

Mind Moon Circle

Journal of the Sydney Zen Centre



Selfless Service

SUMMER 2019

Summer 2018 Selfless Service

Contents

Introduction from the editor	3
Summer Meadow – photo by Glenys Jackson	3
Thich Nhat Hanh; A Life of Selfless Service – Gillian Coote	4
Jukai Vows – Kerry Stewart	7
Spent (a drawing in pen and ink) – Glenys Jackson	10
The Flow, & Haiku – Diana Levy	11
An Ordinary Life – Maggie Gluek	12
Into the Wild – Greg Try	13
Serving Being Served – Sally Hopkins	14
Mary Oliver, Poet of the Ordinary/ Extraordinary – Caroline Josephs	16
Waking up and Acts of Service; An Engaged Buddhist Response to Climate Change – Subhana Barzaghi	18
Metta Solutions – Sean Loughman	21
Service - Sweep the Sheds – Brendon Stewart	23
Poems and Haiku; Resonance – Daniel Menges	25
Tenzo Sesshin, Vegetable and Fruit Gatha – Jill Steverson	28
Zen Poems – from Glenys Jackson	28
Spring Moon, Autumn Waters – Sean Loughman	29
Vibrations and the Resonant Moment; Vibrations of the Noded Dark - Caroline Josephs	33

Cover: Thich Nhat Hanh as a boy – from Gillian Coote

The next issue of Mind Moon Circle will be edited by Ameli Tanchitsa on the theme *Ambiguity*.

Send your contributions to: ameli.tanchitsa@gmail.com

Mind Moon Circle is published quarterly by the
Sydney Zen Centre, 251 Young Street Annandale, NSW 2038, Australia. www.szc.org.au

Summer 2018

Selfless Service

We have a wonderful diversity of pieces from our community that I trust you will enjoy in this Summer edition of Mind Moon Circle.

Thank you to all the contributors for your selfless giving of your time, inspirations and perspectives.

A special thanks also to Janet Selby and Caroline Josephs for your work behind the scenes to bring this edition up to its finished quality.

In an email exchange with Subhana during the gathering of articles, she wrote

‘With the ‘self’ forgotten, all acts become selfless service’

For me, this quote captures the spirit, the practice and the mission of Selfless Service.

With love and gratitude,

David Pointon



Summer Meadow

Glenys Jackson

Thich Nhat Hanh: a Life of Selfless Service

Gillian Coote

Journey

Here are words written down -

footprints on the sand,

cloud formations.

Tomorrow

I'll be gone.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1)

Since suffering a severe stroke four years ago, Thich Nhat Hanh has been unable to speak and is partly paralysed but communicates powerfully. Soon after his 92nd birthday last year, he expressed his wish to return to Ta Hieu Temple in Hue. "It is now time for me to return to the Root Temple...to live on the land of my ancestral teachers, to offer my presence to my monastic brothers and descendants until the day this body disintegrates. I wish to end my days in the home of my spiritual ancestors." He has asked his many Sanghas to run seven-day retreats to mark his passing.

In a letter to Elders and descendants on his arrival in Vietnam in late October last year, he wrote: 'Since leaving the Bao Quoc Institute of Buddhist Studies more than seventy years ago, I have devoted my life to realising the vision that the ancestral teachers have entrusted to me, as recorded in the transmission gatha that I received from my Teacher.

"Heading in the one direction of embracing the loving vitality of Spring, is to walk the path of heroes.

Acting in such a way that is neither caught in ideas or notions, nor taking sides in partisan conflict,

The light of mindfulness illuminates our true nature,

And in both East and West, the wonderful Dharma is realised."

It is an honour to have been able to fulfil, at least in part, the task our ancestral teachers have entrusted to us," Thay concluded. (2)

To those who know something of Thich Nhat Hanh, this is an understatement. His selfless service to the world is measureless. Entering the temple in 1942 as a novice monk at the age of sixteen, he also studied at Saigon University, and in 1961 travelled to the US to teach Comparative Religion at Princeton University, then at Columbia. He returned to Vietnam in 1963 and founded the Van Hanh Buddhist University, La Boi publishing house, and an influential peace activist magazine, as well as establishing the Order of Interbeing based on the Bodhisattva Precepts, thus founding the Engaged Buddhism movement, the term Engaged Buddhism first appearing in his book Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire. Thay has published over 100 titles in English.

In 1966 he founded the School of Youth for Social Service, a grass-roots relief organisation of 10,000 volunteers, that same year receiving 'lamp transmission' from Master Chan That, becoming a Dharma teacher of the Lieu Quan Dharma Line in the 42nd generation of the Lam Te Dhyana school (Lin Chi Chan" in Chinese, or Rinzai Zen in Japanese). This same year, he began travelling to the US where he first met Dr Martin Luther King Jr, (who nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967), and to Europe and Australia, to make the case for peace. As a result, both North and South Vietnam denied him the right to return to Vietnam, and he was exiled for 39 years. Indeed, in 1986, when we in BPF were organising for Thay to visit Australia, he was still on some sort of blacklist, his visa was blocked and we had to do a lot of talking to people in Foreign Affairs to clear the path. (3)

I first met Thay at Koko An, Roshi and Anne Aitken's zendo in Honolulu, where Thay gave a five-day retreat in 1985. The following year, Thay and Sister Chang Khong (in those days, Sister Phuong) came to Sydney and I documented their visit in *The Awakening Bell*, made for SBS-TV. Tony, Gully and I joined an artists' retreat with Thay at Ojai, California, in 1987 and in 1988, documented Thay's pilgrimage to Buddhist sites in India and Nepal. We have learned so much from him. His teaching is profoundly simple, gentle and compassionate.

In 2005, Thay was asked: "You will be 80 this year. Do you plan to retire as a spiritual teacher at any point?" and he replied: "In Buddhism we see that teaching is done not only by talking, but also by living your own life. Your life is the teaching, is the message.....I see myself in my continuation, and I will not retire. I'll continue to teach, if not by Dharma talks, then in my way of sitting, eating, smiling, and interacting with the Sangha. You don't need to talk in order to teach. You need to live your life mindfully and deeply." (4)

Plum Village's website also tells us: 'After resting for two days by the ocean to recover from the journey, Thich Nhat Hanh arrived at Tu Hieu on the afternoon of October 28th, where he was welcomed with a traditional formal procession and the sound of drums and bells. As he entered, he took a moment to reach out and touch the cool stone of the ancient gateway: a seal of arrival and return. Everyone present remained silent as he contemplated the half-moon pond, where he had spent many memorable moments as a young monk, and then made his way to the Buddha hall to pay his respects and offer incense at the ancestral altar.

Since his arrival, Thich Nhat Hanh's health has remained fragile but stable. He has joined his community in walking meditation at dawn, visiting every corner of this temple that was his home and where he was nurtured as he embarked on his spiritual path. Even at this moment, Thich Nhat Hanh remains steadfast and energetic in using every breath and every action to build and strengthen the "beloved community of compassion," and to cultivate healing, reconciliation and transformation in his community, society and the world." (5)

Birth and Death

During many lifetimes, birth and death are present,
giving rise to birth and death.

The moment the notion of birth and death arises,
birth and death are there.

As soon as the notion of birth and death dies,
real life is born.

- *Thich Nhat Hanh* (6)

Notes:

1. "Journey" from *Call Me by My True Names: the Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh*, publ.Parallax Press, CA, 1999, (p.127).
2. plumvillage.org
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. "Birth and Death", from *Call Me by My True Names: the Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh*, publ.Parallax Press, CA, 1999, (p.168).



Jukai
Kerry Stewart

THE TEN GRAVE PRECEPTS

I take up the way of not killing...

I vow to notice my own aversion and neglect which can lead to killing. I vow to protect and nourish all precious life while recognising the complex nature of existence. I do not take lightly the essential act of giving and taking life in order to survive. I vow to eat with my heart open. I vow to befriend soil bacteria, angophora, snapper, possums and other beings, so I avoid slipping into separateness from them. I also vow to acknowledge and support my own, and other's dreams and actions.

I take up the way of not stealing...

I vow to notice my own greed which directly leads to stealing. I am deeply grateful for my birth in this time and space and acknowledge the abundance of things that have always protected me. I also deeply understand that for many people, taking what isn't given is the only way to survive. I vow to be generous with not only things, but with my time, energy and spirit. And when something is offered I will accept it graciously. I own nothing but am privileged to look after many things, as my ancestors did. There is no mine or yours in the Dharma.

I take up the way of not misusing sex...

I acknowledge that my gender and sexuality are an important part of my being. Sex is a deep expression of the Dharma – the connection between body, heart and mind. Misuse of sex happens when the heart and mind are left out of this relationship. I vow to acknowledge the pull of my body without forgetting my own and other's hearts and minds. There is no power over another, no competition, no judgement and no prize in a healthy sexual relationship, just this moment, just this loving embrace. And, as my hair silvers, I vow to expose the misuse of sex when I see it, for the sake of my young sisters and brothers.

I take up the way of not speaking falsely...

Deceiving myself and others with false words, sows seeds of confusion which can grow into thick bushes of ignorance. At the heart of a lie is the desire to protect or bolster a particular version or image of my small self. I vow to accept and nourish myself, so speaking about things as they truly are, emerges naturally. This truth will then moisten the universe and provide healthy growth between us.

I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs...

I vow to be conscious of heedless craving and the desire for life to be different. Drugs cloud the mind and feed the emotions. They interfere with the clear brilliance of a Spring morning, or the soft whisper of the breeze in the sheoaks, or the gentle touch of a loved one. I vow to choose wisely the pure experience, over the altered one, and deeply know the sense of enough.

I take up the way of not discussing faults of others...

I vow to recognise my own faults and choose my language wisely, by not gossiping about the faults of others. Everyone makes unwise choices, including me. Engaged and empathetic conversations bring us closer to one another. Gossip tears us apart. I vow to honour and respect your whole being and not discuss your faults with others.

I take up the way of not praising myself while abusing others...

Words that sing of my brilliance while beating you down, is a power play which never makes me better than you. It deeply wounds both of us. There is no hierarchy in the Dharma. I vow to walk the path with you beside me.

I take up the way of not sparing the Dharma assets...

There is no lack in the Dharma – abundance is before my very eyes and one glimpse is enough to turn the wheel. I vow to give generously and receive humbly of these gifts.

I take up the way of not indulging in anger...

The fire of anger is fuelled by self-righteousness, pain and complete separation from others. I vow to cultivate resilience, explore other points of view without judgement, and walk away when the fire starts to consume the 10,000 things.

I take up the way of not defaming the Three Treasures...

The triple gem of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha shines light from within. Defaming the treasures clouds their brilliance in this one body. I vow to polish the treasures so the stars, mountains and grasses can reflect their glow.

THE THREE PURE PRECEPTS

I vow to maintain the precepts...

The precepts are the ethical foundation on which I stand. I vow to struggle with an open heart and mind, to nourish them.

I vow to practice all good dharmas...

My body, heart and mind are the material of all good dharmas. I vow to think, speak and act with this realisation.

I vow to save the many beings...

The many beings nourish and rely on each other. Without one, all are diminished. I vow to sustain life and save the many beings.

THE THREE VOWS OF REFUGE

I take refuge in the Buddha...

The Buddha is my home, the light within me and all beings. I vow to dwell there.

I take refuge in the Dharma...

The Dharma is the structure that helps me live fully and without fear. I vow to notice its resilience and support.

I take refuge in the Sangha...

The Sangha is the many beings who are taking refuge together in this One Buddha and Dharma. I vow to rest here in your embracing company.



Spent
Glenys Jackson

The Flow

Diana Levy

Yesterday I walked with him beside a river. And
I went with him into a train station, collapsed
on the platform, dragged myself home,
was carted off by ambulance to emergency
with him. Yesterday the river as we talked
and walked upstream was tawny gold. And I
descended into an ice-bath, unconscious.
I lay open-hearted on an operating table
with him: bright lights for twelve hours.
I lay hallucinating in a recovery ward
with him.

Yesterday I floated down the river
with him. The cicadas blasted away powered
by summer. I dipped my hands in brown water and
propelled my lilo down. Yesterday we floated
down the river, going with the flow. Light rippled
on the river; bellbirds sang in the bluegum forest.
We drifted on a tiny current. His skin is brown.
He lay back and drifted backwards.
It was easy.

Haiku

from little things
big things grow -
bright wattle flowers

The Gully, Katoomba

soft as mud
wavelets sigh
into the beach

hills pulsing
with cicadas -
every flying thing

Hawkesbury River

An Ordinary Life

Maggie Gluek

Ellen Carlin was born in Sweden in 1889, one of eight siblings. Her family emigrated to the US when she was a child, part of the great wave of Scandinavians who helped settle Minnesota in the 19th century. I think of them as the backbone of that state in its early history, the salt of the northern earth. With her husband David, also Swedish in origin, she lived in Mound, a rural area outside Minneapolis, named for a Native American burial mound and latterly famous as the place where Tonka Toys originated. She died there in 1968, aged 78.

My sister and I came to know Ellen well as our favourite babysitter, though we would never have addressed her by her first name. To us she was Mrs. Carlin or more usually “Mrs. Car.” Our mother did not work outside of the home but was often off doing things—playing golf, volunteer work—and our parents’ weekends included a busy social life. Molly and I were therefore often left in the care of Mrs. Car who would have been well into her sixties by the time she took up this job. Her presence felt like a rock. Solid and so quiet you might not even notice it. She was laconic, not given to many words but allowing and kind, ready to engage in conversation if you wanted to. Clear as day I picture her sitting at the green laminated kitchen table, skinny, smoking a cigarette with a cup of black coffee. A percolated pot of strong brew would see her through the day. Occasionally—oh how strange it seemed—she drank buttermilk. And she loved television soap operas, faithful in particular to *As the World Turns*. Molly and I were in and out playing and she was there for us when we needed her. In fact, Molly never wanted her to leave.

Sometimes she’d take us to her house, not far from where we lived but a world away in the socio-economic landscape. These were older people making ends meet. To us, children of privilege, her house seemed so tiny. And cosy. When we ate there, the small table was neatly set; it always featured a plate of white bread triangles and butter. Her old car was cozy too, its upholstery comfortingly redolent of cigarette smoke. The Carlins had one biological child, Donna—herself married with kids—and an adopted son, Jerry, who was not much older than us. Jerry was mildly intellectually handicapped, though that wasn’t a term used in those days. “I just thought Jerry was nice,” said my sister.

What I did not know then was that in their years together the Carlins had fostered upwards of sixty children, perhaps more. We learned this later when they received an honorary acknowledgement from the state. I can’t remember Mrs. Car speaking about it. She would never have considered herself “special.” Or entitled to anything, though she was most grateful for what she received. From her point of view, you took life as it came and just did what you did. Her doing was quietly offering loving support to children, without discrimination. Creating a gentle, safe place. I can’t think of anyone else I’ve known who evinced less ego. “Modest” doesn’t come close because it suggests someone who thinks that they have something to be modest *about*. Borrowing a Zen phrase, I’d say she was a true person of no rank.

Into the Wild

Greg Try

It was a beautiful Spring day when we set out from inner city Sydney to drive up to the Upper McDonald valley. It was unseasonably warm by the time we got on the road but that's to be expected as the way things have gone in the last 10 years or so. Rob had driven up to Kodoji once before on his motorbike. I've never owned a car so am always a passenger on the drive up there.

We had a pleasant if non-eventful trip as far as Wiseman's ferry. So far so good. It looked like we'd be there for about 2.30ish. Leisurely setting ourselves up before the job's meeting and supper. There wasn't much of a line for the car ferry. When we drove off the ferry instead of heading for St Alban's we went the other way. Rob knew his way to Kodoji from St Albans. Me, I had absolute faith in the driver. I'm sure I did recognise places I had driven through before, but then it all became unfamiliar.

I felt slight anxiety when we were going heading up a fairly steep mountain. I didn't remember going this way before. Rob broke the silence by saying "I think we took a wrong turn". That struck me as the most sensible explanation for finding ourselves in unfamiliar terrain. Also the scenery was glorious, following the River, taking us ten or twenty miles out from our destination. Why hurry, why worry? Of course we'd get to our destination in the end, how could we not?

There's a koan in our Zen tradition that exhorts us to 'Go straight on a narrow mountain road with ninety nine curves.' (1) That seemed particularly apt in our situation. Two hapless Zen buddies out for an afternoon drive. We decided to stop at a river side café for a pit stop. Rob decided to head back and go the way we came and head the way we should have when we came off the ferry. I agreed that this was a sensible idea.

About 40 minutes later we drove into St Alban's. It was looking like we really would be attending Sesshin. We would arrive before dusk! I knew we'd be fine when we drove through St Alban's, following sign posts and familiar landmarks. We were closer to our destination.

When I was drinking a cup of tea back at the café, I found in the book I'd brought:

"The basic lesson of Zen is this,

"Forget yourself. Even old timer's fail to apply this fundamental teaching. It may seem contradictory that the jewel of the individual can only be realised by letting it drop away."

"Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)." Walt Whitman meet Dogen Kigen." (2)

There were a couple of other instances of "Is it this way the way or that?". When we'd got to the top of a particularly steep incline, we weren't sure whether to turn left or right. The car stalled and we rolled backwards into a ditch. Oh no, not this! Why us? Anyway we were able to extricate ourselves. We turned left. Before long we saw the handmade sign that pointed to SZC. We saw the parked cars on the way up to the paddock. We had arrived.

Notes.

(1) A koan from Introductory koans.

(2) Miniatures of a Zen master. Robert Aitken. Counterpoint 2008

Serving Being Served

Sally Hopkins

*“But the farmer
knows no work or act of his can keep him
here. He remains in what he serves
by vanishing in it, becoming what he never was.”*

Wendell Berry.

Puzzling what ‘selfless serving’ could really mean, I thought of sesshin. The formalities of sesshin seemed pretty meaningless mumbo jumbo to me at first, but through the years I’ve come to see that every part of it is a teaching, a pointing, a sort of medieval morality play in which we all take part.

In sesshin the Food Server offers food to the participants who have laid out bowls and implements to receive the food.

Servers stand without the doors as everyone chants:

Vairochana pure and clear Dharmakaya Buddha (empty)

In they come and bow: Lochana- full and complete, Sambogakaya Buddha, and then down the dojo to the first person to be served:

Shakyamuni, infinitely varied, Nirmanakaya Buddha. All particular, all different. (the three Buddha bodies of us all.)

They bear food prepared by the cook, chopped by the choppers, brought to Kodoji in someone’s car, bought from the shop by the Food organizer, who bought it from the farmers, and so on to seeds, the soil, the sun, the rain.

The food is received. The receivers and givers bow.

If the Server is thinking “I am serving,” “Am I doing it well?” “Do they see how well I am doing it?” “Are they looking at me?” this is not just serving, just doing. The universe has contracted to ‘me’ doing, feeling good or bad about doing.

Sesshin teaches us that giving and receiving are reciprocal, always.

The Teacher offers words, encouragement, presence, as does Tanto. We all offer Presence. One of my brothers who spent 16 years making beds for elderly so they could stay in their homes, says, “The giver is beholden to the receiver.” This is a circular matter.

Selfless doing requires clear eyes- it is not mindless. We can be selfless, just fully throwing everything into serving causes that are truly harmful. Though the daily news, or the chat on the bus many not suggest so, we are ALL in this life together. Everyone is responsible for non-harming, for the peace in the world, the life of all beings. We vow to save them – include them. Everything. Everyone. Not simple. The person filled with hate? The developer with an eye on profits despite whoever or whatever suffers as a consequence? Or Safe Borders for us- too bad about Them?

Geoff Dawson once quoted a Somali poet. Warsan Shire.

*“Later that night
I held an atlas on my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?*

it answered

everywhere
everywhere
everywhere”

Yes, greed, hatred and ignorance rise endlessly, so I truly need to keep practising to Wake up, as do we all, so we can all play our role selflessly for the benefit of all and every thing, including this one. Avolokiteshvara, Guanyin, sitting in the entrance hall at Annandale, the one who hears the cries of the world, the one who is the cries of the world, the one who responds to the cries of the world- each one of us. Just truly hearing, being, responding, we are all selflessly serving, and this is the joy and delight of being alive.

Mary Oliver, Poet of the Ordinary/Extraordinary.... Is Her Legacy 'Selfless Service'?

Caroline Josephs

As I read of Mary Oliver's death a few days ago (17th January, 2019, at 83, of lymphoma)a poet who had won many awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, and whose works sold many books in numerous countries....I asked myself whether the work she did was 'selfless service'?

Could a poet, an artist, a musician, a dancer – be engaged in 'selfless service' I wondered...??

Another question seemed to be, 'What is the *self*, and when is it *selfless*?

Is selflessness always tinged with 'self', as conditions of life infuse, suffuse, our body, our genetic inheritance, and the complexities of that interaction? Is 'emptiness' something neutral in relation to the self?

Is selflessness another face of *giving*, where *receiving* is inherent....a two-way energy/conversation? If a person washes dishes in a place for the homeless and poor, is there a kind of self-satisfaction in that –a gift to the do-er as well as to the receiver? From 'my' experience of engaging with an art process, in the writing of prose or a poem, or in dancing in endless flow of movement...'I' seem to lose the 'self' in a 'zone' of meditative absorption.

In this so-called 'zone' it seems concerns of the world of 'comings and goings', are immersed in

'just-this-brush- stroke', or 'just-this-word'...searching endlessly for the most poignant way to express something deeply held inside, that is beyond the small concerns of --'whether the washing will dry today', or 'must do some shopping for zucchinis'...Where the world of 'have to' or 'must do'disappears....

Is this process of seeking, searching, for just-the-right-brush-stroke, the right colour, the right shape, the right, implied 'truth'...or as Elizabeth Cummings, the Australian artist notes, searching 'to touch the ineffable', 'between representation and the other thing, it is difficult to keep one's balance'.

I love both these quotes from a seasoned elder in the arts....Is it indeed a liminal space we enter, not separate from concerns of the world, and at the same time, searching for the 'ineffable', the sublime?

When I looked at the books of Mary Oliver's poetry on my crowded cluttered book shelves, I found the poems that had moved me years ago – to the extent of putting 'stick-its' on certain pages....to remind me to re-read, to read again, those poems, as they had then, and still do, 'touch something in my body' that stuttered into being with the words....

I asked again, 'Was Mary Oliver's offering of poetry to the world... 'selfless service' with these strokings on my soul?' And, if she had never put her poems out into the published world (her book quoted below won the National Book Award in U.S.) would they have been a service to others? If she had simply crafted them, or if artists don't show their work, or dancers don't show for others, or storytellers don't tell the stories....would their work lack the selfless service merit? I know from the work I have done with storytelling that it is the listener who is as important as the teller....They are engaged together, as the viewer may be to some work of art that strikes a chord in the body-mind, or the musician surely does with peerless playing, for example....

Here are a few lines from one of these beloved poems (from *New and Selected Poems*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, p.172.) I was moved to tears to find it, and realise that Mary Oliver was no longer writing to us. Her words live on:

The Sea

*Stroke by
stroke my
body remembers that life and cries for
the lost parts of itself---
fins, gills
opening like flowers into
the flesh—my legs
want to lock and become
one muscle, I swear I know
just what the blue-gray scales
shingling
the rest of me would
feel like!
Paradise! Sprawled
in that motherlap...*

There is more.....including this piercing titbit:

*'blind feeling...sleeking along...in the luminous roughage of the sea's
body....
vanished
like victory inside that
insucking genesis, that
roaring flamboyance, that
perfect
beginning and
conclusion of our own.*

'The End' of the poem -- is this, 'conclusion of our own'?

Is this selfless service?

Is this **samu** of the 'soul'?

Perhaps Dogen (b.1200 – d.1253) sums it up:

To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by the ten thousand things. When actualized by the ten thousand things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away. No trace of enlightenment remains, and this no-trace continues endlessly.

Waking Up & Acts of Service

An Engaged Buddhist Response to Climate Change

Subhana Barzaghi

The world is burning up, the rise in CO² emissions is heating up our world (1) and threatening all of life on our precious planet. Climate change is a reality, the effects are already being felt and sadly we are carrying on with business as usual. Everything is under the law of change, which means that death—and rebirth—will always be with us and that rebirth may take forms we do not recognize and did not expect. The future offers chaos, uncertainty, loss and change. To deny this is to deny reality.

We need an inner and outer revolution in order to face and meet the challenges of global warming, destruction of the forests and wild rivers, the rise in natural disasters, refugee crisis, economic and political turmoil and mass extinction of native creatures. Zen practice is a powerful resource which helps us find solace, freedom and resilience to face and deal with these fractured and difficult times as well as support one another.

I recently lead a Dharma Gathering in the South Is of New Zealand, which was co-hosted by the Zen Group in Christchurch and Southern Insight Meditation Group. The theme for this Dharma Gathering was an Engaged Buddhist practice and a response to Climate Change. The Kiwis are way ahead of us and are certainly more pro-active in this space than our conservative politicians. A Dharma Gathering includes silent meditation periods, workshops, dharma talks, and discussion forums.

At the heart of Zen practice is an imperative to wake up and embody the empty one world, the selfless dimension of who we truly are, to experience our seamless nature where mountains and rivers and all beings come forth as we ourselves. When the self is forgotten all acts are ones of selfless service. In a similar vein, Mahatma Gandhi, said, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service of others”.

There are different ways to look at the world. Zen Master Dogen, in the Shobogenzo said, ‘the entire earth is our true human body, is our actual body’. This truth is to be realised and embodied. Joanna Macy invites us to see the ‘World as Lover, World as Self’ and believes that the world itself has a role to play in our liberation because, “Its very pressures, pains and risks wake us up and guide us home to our vast true nature”.

However, just sitting meditating and finding our own happiness, liberation and well-being is only part of the solution. Clearly it is not enough. The Buddha’s wise and compassionate teachings can and must be integrated into the political, social, cultural and environmental spheres of our daily lives to bring about a culture of awakening for the welfare and benefit of our beloved planet and all beings.

On the other hand just being a socially engaged activist is also unsustainable. I have met so many burnout, exhausted social workers, activists, scientists, doctors, ecologists, who are passionate yet who are despairing. They require some inner contemplative work to be able to hit the re-set button, to let go the stress, to replenish, to be nourished and find their original dwelling place once again.

Wise and compassionate engaged action requires both inner and outer work, not just

more reactivity based on the old paradigm. If we do not transform greed, hatred and delusion, which are the underlying roots of our personal and global suffering, then sadly we will repeat the same old patterns in our social economic, political and environmental systems all over again. Reactivity creates a 'them and us' paradigm, it divides us and sets nation states against nation states. As Aitken Roshi said, 'We are in this together'. We are part of this process and this time around we are the cause of it, too. We need each other and can solve these problems. We need to create a culture of Waking Up and then acts of service naturally follow.

At the Dharma Gathering in N.Z, we watched two videos that had quite an impact. The first documentary was from Climate Scientists in England who laid down the latest research and facts and it is not good news. In fact it is a lot worse than they had originally projected. These scientists are fed up with scientific facts being watered down by Governments so they voluntarily formed a group called **Extinction Rebellion** (2) and have taken non-violent actions to raise awareness and get Politicians to wake up to the reality. These are world authorities and respectable Climate Scientists. They are saying that if the temperature rises global up to 3 /4 degrees, it is game over for life as we know it. We are looking down the barrel of our own extinction, like the dinosaurs before us. Their acts of service are creating a worldwide movement.

The second documentary was the launch of the book called, "Draw Down" led by Paul Hawken. Draw down means drawing down the CO² emissions to reduce temperatures rising. This practical and highly researched book by teams of scientists lists the top 100 solutions that are all within our reach right now to reduce emissions. I have known of climate change and been involved with environmental activism on and off over the last 3 decades, however after the dharma gathering and these two videos I feel a thrust of urgency and responsibility more than ever before.

Joanna Macy calls for a shift of consciousness. (3)

"The insights and experiences that enable us to make this shift are accelerating, and they take many forms. They arise as grief for our world, through seeing the lie of old paradigms of rugged individualism and separateness. They arise through the glad response to scientific breakthroughs, as reductionism and materialism give way to evidence of a living universe. And they arise in the resurgence of wisdom traditions, reminding us again that our world is a sacred whole, worthy of adoration and service".

There is a clear relationship between developing the inner qualities of our heart and mind with our actions and behaviour in the outer world. If we develop wise, clear and compassionate qualities our actions will naturally cease to threaten the continued survival of life on Earth.

We set forth our fundamental aspirations every evening when we recite the Bodhisattva vows; May all beings may be liberated.

The peacemaker vows remind us of our deep inner and outer work:

- that the roots of greed, hatred and delusion be abandoned,
- that there are countless doorways of liberation,
- that we can awaken to the 10,000 things
- that this very body is the body of the Buddha

that we take up the way of compassionate action
that we create a culture of awakening for the welfare and benefit of our
beloved planet and all beings.

- 1) CO2 Emissions Reached an All-Time High in 2018 - Scientific American; <https://www.scientificamerican.com/.../co2-emissions-reached-an-all-time-high-in-2018/>
- 2) Extinction Rebellion | Rebel for Life; <https://rebellion.earth/>
- 3) Learning to see each other; <http://www.joannamacy.net/engaged-buddhism/225-learning-to-see-each-other.html>

Metta Solutions

Sean Loughman

Mere thoughts and observations are not enough, yet that is all I have to offer in response to Nelson Foster's recent article, Children at Play in a Burning House¹.

How did we get to the place we are in? Technology has allowed us to extend and push beyond sustainable limits. We now rely on technology and the attendant political, economic, agricultural etc. systems to survive, thus creating a complex web of dependencies, without the accountability. A fundamentally simple problem of overpopulation and overconsumption now manifests as something far more complex.

I won't offer prescriptive solutions, but I will offer some building blocks necessary to create solutions: the meta-solutions (or do I mean metta-solutions?). To use modern-day speak, we need long-term holistic thinking to understand the consequences of our actions, ethics to treat the interconnected all equitably, the resolve to change our ways, and restraint to curb reactive self-interest. In Zen lingo, these are wisdom, compassion, zeal, and forbearance. You will recognise most of these from the six paramitas². Recent events have made clear that these qualities are lacking in the domains of politics, business and tech, which shape our societies' systems. And it is because they are lacking that our systems are failing us. And yet, it is these very systems, if they are built with wisdom and compassion, that are the solution.

Like the scientists who realised that simply talking to other scientists was not enough and that they needed to "go public" about climate change, spiritual leaders also need to find their voice again. As well as guidance on a personal level, we need spiritual leaders who can guide on a societal level, speaking with political, business and tech leaders and the community at large. While academics and businesses rediscover and shape ideas (dare I say buzzwords?) like "mindfulness", "systems thinking", "soft skills" and "triple bottom line" (and though "wisdom" masquerades as "insights", is yet to make a proper comeback), spiritual leaders have been slow off the mark. This is understandable since spirituality and religion are tainted words and have no place in the prevailing rationalist world view and liberalist attitudes. The pushback against religion in public and political discourse during the 80s and 90s (in Australia) is understandable³, and though it is a delicate balance, I do not think we can afford to throw the good out with the bad. Who best to guide us in these areas? Surely not (only) the wealthy old white men of politics, the wealthy middle-aged white men of business and the wealthy millennial white men of tech.

In the meantime, while we rethink our systems, how can we live more sustainably on a individual level? The flood of distractions and demands as we try to keep up with our turbocharged hamster wheels steals our presence of mind, some of us all of the time, all of us some of the time, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln. Slowing down, even temporarily gives us the space to reawaken to what really matters and fill what we then discover is empty with what really is. In this way, letting go of that which was never really there is easier because it is not really letting go of anything. This is just one of the ways that the paramita of meditation can help.

That we need to shift to a carbon-neutral world is clear. That many things are changing and must change is clear - the details of how and how much seem less and less relevant as we approach the cliff edge. What a carbon-neutral or carbon-reduced Anthropocene looks like is not clear partly because there are so many possible scenarios. One way or another it is going to happen. We can make the leap ourselves or wait for the push. Let's not let fear cloud our minds or self-interest stall our efforts.

1. SZC newsletter issue 6, volume 1, February-March 2019. <http://szc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Newsletter-FebMarch.pdf>
2. I have not listed the other paramitas only because it would weaken the message, since decision-makers listen only to what directly affects their affairs, not because they are any less important or effective.
3. The podcast, *Why Liberalism failed?* has a great discussion on the death of religion in public life.
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/patrick-deneen/10467340>

Service; Sweep the Sheds

Brendon Stewart

Being of service is sometime thought of as a calling; called to service, to minister, to take up arms: it may also suggest being available, ready to help out and sometimes even put upon. The New Zealand All Blacks, one of the best sporting teams ever apparently have as a working code of character, 15 service tasks. Number 1. **Sweep the Sheds:** Never be too big to do the small things that need to be done. Rugby is a team sport and everyone needs to contribute on and off the field. Richie McCaw might be considered a legend of the game (even a New Zealand God) but he is just ‘one of the boys who clean the sheds’ [changing rooms] after every game.

Stay grounded.

There is a lot to be said for sweeping. Buddhism and sweeping have a long history - to sweep is to practice. I know it's not as glamorous as Zazen or walking meditation. It is menial by nature and associated with tasks that call out as necessities. It's about maintaining the ground.

Long gone are the days, for us at least when servitude was a way of life, where class and privilege put people in their place. No more do we live out a Downton Abbey episodic life, except of course in television land. But still there are slaves and many sadly toil at work that eventually comes to us by way of cheap and expensive products. How do I know what might be the merchandise of slave labour? The class and privilege I know is at the great expense of people in countries so nearby.

The Japanese character for “human being” denotes both a “person” and the condition of being “between”. Here then we have us, Human Beings, “in between”. The implication of this suggests that we exist (ego consciously) through relationships; with others – friends, colleagues, family, and strangers and with other others, both sentient and material.

Interdependence!

Stephen Bachelor in his recent book *After Buddhism* discusses the Four Great Vows as if they are tasks. And then it was pointed out to me that each of the Four Noble Truths correspond with our vows and in this way we can do sacred and ordinary service to ourselves and to others. These tasks require that one actively participates, with body and mind in the ‘doing’ of wise ethical service.

Saving all beings reminds us that Dukkha pervades our experience in all that we do. Dukkha is both causal and consequential in our endless propensity to fall into greed, hatred and ignorance; Dukkha can be confronted and moderated and this is the learning task as we approach and tangle with the countless Dharma Gates. By accepting and walking in the Buddha’s way we partially unshackle ourselves from Dukkha. And then, it starts again and again, not so much starting and stopping but endlessly flowing on, through and towards the countless Dharma Gates.

Linking the Four Grave Vows with the Four Noble Truths reminds me that my ego self is engaged with this work. There is a real and present self otherwise what attempts the task of living up to the vows. Saving all beings, as an example, has a lot to do with recognising the suffering in all others and ourselves. The First Grave Precept implores one to refrain from killing, or even thinking about killing or harming

or doing harm. A sentient being responds to other sentient beings with care; this isn't a task whereby an illusion of self acts to refrain from harming another illusion. The so-called historical Buddha's ethics of non-harm, says Bachelar, is founded on one's capacity to empathize with others, to feel their suffering as though it were one's own. Such an ethic would be incoherent if one did not recognise the other as a self, just like one's own flesh and blood self. (*After Buddhism*; S. Bachelar p. 100). And, at the same time each self is entirely dependent on a shifting complex of unrepeatable physical and mental processes. Comprehending our engagement with Dukkha means to know and accept the other fully as a contingent human being.

What must stay grounded? For service to be truly lived it doesn't happen in emptiness, nor is it formless and without sensation, perceptions or mental reaction. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are at work, the sound and smell of service encourages thinking, not knowing is real enough and old age will overwhelm the work at some time. This Buddhist approach to ethics, to tasks and community starts with a recognition of the complexity and uniqueness of every situation. There isn't a book of rules that provide a definitive way to proceed. The tasks emerge with our wise reactions to each situation.

Resonance Poems & Haiku

Daniel Menges

Pouring rain, washing
Streets clean, tears and all – her voice
Echoes laughter, sighs

Finding refuge in-
Side the voice, singing – Sunrise
Over sea, a hole

Of blue sky in grey.

- 14th October 2014 Parramatta, Australia & 29-30th October 2018 Chengdu, China

* * *

Through the pouring rain
The Flame Tree blooms. The grey city
Grows / devours those small farms
Surrounded by skyscrapers,
Highways, shopping malls. / Tucked away,
At home, the sangha chants.

The unseen, unknown
Shines even with this dust in
The air / The gateless /

Great Barrier Reef, lungs
For the planet. 7 billion
People, like that rain,

Filling a forgotten ocean / the name
The mind tries to grasp, touch the edge of. / Drying now,
The message rises
With the heat.

- 17th October 2014 Sydney & 29-31st October 2018 Chengdu

* * *

ATT KTV, Carrie's Birthday

Alone in a room
Full of people – singing heart break –
Together – moon, waves.

- Night 14th June 2017 & 29-30th October 2018, Chengdu

* * *

Your friend is dying –
Cannot imagine her not
Here – body falling

Away, pain in the eyes
A slight smile on her face, mudra
Hands like tree roots / going
'Back in'

To the earth, universe
In our bones and breath.

- Morning 15th June 2017 & 29th, 31st October 2018

* * *

No-thing to hold on
To, nothing to hide from / rain
Clouds on Four Sisters
Mountain.

Fat Tibetan man
Trying to smoke out the open
Bus window – Smoky air, eye contact –
'Please no.'

There, the city's buildings
were smaller than mountains. Here
We cannot see the mountains
Through gray / crying for
A way out, sunshine.

As if to touch that
Fertile earth, on the 10th floor
Roof, pot plants everywhere

A pumpkin the size
Of a child's head, hanging
Amidst the rubble.

- Danba to Chengdu bus, 30th August 2017 & 29-31st October 2018 Chengdu,
China

* * *

Gray-haired, my mother
Hugs me, puts her head on my
Shoulder, like a child.

Like a rocking boat
On tracks, the train moves across land –
Sky abloom with red.

Coming and go, seeing
Them all – it's as beautiful as it is painful.
This shines / like that light /

Across the vast grassland.

- 18th October 2017, Iowa, USA & 29-30th October 2018 Chengdu, China

© Daniel Menges 2018

Tenzo Sesshin, Vegetable and Fruit Gatha

Jill Steverson

Lettuces packed upright resplendent in their lettuce nature
Onions leeks potatoes too
Silverbeet preciously nurtured stand tall
Melons, grapes, bananas, apples pears and passionfruit for all
Bumping the creek
Kaww Kaww Kodoji

Unpacked, missing found never astray
Early morning sunshine Chop Chop Chop
Cook Cook Cook breathing Tenzo
Whirring, stirring and serving Dojo
Tasted, swallowed in our precious hall
Zucchini, capsicum and radish savoured by all

And now it's time to sing
A recognition do we bring....

All alimentary canal Buddha's
Great digesting Bodhisattva's
Sitting with nutrition, fibre, gurgles,
Great evacuating Buddha's
Beans, pumpkin paw paw
Cauliflower, parsley, lemons and more
To the earth it comes back
Nothing extra nothing lack
With all beings we pray
Om makurasai svaha !

Zen poems

Provided by Glenys Jackson

A sudden summer shower;
The village sparrows
Hang on to the grasses.

Yosa Buson

Summer sky
Clear after rain-
Ants on parade.

Masaoka Shiki

Spring moon, autumn waters

Sean Loughman

This is part one in a series, on the capping verse to case six of Keizan Jōkin's Denkōroku. In the very act of writing about this poem, I do the reader and Keizan a disservice, which is why I am writing in instalments, so that the reader can digest the poem slowly and make it their own.

A kōan is actually nothing special. It is like a tiny grit of sand in an oyster or a seed crystal sitting in solution. It may grow slowly or it may form in an instant, perhaps with the help of a sharp nudge from a good teacher. But the marvel is in the inexhaustible material around it. This jewel, like one's understanding, grows and grows, layer by layer. And complete understanding is expressed through the many facets of this one jewel. This is why some Zen schools give students only one (main) kōan to work on for their entire life.

縱有連天秋水潔
何如春夜月朦朧
人家多是要清白
掃去掃來心未空

Keizan Jōkin

*Though clear waters range to the vast blue autumn sky,
How can they compare with the hazy moon on a spring night!
Most people want to have pure clarity,
But sweep as you will, you cannot empty the mind.*

Translation by Maezumi & Glassman¹

*If we suppose that it has a connection with heaven, autumn water is pure,
but what about the haziness of the moon on a night in spring?
Most other people desire what is clear and white;
they sweep and sweep, but their minds are not yet empty.*

Official Sōtō school translation²

1

When I first read the capping verse to chapter six of Keizan Jōkin's (瑩山紹瑾, 1268–1325) *Denkōroku* (伝光録), *Record of Transmission of the Lamp*, I thought it was simply a warning against abiding in the clear waters of nirvana and encouraging us to step back in to the profane world of form, in which “mountains are mountains and

1 I recommend reading no further until you have considered the poem for yourself for a good six to twelve months!

rivers are rivers”. However, by returning to the original Chinese, written by Keizan, a Japanese, in much the same way as English monks wrote the Bible in Latin, it revealed layer upon layer of itself and myself.

We can appreciate and learn much about the meaning behind this poem by first understanding the stylistic conventions which it followed. Keizan’s poem is an example of a *shichigon-zekku* (七言絶句) or heptasyllabic quatrain, the Japanese interpretation of the Chinese *qiyan jueju* poetry style. The *qiyan jueju*, or *qijue* for short, has a number of features. For example, the poem must conform to the following pattern³:

- First phrase *Qiju* (起句“bringing into being”): Depiction of the scene
- Second phrase *Chengju* (承句“understanding”): Add further illustration and detail to the *qijue*
- Third phrase *Zhuanju* (轉句“changing”): By changing the scene of action, reveal the true essence of the poem
- Fourth phrase *Jueju* (結句“drawing together”): In assimilating the *zhuanju* draw together and complete the poem

According to Dr. Zhao of the University of Sydney, Department of China Studies, the poem does not fit the strict definition of a *qiyan jueju*, since the first, second and fourth lines do not rhyme. He also suggests that it seems to be modelled on an ancient style, rather than the “recent” (meaning Tang Dynasty!) style.

Keizan adds a further twist by beginning the poem with a qualification, effectively turning his back on the truth of the first line and somewhat prematurely revealing the essence of the poem in the second line. This becomes even more interesting when you understand whose teaching Keizan is alluding to and possibly rejecting in the first line - to be revealed in the second, exciting instalment!

I had the opportunity to speak with Maekawa Bokushō *godō* (“rear hall *rōshi*”⁴) of Sōjiji, who told me that *shichigon zekku* can also be considered in two halves, known in Japanese as *kei* (景), the scene and *jō* (情), the sentiment. This is a simplification of the four-part pattern described above. He also told me that such poems are often written last line first, simply because it was easier to write this way. Given these characteristics of the poem, it strikes me that Keizan began this poem as a couplet, as most of his other capping verses are, and then appended or prepended the other two lines.

Another style of Chinese poetry is the antithetical couplet⁵, which follows a number of conventions. For example, the intonation of each character, which is not carried over to Japanese, forms a pattern in each line, which must be the opposite of its complement (see below, right). *Qijue* must also follow certain intonation patterns⁶, and though Keizan’s poem (below, left) has a symmetry, it is not the standard Chinese pattern. Japanese poets were known to deviate from Chinese models in a number of ways, so there is not much to be read in to this.

intonation			intonation			intonation		
掃	仄	平	何	平	仄	ten thousand	萬	千
去	仄	平	如	平	仄	league/village	里	江
掃	仄	平	春	平	平	be absent	無	有
來	仄	平	夜	仄	平	cloud	雲	水
心	平	平	月	仄	平	ten thousand	萬	千
未	仄	平	朦	仄	平	league/village	里	江
空	平	平	朧	平	仄	sky/heaven	天	月
人			縱					thousand
家			有					river
多			連					be present
是			天					water
要			秋					thousand
清			水					river
白			潔					moon

The second poem by Leian Zhengshou (雷庵正受, 1146~1208), a Dharma descendant of Xuedou⁷, also famous for his poetry⁸, is an antithetical couplet that follows the rules strictly. The lines mirror each other as clearly as the waters reflect the moon. Intonation, lexical category (i.e. noun, verb, etc) and meaning are in perfect complement. I will discuss this poem further in the next installment since I believe Keizan is making reference to it.

Finally, Keizan uses a very similar poem, written in the same *shichigon-zekku* style, using the same metaphors in chapter twenty eight of the *Denkōroku*, suggesting that he too was rather fond of this poem

Part two examines the allusions to Zen literature that Keizan makes and the English translations.

References

1. **The Hazy Moon of Enlightenment: Part of the On Zen Practice Collection**, by Taizan Maezumi and Bernie Glassman, © Zen Centre of Los Angeles Wisdom Publications, 2007.
2. T. Griffith Foulk (editor), **Record of the Transmission of Illumination by the Great Ancestor, Zen Master Keizan** © 2017 Sōtōshū Shūmichō: https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/denkoroku/pdf/CHAPTER_SIX.pdf. Accessed on 25 July 2018.
3. **Qijue**. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qijue>. Accessed August 11, 2018.
4. **Rear hall roshi | Glossary | SOTOZEN-NET**. https://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/eng/library/glossary/individual.html?key=rear_hall_roshi. Accessed October 24, 2018.
5. **Antithetical couplet**. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antithetical_couplet. Accessed August 11, 2018.
6. **Jueju**. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jueju>. Accessed August 11, 2018.
7. **Yunmen Wenyan**. pl.wikipedia.org. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yunmen_Wenyan. Accessed August 11, 2018.
8. **The Five Houses of Ch'an**. <http://chanmeditationlondon.org/chan-history-buddhism-chinese/five-houses-cha/> Accessed 17 August, 2018.

Resonance, and the 'Resonant Moment' ... 'Vibrations of the noded dark'

Caroline Josephs

Once upon a time....just last week....I returned from some days away from my home, and went to the bathroom, as you do... to go to the toilet.

There in the toilet bowl, looking up, is a lizard – hard-skinned, elegant, over a foot long -- with its long arms and delicate extended fingers stretching out to the sides of the bowl, its body curling away below, its head just above the water. It is so still. I'm not sure of its state. I have never seen anything like it, in the surrounding area, or anywhere in Sydney for that matter....

Having recovered from my first transfixed shock, I ask it 'Are you alive, or are you dead?' It doesn't move. I am thinking 'I am going to have to try to remove you, little creature...But how? If you are alive...you may shed a leg or tail if I grab you too harshly'.

I go into the kitchen, and selecting some tongs, return to the bathroom. I peer at my unexpected visitor. It doesn't move. But as soon as I begin to move towards it with the tongs, it begins to scrabble and struggle at the walls of the toilet in fruitless efforts to escape.... I am in a very difficult dilemma. I bend back, with tongs, contemplate the situation... As I am so engaged, the lizard seems to take the matter into its own hands, so to speak, folds its legs down close by either side of its body, turns its head around 180 degrees, dives down into the water, swim up the S-bend ...and disappears! I stand stock still in shocked amazement.

'I hope you can hold your breath for some time,' I say, to its departed presence.

The same night, I am having dinner with friends who live on the Hawkesbury River, out of Sydney. I describe the incident. 'It's a water dragon', they say, 'They live in water, and on banks of the river. It would have come up through the sewer, and can return the same way'.

'A water dragon! I have never heard of such a thing!

But the creature has not finished with meThere is a segue...

The next day I am preparing to give a storytelling at a friend's house. I want to find a story I know to be suitable. I reach up to the top shelf of the bookshelf to retrieve the book. It falls on to the floor – open -- at a story I have not noticed before. The story begins... with a woman... going to the outhouse... and being brushed on the buttocks by a creature! Well! A flash of recognition in my body, goose bumps up and down my arms!

The story comes from ancient Japan. That is definitely the story I was meant to tell. Strangely the story had come to me in written text, not the usual oral form I was working with at the time... Here is...

The Bonesetter

Long ago there lived a couple who were much respected in their land. He was a warrior and a physician, and she was a woman of great beauty, accomplishment and wisdom.

One evening, the woman went to the outhouse as was her habit, and as she went to sit down, something brushed her on the buttocks. "Who's that? How dare you!" she cried more in indignation than fear. Something scurried off into the darkness. She mentioned nothing of the incident to her husband but the next night took a sword with her to the outhouse, ready for any trouble.

Again as she went to sit down, the 'creature' brushed her on the buttocks. This time the woman used the sword and cut off the hand that had touched her. "Aieeeee," yelled the creature and she heard it running away in the darkness. When she looked down at the hand, she saw that it was shaped like a tortoise's foot.

When she returned to the house, she told her husband what had happened. At first the husband was impressed with his wife's courage and then he laughed, "A water demon has fallen in love with you."

The wife retorted, "Don't say things like that. It could have kidnapped me or anything." Then they both inspected the hand more closely. "It is very strange and unusual," they agreed. "It may be valuable," said the husband. And they decided to lock it away in the vault.

The next night the couple was in bed when they heard a voice at the window, "Please, please...give me back my hand." The husband reached for his bow where it stood beside the bed, and pulled the string. It made a sound and the creature ran away into the darkness.

The second night the same thing happened. The voice at the window whispered fervently, "Please, please...give me back my hand". The husband reached for the bow but this time pulled it harder so it made a loud twang and the creature ran off into the night.

The third night the voice at the window again repeated its plea, "Please, please, give me back my hand."

The husband was becoming curious so he said, "Who are you? And what do you want with the hand?"

Into the room stepped the water demon.

"I am a water demon," he said. "I can mend broken bones and heal severed limbs. If you give me back my hand I can join it to my arm as quick as a wink".

"But", said the warrior-physician husband, "Your hand is now wrinkled and shrunk. How can it be of any use to you?"

"It makes no difference," said the water demon. "I can still mend it".

"All right," said the husband. "I ought to kill you for bothering my wife and me, but I will return your hand on one condition: that you teach us how to mend broken bones and heal severed limbs." The water demon agreed, the hand was returned. He joined it to his arm and it was indeed as good as new again.

The water demon taught the husband and wife the secrets of how to mend broken bones and heal severed limbs, and then he scampered off into the night.

*In the morning, the couple found on their doorstep two glorious fish and they knew that the water demon had left them there for them in gratitude and they cooked and ate them with great relish. They became great healers in the land and taught their children and their children's children the secrets of mending broken bones and healing severed limbs. And so they lived on in great happiness in the land.*²

There was more to come...

The day after the storytelling, I was in my living room. A mammoth dragonfly flew in, alighting on the bookshelf, across Marshall McLuhan's *'The Medium is the Message'* and Milan Kundera's *'Immortality'*.

The dragonfly's body was about five inches in length, its wingspan about ten inches. A mammoth dragonfly!

It had brought a faint sense of something else...barely felt, a flutter of transparent wings, oscillating and shimmering between realities...

Osip Mandelstam, writes...

*The wind brought comfort to us.
We could feel in the azure
Dragonflies with Assyrian wings,
Vibrations of the noded dark.*

'Vibrations of the noded dark' -- a haunting refrain...I was fascinated with 'resonant moment' -- it seemed to be a point of attention, when peculiarly unrelated elements seemed to come together in a kind of synchronistic melding. The lizard in the toilet, a book falling open, the story of *The Bonesetter*, the huge dragonfly...how my life was, then, at that time...

The 'resonant moment' in the telling of the story of the *Bonesetter*, was for me, the sound of the water demon at the window pleading for the return of his hand. I knew that my voice took on a different quality at that point in the telling. I *felt* the demon's anguish. I imagined the creature unseen by the couple surprising them at a *threshold*, at the darkened window, while they were inside in the light, in the warmth. Although I knew of the sword severing the foot (or hand) previously, and had heard of the 'tortoise-like foot', it wasn't until I told the story and could hear the pain of the water demon in my own voice, that something shifted in the hearing of the story. The appearance of the water dragon in my life occurred at a time of decline in my creative energies. I had been doing an enormous professional job. It had zapped me of any energy to engage creatively with the world -- a professional position which had become less and less satisfying, as I was plunged into the swirling chthonic mire of power plays. I felt I was 'dying'. My simultaneous involvement in the dying process of a close and old friend, served to heighten the experience.

Each time I re-tell the story of the bonesetter, I recall the events that surrounded the arrival of the story into my life. Martin Buber wrote, "Where will and grace

² Adapted from A. Chinon, *Once Upon a Mid-Life: Classic Stories and Mythic Tales to Illuminate the Middle Years*, 1992, Tarcher/Putnam, U.S.

are joined...I am drawn into a relation. Relation is reciprocity. It acts on me, as I act on it”.

A Buddhist notion of *mutual co-arising* characterises this process in which reciprocity of relationship occurs between the internal and the external - an inter-dependence. I speak, you listen. The quality of my speaking may effect, or affect, something reciprocal in you (as well as internally in myself). The quality of your listening is similarly invoking something not equal, but *reciprocal* in me. This is the Buddhist notion of 'mutual co-arising' or 'mutual co-dependence.'³ It bears particularly on the process of storying or telling-listening and the relating that occurs between storytelling, the story, the teller and the listeners as well as between each of the listeners -- bringing them into a kind of community (or 'communitas').

As epilogue, I want to comment on the added intensity of an *oral* storytelling over the text or written version. In an embodied telling there are so many subtle and expressive ways of inhabiting the oral. As I listen to the oral version now on CD I re-visit the difference between the version on the page, and the oral telling of it. I know it was the anguish that I could experience as a storyteller, in voicing the creature's pain at losing its *hand* (the part that 'makes', manifests, creates) that I was able to experience, to *hear*- in the interior of the body -- that same point of hurt. Traditional societies often passed on their sacred wisdom and knowledge in *oral* storytelling. The oral may bring forth, '*vibrations of the noded dark*'...

Caroline Josephs Sept 2018 © (adapted from Introduction, doctoral thesis 2005)

³ Macy, Joanna, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems*, State University of New York Press, 1991.



Journal of Sydney Zen Centre
251 Young Street,
ANNANDALE NSW 2038

PRINT POST
225 293 00002

POSTAGE PAID
AUSTRALIA