



Encouraging Words

“IMMANENCE”

Paul Maloney

The Zen Buddhist view on the human condition can be summarised by the following proposition of Hakuin Zenji, in the conclusion of his Song of Zazen.

“This very place is the Lotus Land, this very body the Buddha.”

If this can be believed, then I think it follows that there is no need for any form of substantial transcendence of the world.

On first sight this proposition seems to be contrary to common sense. Buddhism takes as axiomatic that the human condition, in samsara, is characterised by dukkha (unsatisfactoriness). There is, of course, the promise of an end to dukkha, by following the eightfold path, with the subsequent hope of attainment of nirvana. So how can Zen claim that this place is the Lotus Land, that in fact samsara is nirvana? This in turn depends on how we view the nature of human being itself.

The historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, is said to have declared as a result of his great Awakening experience under the Bodhi tree,

“Wonderful, wonderful, now I realise that all beings are by nature Buddha,

Only their ignorance and delusions prevent them from realising this fact.”

Note that. “All beings by **nature** are Buddha.” They are not by **nature** sinful. They are not by **nature** flawed. They are not by **nature** in need of salvation. They are not by **nature** alienated from God, or whatever. They are by **nature** Buddha. Buddha nature is immanent, not transcendental.

Yet, despite the fact that all beings by nature are Buddha, there is dukkha. How should we understand the nature of the dukkha that is the human condition, and what is meant by the terms “nirvana,” and “samsara?” We do not suffer because we are sinful, but because we are deluded, ignorant of our essential nature. The fundamental delusion, according to Yasutani Roshi, is

to believe that I am here, and you are there. That is to say, to believe that the world of samsara is made up of a collection of independent, self-existent things. Believing we are isolated “selves”, alone in a contingent and indifferent universe, we grasp at that which is pleasurable and seemingly permanent, and we reject the painful and impermanent. As a consequence, our lives are driven by desire and aversion, both of which are the consequences of ignorance. These three poisons, greed, hatred and ignorance are the source of suffering.

Because there is suffering there is a need of salvation. What is the nature of Buddhist salvation? For the Zen Buddhist salvation is not by faith or by grace. Nor does it come by good works, for there is no merit to be achieved or accumulated. Salvation is not to be found in any nirvana that is conceived of as a transcendental realm beyond change. It is because of ignorance that people seek a false refuge in Being, and the hope of permanence. In particular that there is life after death.

Salvation in Buddhism is by one thing alone: Awakening. Hakuin tells us that the most efficient path to Awakening is zazen. Because the fall is the result of ignorance, so suffering is overcome through understanding, through waking up, by becoming a Buddha, an awakened one. Salvation comes through the seeing of self-nature, and the understanding that this nature is no-nature. The understanding that brings salvation is the self-conscious awareness of change and impermanence as the only reality. It is the realisation that in the world of experience all is momentary, all is empty, and all is without self. Enlightenment can be considered as the result of the complete annihilation of the deep rooted, innate clinging to the notion of being, or anything whatsoever that is permanent. In the words of the Buddha,

When you develop the perception of impermanence, then the conceit of ‘I AM’ will be abandoned.

When we understand that our true nature is empty and impermanent, we are enlightened, we are saved. Not only are we saved, we realise that we always have been. It is

like waking from a bad dream to find oneself at home in the comfort of one's own bed.

Three Views of the human Condition.

A way to understand the Buddhist position is to contrast it with two common world views that can be identified as most natural to the human mind. Consider three things in the ocean; a log of wood, a fish, and a wave. Each can be said to exist and to have certain distinguishing characteristics. But the relationship of each to the ocean is quite different to that of the other two.

The log is quite other than the ocean, they are two different substances. The ocean could dry up, or the log could be removed from it and placed somewhere else, without either being substantially affected. By analogy, this view presents the human condition as one of looking at things from the 'outside', as it were. The individual person is detached from the world, in it, but not of it. As such the person is relatively indifferent to the fate of the world and assumes no responsibility for its integrity. But, just as the log is tossed on the surface of the ocean so, the individual may see him or herself as suffering, the victim of the world's contingency. Salvation for such a person can be conceived of as the gaining control over the world, making it submit to his power, or, alternatively, the attainment of an ontological transcendence, refuge in some more pleasurable world where the "self" can exist permanently.

The relationship of the fish to the ocean is more intimate, and also more dependent, than that of the log. Changes in the ocean's condition will affect the fish. Should the ocean get hot, cold or even dry up then the condition of the fish will be substantially affected, its very existence threatened. However, the fish is sufficiently other than, and therefore independent of, the ocean that it could be removed from the ocean and placed in another body of water, without being substantially affected. Again, by analogy, this view presents the human condition as far from that of a detached observer. The human person finds him or herself in the very midst of the world, directly affecting and being affected by the things that he or she encounters. If the world is threatened so is the self. But for all its intimacy the relationship of the self to the world is that of subject to object. The self faces the world as something other, albeit, an "other" that requires a commitment on the part of the self to maintain and nurture it. This is the world of "shallow" ecology that views the world as standing available to the self for its own satisfaction. The person exists in the world and experiences the existential anxiety that is the natural outcome of such a position, should control be lost.

While the second view is closer to that of Zen than is the first view, in its structure it is basically different. The wave, on the other hand, does not have the independence of the log or the fish. For while it can be distinguished and said to exist in the ocean, it cannot be separated from its environment. And while it may be said to have colour, form etc. it has no core centre, no "self", that remains apart

and unchanging. The wave's existence is not so much dependent on the ocean, but a condition of the ocean, one of the ocean's passing features. Because the ocean is constantly changing so is the wave; it arises, abides and passes away as a result of causes and conditions, leaving nothing behind.

The Buddhist view is that the existence of all beings, not only humans, vis-a-vis Buddha Nature is analogous to that of the wave to the ocean. Which is to say, just as the wave is a condition, or feature of the ocean, so is each individual thing (be it a human being, a worm, a leaf, or an atom) a feature of the one reality that is Buddha Nature. So, I can say the wind, the trees, and the mountains, and I too, are interrelated in a cosmic web of interdependence. In my ignorance I fail to realise this fact. Thus, I believe myself to be like the log or the fish that is sometimes buffeted by the storms, sometimes finding peace at the bottom of a deep pool, depending upon where the currents take me. Thus, I suffer. I see myself as a "victim of fate" or suffering from "karma". But this is a delusion. I am not the "victim" of my circumstances for I am not other than my circumstances. I am an integral element in the nexus of events that constitute the one reality that is "me/circumstances". Having no self-being, not being other than my circumstances, means that my fundamental nature is characterised not by being and permanence, but emptiness and impermanence.

So, we must be clear that with salvation the self does not attain union with Buddha Nature, for Buddha Nature is not another with which it could be united. Salvation is a matter of realising our original nature, and it is also a realisation that this nature had never been lost. Buddha Nature is not something to be attained in the future, following a period of sustained practice, but to be found right here.

He walked the blade of a sword;

He stepped on the ice of a frozen river;

He entered a vacant house;

His desire to steal ceased forever.

He returned to his own home,

Saw the beautiful rays of the morning sun,

And watched the moon and stars intimately.

He walked the streets with ease,

Enjoying the gentle breeze.

At last he opened his treasure house.

Until that moment he never dreamed

He had owned those treasures from the very beginning.

Genro's Poem in The Iron Flute, Case 28. Lung-yu's Ultimate Stage

Paul Maloney

Reports

Autumn Samu at Kodoji



The autumn Kodoji samu held over the last weekend in March prepared our beautiful temple for the Great Vows (autumn) sesshin. Eleven people came along to enjoy each others company, the delightful weather and the beautiful wonder of Kodoji. Mervyn, Zoe and Michael came for their very first visit! Sue and Zoe compiled a detailed inventory of our stores and relabelled the first aid materials. Michael, Zoe's husband rebuilt and strengthened the dining table chairs, Alex and Jason mowed the



grass around the toilets and showers and then the big area of lawn in between the temple buildings. Later they levelled off the road fill on our drive way. In the evening Alex played the shakuhachi. Mervyn and Alex swept and cleaned the dojo verandah. Gilly, Kerry and Diana worked their way through an area of Moth vine cutting away the seed pods and uprooting the long and strongly placed plants. Tony and Brendon, helped by Alex emptied the water and then moved one of our water tanks off its stand in preparation for its repair and the repair of the wooden stand. New support beams were fitted after much swearing and some trepidation about crawling under them to secure the beams in place.

Good food was provided by all and lots of wonderful conversation around the dinner table.

Buddha's birthday and baby naming

Our annual Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Ceremony was a joyful event, the altar covered in flowers and the dojo full of lovely children. Ahead of the ceremony, Janet helped them make origami flowers and birds to present to the Baby Buddha. Pip Atkins' lovely 5-year old granddaughter, Nina, her daughter Clare's third child (*right*), was welcomed into our sangha just as her older sister Rosa and brother Louis had been some years before. Clare's father Binh, her friend Rae, Shauna Murray and her daughters Marisol (*left*) and Saoirse, Maggie, Sean, Janet and I joined Nina as she sang us her favourite song, *Blackbird singing in the Dead of Night*. After our lunch, we enjoyed Maggie's delicious gingerbread men.



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Gillian Coote

Autumn Sesshin at Kodoji



The Autumn Sesshin, 19-26 April, was led by Subhana Bazarghi and Maggie Gluek.

We had a good number of participants, 21 adults and two children, Amy (8) and Liora (5). The children were a delight. As one person described them "like bright butterflies flitting here and there", and their voices like tiny birds calling to each other.

Our kinhin was accompanied by full moon and shooting star, and the wonderful playing of shakuhachi by Alex Budlevskis accompanied crickets, the wind in the trees, and our open practice afternoon with his practice of the classic piece "Mountain Valley" (San'ya). Alex also played at some closing ceremonies, and you can see him in the photo (*right*) performing "Meditating on the Letter 'Ah'" (Ajikan).



Subhana and Maggie gave rich and inspiring teishos, as well as practice talks on zazen, koans and shikantaza. Maggie's first teisho described our sesshin as a "no frills sesshin", meaning the welcome simplicity of daily life at Kodoji. However, we soon realised that we were at the ultra-max no frills sesshin.

Brendon, with relay teams of helpers, laboured over several days to get the water from the tank running to the kitchen. This meant we had to bring water with buckets to the kitchen. He also noticed that the solar power batteries weren't running adequately. We feel very grateful to Brendon for the huge amount of work and care he put into maintaining water and power during the sesshin.

Layman P'ang's famous poem was often quoted: "*Wondrous power, marvellous activity! drawing water, carrying wood.*" I have to say that the evening sitting by candlelight, and waiting for dokusan by tealight, was a very special atmosphere, perhaps to be repeated even without solar problems.

All these problems meant that people pulled together and Subhana's opening theme of

"How can my zazen help others?" was translated into a very practical and constant "How can I help?" from everyone. After an intense but fulfilling week, it was good to bring back home that no-frills sesshin mind.

Family Walking Weekend



Seven of us enjoyed spectacular views and each others' company on the Family Walking weekend. Our leader Will had scoped out a route that took us up Jack's Track, along Womerah Ridge and then down the ridge behind the zendo at Kodoji. Over the years he has found a number of sites along there, and was that the highlight? seeing these? visiting the art cave again? Or maybe it was the Glossy Black-Cockatoo/ Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo? It was sighted by Alex and Kerry, near the beginning of Jack's Track. Whichever it was, this bird is listed as vulnerable/ endangered. We walked through different patches of casuarina - these birds are sometimes called the Casuarina Cockatoo - "yummy!" - and it was flowering almost-red. Will and I saw Sydney rock orchids in this area. It would be lovely to go

back and see them when they're flowering.



Another very great pleasure was being serenaded at lunchtime by Alex, on his shakuhachi. We were on a rock outcrop, probably just above our bit of Gorrick's Run. A sadness though, was the paucity of birds - I had noticed this during our recent autumn sesshin, that compared to earlier times, there is much reduced birdcall. But the company of my fellow sitters at the dining table, or hangin' out with sore feet after a fairly solid day of walking, filled me with gladness.

The experience of being taken to a Darkinjung site that consisted of a line of rocks where ceremony and fires took place, will stay with me. If there is another Walking weekend, I hope you'll come out with us and lift your spirits - bush tonic.

Diana

COMING EVENTS

Winter Sesshin at Annandale, 8-12 June *The Dance of the World*

This five day non-residential sesshin will be held at the Sydney Zen Centre, Annandale. It will be led by Paul Maloney Roshi and Jane Andino, apprentice teacher.

There are three blocks of zazen per day: Morning, Afternoon and Evening.

Participants can sign up for any blocks, but are urged to take advantage of the long weekend and sign up for the full Saturday, Sunday and Monday sittings. Attending the opening of sesshin on the Saturday morning is mandatory unless there are exceptional reasons not to. The non-residential sesshins are a wonderful opportunity to integrate your zazen and work/home practice. As we move between blocks of zazen and the demands of a busy schedule, we experience the flow of the dance of the world. In this sesshin we will be exploring the connection between zazen and our creative being, to find emptiness singing itself. In Hakuin Zenji's words: "Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law."

Application forms available soon on the website and at Annandale.

Enquiries: Julie Robinson, mobile: 0403 192 814, email: julesandco@live.com.au

Samu at Annandale, Sunday 16 June

Zazen from 8.30 - 9.30 followed by Dharma talk. After a cuppa, we will prune climbing ficus, weed garden, clean and mend zafus and zabutons, sweep dojo, look at sorting out stuff in the garage, plus any other jobs that present themselves. Please bring some vegetarian food to share for lunch. Brendon Stewart, phone 9879 7290 email stewarts34@bigpond.com

Notices

Orientations for Newcomers

Next Orientations: Thursday 13th June; Thursday 11th July

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. www.szc.org

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: Aitken & Steindl-Rast*; *The Blue Cliff Record Vol 1 & 111*; *The Roaring Stream: Foster & Schumacher*; *Vegetable Roots Discourses: Caicentan (Aitken)*

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.

T-shirts 'Climate Action Now' for sale

Sangha member Peter Thompson has put in a lot of effort over some time to get action on climate change. In his latest effort he designed a series of t-shirts that are available for sale in the foyer at Annandale.

Order from Facebook: Wear a T-Shirt for Climate Action Campaign. Click on "Shop" to place your order.

Library Upstairs at Annandale for Members

Sue and Glenys work together sorting out the library upstairs available for members to access. Just in case there are any enquires both Sue and Glenys can be contacted. Glenys: grosej@gmx.com, Sue: sue.bidwell17@gmail.com

Asylum Seekers Centre Donations

In 2017/18, with your help, ASC supported over 3,200 people. More than 1,000 new people were new to our centre including 200 children. With both NSW and Federal elections, ASC will actively engage with politicians calling for the reinstatement of income support for people seeking asylum. 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.

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.

News From The Board

Breaking Down Barriers The Buddhist Council of NSW Board has written a letter of condolence and support to Muslim communities in Australia and New Zealand. The Board, on behalf of the sangha, has signed this letter along with other Buddhist groups. We have also sent a card wishing Arthur Wells and the Christchurch sangha our loving thoughts and resolve to work together toward a more inclusive and accepting society - breaking down barriers when we see them by mirroring our true face.

Care for Kodoji Deep bow of gratitude to all the dedicated people who came to Kodoji for samu in April. The Centre couldn't function without your hard work, skill and time. Maintenance is the greatest, and often most overlooked, technique for combating major environmental issues, like Climate Change. So, the planet thanks you too.



New Page on Website The Wake Up discussions on Thursdays in May have been very successful. The speakers have provided lots of info and links, so the Board has decided to create a new page on our website in the Resources section called Environmental Engagement where they can sit for everyone to easily access.

Organising Sesshin Recipes The Board is in the process of collating, making measurements consistent and digitising all of our sesshin recipes so it makes it easier for food buyers and cooks. We have retrieved some old recipes and may find some new ones too!

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.

Members of the Board



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

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

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June 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	27 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	28	29 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	30	31	1
2	3 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	4	5 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	6	7	8 Winter Sesshin
9 Winter Sesshin	10 Winter Sesshin	11 Winter Sesshin, Board Meeting	12 Winter Sesshin ends. ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	13 Orientation (Kim)	14	15
16 Samu Annandale	17 Dharma Cafe 7-9pm Subhana	18	19 Dharma Cafe 7-9pm Gillian	20	21	22
23	24 ZAZEN 7-9pm	25	26 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	27	28	29
30						



Waterfall in nearby creek, Gorriks, Autumn Samu

July 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	2	3 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	4	5	6
7	8 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	9 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	10 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	11 Orientation (Kerry)	12	13
14	15 Full Moon Ceremony, <i>Not Killing</i>	16	17 Full Moon Ceremony, <i>Not Killing</i>	18 Beginners Night (Jane)	19	20
21 Zazenkai 8:30-12pm Talk and Dokusan, Maggie	22 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	23	24 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	25	26	27
28	29 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	30	31 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian			



Manjusri Rock, Jack's Track, Family Walking Weekend.