



Encouraging Words from the Teacher



Great Vows for All

The Four Great Bodhisattva Vows are something that we regularly chant together and through just chanting this gatha we realise our vow to save all beings. Chanting is a wonderful way to build sangha: the sangha that sits together at Annandale or Kodoji, the sangha that sits together with all beings, the Buddhist sanghas in Japan, China and Korea, who also chant these vows, the Mahasangha of all beings. As our voices mingle and as we pay attention to the sound, the bonds that separate us from one another simply melt away. Whose voice is that? Is it mine? Is it yours? Or is it just that sound coming forth with no subject and no object? In that single sound, we unite with all beings of the universe, thus realizing the first of the bodhisattva vows: The Many Beings are Numberless, I Vow to Save Them.

Great Vows for All: *Shigu seigan mon*. You will recognize the Japanese form of title from when we chant these vows in their Sino-Japanese form after teisho. *Shi* simply means 'four'; *gu* means 'wide, encompassing' and is often used in words that emphasize sociability. It is this *gu*, with its implication of 'encompassment' that marks these as Bodhisattva vows. The vow of the bodhisattva is, after all, to attain the way for the

benefit of all beings. Seigan simply means 'vow'; and *mon* means gate. A gate that is so wide open that it is not even there at all.

The many beings are numberless, I vow to save them: *Shûjô men seigan do*. I'm always a little uncomfortable with the translation of *do* as 'save.' For many of us it bring with it too much baggage from Christianity. I personally prefer 'liberate,' and as I chant 'save' I always think 'liberate.' As we liberate ourselves we liberate all beings, we liberate everything. We also encounter *do* in the Heart Sutra when we say 'all five skandas are empty *transforming (do)* anguish and distress.' Now we have three translations: 'saving', 'liberating' and 'transforming.' Perhaps it helps to understand a little more about this tiny word, *do*. In Buddhism the fundamental meaning of the character *do* is 'bringing across.' It brings to mind the traditional image of the raft that brings beings across from the world of delusion to the other shore of Nirvana. When we pass across to the shore of Nirvana, when we realize our true nature, we bring all beings with us. This is how we save them. This is how we liberate all beings. This is how we transform all beings. And this is how we realize our Bodhisattva vow.

Greed, hatred and delusion rise endlessly, I vow to abandon them: *Bonno mujin seigan dan*. Strictly speaking *bonno* has a wider meaning than simply the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. *Bonno* (*klesha* in Sanskrit) are impediments to realization, or which greed, hate

and ignorance are but three, but the big three nonetheless. Thich Nhat Hanh calls these ‘states of suffering’ in his translation of the Great Vows. Different traditions number the impediments differently, up to 108 (and possibly beyond). They include such things as ostentatiousness, grudge, gambling, ingratitude, ambition, dominance, faithlessness, manipulation, stinginess. Please feel free to add to this list of impediments from your own experience. Japan temples often have 108 steps, each representing one of the *bonno*. I always think of this vow as I trudge up those steps.

In an earlier translation we used to say, I vow to cut them off, and that is what *dan* actually means. Fierce cutting off of the impediments is indeed sometimes appropriate. That is why those fierce *niô* figures confront us at the temple gate, with their swords. But ‘abandon’ points to a gentler practice of ‘letting go,’ that is perhaps more appropriate for the sort of practice we encourage.

Dharma gates are countless, I vow to wake to them: *Hômon muryô sei gan gaku*. What is a dharma gate? In Sanskrit *dharma* has a range of meanings. Most commonly it is understood as the body of the teaching, or any formal teaching. But it also means ‘things as they are’ and ‘that which arises right now, just as it is.’ Dharma-gates—opportunities to turn ourselves around and realize our true nature—surround us, the sound of the currawong, the knot of wood, the weight of the

hands, just this syllable of the chant – *hō —mon*. They wake us up.

The Buddha Way is unsurpassed, I vow to embody it fully: *Butsudô mujô seigan jô* In the past we used to chant ‘The Buddha’s Way’ but now, many of us are tending to say ‘Buddha-way,’ though there has still been no ratification of this change. What’s at issue? To my mind, ‘Buddha’s Way’ points in the direction of the Theravada, and the Noble Eightfold Path: the right actions that leads us towards self-realisation and liberation, and there is certainly nothing wrong with this. But in Mahayana Buddhism the *butsudô*, the ‘Buddha-way,’ is not so much a set of moral actions as a deep engagement with what is, moment by moment, by moment. It is this path—just this breath, now this breath or just this syllable, just this syllable—that we vow to follow here. This path is unsurpassed, not in the sense that it is better than any other path—students sometimes initially have trouble with this vow because they interpret it as saying that Buddhism is somehow better than other practices—but ‘unsurpassed’ here means simply that the Buddha-way it is far beyond delusive dualisms of: better or worse, larger or smaller, surpassed or unsurpassed. And we realize this path by becoming it. The final *jô*, means literally, ‘become,’ but ‘embody it fully’ captures the meaning well, so long as we realize that the path, the one who embodies it, and the body itself are vast and limitless.

REPORT

SAMU at KODOJI September 26-27

- This great working together family time comes too late in the month for a report this Newsletter.

COMING EVENTS

SPRING SESSHIN

October 2- 9 at Kodoji led by Gillian Coote, roshi

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING + DISCUSSION

Sunday 18th October sit 8.30-10 Meeting
Followed by a potluck lunch.

This is a very important sangha occasion, and especially this year when it is hope there will be discussion about thoughts on SZC's future. You are all urged to come and put your pennyworth in. We are all needed.

ROHATSU SESSHIN

Annandale, Friday 4th - Tuesday 8th December
Led by Maggie Gluek.

THE BUDDHA SEES THE MORNING STAR

How do you honour the Buddha's realisation? How about with a period of intensive practice? Rohatsu Sesshin is coming up! Our annual Annandale-based sesshin will run from the evening of Friday December 4 to midday Tuesday December 8. The flavour of this city sesshin is one of seamless coming and going; while participants are encouraged to sit as much as possible, the structure allows fitting in sesshin time around work and family commitments. The schedule includes a 6am-8am block and an evening block with teisho. Rohatsu at Annandale is non-residential. Though billets may be available, they cannot be guaranteed. Breakfast and supper are provided, lunch can be brought or purchased in Annandale. Application forms and more details will soon be available at the zendo and on the SZC website.

SYDNEY ZEN SANGHA CELEBRATION 40 YEARS

Sunday 15th November from 10am
Pat Brunton Hall, Crowsnest Community Hall,
2 Ernest Place, Crowsnest

This potluck celebration is for all Sangha members, past and present and their families.

Please bring stories, photos, poems to share, and a plate for the feast.

Please RSVP to:

Kerry Stewart stewartkerry4@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION to ZEN BUDDHISM

Saturday 28th November 1pm-4pm

This is an afternoon to answer many of your questions. This will be suitable for beginners and will be led by Paul Maloney .

Electronic course notes will be sent to participants after the day.

Cost will be \$30, payable to SZC.

MEMORIAL CEREMONY

Sunday 8th November with Gillian Coote
Sitting 9am Ceremony 11.am.

Honouring family and friends, followed by a potluck lunch.

People are encouraged to bring photos of those they wish to honour, and to bring flowers. This is always a very intimate time together remembering people we have loved.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

WOMENS GROUP

The Women's Group has donated \$660 to the Asylum Seekers Centre so far this year

DONATION

Many thanks to Riley Lee who donated half his takings at his recent concert to SZC. Very generous.

SURVEY

Please complete the survey sent out some time ago as this will help us in the general discussion about SZC future plans.

The Board is very busy planning the Annual General Meetings in October and making plans for the 40th Anniversary celebrations on November 15. A very busy time of the year, as one Board winds up and prepares for a new Board in 1915-16. A great deal of work has been done this year, seeing to the changeover of our constitution, the budget deficit, and all the matters that naturally arise – not counting the big Transmission Ceremony

ASYLUM SEEKERS

There is a box in the Annandale bathroom which awaits plastic bags, carrier bags, plastic food containers, old batteries and Ipods which will be taken by Lesley Treleven to the Asylum Seekers Centre in Newtown, to help those refuge seekers left awaiting confirmation of their status.

MEMBERSHIP

There is now a new membership fee for people who live out of town, and do not have an on-going relationship with a teacher but who wish to remain a member of SZC. This new fee is \$210.

GIFT

Greg Carty has given SZC his taiko drum – a wonderful gift to replace our present drum used at sesshin that is no longer so functional. Thank you, Greg!

RESIDENTS

The Board was sad to hear that Yuko decided to move on after living with us for 7 years. We wish her well. With this we now have a room available at Annandale, please let the Board know of any person you may think suitable to become a tenant. The room is the big front room, with two windows looking out on to the world, a wonderful space in which to live, as all who have lived there have attested.

Notice Board

Dokusan

Monday Subhana: October 12, 19,
November 9, 16, 31.
Allan: 26 October
Wednesdays Gillian: October 14, 21 (sitting only
7th during sesshin)
November 4, 11, 18

Dharma cafe

Subhana 23 November
Gillian 25 October

Full moon ceremony

October 28 and November 2 "I take up the
way of not Defaming the Three Treasure."

Board meetings

October 12 – Sit 6pm Start 6.30pm
November 10 - the new Board will be meeting,
Sit 6pm Start 6.30pm

Women's group

OCTOBER 16 – a week later due to Sesshin - at
Jean's
NOVEMBER 21-22 at Culburra with Julie.

Zazenkai

No Zazenkai in October or November as the
AGM will be on 18 October and the 40th
Anniversary celebrations will be on 15
November

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

Ashfield Morning Zazen

SZC members interested in zazen and dokusan are invited to join in a small group that sits regularly on Tuesday (6-7:30

am) and Friday (6-7:30 am). Contact either Allan Marret allan.marett@gmail.com 04097127767
Or Kim Bagot kimballb7@gmail.com 0402321277

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 October-November 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28 Dharma Café 7-9	29	30 Dharma Café 7-9	1	2 Start Spring Sesshin at Kodoji	3 Sesshin
4 Sesshin	5 Labour Day Holiday No Sitting	6 Sesshin	7 Sesshin No teacher or leaders at Annandale	8 Sesshin	9 End of Spring sesshin	10
11	12 Zazen 7-9	13	14 Zazen 7-9	15	16 Women's Group at Jean's	17
18 A.G.M 8.30 sit 10am start	19 Zazen 7-9	20	21 Zazen 7-9	22	23	24
25	26 FMC "Not defaming the Three Treasures" 7-9pm	27	28 FMC "Not Defaming the Three Treasures" 7-9pm	29	30	31
1	2 Zazen 7-9	3	4 Zazen 7-9	5	6	7
8 Memorial Ceremony 9am-11am sit then ceremony	9 Zazen 7-9	10	11 Zazen 7-9	12	13	14
15 Celebration of 40 years 10am at Chatswood.	16 Zazen 7-9	17	18 Zazen 7-9	19	20	21 Womens Group at Culburra
22	23 Dharma Café 7-9	24	25 Dharma Café 7-9	26	27	28