



ENCOURAGING WORDS

Gillian Coote

“A man of no rank”

Although I’ve often read Robert Aitken’s *The Practice of Perfection*, the other day I noticed for the first time that he had dedicated it to the compassionate presence of Nyogen Senzaki, Roshi’s first Zen teacher. Roshi started sitting with Senzaki in 1947 in Los Angeles, where he had a floating zendo in the Miyako Hotel.

Born in Siberia in 1876, the infant Senzaki was found by a Japanese monk at the side of his mother’s frozen body. Later he went to Engaku Temple to study with Soyen Shaku for five years, after which Senzaki left the temple to start a nursery school in Hokkaido. He was unhappy with the Japanese Zen establishment and its complicity with imperial rule and militant nationalism.

When Soyen Shaku was invited to teach in San Francisco in 1905, he took Senzaki along. And, apart from one brief visit back to Japan, Senzaki never left, fully embracing his teacher’s challenge - This may be better for you than being my attendant monk. Just face the great city and see whether it conquers you or you conquer it. Do not feel obliged to serve me any longer.

Soyen also forbade Senzaki to teach for twenty years. He grew his hair and stopped wearing robes. To support himself, and with limited English, he worked as a dishwasher, housekeeper, hotel clerk, elevator assistant and cook and, in his spare time, devoted himself to studying the English language and Western philosophy.

This brave monk felt that Americans - practical and self-reliant - would make good Zen students and at last, in 1925, the twenty-year ban over, he began establishing “floating zendos” in his students’ homes. Three years later, he opened the first American Zen centre, the Mentorgarten, in his modest apartment in San Francisco.

In 1935 Nyogen Senzaki said: “American people are, in general, great workers. They are also very enthusiastic

pleasure seekers. They are not, however, well acquainted with ways in which to enter silence and be at rest.” The aphorism, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” is undoubtedly true, but all play and no work will spoil anyone, too. Buddhism does not hold much potential of adding worldly pleasures to American (or Australian) life, but it does offer knowledge of the “Great Empire of Silence”.

To begin meditation, he said, “All that is necessary is to sit quietly and comfortably in some secluded spot, silently counting your breath from one to ten. No matter what thoughts may arise, just ignore them as you keep on silently counting your breath. In doing this, you are climbing the steps of the tower of silence, at whose top sits the temple of realisation that science and philosophy has never reached. There you will surely attain the same penetrating wisdom that the Buddha himself attained - if you will only keep on counting your breath until you have entered into the silence of samadhi. This is a condition of mind in which you have nothing to receive and in which there is nothing to receive you.” (1)

Senzaki kept his zendo open throughout World War II when Japanese- Americans were interned in the Heart Mountain Relocation Camp, which he called Compassion Mountain. He taught Zen as a steady, disciplined, unromantic, yet transformative path of everyday life and his isolated and inconspicuous life as a Zen monk has endeared Senzaki to subsequent generations of Zen students. “A man of no rank”, as he put it, he only wanted to be “a happy Jap in the streets.” (2)

Robert Aitken said Senzaki’s students were inspired by his kindness, modesty, patience and humour. He called himself “a kindergarten nurse” and a “mushroom monk”. “You may laugh”, he said, “but I am really a mushroom without a very deep root, no branches, no flowers and

probably no seeds, a lone cloud, floating freely in the blue sky”.

A snail leaves the zendo

Carrying his own shell.

He goes along the old road

Passing under the Bodhi tree.

Stepping over fallen flowers.

On his way, he calls to spring

Speaking softly to the breeze,

“Three thousands worlds are my home!”(3)

Senzaki left us on May 7, 1958 aged 82. He never received formal dharma transmission and he left no formal dharma heirs. Yet he did sow seeds and they did grow. Here we all are. A deep bow.

Gillian Coote

(1) Nyogen Senzaki, *On Zen Meditation: What a Buddhist Monk in America Said*, publ. 2000, Rinzai Zen Mission, Pa’ia, Maui, Hawai’i, pp.18-19

(2) Helen Tworkov, *Zen in America*, publ. North Point Press, 1990, p.10

(3) Nyogen Senzaki, *Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy*, publ. 2005, Wisdom Publications, p. 166

Upcoming Events

Mind Moon Circle Contributions Spring 2020 edition 30 October

Dear Zendo and faithful practitioner,

I am editing the Spring 2020 issue of Mind Moon Circle with assistance from Janet Selby. The theme will be “Practical Applications of the Middle Path in Everyday Life”. The closing date for contributions is 30th October, 2020. The theme has a number of perspectives - philosophical, spiritual, yogic, logical, conceptual, practical, moral, and so on, and, while the term may be seen to be a part the theoretic philosophical aspect of the Buddha’s teaching, along with such doctrines as emptiness, anatman, codependent origination, the total interpenetration of Hua Yen, and Nagarjuna’s catuskoti, it, like them, acts as a practical guide in our everyday life. In this way it is like the Golden Mean in Greek thought, the via negativa in Christianity or the commonsense of the secular humanist. Or perhaps you disagree?

I look forward to hearing your ideas and hope to include a few of my own,:

philiplong@bigpond.com

Gassho, Lots of Love, Phil.

Rohatsu Sesshin December 4 - 8

The Rohatsu Sesshin will be held online/offline from the evening of Friday 4th December to midday Tuesday 8th December. The sesshin will be led by Apprentice Teachers Jane Andino and Peter Bursky.

It will be similar in style and schedule to the Winter sesshin.

Look out for notices on the website and the SZC What’s On closer to the time.



Reports

Samu at Kodoji - 22 and 23 August

A very cold weekend with plenty of sunshine.

Jonathan, a newcomer to our sangha split wood on Saturday afternoon. Greg Carty checked the batteries, the specific gravity therein is perfect.

Kerry, Sue and Brendon mowed the grass, checked the larder's inventory, threw away out of date "stuff", tidied and swept the dojo and sat around the warm fire in the evening.

All good. *Brendon*

News from the Board



COMING HOME

The teachers have returned to our sitting practice at Annandale as well as continuing our Zoom meetings with an added Zoom night on Thursdays. There are restrictions on how many people are able to come to the zendo so it's essential to register and book in with info@szc.org.au. Please don't turn up unless you get a return confirmation for your booking.

FACELIFT

The large bedroom and library upstairs at Annandale have been painted by our super worker Nick. Sue, Glenys & Kerry sorted the books before packing them into boxes to clear the library. Many books weren't relevant for a Zen Centre so Pip offered to take photos of each book and sell them or give some away online. She's had great success! Now the Zen books are back on their shelves, so when you visit go up to the library and see if there's anything you'd like to borrow. Deep bow of gratitude to Sue, Glenys, Pip and Nick

SCHEDULE

Changes to the upcoming events scheduled in October and November are all dependent upon the Covid situation not escalating and advice from NSW Health Department:

- Spring sesshin at Kodoji is going ahead, with restrictions on numbers and strict adherence to hygiene and distancing rules.
- The Memorial Ceremony planned for November has been cancelled due to difficulties in keeping Covid safe during the ceremony.
- AGM is via Zoom

Check 'What's On' or our website for up to date details: <http://szc.org.au/upcoming-events/>

AGM 18 October

This year our Annual General Meeting will be via Zoom - Please come along! It's a great opportunity to find out how we've been going over the last year and help plan for the future. The meeting starts at 10.30am, so please log on at 10.15am to check in with your dharma buddies before official proceedings begin.

It's important that SZC members are involved in the decision making process of our sangha. There will be lots of wonderful ways to share your skills by taking up one of the many jobs that need to be done to keep the sangha running smoothly. We need your input, so if you can't make it, please fill out a proxy form (which will be sent out to members) for someone else to speak for you. And we need as many people as possible so we have a quorum.

WELCOME

Welcome to Pip and Kevin who are new residents at Annandale. Pip is a long term member who many of you will know and Kevin is new to the group, having done an orientation in August. Please say hi if you see them at the zendo or on Zoom.

MEMBERSHIP DUE

If you haven't paid, please do it now! Unfortunately, you've missed the early bird discount. There are many benefits of being a member – one is being able to vote at the AGM. Please go to the website to find out the new categories of membership and cost. <http://szc.org.au/membership/>.

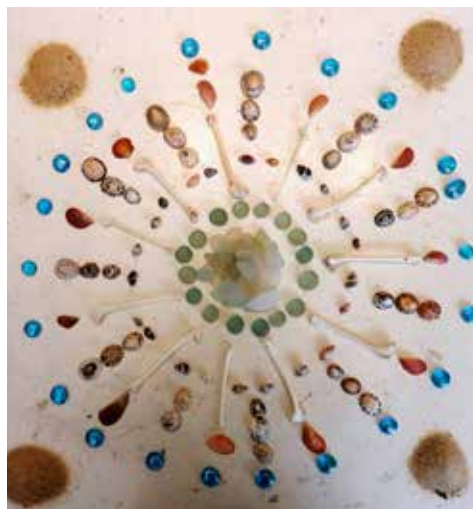
NEW MEMBERS

Welcome Sean, David, Paul and John to the sangha! It will be wonderful to get to know you and for you to get to know the other sangha members. We look forward to sharing this wonderful practice with you.

TALKS

Don't forget that we have a huge back catalogue of talks, and more to come, available as podcasts on our website: <http://szc.org.au/podcasts/>

*Below: Mandala sharing from Womens Group:
Glenys (previous page), Glenys, Gilly, Jill Ball, Julie, Kerry and Caroline*





Scenes from Spring Samu at Kodoji

Regular Notices

Transition back to Annandale Zendo / Continuation of on-line meditation

Please see the regular SZC email reminders for Zoom links, or email info@szc.org.au for details.

We are trialling a limited transition back to the Annandale zendo, with alternate weeks offering Monday or Wednesday meetings. This will be subject to review, depending on the easing (or not) of the COVID-19 restrictions, and our members' and teachers' circumstances.

If you wish to attend the Annandale zendo, **you must pre-register via info@szc.org.au**, and you must comply with our COVID-19 conditions of entry which can be found on www.szc.org.au/classes/zazen

The Board is also committed to maintaining an on-line meditation program, with Thursdays being the regular weekly evening. As a trial, we have begun Zoom meetings on Thursdays.

Mondays

7.00–7.25 Guided meditation
7.25–7.30 Walking meditation
7.30–7.45 Encouraging words
7.45–8.15 Inquiry and sharing about practice
8.15–8.30 Plenary and close with Great Vows

Tuesdays Mini morning meditation

6.55–7.00am Join/welcome
7.00–7.25am Meditation
7.25–7.30am Great Vows

Wednesdays with Gilly Coote

7.00–7.30 Meditation/walking
7.30–8.00 Meditation/walking
8.00–8.30 Discussion/Great Vows

Thursdays

7.00–7.30 Meditation/walking
7.30–8.00 Meditation/walking
8.00–8.30 Discussion/Great Vows

The Blue Mountains Zen Group

We will be meeting via Zoom on Sunday afternoons October 11, 25, November 8, 22.

All are welcome to join us for zazen with either a talk or Dharma Café.

Please email Jane at janeandino@yahoo.com.au for more details.

Phone dokusan for members

Subhana is offering dokusan to SZC members on Thursday evenings.

Gilly is also offering dokusan to members by appointment.

Members of the Board



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

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

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

October 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter Bursky	2	3 SPRING SESSHIN
4 SPRING SESSHIN	5 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana + Peter Bursky	6 SPRING SESSHIN	7 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Maggie	8 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Jane	9 SPRING SESSHIN	10 SPRING SESSHIN
11	12 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter Bursky	13 Board Meeting 6.30pm	14 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	15 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Jane	16	17
18 VIRTUAL AGM 10:30am	19 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana + Peter Bursky	20	21 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	22 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter Bursky	23	24
25	26 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	27	28 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	29 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Jane	30	31



Samu at Kodoji, Kerry and the compost.

November 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana + Peter	3 Orientation	4 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	5 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter	6	7
8	9 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	10 Board Meeting 6.30pm	11 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	12 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm	13	14
15 VIRTUAL ZAZENKAI 10am Teisho Maggie	16 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm TBC	17	18 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	19 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm	20	21
22	23 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm	24 Orientation	25 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	26 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm	27	28
29	30 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm TBC					



Samu at Kodoji preparing for Spring Sesshin.