



MIND MOON CIRCLE

Autumn 2021
Journal of the SZC Sangha



Blow fly



SOUNDS OF KODOJI
Janet Selby

Squawk



sulphur crested
cockatoo



Laughing
Kookaburra

koo koo koo ka ka
etc etc

loud tinkling song
with strong
high note



grey fantail

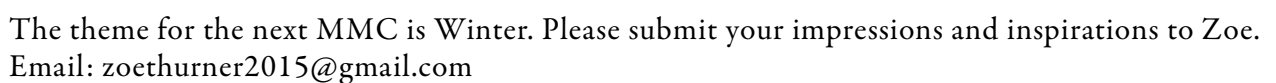


Eastern whip bird

whhhhhhh whip ↗

whip ↘
whip ↘

woo-woo like a dove
wobbly wobbly wobbly
wobbly wobbly wobbly



LIFE
UNGRASPABLE

Sally Hopkins



These paintings were made at Spring Sesshin at Kodoji in 2020. During the breaks I captured the character and sounds of some of the creatures there. Only in the deep stillness of Kodoji in the framework of sesshin could this opportunity arise: to be completely engrossed in rich layers of birdsong, blowflies and the chopping of the veggies.



Yellow tailed
Black cockatoo

a squeaky gate with
destructive tones

One of the things that I have found over the years is that one of the most important aspects of our practice is the acceptance and love of self. If we can't accept and love ourself it is not going to be easy to love and accept others, and it is not going to be easy to trust to the degree that we need to, to release the mind road. It may sound simple enough however it is not always easy to do. Often our response to the world, and our habits of thought, can be coloured by the experiences that we have had throughout our life, and some of these may have been difficult or traumatic. So, we may respond or react to circumstances in ways that we find difficult to accept or reconcile within ourselves. This may be in the form of fear, anger, closure, jealousy. The list goes on.

My own experience involved having an angry and aggressive father. I often felt fearful of him. Later this led to me feeling particularly vulnerable in some circumstances leading to feelings of wanting to withdraw, while at the same time in my logical mind, wanting to do the opposite. These types of thoughts and feelings can make us feel conflicted. We may feel that we should be other than what we are. But here is the thing, the opposite is true, and it is not an easy lesson to learn. Learning to love and accept our difficult bits can be an ongoing practice. It seems that loving and accepting can't be done with the idea that by doing so, the difficult bits will go away. That's not how it works. It is loving and accepting so that these aspects of ourselves, have a place, and are included.

Jack Kornfield quotes Thomas Merton as saying, 'True love and prayer are learned in the hour when love becomes impossible and the heart has turned to stone'.¹ When we resist and try to cover those aspects of us that are difficult and not wanted, we are in a sense also excluding the universe. We are excluding the self that contains all, that 'is' all, and is no-self at the same time. To quote again from Kornfield², 'The place where we can most directly open to the mystery of life is in what we don't do well, in the places of our struggles and vulnerability'. Our normal logic would think that this would not be the case. It is only when we are totally together that we would open to the mystery of life. Not true.

Thich Nhat Hanh points out that because we are afraid of suffering, we 'seek pleasure and avoid suffering,' and by doing so, 'we ignore the goodness of suffering. Suffering has its own goodness. Each of us needs a certain amount of suffering in order to grow up, to understand, and to cultivate our compassion, joy and happiness. Our joy and happiness

1 J. Kornfield, A Path with Heart. Bantam Books. 1993, P. 100.

2 Kornfield p. 79.

can only be recognised against the background of suffering'.³ It is the same with our wounds. We want to avoid them and the discomfort and suffering that goes with them, whilst what is really needed is loving attention and acceptance.

An interesting way to test whether we are opening our heart to love and acceptance of ourselves and all of our complexity is whether we believe, 'I am enough.' What is the honest response? If we can't say 'I am enough', we are in need of loving and acceptance, from and for ourselves. If we think that it is about acceptance from others, there is a good chance that we have created this belief in our minds and have projected the belief onto others. We are projecting our own sense of unworthiness. When we believe that we need to be other than what we are, already there is non acceptance of ourselves. It is like we become the judge, the jury, and the executioner and then project this judgement as if it comes from all around us.

Stephen Levine describes 'mercy as the opposite of judgement.' He says, 'mercy unites, judgement separates. Mercy is the voice of the unitive, of our natural goodness. Judgement is the cold wind in the abyss between the heart and the mind. Mercy does not judge its own absence. It is open even to our closedness. Judgement regards everything with an equal mercilessness. Judgement wounds, mercy heals'.⁴

With loving acceptance also comes trust. When we have a love and acceptance of those aspects of us that feel foreign, or we can't control, when we allow them in, allow them to be part of our whole inclusive being, we are also more likely to be able to trust. When these aspects of us are obscured, resisted, and kept in the dark, a lack of trust goes with our lack of inclusiveness. From Stephen Levine, 'Opening to resistance, trust evolves where there was distrust before'.⁵

So, when we have loving acceptance and compassion towards ourselves, whilst at the same time evolving our trust, we are also doing this for all things, for the universe. Because we are not disconnected from the world, from nature and people, we are naturally bringing loving inclusiveness to all things. To realise our true self nature, subtle and mysterious, we need to release our hold on the endless mind road of thoughts and concepts. When we don't trust, it is like we use the endless stories in our mind as a sort of refuge from our fear. We endlessly keep the mind busy so that we don't have to feel our pain or fear. Constantly pursuing diversions, distractions and stimulation from outside of ourselves. But it is really more like a prison, where we are

3 Thich Nhat Hahn Reconciliation: healing the inner child. Parallax Press Berkeley California. 2010, P. 53-54

4 S. Levine, Guided Meditations, Explorations and Healings. Anchor Books, New York. 1991, p. 24.

5 Levine p. 188.

pulled this way and that way by the endless stream of likes and dislikes, aversions, desires, never finding peace.

So, our practice can seem a bit like a sequence, first we love and accept, there is trust, then we release our hold and let go. As well as being a process that is learned over a lifetime, we can go through this whole process in one sitting, and in one day. It's like, 'today we love and trust. Yesterday we didn't love and trust so much.' In fact, the process can happen in one moment of real trust. In this is contained a true love and acceptance of all things, all barriers come down, and there is revealed the true nature of all things, god, the dharma, whatever it is that we choose to call this. And it is undeniable.

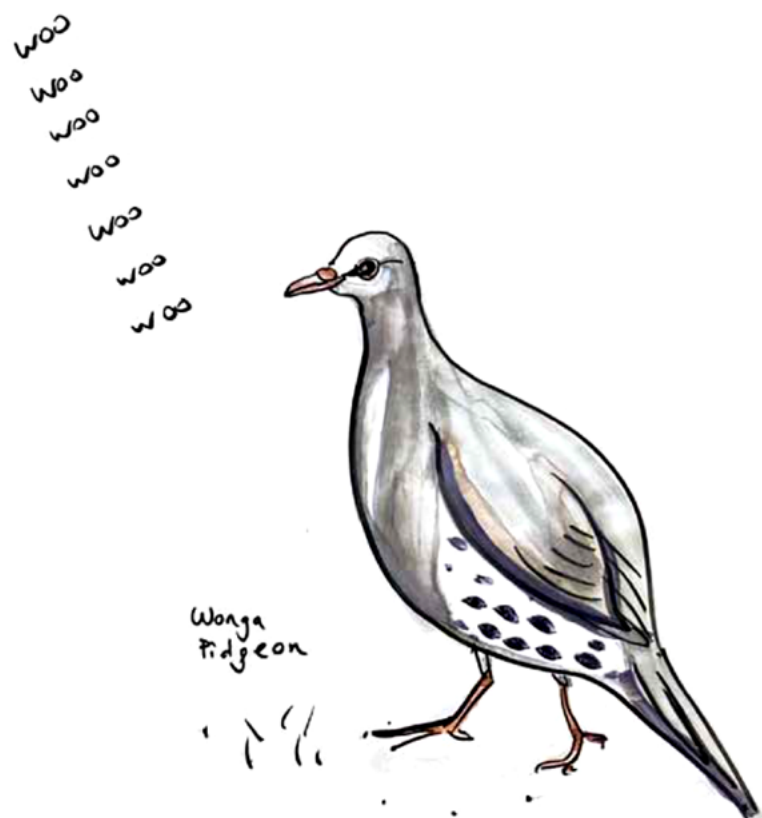
I just want to quote here from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross⁶, 'Love, that thing we have great difficulty even describing, is the only truly real and lasting experience in life. It is the opposite of fear, the essence of relationships, the core of creativity, the grace of power, an intricate part of who we are. It is the source of happiness, the energy that connects us and that lives within us'. She goes on to say, 'love is the source of truth'. So, there we have it. If we want to know the truth, well we know the source.

Our practice of zazen naturally leads to love. As we return to each breath over and over, we are choosing to let go of our preoccupations, desires, aversions and stories. We forget ourselves in this process of uniting with our breath or with our koan. One of the things that we notice after practicing for a while is that we begin to feel the pain and suffering of the world more. When we hear of, or see someone else's suffering, we also feel their suffering and our compassion naturally reaches out to them. We can be surprised to notice that tears well up in a moment at hearing of someone else's suffering. This is because the suffering of the world is our own suffering. Through our practice, our sense of separation from the world diminishes, and our realisation of our interconnection and unity with the world becomes clearer. So, when another suffers, we suffer, when another is joyous, we are joyous. There is an incredible beauty in this, and we don't want it to be other than this. In this inclusiveness, we feel the world.

The hardest thing to love and accept can sometimes be ourselves, and in a sense, we have to be able to do this before we are capable of love and compassion for others. Sometimes we need to be deliberate in nurturing love and compassion for ourselves. Being aware of, and challenging our old critical thoughts, directing feelings of love and compassion towards our neglected, and sometimes wounded selves, and accepting those parts of ourselves. Only then can we be complete. Finally, this is from Stephen Levine, 'As one teacher said, "The mind creates the abyss, and the heart crosses it". Love is the bridge. It is the whisper of underlying suchness. To enter this reality, we let go of the thoughts and feelings that filter mercy and forgiveness, the resistance, the fearful doubts that seduce awareness into identification with the unhealed. We let the mind float in the heart.'⁷

6 E. Kubler-Ross and David Kessler, *Life Lessons: How our Mortality can Teach us about Life and Living*. Simon and Schuster, Sydney, 2000 p. 39.

7 S. Levine. *Healing into Life and Death*. Anchor Books, New York, 1987, P.66.



On a stunning, warm and clear Sunday morning I decided to visit the Centennial Park Labyrinth. It was the 4th April 2021, officially the first day of autumn. The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures, a truly universal symbol used as a place of reflection and renewal. The Centennial Park Labyrinth is based on an ancient 11-circuit design that is divided into four quadrants. The most prominent and famous labyrinth of this design is found in Charters, France, known as the 'Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres', which I have had the good fortune to walk.

The labyrinth holds widely divergent meanings and purposes for people all over the world and through the ages. Some of the earliest European labyrinths date back to the bronze age 4,000 years ago. For some, the labyrinth is a divine template for sacred geometry; for the Christian clergy, it's a place to perform special sacraments and rituals around lent and Easter; and for medieval Christian pilgrims it represented a symbolic map of the tortuous journey to Jerusalem – "chemin de Jérusalem". Pilgrims have been going to Chartres Cathedral to walk the famous labyrinth for over 1,000 years. This tide of enthusiasm shows no sign of abating. The labyrinth today is an inclusive sacred space, welcoming all faith traditions.

In more recent years it has become a symbol of wholeness. A labyrinth combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral and has only one circuitous path to the center and out again. For some, the path is that of life – from birth (the edge the circumference) to death (center). For others, it is a liturgical dance, a walking meditation or prayer, a true symbol of pilgrimage. It is symbolically 'a journey to the center', the search for the 'self', 'the interior castle', or an encounter with the Divine.

On the 5th February 2014, more than 60

people attended a silver spade 'Sod-turning ceremony' to bless the site and to mark the commencement of the construction of the labyrinth in Centennial Park. As a permanent fixture in the park, it will leave behind a magnificent legacy for generations to come. It is a place to experience the art of sacred walking on this precious green earth. I felt so grateful for Emily Simpson, whose original vision had now been realised. It had taken her steadfast passion over five years to raise half a million dollars for the labyrinth's construction.

Emily chose a number of wisdom keepers across the community, from various faiths, to attend the blessing ceremony: Monsignor Tony Doherty (Church of Mary Magdalene), Barbara Duck-Chong (Rosicrucian Order), Rev. Ben Gilmour (Uniting Church), Auntie Ali Golding (Aboriginal Elder), Imam Amid Hady (Zetland Mosque), Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins (Temple Emanuel) and myself.

Auntie Ali Golding an Aboriginal Elder from the Biripi Nation offered her words of wisdom in the opening ceremony, "Walking home to country is a connection our people have always had with Mother Earth. Our culture is defined by the closeness of family circles and staying connected to the people within it. The labyrinth invites and welcomes people to walk the path together - it calls them to the land in oneness."

I was delighted to be asked to be one of the labyrinth's wisdom keepers. Each speaker offered his or her words before walking together along the chalked outline of the labyrinth on the grass. I stepped up to the microphone. "Let's walk mindfully, as if you are kissing the earth with your feet, making each step a step of calmness and peace. When we are truly present and one with our walking then the walker and that which is walked upon become one, the division between self/other dissolves into the

sacredness of walking with a peaceful heart”.

Nine months later, when the Labyrinth was finished, Emily organised a grand opening ceremony. Gilly Coote Roshi, along with many of the same group of spiritual elders, was invited to offer her blessings, making it a truly ecumenical open space for everyone. From the beginnings of the project, the Sydney Zen Centre has had a connection with this extraordinary project.

I walk the labyrinth on special occasions, or in conjunction with earth time to mark the changing of the seasons and the light - the equinox (equal amount of daylight and darkness) or the winter solstice (longest day of the year) and the summer solstice (shortest day of the year).

Sometimes my heart, heavy with grief, leads me to the labyrinth seeking healing. On other occasions, I have been at the crossroads of a dilemma in my life and looking for guidance. I have celebrated birthdays, a mad hatters tea party with friends and even performed a wedding ceremony at the heart of this labyrinth.

The labyrinth offers itself up as a space for creative time-honored rituals for healing and guidance. Walking the labyrinth, for me, is a time of quiet inner reflection, a centering where I drop into an open-heart space. It is primarily a contemplative walking practice, a path to inner stillness and equipoise through mindful movement.

Glorious warm weather blesses the day. It is a hat and t-shirt affair. As I stand at the entry of this beautiful sandstone labyrinth, I am immediately struck by the awesome beauty of the surroundings; the ancient paperback forest and swamp to the right hosts a large protected bat colony. To the left, there is a series of inter-linked lakes home to an abundance of aquatic and bird life. These waterways, with their dense reeds and swathes of water lilies, arch around the magnificent gardens and trees of Centennial Park.

I take off my shoes and walk bare-foot, mindfully, on the cool sandstone and under

a bright clear sky. I hold an intention to be present and keep my heart open to whatever emerges. It's always good to start a journey with a wise intention.

The way ahead is hard to sense, the path twisting and turning like a coiled snake and seeming to double back on itself. The serpentine path triggers a strange image in my mind - perhaps I am walking through the large intestine in the belly of some gigantic mysterious creature of my imagination. 'What wants to unfold in me?' I wonder, as I turn and listen to my inner landscape of sinews, backbone, and breathy sighs. "How do I know which direction to go in this life when each moment is greeted by uncertainty?"

It is difficult to anticipate the next turn and easy to get disorientated; now facing east then north. I lose my sense of direction. This is not unlike life, each moment full of the unexpected and unpredictable - like climate disruption and a pandemic - each, a step into the unknown.

Not knowing is the portal of our nights and days and the portal for our inner journey of entering through the cloud of unknowing to a place of revelation. The Christian mystics call the cloud of unknowing the gateway to unity with God. "If one is courageous enough to surrender one's mind and ego to the realm of 'unknowing', one may begin to glimpse the nature of God." (Cloud of Unknowing).

Like all labyrinths there is one path in and out, unlike a maze with its convoluted dead-end cul-de-sacs, secret passageways and puzzles. All you need to do in a labyrinth is to follow the path, one step at a time, and trust the process, trust the path.

Our spiritual journey requires us to put our trust in a path, to follow the ancient wise and compassionate teachings and practices. I have done just that - following the Buddhist eight-fold noble path for over four decades, since I was twenty years old. I am grateful to have a holistic path of contemplative practices leading to the recognition and realisation of what is at the centre of the

labyrinth of our lives, to follow. The journey simply requires us to take this step - the next will reveal itself. You don't know where it's going to lead, what's around the next corner. The mystery is enticing.

As we start on the pilgrim path we're literally walking towards a goal - to reach the centre of the labyrinth. At the early stage of any spiritual journey the goal seems separate from where we are. We are driven by a longing for some special experience or propelled by ideas of transcendence or enlightenment. As I kept walking, there were no clear goal posts anymore, those fixed markers of achievement had lost their spell over me, or maybe I deemed them unnecessary, even a hindrance on my path. Despite this, my mind kept searching for some sense of firm direction, something to hold onto, someone to pour my love into, something worthy or meaningful to devote myself to in this sea of transience. I sometimes dismay at my romantic and devotional longings that seem to never rest. Scolding myself kindly, I remind myself to simply follow my toes wherever they lead me. Step by step more questions arise. "Should I just continue to follow the silken thread of the moment of experience with all its infinite possibilities, just live in the here and now with its feast of offerings to the senses?" Is the eternal now enough? My mind then flipped over to the opposite proposition, "What about that underbelly of destiny - the pre-determined, karmic invisible hand of fate, does it play a part?"

Alas, too many philosophical questions. I bring myself back to this moment and quietly fall into this step and the fluidity of movement. "Accept what emerges and enter into the full catastrophe of living as it is," another voice inside beckons. My restless urges start to settle and I find that my way home is right here. This abiding presence has always been here. It is a major pathway and calls me back to the ocean of being. I know this space and inner stillness well yet I seem to forget it as I round the corner. It's curious how we seem to have to discover it over and over - as if the pilgrims' journey is a sort-of ground hog day, destined to repeat itself until we find ourselves truly at ease with the natural sense of unity and belonging with all things.

Because this is a public labyrinth, four children turn up and race along the path - joyfully treating it as a competition to reach the centre - running and bumping into the adults like dodgem cars. The first young boy to arrive at the centre plops himself down, impatiently saying to the girls, "Hurry up, hurry up". The eldest girl who wears shimmering blue tights with glistening silver swirls arrives next. The littlest one, who lags behind says, "It's impossible, it's impossible, I'll never get there". The mother at the edge of the labyrinth calls out in a reassuring voice, "Just keep going, you're on the right track". The child's excitement is palpable and yet so is her sense of being overwhelmed and lost. I imagine her thinking, 'this is so big, I don't know my way forward, will I ever arrive'?

As they speed past me, they provoke up my inner critical-parent thoughts, "Why can't you see this is a sacred place? You should slow down and be more respectful. Why don't those parents discipline their children?" This internal commentary of which I am not proud, seared and inflamed a tightening in my chest that feeds the reactive barrier of exclusion separating me from them. I feel the deep-rooted controlling urge that wants to put my hoof into the world of who or who doesn't fit into my tribe, what is spiritual, and how one should behave in a labyrinth.

But, I am so over that tightness, and I give myself to the walking, holding my intention lightly, trusting the process and the path, which means at this juncture sloughing off those judgments.

After twenty minutes, I approach the inner sanctum. I begin to realise that the journey to the centre of wholeness is about freeing myself from the limited negative beliefs that exclude the world of other. It is about casting off the old familiar cloak of anxiety and worry, releasing the labels and negative judgments of mind, shedding those constricting garments that impinge my soul and clip my wings along with everyone else's, especially the rambunctious children. Their high-spirits, giggles and spontaneity becomes infectious and I can't help but feel my heart open, soften and smile along with them.

At the centre of the labyrinth you're greeted by a six-petal rosette with rich symbolic

value, including that of enlightenment. As I stand on one of the six-petals, I half expect some ecstatic experience to burst forth from my beating chest. I just stand there in my rags of love and ordinariness. The petals encompass a round, empty space. I let all my expectations fall away and cast my gaze towards the centre and feel myself falling into this vast mysterious space. Am I falling inwards to my own boundless empty centre or falling outwards into a chasm that continues to open out, that will swallow me whole? Oscillating on the brink I can't tell whether this spaciousness is inside or outside or both?

Curiously, when you are really at the centre there is nothing there, just an empty space, yet paradoxically everything is present. I realise there is no centre, the centre is everywhere and explodes into every single thing; the families lying on the grass, the children running around, the pungent smell of bat shit wafting across the grass, the ducks in the pond, the cockatoos flying overhead through a vast sky, everything becomes the centre. There is no periphery. You become one with the universe and in that intimacy the universe is you. The unexpected void at the centre of the labyrinth becomes a metaphor for what is at the heart of all things.

The labyrinth always offers up a surprising experience, every time it's a different journey. I think of it as a metaphor for our life, a trajectory towards wholeness that requires the hard work and miracle of characterological transformation, integrating emptiness and fullness. The emptiness that over-flows from each moment with abundance and potentiality, reflecting the deeper truth and experience of who we are.

Having found this sense of wholeness and ease, the way forward is the way back. The task for the return journey is to hold this grounded, still and spacious centre within,

carrying it through your life, no matter where you stand. Out of this spaciousness my heart begins to sing and my footsteps are lighter on the path. As I walk out along the spiral, each step now is the centre. The still 'centre' follows me everywhere. The journey is the destination and each mindful step is the way. I find this practice simple, soothing and joyful.

If we're open to life, we can enjoy even its craziness – the unexpected turns up and we can be with that. Joy bubbles up when the self is forgotten. If you have an agenda of how you think life should turn out, you will sadly be disappointed. With revelation and practice we grow the capacity to work with what is because that is who we are in this moment. We are not wishing it otherwise. With this understanding, I find there is more ease and peace with the ordinary every day sublime moments of life.



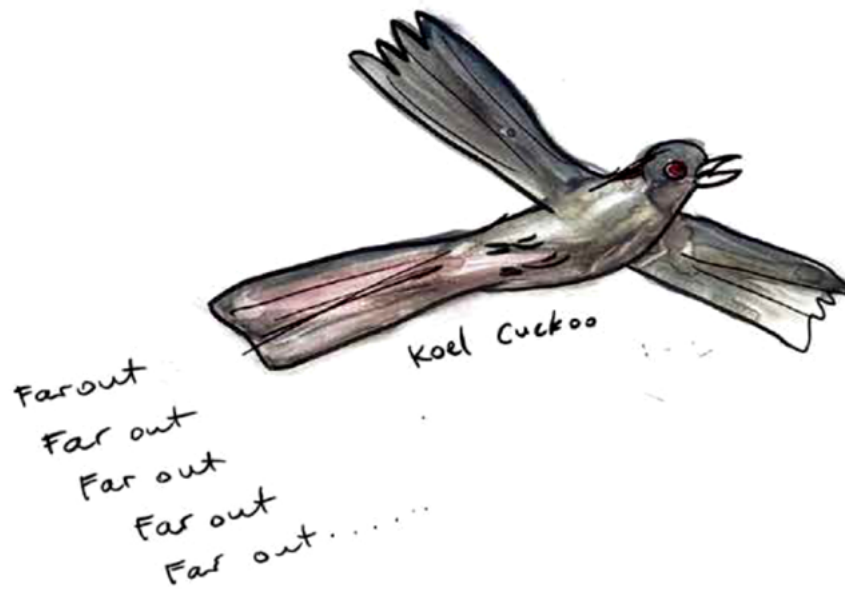
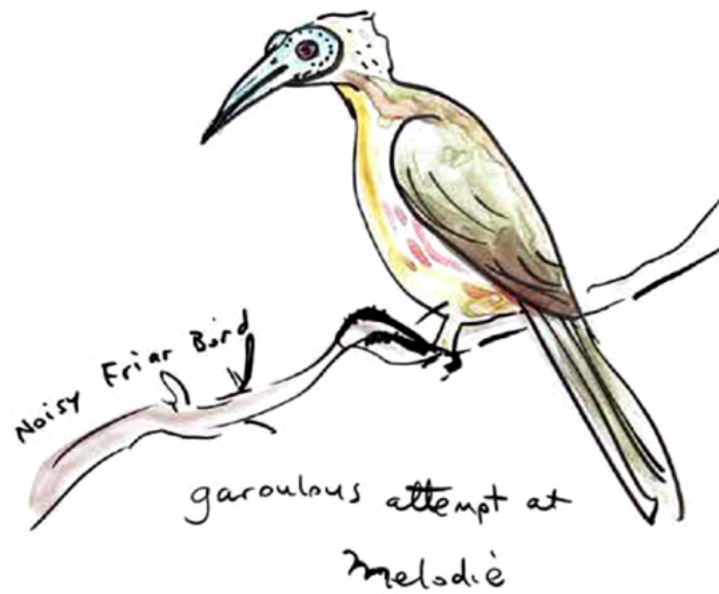
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Opening ceremony of the labyrinth with 12 spiritual elders from different faith traditions. Gilly Coote representing the SZC.



IN SINGING AND DANCING IS THE VOICE OF THE LAW (Hakuin Ekaku).

Caroline Josephs

'The Contemplative' is mostly of 'stillness', the Dancer mostly of 'movement', but each has the paradoxical opposite within.

What is it about dancing that feels so right? That is both stillness and movement at the same time? Is it that the body is responding to another's movement, or to Nature, or an inner sense or feeling? Is the absorption, Presence? Is Presence simply the absorption of 'self' or the 'I'? Emptiness? Is the mind stilled when body-spirit dances? And just Being, comes into play through the body. How about swimming? The oceanic feeling of the body being uni-verse? Or music? When the mind is absorbed by sound, and becomes just the Now of that sense?

To return to just dancing, with a short her-story of dancing:

Imagine this!

A young girl dreams of learning classical ballet. Parents refuse. Instead learns piano accordion.

Her aunt Lulu has been a dancer. She loves to dance around room to her aunt's piano playing when she stays with her in Melbourne, age 7.

Her aunt Jessie, with whom she has a long and close relationship takes her to dance shows, pantomime.

Meanwhile her life is riding her trike, running through bush on North Head with mates, running on sand, surfing and swimming in harbour and ocean, through the early years. In High School 1959, her German teacher begins a class after school in creative

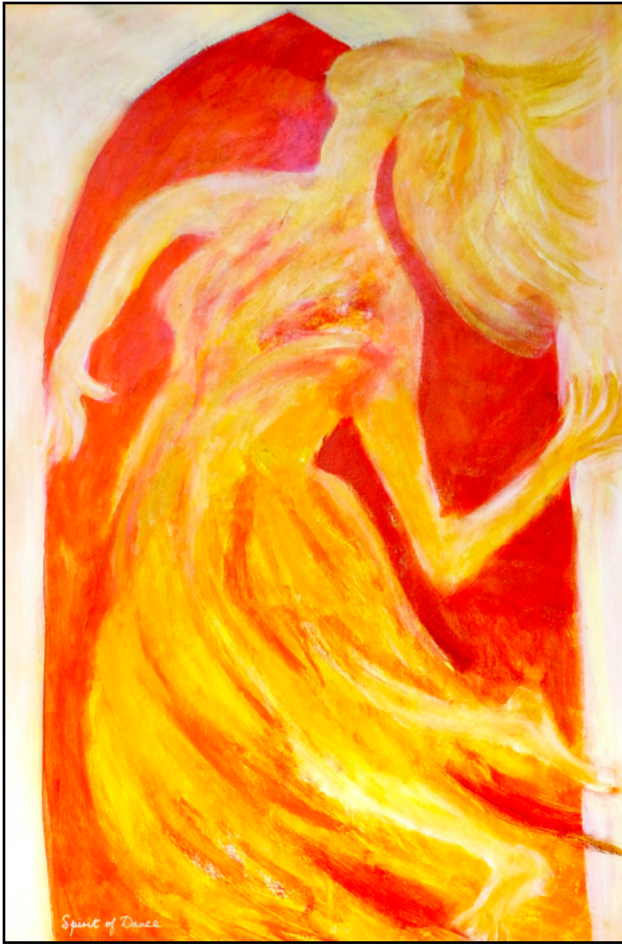
movement. The teenager stands at the door unable to join the group, barred because she is in the last year of school. She yearns to dance. But told that study for Leaving Certificate more important.

At university a few years later she discovers the great modern dancer, Martha Graham's disciple, Margaret Barr, (an old lady then) -- teaching creative movement in a Glebe church hall. [Paul Maloney is Marg Barr's senior assistant]...

Dance warm-ups done to 'Carmina Burana', wondrous music. Later performing small part in a production. Margaret Barr creates original dance performances. One of these introduces her to Daisy Bates (who lived as a Victorian woman among the Indigenous people in WA).

London 1967. She is teacher... experiences Martha Graham dance with her company of multi- cultured people....from Asian, from Africa, from Europe. She is spellbound. Martha Graham, in her 70s, is dancing with her troupe, so expertly, so elegantly. Martha Graham was herself inspired by Isadora Duncan (USA) who broke with tradition by barefoot dancing. Duncan shocked early-20th-century audiences by refusing to wear shoes when she performed. Duncan's bare feet were a rebellious act, representing her desire to push dance beyond the confines of classical ballet. (Recently, I was reminded of this when Subhana encouraged barefoot kinhin outside).

Some modern dance innovators, including



'Spirit of the Dancer', Acrylic on canvas, 112 cm x 77 cm



'Spirit of the Contemplative', acrylic on canvas, 112 cm x 77 cm

Paintings by Caroline Josephs. Both from installation, giant Japanese-style unfolding book...entitled 'Illustrious Italian Women and the Spirits that Moved Them' 2019 shown in 13thc church in Umbria, and in Cultural Centre in Rome. (Each page of book a portrait or a spirit figure).

Martha Graham, adopted the practice of dancing barefoot for practical reasons --without shoes, Graham's dancers could maintain better balance and stability.

In 1967 London she is teaching intellectually handicapped kindergarten kids (from poor backgrounds) -- their classroom relegated to the school cloakroom, where they swing on the coats, and are generally unruly. Except! When she sings with them, or plays music, or lets them move to that. Or, they are encouraged to run around the playground, moving their bodies in different ways.

India 1968. She learns Bharat Natyam, with one-on- one teacher, briefly. The tabla keeps the rhythm. She soaks up the spectacle and precision of Indian dance performances, lying on large mats and bolsters on floor, imbibing music and dance through long long evenings.

Late 1970s to early 80s. She facilitates creative movement workshops. She is taking a group of primary teachers with their principal, a nun, and inviting them begin on the floor, relaxing and sensing into the body. The nun-principal remarks quietly, 'Oh of course, we are allowed to have bodies now'.... (Pope has changed something it seems, to allow this).

2010 She goes to a Kabbalah Retreat for a week to include Xmas-time. In upstate New York. Out of a small village, on an environmentally sustainable farm community.

It is winter, snow and a frozen lake, snow-covered forest on other side of lake. A 'temple' synagogue beautiful building with one wall of glass that looks out to the lake and forest, to squirrels, woodpeckers, pine trees...Inside the temple -- cleared, large space for dancing....led by a superlative teacher of the 5 rhythms Dance....who is also a musician. Five Rhythms is based on Nature...through five aspects, or five rhythms:

FLOW

STACCATO

CHAOS

LYRIC

STILLNESS

All introduced through appropriate music. Create her own forms for each. Exhilarating.

(This in addition to meditation, chanting, talks, small group sessions, yoga, Q and A sessions, food).

Each day she walks in snow boots and down coat all around the lake and through the snow-covered forest, all this in this experience in the body. Unexpectedly, all are hastily organised to leave the retreat a little earlier than planned -- on Xmas Day. I arrive in NY as snow begins to fall in massive blizzard, for two days, covering the city with 30 inches of snow and bringing everything to a standstill! Flow, chaos, and stillness manifested! Quiet. No traffic.

Everything stuck in time.

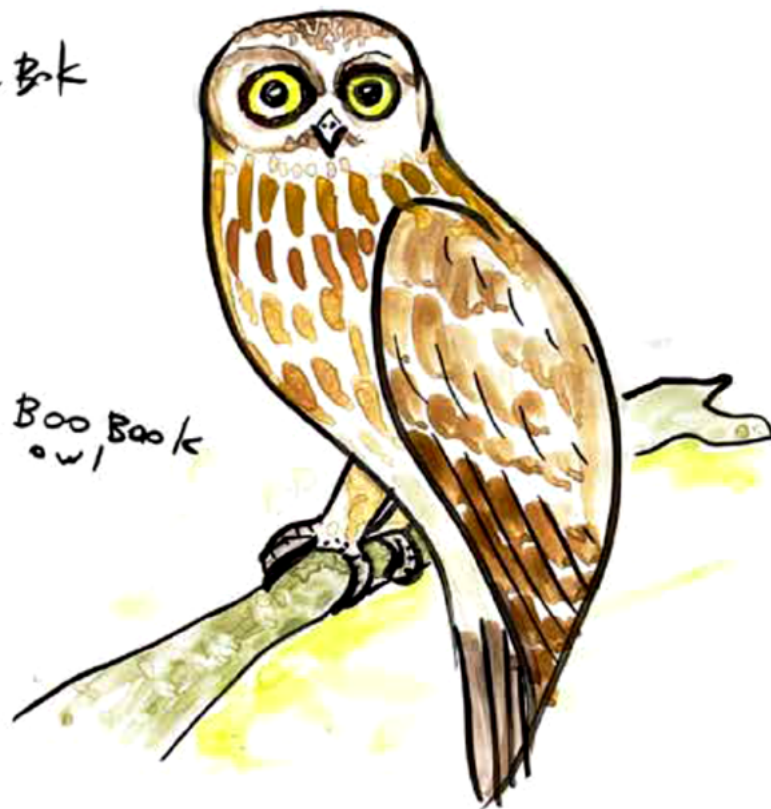
To be disappeared - just the dance. 5 Rhythms as a vacuum to clean us out of everything that is necessary to be a spirited breath in the moment. Neda Menadie, 5 Rhythms teacher.

To end her-story, with Dogen:

13thC Japanese Zen Master experienced reality as a great dance moving through time, coming to life in the thoughts and acts of all beings. It is a most special dance, the dance that the whole of reality is dancing with nothing left out. All beings are dancing, and reality is dancing as all beings.

Let's dance!

Boo - Book
Boo - book
Boo-Book
Boo - Book



*The wilderness calls to me
I think, 'I must go there'.
The wilderness takes hold in my mind,
I play, lost in fantasy,
'if only I could be wild'.
Its voice is so loud but I refuse to listen.
Putting myself outside of it,
Bemoaning my tame state,
Safety and control I hope to escape.
But listen closer!
She does not call me anywhere.
Listen closer!
What does she have that I don't?
What do I have that she doesn't?
The wilderness and I.
Listen closer!
Nothing hinders anything,
The plastic heater, the smooth cream walls,
The raging waterfalls and grandmother trees.
Listen!
She does not call me anywhere,
Because I am already wild.
I am hearing my own home,
Embracing me.*

As the pandemic falters in Australia, people have been talking about what they have learnt through the shutdowns and social isolation that required us to work

from home, foregoing bodily contact with others - except for elbows and feet - and gathering as a virtual sangha on Zoom, with out-of-state students, out of country students, visible again. The Diamond Sangha Teachers Circle has just finished its first historic virtual meeting, the organisers having found mutual time zones across the UK, Germany, the US, NZ and Australia so people could meet for three hours over four days and share experiences and ideas. No need for flights or billets, just the convenience of staying at home and turning on the computer. Could there possibly be a downside?

Waleed Aly, talking recently on ABC RN's *The Minefield*, said he'd experienced the depth of what he missed during this strange time, which he now knows cannot be substituted. "We're not talking about mere functionality, but collegiality, creativity and enrichment from others." He also talked about the cult of substitutability, particularly in tertiary education, which reckons that students can access lectures by hearing them as recordings. Or on Zoom. 'We've been retro-engineered to fit in with our tools, which offer the illusion of achievement.' Author Gideon Haigh added that virtual meetings often meant human contact was superficial, lacking non-verbal cues, sotto voce utterances and asides. And, although Zoom and other on-line communication technologies 'kept the joint going', he said it was time to stand up for 'in person action', and all the subtleties of body language, frisson, persuasion, and outcomes.¹

On the other hand, as well as keeping the joint going, another positive from the Zoom era has been the time freed from commuting, time to walk around, to explore. To pay attention. During Covid-induced social isolation, we'd see parents with their young ones standing on the wooden bridge over Tarban Creek, gazing down at tiny fish moving through the water, willy-wagtails flitting and calling through the mangroves, and those magical ever-expanding circles. One day, a group of older people were peering into the creek as we walked by, someone calling, "Look! A school of kingfish, they're under the mangroves and heading our way." And there they were, large yellow-tailed silvery fish moving swiftly on the ebbing tide towards the harbour.

Nowadays, our walk beside Tarban Creek includes four glossy brown ducks asleep on a low mangrove branch, nine ibis foraging up on the grassy hillside, white on green - but these miraculous beings are unseen by most passers-by. They are jogging or walking briskly - adorned with earbuds. Young mothers text intently while pushing their prams, businessmen do deals in loud voices on their mobiles as they stride along. Such convenience - keeping fit, getting fresh air, working, everything under control, and all happening at the same time. Psychologist and philosopher William James noted in 1890 that, "Attention is the

taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought," wrote. "It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state which in French is called distraction." James described a vivid possessing of the mind, an ordering, and a withdrawal, states of mind which are becoming less and less a given in our lives, the seduction of virtual universes, the allure of multi-tasking, our allegiance to a constant state of motion markers of a land of distraction.²

Even in more predictable times, as Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us, 'Most people are forgetful; they're not really here a lot of the time. Their mind is caught in their worries, their fears, their anger, and their regrets, and they are not mindful of being here.' They are not attentive. "That state of being is called forgetfulness - you are here but you are not here. You are caught in the past or in the future. You are not here in the present moment, living your life deeply. That is forgetfulness. The opposite of forgetfulness is mindfulness.'³

Some people who worked from home during 2020 also noticed a there was a downside to the lack of the usual commute, how the boundaries between work and home dissolved, how the passage to work, the passage back home again, transitional times for people to reflect and relax, (if they chose not to be distracted by their screens) vanished. During Covid, one was always at work, even in the kitchen making breakfast.

Sherry Turkle in *The Empathy Diaries* wonders if our immersion in the digital world is causing us to lose true solitude, "where the capacity for empathy is born," or to say it another way, the capacity for 'true intimacy'. Turkle finished writing her book before the pandemic both heightened our isolation and increased our dependence on digital tools.⁴

Now we have entered another unstable time, when confusion and misinformation about vaccinations occupy the news. We see once again how provisional our lives are, how we are not in control, and this creates further anxiety and distress. Which is perhaps why we are less and less able to see, hear and comprehend what's relevant and permanent, why so many of us feel that we can barely keep our heads above water, and why our days are marked by perpetual loose ends.

Towards the end of Richard Flanagan's climate emergency novel, *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams*,⁵ set in fire-riven Tasmania, one of his central characters is Anna, who spends much of her time immersed in the digital world: 'The more things change the harder people stare into their screens, living elsewhere, the real world now no more than the simulacrum of the screen world, their real lives the shadow of their online lives,' she muses. "The more people vanish, the more they assert themselves online as if in some grotesque equation or transfer. Meme

artist, influencer, blogger, online memoirist. She wondered if the more they were there the less they were here. Did she know? No, thought Anna, she didn't know; she knew nothing, but it seemed to her at times that not only were people not seeing but perhaps - and it was this that struck her as more frightening than anything - they did not want to see."

Anna's insight is ironic, given that she is a screen-junkie - but she is beginning to ask questions - about others' who vanish into their screens - though not yet about her own screen addiction. However, all things are subject to change, including Ann. "Above all things, she wanted to see. She wished to once more observe the world not as people said it was, but as it is. She wanted to be attentive to this is, not panicked by what wasn't. She needed to precisely know the world as it presented itself to her. And if it revealed a bruised, damaged universe, still, perhaps there would be in the very wound some hope. These things seemed suddenly clear to her. But less clear was how to achieve them. She checked WhatsApp, she checked Insta. A charred rainbow lorikeet halted her scrolling." Finally, her scrolling screeches to a halt.

"Set amidst a tidal rind of wet soot on a beach, the bird was burnt and drowned, red beak bright, blue crown vivid, green and yellow and orange plumage kaleidoscoping into oily burnt leaves and black bark. Its one open eye stared up at Anna in terrifying judgement. It saw! It saw and it saw!

Fear felt close. Wasn't that what everyone was saying now? Summer was frightening. Smoke was frightening. Having children was frightening. Living in the forest was frightening. Choking in the cities was frightening. Today was frightening. Tomorrow was terrifying, if we made it that far.

She had seen a picture of a dead charred rainbow lorikeet, such a beautiful bird, and it had broken her heart. She had a question."⁶

Now Anna has her question, will she be true to it? The poet Rilke: "Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."⁷

Siddhartha Gautama had his own question, perhaps not unlike Anna's. Although a protected child, he saw illness, old age and death, and wondered. But though he asked people in his household, 'Why is there suffering?' the answers he was given did not resolve the question, which grew more intense until he was finally impelled to leave his family home in search of answers. He studied with excellent teachers and learnt how to meditate. Then, after six years of practice, he sat alone under the bodhi tree, vowing not to stand up until

his central question was fully resolved. Sujata's daily gifts of food kept him alive so that the Morning Star in that dark pre-dawn sky could break him open. He cried out, "Ah, wonderful! Now I see - all beings of the universe are the Tathagatha - it is only their delusions and attachments that keep them from acknowledging this fact.' And so Siddhartha became the Buddha, the one who is awake, whose teachings of intimacy, interdependence, compassion and wisdom are as potent and alive as they were 2500+ years ago. And all because he lived his question.

What is your question?

Aitken roshi: "It is essential at the beginning of practice to acknowledge that the path is personal and intimate. You must walk it for yourself. It is no good to examine it from a distance as if it were someone else's. In this spirit, you invest yourself in your practice, confident of your heritage, and train earnestly side by side with your sisters and brothers. It is this engagement that brings peace and realisation."⁷

We are able to read Mind Moon Circle because the Dharma has moved fluidly between continents, adapting to different cultures and technologies. In this time of climate crisis, air travel, even car travel, become ever more problematic - screens rule and, as we move towards virtual Dharma, long may it continue to adapt and flourish. But could the convenience of screens erase the potential for sangha building, for community, unless we find ways to ensure that intimacy, attention and person-to-person sangha relations do not become a distant memory, having given way to virtual practice, with all its convenience and control? What must remain essential elements of practice? What will become of the Three Treasures in a virtual world?

1. ABC RN's The Minefield, 8/4/21

2. William James (1890). The Principles of Psychology. 1. New York: Henry Holt. pp. 403-404.

3. The Five Mindfulness Trainings, Thich Nhat Hanh

4. The Empathy Diaries, Sherry Turkle, publ. Penguin Press, 2021

5. The Living Sea of Waking Dreams, Richard Flanagan, pub. Penguin Random House, 2020

6. ibid

7. Taking the Path of Zen, Robert Aitken, North Point Press, 1982

8. Letters to a Young Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke

one long whistle here.....
ch ch ch ch
ch ch ch ch
ch ch ch ch



Satin Bower Bird
male

High pitched

Thin

zizzing
trills

rather
squeaky

Superb Fairy
wren



chop
chop
chop
chop
chop



chopping bodhisattvas

wi-wi-wi-wi-whip



Golden Whistler

Pretty Little thing,
Pretty little thing

chck chck chck chck



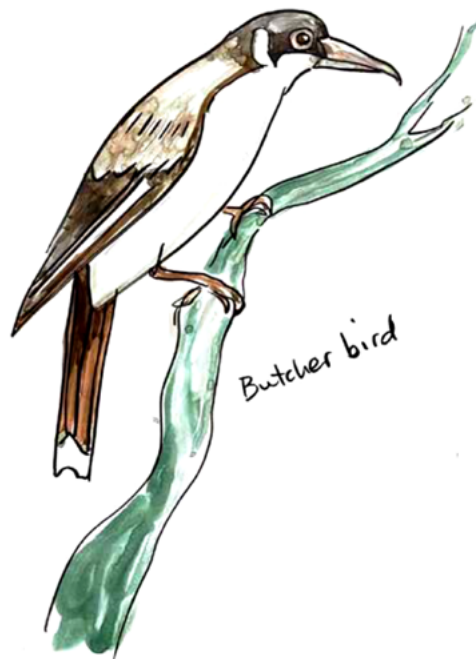
Willy Wagtail

curra-wong
curra-wong
curra-wong



melodic carolling

Rich Melodious piping



Butcher bird

cho-cho-weeeee↑



grey shrike thrush
G.S.T.



Barking owl
grr woof woof
yap yap
scream~~~~~

*Hunched against the wind
head down.
Suddenly, beside the road
patches of yellow;
a nasturtium tossing about
this way and that.
No resistance
just here now,
dancing wildly
calling loudly;
spindly fragile roots
holding firm
while all above buffets about.
I dance down the road
its silent call
ringing through me.*



*Avalokiteshvara,
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,
potentially everyone of us,
when practicing zazen
clearly saw
that there is no permanent independent
self being
in anything or anyone.
Everything is interconnected, changing,
and impermanent.
Seeing this,
that there is nothing to attain,
that all we really have
is right here, each moment,
heals the anguish and distress.
There is nothing to be clung to,
we are drops in the ocean,
in the sea of being.*

THE SAYINGS AND DOINGS
OF LITTLE HEART

Sean Loughman

The Case

*Little Heart whines for another biscuit.
Old Man asks "Can you be a good buddha
and wait till dinner time?"
Little Heart bursts in to tears and wails,
"No, I can't be a good buddha!"*

The Verse

*I thought the Buddha was good,
But now I know he's not.*

SAMU CHOCOLATE CAKE

Sean Loughman

Due to popular demand, the Samu Chocolate Cake recipe shall be revealed. It is a rich, moist, gluten-free treat based on a Sicilian recipe.

Ingredients

220g butter/margarine
220g sugar
4 large eggs
200g chocolate (45% cocoa)
300g almond meal
100g cocoa powder
3 Tbs marsala
zest of one or two oranges (optional)
icing sugar

Instructions

Remove butter/margarine, eggs from fridge.
Turn on oven to 180C.
Prepare spring form cake tin with grease proof paper.
Chop/blend chocolate in to small pieces.
Beat softened butter and sugar until pale and well mixed.
Add eggs, beating well after adding each one.
Mix in remaining ingredients, except icing sugar.
Pour in to cake tin and bake for approximately 50-60min.
Remove from tin and let cool.
Sprinkle icing sugar before serving.

Notes

Tastes best with a moist centre. To achieve this, baking temperature and time must be tuned to your oven. Tweak ingredients as you see fit. Can be served with whipped cream.

The Three Vows of Refuge:

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I surrender to just this, now.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

I take refuge in all things, uniquely as they are.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

I surrender to the intimacy of no separation.

The Three Pure Precepts:

I vow to...

Renounce all evil;

Allow thoughts of selfish motives and desires

Practice all good;

To pass along freely, and instead stay present to what needs care,

Save the many beings.

For the benefit of all animate and inanimate beings.

The Ten Grave Precepts:

I take up the way of...

Not killing.

I vow to see into aversion and its roots, being free to nourish all of life.

Not stealing.

I vow to freely practice giving and receiving with an open heart,
as it's all already here.

Not misusing sex.

I vow to not misuse sex and attraction in ways that lead to harm,
and instead celebrate sex as a sacred act within a committed relationship.

Not speaking falsely.

I vow not to be attached to any one view or belief as truth.

Not giving or taking drugs.

I commit to clarity and presence within all aspects of life.

Not discussing the faults of others.

I vow to embrace others as they are, beyond ideas of right and wrong.

Not praising myself while abusing others.

I vow to hold thoughts of self lightly, and never to place the self above others.

Not sparing the dharma assets.

I vow to live this moment fully and with nothing to spare,
especially during difficult times.

Not indulging in anger.

When experiencing anger, I vow to pause and look deeply into its nature,
not to lash out or to feed it.

Not defaming the three treasures.

I vow to bear witness to all of life, and to not delude myself otherwise.

*Wisteria has decided
to explore the space between
the tin lining the outside
of my studio
and its timber frame.*

*She is not doing
what any of us are supposed
to do, which is of course
to grow
towards the light.*

*This verdant adventuress
may cause problems
as she pushes her way
through the walls of this
shed I built
to hold the stories
that keep me together.*

*I will leave her
for now.
Until I can discern
what she's doing
in the dark.*

*My darling
heart with fragile and
persistant window.*

*I can't see
deep into the darkness but
I know how to get home.*

*This home
with transparent skin
barely holding on.*

*Front door
sliding left and right
yearning to love.*

I love.

There was a time when I was unaware of Dharma and then there was a time when I discovered instructions in Dharma. Both times equally valuable and formative.

To borrow a quote by Sri Ramana Maharshi: *“To realise the Self is to be still.”*

I would like to take you on a journey on my small runabout boat. We'll do a bit of meandering along the river, and I will share with you my insights into the relationship between movement and stillness.

...

It was 20 years ago when I tried meditation first. I attended a workshop with an aim to discover the benefits of meditation. Over a few weekly meetings we would apply the same technique – shutting off our sense of sight and hearing by using earplugs and sitting in the dark with eyes closed. Instructions were simple, just observe your thoughts when they come in and don't engage with them. Ignore them and let them go by saying “I will tend to this thought later”.

Even though the instructions were incomplete, something remarkable happened. For the first time in my life, I experienced the space between thoughts. This experience inspired me to meditate for 20 minutes each morning and evening every day. After several weeks of regular meditation, I noticed I wasn't reacting to things that would usually provoke emotions of unrest. The benefits were obviously there! My posture changed a bit, as well as my horizons, which extended much further than usual.

And as per the promise of the workshop I started believing that meditation will bring about some advancement in the world. I thought I'd discovered the key to a secret and it was all about to be revealed to me and I was finally going to be forever healthy, famous and rich - or something along those lines.

My triumph over the world lasted for a few weeks. My mind was so busy thinking highly about itself I didn't have time anymore to sit 20 minutes in the morning and at night to observe it. I was too busy. And very soon this self-congratulatory pattern turned into the usual feeling of inadequacy and lack. As David Loyd suggests, it is this sense of lack - the sense of something missing in our lives - that generates a sense of dis-ease about ourselves and leads us to yearn for fulfillment which then becomes the suffering.

This is the craving (desire, greed for pleasant feelings and experiences). But how can something that has no substantial reality ever get fulfilled? asks Loyd in his book *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*.

I realise now, that this is the tendency I have had ever since I can remember. Looking at that time of uninstructed life, I can see how I was constantly needing to propel myself forward in the world. Oftentimes dreading it but nevertheless doing it because I didn't know any different.

With a need to be someone (mind you, I had no idea who), I was constantly moving towards something, though I had no idea what. I would occasionally gain momentum, feeling as though I was about to find some substantial footing and oftentimes convince myself I had found it. The other times, I would contract, pulling back from anything unpleasant, building the conceptual walls of isolation and self-protection around me. The cycle of up and down moods became predictable. I was struggling for existence in an unfriendly world. I wanted the world to bend forward and satisfy my need for certainty. It was exhausting, as you would know.

The only solution available to me at the time was to get a bigger and faster engine and propel myself further away from all the stuff making me feel bad. Yes, that was it, I thought. A brand new big shiny outboard engine for my boat and all my uncertainties would somehow turn into pleasant feelings. That was my solution to suffering. Just move faster and you'll be fine mate. It didn't work, and only made me suffer faster. I would call this Uninstructed Movement.

Uninstructed Movement seems to be our default state. We can say we are born into it. From our own conception we are in constant movement. As Alan Watts said, "Ever since I was a twinkle in my fathers eye". The human system does not stop moving, constantly in movement even in deepest sleep. Breathing chest expanding and contracting, blood flowing, muscles twitching, eyes moving randomly.

Ordinarily, we follow this momentum of movement without questioning. Our body, sensations, perceptions, mental reactions, consciousness. Always in flux, forever changing. Like Dyarubbin (the Hawkesbury River), next to which I live, with its many creatures and currents visible and invisible, patterns on the water's surface made by ever changing winds, tides coming in and going out. The river is never idle.

The river doesn't need any instructions on how to be the river. But, it seems we do need instructions. I needed instructions on how to be. I didn't know, at that time, that what I needed to do was to stop and listen. To turn off the engine, drop the anchor and see what happens.

About ten years ago I was encouraged to come to Sydney Zen Centre. I knew nothing about the practice of Zen. It turns out I didn't need to know anything, because the practice knew everything about me. The first instruction that was offered was about sitting posture. I was falling asleep on my cushion, head dropping into my lap, when a pair of hands grabbed me and jolted me on the pillow into an upright posture. Many years later I would realise It was a pair of many hands of Avalokiteshvara.

These hands kept holding me. The next instruction was about sitting still. In my first Sesshin, I was jittering and was instructed to be still. Instructions on breath counting followed. I took the instructions very seriously. I still am.

And then there was reciting of the Heart Sutra. I had no idea what it all meant or why it resonated with me so strongly but intuitively I understood it to be an expression of the ultimate truth.

These fundamental instructions, in addition to the genuine practice by all the bodhisattvas of our sangha softened my shell. Soon, the Dharma started taking hold in my body in the form of stillness.

...

When I don't let my thoughts wander casually but guide them skilfully towards the radical clarity found only in the direct experience of the present moment, I always arrive at the same place at the exact same time. Place never changes, it's always the same: the place is right here. And time is forever stuck on the same time: time is right now. I arrive to THIS.

When instructed, THIS is without boundaries. Everything merges into a single direct experience. Place and time merge into single suchness. This suchness permeates my body and my mind in the same way it permeates the entire universe. It is the meeting point of all dedicated bodhisattvas, rejoicing and turning the dharma wheel in perfect harmony. Dharmakaya Buddha.

At this moment

I experience
The stillness as the sum total of all movement.
I experience
The emptiness as the sum total of all forms.
I experience
The silence as the sum total of all sounds.

At this place

I see that
To truly move one becomes truly still.
I see that
To truly embody all forms one becomes truly empty.
I see that
To truly hear all the sounds one becomes truly silent.

When talking about stillness, an image of a rock thrown in the river may be useful. I throw it and watch as it sinks to the muddy bottom. When it lands, it simply sits there. Its own weight pinning it down. If this is a parable for our life, in the torrent of the moving phenomena we skilfully use our body as the rock. When the body sits like this we give our mind a place to rest. We skilfully locate the centre of the torrent in the centre of the Self. When we become still and hear all the sounds like Kanzeon does so masterfully, this centre naturally moves towards the centre of our heart. Our heart blooms open with every thought, with every action, with every movement. Such is the realisation of stillness.

It is the same when I stop the engine and throw out the anchor. The boat is anchored in the midst of the moving river. Everything is moving out from the centre of stillness and back into the centre of stillness. Such is our Zazen. Such is stillness in action.

...

Recently I have discovered this same stillness in an unexpected place.

A few weeks before the Covid lockdown I was riding on my pushbike along St. Johns Road in Glebe. As I was passing the Glebe Town Hall I heard this beautifully sophisticated piece of music. The music touched me, and I got off my bike and went upstairs to see where it was coming from. When I got to the main hall I saw a bunch of people moving/dancing. I was immediately attracted. There were some flyers at the door. The following week I joined the class.

I had discovered the embodied movement practice. This movement practice is called 5Rhythms. It was developed by Gabrielle Roth in the late 1970s and focuses on five distinct body rhythms: flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical and stillness. Imagine the sine-wave, a waveform starting at the bottom of the curve and reaching the peak and then returning down only to repeat the pattern. Like breathing patterns: with in-breath reaching the full capacity of our lungs and out-breath following. This is called the Wave.

It starts with a rhythm called Flow. Much like the river emerging out of the mountains. Forming out of tributaries, it takes its shape and grows. In Flow, the body feels its way into the rhythm. The body shapes itself with flowing movements into the dance and the dancer emerges.

The wave then moves to Staccato, where every movement is sharply defined. This is the rhythm of getting things done, of setting necessary boundaries. Boats dashing at various angles from one river bank to the other. Sea eagles carving clear lines above the river. Body moves with sharp clear movements. The river bends and stretches on its way to the ocean.

Next comes Chaos - the top of the wave where things are volatile and often can fall out of control. Which is a good thing because to truly Be we need to abandon control. It's like a mad westerly wind in September screaming forcefully along the river, lifting spray into breaks, pulling and pushing everything in its path. Ripping out established trees with its force.

After Chaos reaches its peak and we have let go of any holding patterns, the rhythm of our own unique self sets in. It's called Lyrical and in this rhythm we dance out our own authentic life as it unfolds. This is like jumping into the river and having a swim. Swimming with or against the tide, dodging stinging jellyfish.

By dancing our unique dance, we naturally settle into the last stage of the wave. The final rhythm is Stillness. I love laying still on the surface of water with my arms and legs spread and just floating. And noticing how with every breath I gain some buoyancy and with every outbreath the body submerges a little. In stillness we truly arrive at the present moment. The dance is dissolved and also the dancer together with it. The wave ends only to start a new wave from the beginning.

When I step into the Wave it's like I literally step inside the moving body and something truly wondrous happens. The moving body is able to express the depth of my uniqueness in a way words always fail to do. This moving body doesn't end with my skin. It includes all the other moving bodies around me. It includes the floor, the building, the street, the city, land, waters, air, sun, the moon and the stars. Everything is included and there is peace along the entire wave. Even at the very peak in the midst of chaos whilst moving uncontrollably, I embody the familiar stillness which blooms from Zazen. With Zazen I practice to completely accept all of my joy, fear and pain. Accepting, honouring and giving them space in my life. It's hard work, but endlessly rewarding.

It is because of Zazen, in which I practice the letting go of constructed identity and being present to what is arising, I find dancing to be so liberating. This radical openness to the movement brings about the Sambhogakaya Buddha - the body of enjoyment and bliss. This is what I call Instructed Movement, Stillness in Action.

Right here, in this precious jewel of the present moment, all questions are answered. Everything is resolved. Questions about life and death, such as:

Am I dead or alive? What trully matters?

All it matters is direct experience. In direct experience all questions are already answered. The ultimate jewel can only be embodied. This is what I understand to be stillness in action. And for me, lately, this has been embodied movement. While dancing the wave I can express power with grace, and vulnerability with dignity.

I have become wealthy beyond my wildest dreams. Now I have two practices which afford me to just be in suchness.

Stillness in action is where I become a guardian of the Dharma. Dancing with both arms wide open - one for wisdom and the other for compassion - I find myself in the midst of life's movement. In the midst of all arising phenomena. The entire world becomes a clear instruction and infinitely varied Nirmanakaya Buddha is radically present in a single breath.

I vow to continue practicing like this.

...

The above text was prepared for the talk at Sydney Zen Centre in Annandale on 18th April, 2021.

I wish to express my gratitude to all our teachers and all the guardians of dharma, our sangha members and everybody committed to discovering our true self and bringing a loving compassionate heartmind into the world which patiently awaits.

I am especially grateful for all the Dharma instructions passed down in the lineage of our Diamond Sangha starting with our founding teacher Aitken Roshi. And I am most especially grateful for all past, present and emerging generations of first guardians of this land who have cared and continue to care for the country which is holding us.

Thank you Gilly for giving me the opportunity to speak at Zazenkai. I was truly honored and humbled.

With Gratitude and Love
Ameli



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