



Encouraging Words

Subhana Barzaghi

Requiem

No doubt many of you are feeling a range of emotions in the face of the long summer drought and devastating fires that have scorched and ravaged our beautiful vast and wide sunburnt home. Our house is indeed on fire, these are the biggest out of control fires any country in the world has ever known. Our large semi-arid country is particularly vulnerable to global warming. Even for the experts, climate scientists and bush fire experts, it is still a shock, horrifying in its magnitude and unprecedented. I have had to dig deep into my practice through these hard times to find an appropriate response to manage my own grief and overwhelm, anger and fear. Zazen and dharma practice is a potent refuge for steadying ones mind, to cultivate equanimity, mindfulness and compassion. By attending to our own inner life we grow the capacity to bear witness and offer compassionate action to the heart-wrenching devastation. I encourage each of you to reach out, to share with one another in safe circles and find ways to process your grief. Let's honour the loss of human life, property, the great forests and flora and an estimated half a billion animals and creatures that have died. I find listening to music, creative writing and poetry soothing an avenue of expression. I wrote this poem as a way to share and process some of my grief.

Requiem

By Subhana

Morning has broken with the sound of rain
drops on the roof barely recognisable,
clouds assemble.....then nothing,
more like a visit from a cruel fairy,
tormenting a mouth as hopeful and as wide
as this sunburnt country,
left gapping open with promises
but leaves us like a thirsty ghost
disappearing back to parchment.

A red-hot fiery wall of flames,
so hot it turns soil to glass,
burning everything to a crisp,
along the 2,000 kilometre spine
of the eastern sea board
crossing three state borders.
I gasp with disbelief. Shock.

The image of a joey caught in a wire fence,
barbecued alive, haunts my restless nights.
Women in Holland, knit mittens
for koala's burnt paws.
Grief has unpicked the lock in my heart,
I cannot stop the tears from over-flowing.

The smell of smoke wakes me,
I throw back the sheets, wondering,
if my house is on fire?
"Our house is on fire", the children wail.
The city coughs on toxic smoke,
the smell of singed mullets, koalas,
ringed-tailed possums and lyrebirds
fill my nostrils. I'm undone.

A ghastly orange fiery sun, casting
black cumulous billows of smoke
plunge trembling towns into darkness
at four in the afternoon.
"Emergency, get out now", a brave firey yells.
Warm-blooded creatures curdle with fear,
horrified and fleeing at least those who can
camp by the ocean, bodies wrapped in blankets
by a salt and smoky shore. A Refuge.

It's 44 degrees at home, 49 in Penrith,
the hottest place on earth.
Outside my door is an oven that burns your face off.
Ash from the ghosts of the charred bush
fall on the verandah,
the garden wilts, my ankles swell up,
day-to-day lives are ripped apart.

What have we done?

Half a billion creatures have been sacrificed
in the funeral pyre of rapacious human greed.
We are left belching and sick to the core.
Their fate is our night terror,
their fur, skin, scale and feather is our loss.
Their deaths mark a burial chamber
seared into the folds of our good heart,
they leave an acrid taste
on the tongue of remembrance. Gone.

I dream, I am a woman with wings
that can fly over this scorched land,
with eye-droppers full of tears
large and glistening, falling and watering
the cavernous mouth of what remains.

Fires raged across 459,123 acres in California,
ravaged 2,240,000 acres in the Amazon,
and some nations stood up and took notice.
Then 6,424,739 acres in Siberia were destroyed,
now 11,300,000 acres in Australia have been
consumed in an inferno. Unprecedented.

This is what a climate crisis looks like, feels like.
The Earth is putting us on notice.
Can we save 'us' from ourselves?
'Omnicide' a word for human genocide,

can also refer to extinction by
global, anthropogenic, ecological catastrophe.

Perhaps there is a silver lining
to all this destruction,
perhaps the reality of global warming
will break into those staunch conservative seats.
Perhaps it will rattle us out of our creature comforts
and shake us our bones out of complacency. Awake.

"We are one, we are many",
an Aussie rousing chorus.
A country united: solidarity forged
out of a cauldron of loss,
the bravery of RFS, and volunteers, standing
shoulder to shoulder against an angry blaze,
ordinary folk, doing extraordinary things,
the true unsung heroes. Thank you.

The phoenix of active hope
rises up from the ashen spleen of the landscape,
with an out-pouring of generosity,
donations, blankets, clothes and sustenance,
and with your tenderness and mercy,
softening the blistered and broken hearted,
that feels like the healing balm of so much love.

Reports

Rohatsu Sesshin at Annandale



The Rohatsu Sesshin 2019 was led by Jane Andino apprentice teacher. It was her first sesshin as a leading teacher and Jane was fantastic in guiding and encouraging students with inspiring words and teishos, making this Rohatsu a deep and rewarding experience.

It started on Wednesday 4th of December and concluded on Sunday 8th December. This was held at Annandale and it was a non-residential sesshin, so it was a great opportunity to integrate zazen with work and home practice.

The schedule included zazen, kinhin, dokusan and teisho. There were three daily blocks and participants could sign up for the

periods that suited their commitments. We had about 12 participants at various times during the length of the sesshin. We practiced with great focus enthusiasm and commitment, always coming back to the wonder of the present moment. And back we came, again and again, helped by the ever present noises that Annandale has on offer, not the least of which was a crew from the Leichhardt council lopping trees and mulching the resulting branches at distances of less than two meters from our windows. Full credits to this heavy and noisy machinery which really anchored our attention on the present moment for a good hour or so!

Jane's teishos were stimulating and rich. They developed the sesshin theme which was the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni Buddha, and also explored the meaning of To-Rei Zenji's Bodhisattva's Vow.

The daily recitations of the Meal Gatha deserve a special mention. The Teacher, in an effort to harmonize the various versions of the Gatha that circulate on our sangha, sent an email before Rohatsu with the official wording. Unfortunately her email fell on deaf ears, or blind eyes. From the very first recitation at lunch on day one, it was clear that this was a lost cause. Some participants were thankful for this meal, while others were thankful for this food. Another contentious issue was whether the above mentioned meal (or food) was the work of many people or the "work of many hands". This seemed to split students into antagonizing camps. To complicate matters even further some students randomly changed allegiance from one camp to the other from lunch to supper on the same day without apparent reason. The Meal Gatha

will definitely need some additional work for future sesshins.

Finally, there is no sesshin without some sort of wildlife encounter, and this Rohatsu was no exception. Urban wildlife was present in the form of three turtles spotted at the Whites Creek wetland to the delight of students involved in outside kinhin.

New Apprentice Teacher

Subhana Barzaghi and I would like to announce the appointment of Peter Bursky as an apprentice teacher in the Diamond Sangha. Peter came to the Sydney Zen Centre in 2009 and has benefitted from the teaching of all the SZC teachers. Subhana and I, however, have been his principal guides and will continue to supervise him in his new role. Peter has a clear eye, a compassionate heart and is dedicated to the Buddha Dharma.

Peter regularly leads our chanting practice and sutra service, and over the years has instructed others in leadership roles. He is especially appreciated for his strong clear voice and musical talent. His musical passions also include leading his heavy metal band, Sumeru. Peter has also studied the Way of Tea in the Hiroshima-based Ueda Sōko Ryū tradition and Yoga in the Satyananda tradition. He likes to incorporate teachings from Zen into his tea and yoga practice/teaching style.

Allan Marett

Coming Events

Samu at Kodoji, Feb 29 - March 1

We have a samu weekend booked into the calendar over the weekend of February 29 and March 1, before the Womens Retreat (March 7- 8) and the DST meeting (March 16-17). This will be a busy weekend and we need as many members to try and get along even if you can only spare one day, please come and help get Kodoji restored and clean. Most work will be cleaning and dusting, every surface is covered in dust and fire debris. There are trees down and some that still stand will need to be cut down and the timber cleared. The grass in front of the buildings will have to be mown and around the toilets and showers. It is very dry on the land so care must be taken. Another big job will involve tidying up the drive way in and the containment path that passes behind the building. What we need are people with chain saws and the experience to use them safely. Come along for a great working time together, Kodoji needs our attention. Let me or Alex know what you might plan. Alex: alexbudlevskis@gmail.com or Brendon Stewart: 9879 7290 stewarts34@bigpond.com

Women's Retreat at Kodoji, March 7-8

This will include periods of silence, zazen, sharing, various joyful and creative endeavours, and delicious meals. Open to all SZC Women. Bring food to share. \$25 per night. Contact jillsteverson@gmail.com

Diamond Sangha Teachers Meeting, March 12-16

Teachers from around Australia and from New Zealand will be gathering at Kodoji for a meeting in March 2020. We will need volunteers to transport teachers to and from Kodoji, so please contact the Board if you're willing to help. Also, there will be a panel of teachers talking at a location to be announced, on Monday 16th March. This should be a wonderful event, so make sure you come along. Details will be on the website.

Autumn Samu at Kodoji, March 28-29

More tidying up before our regular Autumn sesshin. Brendon Stewart: 9879 7290 stewarts34@bigpond.com

Autumn Sesshin at Kodoji, April 10-17

Friday April 10 to Friday April 17 (including the Good Friday and Easter Monday public holidays), with Subhana Barzaghi and Maggie Gluek. This is the traditional seven-day Zen sesshin (the Japanese term translates as touching the heart-mind) improved and refined by Sydney Zen Centre over the past forty years.

An Easter sesshin at Kodoji provides a special off-grid intensive meditation experience:

The silence and beauty of the valley and surrounding cliffs.

Days that are still long, generally mild to sunny, mornings perhaps getting crisp, and full moon by night.

Talks and private interviews with not one, but two teachers.

Lots of meditation, plus body work, walks, and time for private practice.

Block these dates in your diary. Application forms will be circulated in late February.

More information: stephencrump@pfsconsulting.com.au.

News from the Board

FIRES

Thankfully our Bush retreat Kodoji has survived the devastating fires. We rallied as a community to thank the fire fighters and generously donated \$2,200 to the St Albans group.

SAMU AT KODOJI 29 February - 1 March

Many wattles have fallen, or are about to fall at Kodoji, so we need people to help clear and make the place safe. The samu will prepare the land and buildings for the Women's Retreat (7-8 March) and the Diamond Sangha Teachers Meeting (12-16 March).

WEEDS

The latest news about our Weed Grant is that we've contracted Jacob Philpott, a bush regeneration provider, to carry out the necessary weeding work at Kodoji. Thank you Jill Steverson for liaising with the authorities and organising Jacob to work with us. Due to the extended fire season, we're not sure when the work will begin, but there will be notices via email when we're starting. And if you're keen to help out, please let Jill and the Board know.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Board has organised a sign acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which our City Zendo sits. Check it out in the foyer.

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 9879 7290
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

Contact Jane janeandino@yahoo.com.au

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings.

Contact Gary

gcaitcheon@gmail.com 0429 635 412

Sydney North

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. Contact Maggie Gluek magpiewarble@yahoo.com.

Sydney East

The Guan Yin Sangha meets every Thursday morning at Peter Bursky's home in Matraville from 6:30-8:00am. Allan Marett also leads the occasional zazenkai 3-4 times a year. Zafu & zabuton's are provided. Contact Peter Bursky mowerman26@hotmail.com

Sydney South

The Wombat Sangha Miranda meets every Monday evening from 7- 9pm at *Our Lady Star of the Sea* meeting rooms, 50 Kiora Road, Miranda.

We practice deep relaxation then zazen and kinhin and a talk/discussion on the dharma. Zafu & zabuton's are provided. Contribution \$10 towards hiring the venue. Bring yoga mat.

Contact Peter Thompson 0408 507 906

joshu_7@hotmail.com

Members of the Board



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

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February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	4	5 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	6 Orientation	7	8
9	10 Dharma Cafe 7-9pm	11 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30	12 Dharma Cafe 7-9pm	13	14	15
16 Zazenkai 8:30-12pm Talk and Dokusan Maggie	17 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	18	19 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	20	21	22
23	24 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	25	26 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	27	28	29 Samu Kodoji



Gorricks Run, after the Gaspers Mountain fire, 2019-20

March 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Samu Kodoji	2 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	3 Orientation	4 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	5	6	7 Womens Retreat
8 Womens Retreat	9 Full Moon Ceremony, <i>Not giving or taking drugs</i>	10 Board Meeting 6pm for 6.30 Beginners Night	11 Full Moon Ceremony, <i>Not giving or taking drugs</i>	12	13	14
15	16 ZAZEN DST Discussion Panel	17	18 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	19	20	21
22	23 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	24	25 ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	26	27	28 Autumn Samu Kodoji
29 Autumn Samu Kodoji	30 ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	31				



A few trees down, one singed Buddha, and David's pole intact.