



NEWSLETTER

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Encouraging Words from the Teacher

Dogen tells us



Dogen tells us,

“What every buddha and every patriarch has maintained and relied upon, without exception, is just “mind here and now is buddha.”

SOKU-SHIN-ZE-BUTSU

即心是仏

“The principle of soku-shin-ze-butsu, “mind here and now is buddha,” must be understood not from the standpoint of the intellect, but from the standpoint of practice. In other words, the principle does not mean belief in something spiritual called “mind,” rather it affirms the time “now” and the place “here” as reality itself. This time and place must always be absolute and right, and so we can call them the truth or “buddha.” (SBGZ p. 49 Introduction).

The term “soku” is translated as “here and now,” which, I feel, does not convey the true spirit of what Dogen is saying. Within our commonsense world-view we make a clear distinction between space and time, and this leads us to conceiving of a four dimensional reality

that has three dimensions of space and one of time. So, when describing an event we locate it as happening there and then; and we also use here and now to indicate the present. But this way of describing an event is not in the spirit of the Buddha’s world-view, that we come to through the practice of zazen.

Chapter 11 of Dogen’s Shobogenzo has the title Uji, where 有 means “existence” and 時 means “time,” so we get being-time. In Buddhism time is always related with existence and existence is always related with momentary time. So in reality, the past and the future are not existent time; the present moment is the only existent time - the point at which existence and time come together. Also, time is always related with action here and now. Action can only be realised in time, and time can only be realised in action. And this gives us a deep sense of the dynamic nature of existence in a world in which nothing remains the same from moment to moment. (Shobogenzo, Book 1 p. 109) That said, I think it is more realistic to translate “soku-shin” as immediate mind or, more directly, “This! is buddha.”

Mahayana Buddhism teaches that things lack self-being (a perpetual and unchanging identity), and come into existence through the process of “dependent origination”. Since all phenomena arise in dependence upon conditions (pratīya-samutpada), they have no being of their own and are empty of a permanent self (svabhava). Dependent Origination indicates a unity that is the necessary condition whereby beings can be beings at all. The variety of separate things that constitute our world are to be considered as being in union in the unique sense that

things are what they are because of the united nature of existence. This is to deny the prior existence of separate things, which are then aggregated into a whole. Things do not have any prior status, for unity indicates the existential nature of things in the matrix of relatedness.

According to Hua Yen philosophy things do not merely depend upon and correspond to each other, they imply each other as well. A popular image used in Hua Yen is that of Indra's Net. This is a three dimensional net with a jewel set at every node in the net. Every jewel perfectly reflects every other, such that each contains the image of all the others and in turn is contained in every other.

For a wonderful description of this sense of interconnectedness, I would like to quote to you the words of the 3rd Century Neo-Platonist, Plotinus when describing how when the soul regains sight of its true nature all, including the soul, is seen in all. There,

All is transparent, nothing dark, nothing resistant; every being is lucid to every other, in breadth and depth; light runs through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each is all, and infinite the glory. Each of them is great; the small is great; the sun, there, is all the stars; and every star, again, is all the stars and sun. While some manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other. (V.8.4)

In the actual world things are internally related such that when they interact they mutually determine each other, thereby determining the form of the world. Whenever one thing is empirically present the others invisibly participate in its present. A grain of sand is

the whole universe. Even the smallest event has an infinite ontological depth.

When a flower blooms the whole world blooms into spring.

Rather than rejecting the material world as evil, and trying to transcend it, we have here a description of the enlightened soul rejoicing in existence; giving honor and value to all things. But these things are not distinct and unrelated self-existent beings. To lose sight of this unity and interpenetration of all things is to fall into the realm of enchantment and illusion, where things are taken to be independent and separate. It is this illusion that is the source of Dukkha - the all-pervading sense of unsatisfactoriness that is a characteristic of the human condition.

When we see clearly and distinctly we understand the only reality that things have is their existence as a nexus of relationships, like a pattern woven into a cloth. Unravel the threads and the pattern goes. But the "going" is not a transition from being to non-being, for the pattern never was a substantial being that could be annihilated. The Buddhist view is that things neither arise nor cease, for the pattern never was a substantial being that could be annihilated.

As this is confirmed in the Heart Sutra which says:

*Shariputra, all things are essentially empty--
 Not born, not destroyed;
 Not stained, not pure; without loss, without gain.*

And the Diamond Sutra says,

All composite things are like a dream, a phantasm, a bubble and a shadow, are like a dew drop and a flash of lightning; they are thus to be regarded

REPORT

IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE BOARD

On March 3 the SZC board invited sangha members to an Extraordinary General Meeting to pass four resolutions that will allow our sangha to become a registered Association. The meeting was necessary because SZC has been for some decades a limited company with a constitution that required a majority of members (as present at a General Meeting) to vote in favour of changing the constitution.

There were 15 members present, one member - Gilly - by way of a telephone link up, at the meeting and eighteen other members represented by proxy votes.

The four resolutions were passed unanimously.

Our next immediate step is to lodge the new constitution, together with the minutes of the EGM and some other documents pertinent to the procedure (board details etc) with the NSW Department of Fair Trading.

Jason is doing this as I write!

When Fair Trading approve our request and issues a certification of Association we will then have to go through a number of other procedures transferring all of our business dealings and documents from the Limited Company to an Association. We are assuming that there will be no problems in doing this other than some leg work.

The board would like to thank all the Sangha members who helped, especially those who sent in a proxy or came along to the meeting.

(Brendon Stewart- Chair)

This entailed involved a great deal of work by the Board and the Teachers, and most especially Yvonne Hales ,who saw everything organized legally and on time. The sangha thank them all.

SAMU at Kodoji February 20-22

Brendon Stewart and Tony Coote went up to Kodoji last week and cleared the grass from around the buildings using mower and brush cutter (hired for the day). The paddocks will be slashed this week. Here's what the place looks like then.

Yvonne, and Helen and Mark have also been up there working on weeds, and clearing the track to the swimming pool. Thank you!



WOMENS RETREAT at Kodoji March 7-8

Seven women enjoyed a weekend at Kodoji filled with full moon, crickets, darkness, a very green paddock, lyrebirds and silence, sitting, working together, talking, making meals. A wonderful time to just be with the day and each other. Sadly another chestnut tree looks as if it is dying.

SAMU at KODOJI

20-22 MARCH 2015



A magnificent team turned up for samu at Kodoji over Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The aim was to prepare the grounds and buildings for Maggie's transmission sesshin and ceremony. Those attending were Britta Beidermann and Raph, Greg Carty, Mark and Carlyn, Gilly and Tony Coote, Nick Dennington, Carl Hooper, Sally Hopkins, Jason Koh, Diana Levy, Will, Sue and Lily Moon, Janet Selby, Jill Steverson and Robert Parker and Bren and Kerry

Stewart. We sat together for an hour in the morning, and an hour before dinner.

The weather was quite dicey for outdoor work but miraculously, in the breaks between rainy periods, a great deal was achieved, including:

Mowing and raking the grass

Clearing around the buildings

General weeding and cutting back overhanging foliage from the road

Cutting down a number of dead trees

Splitting firewood

Digging a hole for sesshin compost

Replacing rusted guttering to the Dojo and cottage

Painting the eastern cottage gable



APRIL-MAY 2015

Internal work included:

Completion of the lining to the under-stair cupboard

Sanding and painting hojo skirting boards

Window and general cleaning

Cleaning out the fridge flues

Finishing painting dojo ceiling

Repairing the fire-damaged laundry tub in the shower shed

Knife sharpening

Food and goods inventory preparation

Food preparation and cooking (fabulous 5 star meals)

Washing up

Grace after cheking a wombat hole!



COMING EVENTS

ESTER SESSHIN AND DHARMA TRANSMISSION 3-12 APRIL

Easter Sesshin Led by Subhana and Maggie Gluek 3-10 April

Maggie's Dharma Transmission Ceremony 11th April

Please contact Kerry Stewart: stewartkerry@gmail.com if you wish to come to the ceremony.

Zazenkaï May 17

Tony Cote will offer a talk about the influence of Japanese culture and design on designing of Kodoji, in association with the "Japan: Australian Perspectives". Gillian Cote will offer the Dokusan.

Japan: Australian Perspectives is an exhibition curated by Dr Mark Stiles for the Incinerator Art Space, Willoughby, which will present the work of seven contemporary Australian architects and designers who have been inspired by Japan, including Tony Cote and his design for Kodoji. It runs from May 6 to May 24.

WINTER SESSHIN 5-10 June at Kodoji with Paul Maloney and Allan Marett

Deep winter is the time when, in China and Japan, the most significant retreats of the year are traditionally held. It is a wonderful time to engage with what is: cold in the morning, the steam rising in the paddock in the morning, warm sun at midday (perhaps), the cold drawing down in the late afternoon, cosy zazen in the dojo in the evening. The ebb and flow of the day is particularly dramatic at this time of the year and we retreat to the mountains to enjoy it. This sesshin will combine silent sitting and extended walking meditation in the vicinity of Kodoji.

Applications can be found on the website szc.org.au or hard copies at Annandale and should be sent to the Sesshin Coordinator at Annandale or emailed to Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com, phone 0421 369 707. Applications close 15 May. Part time is possible from day one, please check with Janet.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

GORRICKS SAMU and REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Building maintenance is kept modestly in check, however a more concerted ongoing effort by all members is needed for ground maintenance generally. There was discussion about how best to encourage members to become more involved and committed to caring for Gorricks, such as introducing a 'caring for country' group as part of samu.

It was agreed to add a "Kodoji Winter/Building and Bushcare" weekend to the annual work schedule. Chopping firewood should be prioritized to ensure adequate supplies of dry wood prior to each sesshin. Brendon will arrange a date to fit in with existing bookings.

WORK at ANNANDALE

The work at Annandale was necessary work to replace the first floor balcony and the rusted-out roof over the laundry/rear bathroom.

The balcony flooring was supported on timber joists that cantilevered out from the first floor bedroom and were rotting on the ends as a result of water damage. The floor has been replaced and the balustrade wall made solid to enhance the privacy of the access to the end bedroom. It has been designed to allow for the possibility of full enclosure later on down the track. This work has been completed. (Tony Coote)

Tony and Gilly have also done some repairs about the place, and put in a new stove. Thank you!

Notice Board

Dokusan

MONDAYS:

Subhana April 13 May 11,18,25
 Allan March 30 April 27

WEDNESDAYS:

Gillian Cooté April 1,15,29 May 13,20,27

Dharma Café

April 20,22

Full Moon Ceremony

may 4 and 6th Not praising my self while abusing other

Zazenkaï

ZAZENKAÏ 8.30-12 pm talk at 10am. No zazenkaï in April because of sesshin and Transmission ceremony. Sunday May 17 Gilly will offer dokusan and talk: Tony Cooté and the influence that the art and culture of Japan has had on his design of Kodofji.

Board Meetings

April 14, May 19 6pm sitting. 6.30 start. All Sangha members welcome. (note change in May)

Women's Group

April 17 at Caroline's May 15 at Gilly's (7.30) (note change)

Early Morning Zazen

Ashfield SZC members are interested in zazen and dokusan are invited to join in a small group that sits regularly on Tuesday (6-7.30 am) and Thursday (6.30-8.30pm). Contact either Allan Marett allan.marett@gmail.com 0409712767 or Kim Bagot kimball67@gmail.com 0402321277.

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

The Roaring Stream. A New Zen Reader, ed. Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker is on sale at Annandale, along with Robert Aitken's books: *Taking the Path of Zen*, *Mind of Clover*, *The Dragon that Never Sleeps*, *Encouraging Words*, *The Morning Star*, *Vegetable Roots Discourse*, *Zen Master Raven* and *The Gateless Barrier*, plus new titles.

Use of Kodofji

Kodofji 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 Kodofji 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

Blue Mountains Zen

The Blue Mountains Zen Group meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month, from 3-5 p.m., 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

Contact Information

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SZC Calendar April-May 2015

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
29	30 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	31	1 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	2	3 <i>sesshún</i>	4 <i>sesshún</i>
5 <i>sesshún</i>	6 <i>sesshún</i>	7 <i>Sesshún</i>	8 <i>sesshún</i>	9 <i>sesshún</i>	10 <i>sesshún</i>	11 <i>Trasmíssi6n Cerímony</i>
12	13 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	14 <i>board Meeting</i>	15 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	16	17 <i>Women's Group Caroline's</i>	18
19 <i>no Zazenkaí this month</i>	20 <i>Dharma Caf6 7-9</i>	21	22 <i>Dharma caf6 7-9</i>	23	24	25
26	27 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	28	29 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	30	1	2
3	4 <i>FMC not praising myself while abusing others</i>	5	6 <i>FMC Not praising myself while abusing others</i>	7	8	9
10	11 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	12	13 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	14	15 <i>Women's Group at Gilly's</i>	16
17 <i>Zazenkaí 8.30- 12 Dharma Talk and dokusan : Gillian Coote</i>	18	19 <i>Board Meeting</i>	20 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	21	22	23
24	25 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	26	27 <i>Zazen 7-9</i>	28	29	30