



Encouraging Words from the Teacher

by Gillian Coote

You were curious about Zen Buddhism so one day you turned up at an orientation. You liked the silence and the challenge of paying attention and so you came back. Soon it became a regular part of your life. You listened to podcasts, found some helpful apps and read widely about the Buddha's enlightenment. You believed the best was yet to come, and that if you sat for Ten Kalpas and several sesshin each year you would become a Buddha.

But the seconds, minutes, days, weeks and maybe even years flow by, and this thing called realisation is still just a word. Sometimes you feel like giving up. Then you do.

"I can't go on! I've had it!"

Congratulations, you have just arrived at dana, relinquishment, letting go, the first of the Paramitas. Let go! Let go of the thought of realisation, let go of the thought of failure too.

A monk asked Hui-Hai, 'By what means can the gateway of our school be entered?'

Hui-hai said, 'By means of the Dana Paramita.'

The monk said, "According to the Buddha, the Bodhisattva Path comprises six Paramitas. Why have you mentioned only the one? Please explain why this one alone provides a sufficient means for us to enter."

Hui-hai said, "Deluded people fail to understand that the other five all proceed from the Dana Paramita and that by its practice all the others are fulfilled."

The monk asked, "Why is it called the Dana Paramita?"

Hui-hai said, "'Dana' means relinquishment."

The monk asked, "Relinquishment of what?"

Hui-hai said, "Relinquishment of the dualism

of opposites, which means relinquishment of ideas as to the dual nature of good and bad, being and non-being, void and non-void, pure and impure. By giving all of them up, we attain to a state in which all opposites are seen as void."

Hui-hai then outlines the various other Paramitas one by one, though I'll only include a few here: "Bodhisattvas, being beguiled by nothing may be said to have fulfilled the silaparamita, also known as observing the Precepts: clinging to nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the viryaparamita, also known as exercising zeal; dwelling on nothing, they may be said to have fulfilled the dhyana-paramita, also known as practising dhyana and samadhi", and so on. Then he comes to the point:

"You only have to understand that, by a single act of relinquishment, EVERYTHING is relinquished; and that 'no arising' means 'no arising' of anything whatsoever. Those who have lost their way have no intuitive understanding of this: that is why they speak of the methods (of practice) as though they differed from one another. I exhort you students to practise the way of relinquishment and nothing else, for it brings to perfection not only the other five Paramitas but also myriads of dharmas."

Bodhidharma said, 'In the realm of the One, not holding dualistic concepts of ordinary beings and sages is called the Precept of Not Defaming the Three Treasures.'

And centuries later, Master Keizan put it this way: "If you could simply see that One's original, unchanging Self-nature is neither saintly nor ordinary, neither deluded (nor enlightened), then hundreds of thousands of teachings and incalculable numbers of subtle principles all abide in the Mind-source....If you do not reach this realm, you will be agitated by feelings about delusion and awakening."

So, let's relinquish preoccupations with realisation, with status, with gaining, with attainment - that is dana,

the self forgotten, the 'I' no longer at the centre of the universe.

Aitken Roshi says, "The implication of dana for lay people in Classical Buddhism was that you give as you can afford to give. This is quite different from 'dropping off body and mind'. In a very real sense we are practising dana in our zazen, letting everything else go - all preconceptions and patterns that hold us together, all of what we must do in order to maintain what we are. Let go. Let go."

A monk asked Ch'ing-jang of Hsing-yang, "Ta-t'ung Chih-sheng Buddha did zazen on the Bodhi Seat for Ten Kalpas, but the Dharma of the Buddha did not manifest itself, and he could not attain Buddhahood."

Ch'ing-jang said, "Your question is exactly to the point."

The Monk said, "But he did zazen on the Bodhi Seat: why couldn't he attain Buddhahood?"

Ch'ing-jang said, "Because he is a non-attained Buddha."

These non-attained Buddhas are no other than ourselves, just as we are, struggling with our own particular anxieties and concerns, our doubts that it shouldn't be like this, it couldn't be like that, our struggles to attain realisation. See these thoughts and feelings arising, give them up and come back to this! Always come back.

There is, after all, nothing to attain.

Gilly Coote

Reports

A Few Highlights from the Women's Retreat Kodoji Friday - Sunday March 9-11



Gilly, Maggie, Kerry, Oivi, Sally, Diana, Jillian B., Jill S., Lesley, Julie, Caroline, Marianne -- gathered in perfect early autumn/late summer weather at Kodoji. Warm sunny days with sharp cold of evening, nights, and early mornings ... The splendour of starry nights...the clear gibbous moon, the Milky Way, the Southern Cross, the Pleiades (Seven Sisters) and so much more...Mist in the valley in early morning, glittering sparkles of moisture in the well-mown grass (our thanks to Brendon and Kerry)...

A 'bird'-chattering of first breakfast...

The schedule to be determined with many voices intersecting, communing...to find easy consensus on samu --

- **Zazen** to steady the mind-body-spirit, and bring to each moment a clear presence..
- **Who does what, and when?** Morning teas, afternoon teas, showers, meals, sewing,

weeding...

- **Bushcare** to get rid of as much as possible of the impending fleabane, now in bud
- **Sewing** of zafus and zabutons, washing up, prep of meals, clearing up....teas...

Glenys' mandala is unpacked and we bring in silence our offerings from the cornucopia of Mother Nature...to add to the circle of CDs, calligraphy, words ('chanting', 'dancing', 'sutras' etc) and a lotus with candle in the centre.

We sit in zazen to contemplate...In the evening light the mandala takes on a different character -- old and new, nature and human-made, with colours on CDs like city display of neon signs! We have our ritual 'sharing' around the mandala... Lives varied, passions, inspirations, and more...Later, on Sunday, we dismantle the mandala, and realise we are sitting

in a 'circle' that has morphed into an oval -- our mandala an eye now -- iris and flame of the central piece...a tribute to Glenys (who was unable to join us) and to all women nourishing Mother Earth...and working creatively...to re-connect, that which has been severed.

As we sit in the night, repeated flutterings at the atrium windows...We look up... Perhaps a bird wanting to get in? Angels? Owl? Perhaps the spirits of our Indigenous sisters? We don't know...

Yoga stretches happen each day -- with Diana leading ...easing out the body-mind 'kinks'....

Maggie leads us in singing. First her own sweet voice filling the dojo, and then all together...we re-discover the joy of harmony in voices, the words of 'Call upon the Name of Avalokiteshvara' (A Zen hymn adapted by David Englebrecht from Hymn 295). Sally Hopkin's melody and lyrics -- 'Here in this Place' -- reminds us of the delights of being at Kodoji. 'Walk in the Dhamma' introduced by Diana, (by Bhante Sujato)...to the tune of 'Walzing Matilda'....All take these on -- with feeling, and with gusto...

At last, after some vain attempts to start Lesley's car...the jumpleads do their bit...

We depart, each stop at a gate...a memory...each rock a friend...each person, a unique individual in our universe.

Caroline Josephs



Samu at Kodoji, March 17-18

It is marvellous what six people and an 8-year old girl can achieve over a weekend! Sue, Will and Lily Moon joined Gilly and I on Friday afternoon, followed by Jill Steverson and Robert Parker on Saturday,. Knives were sharpened, showers fixed, much mowing done as well as a great deal of bushcare, dojo windows cleaned, the store room tidied, windows re-puttied, two new clothes lines put up, and there was an inventory of everything. Will and Sue did a recce for the May bushwalk. We were blessed with beautiful misty mornings and fine days, wonderful zazen, delicious meals and good company, including a large goana. *Tony*



*back: Tony Coote, Will Moon, Robert Parker, Jill Steverson,
front: Gilly Coote, Lily Yengo Moon, Parry the parrot, Sue Morrison*

Coming Events

Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Ceremony

Annandale on Sunday April 8, from 11am

This ceremony honours the baby Buddha with flowers - if you can, please bring some - and is a family event. Children are most welcome and there will be craft activities in the garden, weather permitting, ahead of the ceremony, which will be followed by a potluck lunch. Bring food to share. Diego and Sabrina's baby Rumi will be welcomed from afar, and if you would like to introduce a new baby, toddler or child/ren to our sangha, please contact Gillian: gillian@gilliancoote.com

Walking Country with Will Moon

This will be a day of mindful walking, setting out from Kodoji, and starting the day with zazen. Dates are 5-6 May. Stay tuned for further details.

News from the Board

ZAZKENKAI LIVES

Thanks to Rick Polito for taking up the new role of zazenkai coordinator. Over the last few years it's been hard to find leaders and numbers of people attending have dropped dramatically. So the Board decided to revamp our schedule and appoint Rick as the coordinator. We look forward to our first full day zazenkai in March with Subhana teaching 'Awakening Your Green Buddha'. Go to the website for details: <http://szc.org.au/classes/zazenkai> And if you missed that one, don't worry, there will be another zazenkai in April. This is a great opportunity to deepen your practice and prepare for longer periods of zazen at sesshins.

COHEN'S KOANS

The fundraising concert performed by Ali Babs and Daryl Wallis was a great night of music, a wonderful opportunity for the sangha to enjoy each other's company and we raised about \$1,300! Deep bow of gratitude to Ali and Daryl and all the people who helped to plan and make the event so much fun.

CONGRATULATIONS

The Board and the sangha congratulates Jane Andino and wishes her all the best on becoming an apprentice teacher with the Diamond Sangha. She was recently appointed by Paul Maloney, roshi. We look forward to engaging with her as a teacher at zazenkais and sesshins in the future.

TRANSMISSION SESSHIN

The Intensive Practice Period scheduled for July has changed to a 5 day non-residential sesshin at Annandale, similar in form to Rohatsu. This will precede Allan Marett's Transmission ceremony on 29th July at the Buddhist Library.

ETHICS

The Resolving Conflicts and Grievances document, drafted by the Ethics Committee and the Board, has been revised and a few minor changes have been made. They relate to teacher/student responsibilities and the nature of dokusan.

Go to the website to read the document:

<http://szc.org.au/ethics-statement>



The Cohen's Koans fundraising concert performed by Ali Babs and Daryl Wallis

Notices

Orientations for Newcomers

Next Orientations: Thursday April 19, May 17 from 7-9pm

The extended format for offering orientations to newcomers, or indeed as a refresher, has been successful and effective. There are limited places and if you are unable to attend without notice, it might deprive others of a chance to attend. Therefore we require people to confirm their participation a few days before the orientation. Any questions, email info@szc.com.au. See website for more details.

Leadership Call

Dojo leadership is not only a fantastic way to actualise caring for the sangha and merging one's practice with the vast field we all share, it's also a great way to guarantee you'll turn up.

For those interested, please contact the following leaders who can guide you in the form of the roles.

Ino: Peter Bursky mowerman26@hotmail.com

Jiki: Sue Bidwell sue.bidwell17@gmail.com

Jisha: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

Books for Sale

Robert Aitken books for sale at Annandale include:

The Ground We Share, The Practice of Perfection, Zen Master Raven, The Morning Star, Original Dwelling Place.

And don't forget the books and CDs by SZC members Sally Hopkins and Glenys Jackson, *Star and Mountain*; *Zen Leopard* by Brendon Stewart; *Swimming in Sound* by Caroline Josephs.

Asylum Seekers Centre Donations

The need for basic survival services by those who receive no government help, cannot work and are waiting indefinitely for visa decisions is increasing dramatically, and each week there are 750 clients.

The Centre relies only on donations of:

Staples: rice, canned tomatoes, beans, lentils

Personal hygiene: shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, shaving cream, toothpaste.

Devices: Mobile phones, laptops and iPads can help keep in touch with separated families.

All data is wiped by an IT specialist.

Unfortunately the Centre can no longer take anything electrical (with a plug).

The SZC women's group continues to make a donation each month which is really appreciated.

If you're not sure, please contact Lesley (0410621756) before leaving anything upstairs at the SZC, Annandale.

"At last, after some vain attempts to start Lesley's car...the jumpleads do their bit..."



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 \$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 Brendon Stewart, phone 9879 7290

email stewarts34@bigpond.com

Blue Mountains Zen

The Blue Mountains Zen Group meets on the second and fourth Sundays of each month, from 2pm - 4.30pm in Lawson. Our teacher is Paul Maloney 9045 3897

or contact Jane at janeandino@yahoo.com.au

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings.

Please contact Gary for more details: gcaitcheon@gmail.com 0429 635 412

North Shore Zen Group

Meets on Thursday nights 7-9pm at the *Quaker Meeting House*, 59 Boundary Road, Wahroonga.

Please bring your own zafu/stool and zabuton.

Contribution \$5 - \$10 towards hiring the venue.

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.

Please contact Allan Marett allan.marett@gmail.com 0409 712 767

or Peter Bursky mowerman26@hotmail.com 0405 042 236



Members of the Board

Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) stewartkerry4@gmail.com; Steven Crump (secretary); Jason Koh (treasurer); Jillian Ball; Alex Budlevskis; Helen Sanderson; Brendon Stewart.

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

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

April 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Autumn sesshin Kodoji	2 Autumn sesshin Kodoji	3 Autumn sesshin Kodoji	4 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	5 Autumn sesshin Kodoji	6 Autumn sesshin Kodoji	7
8 Buddha's Birthday, Gillian	9 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Subhana	10 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	11 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	12	13 Womens Group Janet's	14
15 Zazenkai 8.30-12 Talk and Dokusan Gillian	16 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Allan	17	18 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	19 Orientation	20	21
22	23 Dharma Cafe 7-9pm Subhana	24	25 Dharma Cafe 7-9pm Gillian	26	27	28
29	30 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Allan					



May 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	3	4	5 Walking weekend Kodoji
6	7 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Allan	8 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	9 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	10	11	12 Womens at Jill Ball's
13	14 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Allan	15	16 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	17 Orientation	18	19
20 Zazenkaï 8.30-12 Talk Peter Bursky, Dokusan Paul	21 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Allan	22	23 ZAZEN 7-9pm with Gillian	24 Beginners Night	25	26
27	28 Full Moon Ceremony, <i>Not Lying</i>	29	30 Full Moon Ceremony, <i>Not Lying</i>	31		31

Photo: Caroline Josephs

