san Gilly	16 ZAZEN 7-9pm	17	18 ZAZEN 7-9pm	19 Orientations with Will 7-9pm	20	21
22	23 DHARMA CAFÉ +Pre- cept Ceremo- ny 7-9pm	24	25 DHARMA CAFÉ +Pre- cept Ceremo- ny 7-9pm	26	27	28
29	30 ZAZEN 7-9pm	31	JUNE 1 ZAZEN 7-9pm	2	3	4