



NEWSLETTER

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Encouraging Words from the Teacher

Paul Maloney Roshi



EMBODYING THE PRACTICE

I want all of you to be aware that the study of Zen can effect a miraculous transformation that will change you to the very marrow of your bones.

The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin (Tr. Norman Waddell)

There are two main schools of Zen Buddhism in Japan. One is the Soto tradition as passed down from Dōgen Zenji (1200-1252), and the second is the reformed Rinzai tradition passed down from Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1768). Although they are separated by five hundred years of Japanese history what Dōgen and Hakuin have in common is an absolute dedication to the practice of zazen as the Way of Awakening and salvation from suffering. For both Dōgen and Hakuin the zazen of the Mahayana is the alpha and omega of the Buddha Way.

Dōgen followed the example of his teacher Ju-ching who he said, “used to practice zazen until eleven o’clock in the evening and start it towards dawn as early as two-thirty or three; and this he never failed to practice even in a single night”. (Shobogenzo Zuimonki 3)

Hakuin also was not slack when it came to zazen. In his autobiography he recounts many occasions when, becoming stuck in a problem, he would do zazen without moving for seven days and nights. Even as an old man he did not sleep in a bed. Instead he would wrap himself in his futon and sit in the zazen posture while sleeping.

Furthermore, both insisted on the necessity of Awakening, which is an integral aspect of Mahayana Buddhism. Hakuin insists on the absolute need for kenshō, seeing into self-nature. He tells us:

Everyone who belongs to the school of Zen should understand: there exists in our school an essential matter that can only be penetrated in great awakening.

The term “kensho” consists of two characters, “ken,” - to see -, and “sho”- nature. To see into self-nature is to realise self-nature, which is Buddha-nature. The ultimate aim of Zen practice is to develop a new religious personality through the kensho experience, and to live Zen at every moment.

Dōgen is no less insistent on the need for kenshō. Dōgen’s Awakening came when doing intense zazen under the direction of his Chinese master Ju-ching. Dōgen had an experience that he later described as “the mind and body cast off,” (*shinjin-datsuraku*), and this later became a hallmark of his practice. Dōgen tells us if we sit long enough and hard enough we too will have the experience of “falling away of body and mind – *shinjin-datsuraku*. The literal meaning of the Chinese character *datsu* means “to take off,” or “slough off,” and *raku* means “to drop off,” “cast off,” or “fall down.” So all the accumulated artificial attributes are sloughed off, as a snake sloughs its skin, or a lobster its shell. Then we are liberated.

In the Genjokoan Dōgen tells us what this practice is all about.

To learn the Buddha Way is to study the self.

To learn the self is to forget the self.

To forget the self is to be verified by all things.

To be verified by all things is to let the body and mind of the self, and the body and mind of others, drop off.

*There is a trace of realization that cannot be grasped.
We endlessly keep expressing the ungraspable trace of realization.*

Zazen puts reality into focus by its purity and directness. By melting and dissolving the frozen ego zazen gets us flowing again as we regain our "non-abiding mind". Zazen enables us to realize the Self that is the reality of life. By letting go of our thoughts about "I" when doing zazen, we wake up to the reality of life which pervades the whole universe. So when Gautama the Buddha attained enlightenment he was able to say:

I attained the Way simultaneously with the whole world and all sentient beings. Everything - mountains, rivers, trees, grass, attained Buddhahood.

So for both Dōgen and Hakuin, Buddha Nature has to do with us personally. For Dōgen Zen practice is not simply a matter of simply seeing things differently, Buddha Nature is to be actualized in our lives. Dōgen says,

Unless you are the active Buddha, you will never be liberated from the bonds of Karma. Activity is the primal property of functional interdependence itself.

Dōgen taught that our ability to attain the Way depends entirely on our resolve and attitude for practice. It is like becoming a musician, or a dancer, it requires resolve and constant practice. While some may have more talent than others, and so progress faster, all can attain if they resolve to do so and practice regularly. This means that our realization of Buddha nature is an existential challenge to each of us, something that we face every day. There is and always will be the ever present challenge to live a life of integrity. Furthermore, if there is no transcendental realm of the sacred spirit, then I think it follows that the sacred, if there is such, can only be found in this world, which means this moment. So our every act is full of significance – preparing our food, placing our shoes, walking – there is nothing that can be regarded as trivial or insignificant. But it can only be so if we live authentically.

TRYING, NOT TYING

At the age of 54 I thought I'd make it through life never having to learn how to tie a bow tie. I've attended a few black tie dos over the years and, like most men I suppose, I've always used the pre-tied elasticated versions that require almost no skill to put on. So I was surprised to find recently that the musical director of a singing group I'm in required all of us to tie a bow tie. To be fair it wasn't pure masochism on her part. We were doing two numbers in a competition - the first upbeat and the second one laid back - and she had the bright idea for us to undo our ties between the two pieces. So if we were going to undo them on stage we better learn to do them for rehearsals too.



We had plenty of time - which was just as well because I soon discovered that it's a very tricky thing to do. We had simple instructions and a YouTube link but they didn't seem to make my fingers work any better. On my first attempt I spent about 45 minutes staring at myself in the mirror pushing and poking various bits of fabric here and there and it seemed to make almost no progress. The instructions listed about 7 or 8 different steps. The first two steps went fairly easily but then I got to about step three, stopped, tried, stopped, tried and so on. Whatever I did nothing seemed to work and eventually I gave up with a feeling that I was no closer than when I started. Several more sessions in front of the mirror ensued

with no apparent progress between the start and finish of the session, although I did notice myself getting a few steps closer as the days and weeks went by. The week of the competition arrived and as I headed to Melbourne there was still one step that just didn't seem to want to budge. I kept fronting up before the mirror with no plan, no reason for doing so other than "what else could I do?" By now I was way past anything the video or the instruction sheet could teach me. And then, the day before the comp, I approached the mirror in my hotel room and it just happened. It worked. I did it again and it worked again. And every time I tried after that it worked again.



What does this have to do with Zen? In some ways zazen seems a bit like tying a bow tie. There are basic instructions but they don't get you very far. You just have to turn up with no plan and do it. The bow tie happened to come good the day before the comp but it didn't really matter. Someone else could have tied it for me. I just turned up when I had time, practiced and eventually something happened - even though nothing seemed to happen during each session. Perhaps if it had mattered it wouldn't have worked. I don't know. Or perhaps whether it mattered or not was down to me and zazen helped it not matter.

Paul Carter

[The Bow(tie) combination is incidental.]

Reports

Introduction to Zen Meditation Workshop, 28 November facilitated by Paul Maloney

A small enthusiastic group attended this Workshop one Saturday afternoon at Annandale (see photo below). The zendo provided a comfortable space for everyone to participate and share their experiences. A place where we can nurture a meditation practice serves as a reminder to 'regain our non-abiding mind'.

TO MISS THE MOMENT IS TO MISS OUR LIFE.

A mindfulness-based practice helps us to develop an inner source of wellbeing.

A daily practice gives us an immediate way to self-soothe



"That felt good" or "I don't think I was doing it right". Paul pointed out that this is breathing. It's not right or wrong, it's just breathing. I guess we try and judge everything. Let things be what they are.

Paul Carter

We looked at ways in which an 'inner source of wellbeing' could be cultivated. Among other things we delved into breath awareness practice, mindfulness meditation, posture, kinhin, sutras and chanting not to mention looking at the history of Zen Buddhism and hearing many stories about the Old Masters.

Paul's next Workshop is on 16 April.

Yvonne Hales

One of the main themes of the Workshop was around "the breath". We studied our breathing in intimate detail, and then shared our insights with the group. What did we notice when we focused on our breathing? Was the "outbreath" longer or shorter than the "in breath"? Where did we feel the sensation of breathing? At one point Paul demonstrated the "art" of slow breathing. He said that he could reduce his breathing rate to around two or three breaths per minute and indeed his outbreath seemed to go on for a very long time. Sometimes, when we shared our experiences, we attributed a form of judgement to them.

Drawing of Kanzeon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, supplied by Janet Selby



Introduction to Meditation Workshop, Annandale – 28 November

Rohatsu Sesshin at Annandale, 4 - 8 December

This time the Rohatsu sesshin photo does not give any hint of what actually eventuated. The whole sesshin was an enactment of Coming and Going (hopefully never astray), surprises endlessly arising. Maggie, who had done all the planning, started us out on an investigation of the truths of Buddhism and the Eight Fold path- giving a wonderful teisho starting with Right Thinking and donkeys. “Right here is IT.” She then illustrated impermanence by retiring to her sick bed. Oh! Still, we sat and walked and sat., and pondered the changed circumstances. On Sunday afternoon Kim Bagot came and offered helpful posture and yoga tips so we could sit without concentrating on PAIN. In the evening, Paul Maloney came and offered dokusan to everyone. On Monday afternoon, Gilly Coote offered a very cheerful teisho on the Buddha’s enlightenment and how we have to do it for ourselves, and dokusan. Monday evening Subhana dropped in and sat with us for a while on her way home from the airport. Two regular sitters dropped in and joined us that evening too. Wonderful help from all directions, seemingly joyfully given.

Great breakfasts and suppers were produced (Jill Stevenson had done all the food ordering). Lovely walks in the park were led by Jiki, Alex Budlevskis, even a short burst of tai chi. Jill offered posture help for the day she was present to be Tanto and then Jane Andino took over and led us to the end with a very helpful “Words” (Jane had done the coordinating). Brian Gutkin battled traffic to be our Jisha and Sally Hopkins was the Ino. As we chant for the meal Sutra – “the work of many people” – the sharing of the many tasks, the 16 participants (who came in dribs and drabs) all playing their part to make a wonderful whole. So we sat together, grateful for the practice and the support of so many people and of each other and the ancient forms of sesshin that hold us to our breath whatever comes and goes. Thanks to the residents who made it possible for us to use the space to honour the Buddha’s great insight “All beings by nature are the Tatagatha”. A different but most valuable Rohatsu sesshin.

Sally Hopkins



Last day of Rohatsu Tuesday 8 December 2015. Small group. Big smiles.
L to R: Sally Hopkins, Lily Lampis, Jane Andino, Bridget Clarke, Lesley Treleaven, Alex Budlevskis.

COMING EVENTS

Koan Seminar at Annandale - 21 February

Subhana Barzaghi and Peter Bursky will present a special Koan Seminar/Workshop on Sunday February 21st from 8.30am – 12.30pm. The koan seminar is open to everyone. We will explore creative ways to work with traditional koans and some new contemporary koans.

Traditional koans (enigmatic questions) are designed to break through the habitual conditioned mind and ways of viewing the world and awaken us to the profound mystery of our essential nature here and now.

I am also interested in exploring some contemporary koans which I call, **Embodied Emotional Koans**. These koans are designed to gain insight into our emotional reactions for eg. like anger, ill-will, the tug of greed, anxiety and fear that block the heart from opening. To gain insight and transform our emotional states we need to be able to mindfully attend and befriend the direct felt experience in the body. These contemporary koans are designed 'to provide a process that transforms habitual negative emotional reactions into a compassionate intelligent response' (Jun Po –Denis Kelly Roshi).

Peter and I have been exploring and working with these emotional koans (which are outside the curriculum) and we look forward to opening up this dialogue and deepening our understanding of the compassionate heart-mind free of constricting negative beliefs.

There will be a \$25 fee for the half-day seminar for non-members. **There is no cost for regular members.** I look forward to an inspiring and nourishing time together. A deep bow. Subhana

Samu Weekend at Kodoji, 27 – 28 February

Building Maintenance & Bushcare

This is a wonderful opportunity for families to experience the wonders of Kodoji and the pleasures of working together. There will be cleaning, mowing, weeding, painting, and many other jobs to share, especially a drive on the blackberries. Jean Brick led many forays against blackberries in the past, but they are again trying their luck. Bring *food* for yourself, and everything will be shared, so feasting is part of it, as well as some quiet sitting. Please let Tony Coote know if you intend going. tony@tonycootearchitect.com and he can also answer any queries.

Women's Retreat Weekend at Kodoji, 5 – 6 March

This is an opportunity for all women in the sangha (not just those who belong to the Women's Group) to share the delights of Kodoji while sitting, eating, talking, walking, making whatever we decide. Bring enough food for yourself and all will be shared. Members pay \$15 per night. Non-members \$20. Any questions ask Kerry Stewart stewartkerry4@gmail.com

Meditation & (Neuro)science Weekend, Kodoji, 12-13 March

Representatives of SZC, Macquarie University, Curtin University and Chemnitz University (Germany) along with Zen teachers and scientists will speak and lead zazen, yoga and questioning, at Kodoji (unless flood or fire dictate otherwise).

This weekend brings together (long-term) meditators and researchers who want to learn from one another. What questions would meditators like to have answered from Cognitive Scientists or Neuroscientists? What questions have researchers for meditators? We are anticipating a weekend of curiosity, creativity and development of questions. One main aim is to understand both scientific and meditative perspectives and eventually 'exchange and expand our view points'.

Bring sleeping bag, tent, torch, warm & cool clothes and a hat as the weather can be unpredictable. See SZC website for program, fees, food and transport. Contact Britta Biedermann, b.biedermann@curtin.edu.au, m: 0409 602 482

AUTUMN SESSHIN at Kodoji 25 March-1 April 2016 (Easter Holidays) led by Subhana and Allan Marett

Cultivating the Great Way of Compassion

Wisdom and Compassion are the two ways of the Buddha's teachings. Sesshin is an opportunity to deepen our practice and embody the Bodhisattva Vows. We'll explore ways to cultivate compassion for the Self, Others and the World in order to turn the dharma wheel of wholesome right action to alleviate suffering.

Sesshin co-ordinator

Jillian Ball – Phone: 02 9665 0172 Mobile: 0407 400 126 Email: jillianball@bigpond.com

Applications close on 18 March (Early Bird 4 March). See www.szc.org.au or application forms on the table at Annandale.

WHAT DOES **EARLYBIRD** MEAN?

10% discount off sesshin fee provided full payment is received by sesshin coordinator up to three weeks before sesshin starts (application form may be supplied later).

After Earlybird closes full sesshin fee is payable up to one week before sesshin starts.

After that it is too late to book and pay.

NORTH SHORE ZEN GROUP

From January 21, there will be regular weekly zazen on Thursday nights from 7-9 pm at the Quaker Meeting House, 59 Boundary Rd, 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, 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

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The room in Annandale for rent (at \$650 a month) is still vacant. We all need to seek out possible tenants as this seriously affects the income of SZC.

Georgina Reid is working on a new website and Tony Coote on possible new building plans for Kodoji.

Brendon Stewart will oversee the production of 4 Mind Moon Circles in 2016. He will produce the first issue – *40 years of Zen in Australia*. Philip Long and Brian Gutkin will edit the next two, and another editor is needed for the last one.

The Complaints and Ethics Subcommittee (Brian Gutkin, Julie Robinson, Janet Selby and Diana Levy) have met and are reviewing and revising the 2007 document ‘Resolving Conflicts and Grievances’.

EVERYONE is reminded that when going up to Kodoji at any time for private reasons, and most especially during the summer dry hot period, Brendon Stewart needs to be informed [stewarts34@bigpond .com](mailto:stewarts34@bigpond.com). If the St Albans Rural Fire Brigade needs to be contacted he needs precise details.

The Board agreed that Thursday nights would be good for fundraising events such as talks or performances. Brendon Stewart & Helen Sanderson, the coordinators of this night, would like input from everyone regarding possible lecturers, concerts or other fundraising ideas.

Glenys Jackson is now again walking with ease. Her book “Star and Mountain” is on sale for \$20 at Annandale to raise funds for SZC.

Finances

To conserve costs and the environment the Board asks members to consider receiving their MMC online rather than having a paper copy sent to them. Please email Kerry Stewart stewartkerry4@gmail.com if you’d like to make the change.

The Board has decided that the Facility Fee for non-members attending zazenkai should be increased to \$15, and there will be an increase in sesshin rates in line with the CPI in 2016.

The Asylum Seekers Centre in Newtown has been very grateful for the monthly monies coming from the Women’s Group (\$830 in 2015) and for the food containers, shopping bags, iPads, old computers, hats etc that people have been putting into the box at Annandale and that Lesley Treleaven has been taking to ASC. Every little bit helps.

Notice Board

Dokusan

MONDAYS:
Subhana Feb 8, 15, 29 Mar 7, 14

WEDNESDAYS:
Gillian Coote Feb 3, 10, 17 Mar 2, 9, 16, 30

Dharma Café

Mar 21, 23 7 - 9pm

Full Moon Ceremony

Feb 22, 24 I take up the way of Not Killing

Zazenkai

Mar 20 Maggie talk, dokusan
8.30am – 12.00pm

Board Meetings

2nd Tuesday: 6pm sit / 6.30pm start: Feb 9, Mar 8

Women's Group

Feb 13 at Diana's diana.r.levy@gmail.com
Mar 5-6 Weekend retreat at Kodoji

Early Morning Zazen

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.

Regular Notices

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 \$30 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 Brendon Stewart, phone 9879 7290, email stewarts34@bigpond.com

North Shore Zen Group

Meets Thursdays 7-9pm at the Quaker Meeting House, 59 Boundary Rd, Wahroonga. For details call Maggie Gluek (9987 4312) or magpiewarble@yahoo.com

Blue Mountains Zen Group

Meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. For details call Paul Maloney (4784 2136) or Jane Andino (0432 355 831). Visitors welcome.

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings. For details call Gary (0429 635 412) or E: gcaitcheon@gmail.com

Books for sale at Annandale

The Roaring Stream. A New Zen Reader (eds) Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker

By Robert Aitken: *Taking the Path of Zen*, *Mind of Clover*, *The Dragon that Never Sleeps*, *The Morning Star*, *Vegetable Roots Discourse* and *The Gateless Barrier*

By Subhana Barzaghi: *Wild Grasses and Falling Wattle* (dharma poetry)

Contact

Board: Kerry Stewart (Chair) stewartkerry4@gmail.com, Jason Koh, Brendon Stewart, Helen Sanderson, Sue Bidwell, Georgina Reid, Brian Gutkin, Alex Budlevskis.

Sydney Zen Centre Inc., 251 Young Street, Annandale NSW 2038 E: info@szc.org.au

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2016

SZC Calendar February-March 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 FEBRUARY Zazen 7-9	2	3 Zazen 7-9	4	5	6
7	8 Zazen 7-9	9 Board mtg 6.30pm	10 Zazen 7-9	11	12	13
14	15 Zazen 7-9	16	17 Zazen 7-9	18	19	20
21 Koan Seminar Annandale 8.30am-12.30	22 Full Moon Ceremony “Not killing” 7-9	23	24 Full Moon Ceremony “Not killing” 7-9	25	26	27 Samu Kodoji
28 Samu Kodoji	29 Zazen 7-9	1 MARCH	2 Zazen 7-9	3	4 SESSHIN EARLY BIRD ENDS	5 Women’s retreat – Kodoji
6 Women’s retreat Kodoji	7 Zazen 7-9	8 Board mtg 6.30pm	9 Zazen 7-9	10	11	12 Neuroscience & Mindfulness Weekend Kodoji
13 Neuroscience & Mindfulness Weekend Kodoji	14 Zazen 7-9	15	16 Zazen 7-9	17	18 SESSHIN LAST DAY TO PAY	19
20 Zazenkai 8.30 – 12.00 Maggie talk and dokusan	21 Dharma café 7-9	22	23 Dharma café 7-9	24	25 Autumn Sesshin Kodoji	26
27	28 Zazen 7-9 No dokusan	29	30 Zazen 7-9	31	1 APRIL Sesshin ends	2