



## Encouraging Words

Peter Bursky

In our Miscellaneous Koan collection there is a koan that asks us to “Save a ghost”. It offers us a rich contemplation on the nature of salvation, and what manifesting that salvation for others looks like.

The great vow of saving the many beings means bringing forth our practice, which in turn means actualising the Bodhisattva path and responding to each moment with wisdom and compassion. This koan invites us to present how this is done.

“Save a ghost” challenges our usual understanding of being and relationship. Although a rather strange request, I assure you the ghosts here are very real, and if we're serious about practice we will most definitely come face to face with them. Saving the many beings involves deep intimacy and is not simply just a matter of leaving offerings on the altar. In taking up the vow of saving ghosts in Zen practice, we do it in the spirit of non separation. Right now, ultimately not a single thing is left out, yet when we vow to leave nothing or no one out, we acknowledge a unique approach that can still decipher differences, and therefore suffering in the world.

Ghosts aren't the most desirable beings to come into contact with, nor are they usually in a positive state of mind or existence. At the root of their circumstance is greed, hatred, ignorance and a host of undesirable circumstances we would rather not have to deal with. Their story is usually presented with how they've created a decent chunk of bad karma for themselves, and can't escape that karma without the help of an external power. Unable to save or satisfy themselves, they need help with that, and across the various Buddhist cultures we find many festival rites that are said to ease their suffering and offer nourishment.

But most ceremonies, however well intended to help others, can end up being reflected forms of the power they once had. The original intent and power of a rite soon passes into oblivion, and these rites can become ghosts themselves. We do this with our everyday life too. The simple act of having a cup of tea or sweeping the leaves becomes a ghost of the potential that act truly offers us.

Visions of ghosts also feed into our shadow side, those parts of ourselves that become cast out of our usual lived reality. Active in dark places, lost in some in-between world, yet at the same time always with us. Here we may ask what in our own lives needs saving?

What saves the ghost is the realisation of one not seeing them as separate at all, which after all is the great realisation of our practice. When Buddha Shakyamuni attained the Way upon seeing the morning star, he said, “I and all beings of the great earth have in the same moment attained the Way”. Right there Shakyamuni saved all ghosts everywhere. In the Great Vows we chant, “The many beings are numberless, I vow to save them”, then we say, “Greed, hatred and ignorance rise endlessly, I vow to abandon them”. There might seem like there's some contradiction there, but what it really means is that our practice never really has an end point.

Realisation has no beginning or end, that's why the Buddha's realisation is ours too, and also why it's able to save the many ghosts we encounter each day. It saves a ghost because it is wholly other and reaches everywhere, but it doesn't mean that the others' suffering will vanish. That other will however meet someone that won't turn away from their suffering, and this also applies to saving ourselves.

Realisation doesn't really change us so that we become utterly "free from suffering". We can still suffer, but we have a different relationship with our suffering, one that gives it acknowledgement and awareness to work itself out in the boundless holding of our hearts.

## Upcoming Events

### Tony Coote Memorial Samu Weekend

#### Kodoji 25-26 March

Samu is a most important part of our regular sangha practice. Each samu is unique, each has a flavour, smell and taste, each bring our sangha relations to some form of completion.

Our next samu weekend on March 25 and 26 is especially important. Over the weekend we will celebrate the life and legacy of Tony Coote; designer, builder and mentor of our Kodoji centre.

On the Saturday we will complete all the many jobs necessary to prepare the buildings and grounds for Sesshin - the usual mix of cleaning, mowing, painting, repairs, bush care and setting up for a Saturday night of dance and song and laughter and story telling. Then Sunday we prepare for a feast and a ceremony to welcome Tony's memorial pole, to be placed there just above the creek.

So this is a big invitation to all sangha members to come along to this Samu weekend. We will need whipper snippers, electrical skills, painting hands, cleaning brushes and probably carpentry know how. Mostly we need everyone to come and join in for the great fun and pleasure of the weekend. Bring your partners and kids and dogs.

On Sunday too we'll test out our bush cricket skills, one of Tony's favourite games over the years of building and teaching so many of us how to swing a hammer, and saw-cut precisely to the line.

It will be a weekend of pot luck menu's, food for the Saturday evening meal and then Sunday's feast. So while snacks and biscuits are good - okay, please try and bring a plate of food to help extend the meal.

When you get this notice in the news letter put the dates immediately in your diary and plan to be there with us all.

We'd like to make this samu an RSVP event so please let Brendon know on 0415 964 029 or [stewarts34@bigpond.com](mailto:stewarts34@bigpond.com)



The memorial plaque attached to the dojo at Gorricks Run.

## Women's Retreat Kodoji 3-5 March

All women are invited to a retreat at Kodoji in early March. It will be a mixture of zazen, creative fun, free time and enjoying nature. Full or part time attendance. \$25 per night and bring food to share.

To book **Contact:**  
[jillsteverson@gmail.com](mailto:jillsteverson@gmail.com)



December Women's Group in Sarah Walls' home was a delight. Sarah, Helen, Lesley, Jill, Julie, Janet, Kerry and furry friend Tia all enjoyed the friendships and sharing.

## Autumn Sesshin Kodoji 7-14 April

(including Good Friday & Easter Monday)

This sesshin will be led by Subhana Barzaghi, roshi and Maggie Gluek, roshi. The Bodhisattva Way is comprehensive. It extends to all beings. Healing the ancient wound of disconnection means transcending ideas of us or them. This also includes befriending our idiosyncratic selves. We practise to realise the truth of interconnectedness, vowing to embody it fully. At sesshin we walk the Great Way together, with the Mahasangha around and within us. We become part of the healing of our world when we live in the wide embrace of compassion.

**Contact:** Stephen Crump [stephencrump@pfsconsulting.com.au](mailto:stephencrump@pfsconsulting.com.au)

## Buddha's Birthday & Baby Naming Ceremony Annandale Sunday 23 April, 11am



Previous Baby Naming Ceremony for Lily Lampis's daughter.

This is a family-friendly event - we bathe and offer flowers to the Baby Buddha and welcome new babies to our sangha with stories, poems and songs, followed by a potluck lunch. Please bring food and flowers and plan to arrive by 10.45 am. This year, the baby naming and welcome to sangha will be for Maggie Gluek and Tony Miller's grandchild, Matthew, Phoebe and Andrew's son. There may be other babies - please let us know.

**Contact:** Janet Selby [janetselby@bigpond.com](mailto:janetselby@bigpond.com)



## Reports

### Rohatsu Sesshin

The annual Rohatsu sesshin blossomed bright and fresh through five early summer days. We were nineteen participants in all though never all at once. Three full-timers held the continuity of sesshin. Others came and went, integrating the natural rhythms of work and family with formal practice. Until it felt seamless, the reality of no coming and going salient. Several people bravely and competently took on leadership roles for the first time.

It was just so lovely to be back in the dojo at Annandale sitting for an extended period. In that room sunshine and leaf shadows moved through the blinds which gently clacked against window ledges in the afternoon.

Weather was perfect, especially for our daily long kinhin in Whites Creek Reserve. We wandered through the wetlands – relishing sightings of dragonflies and (for patient observers) long-necked turtles. And meandered amidst well-planted native bush, community gardens and playgrounds.

For those who were able to take part Rohatsu presented a warm gathering of sangha, a blessed pause in December and a deep dive into Dharma.

*Jane Andino*



Those participants who persevered until the last day for the group photo, Rohatsu 2022





Zazen during sesshin  
at Kodoji.

## News from the Board

### Annandale & Zoom

Monday night Zoom meditation will be postponed till mid year, so Subhana and those dedicated sitters will join us in the dojo or log onto the Thursday night Zoom meetings. Please remember, if you are not a member, to pay the facility fee of \$10 if you're sitting at Annandale or \$5 for online meditation. This money helps to pay our rent at Annandale and costs for Kodoji, pay the teachers' stipends, and a variety of other costs we incur. Our bank details are on the website.

### Zazenkais

The Board is keen to encourage more people to come to our zazenkais each month on a Sunday morning, so will be sending out reminders the week before they are held. Zazenkais are a great opportunity to develop your practice with a longer sit and a teisho by a teacher, so make sure you put them in your diary and come along!

### Kickstart Your Practice

This wonderful initiative in December and January, run by Stephen and Julie, was a great success, and will continued seasonally throughout this year. Keep an eye out on the What's On for the dates in Autumn to rejuvenate your practice in the morning, as the weather cools.

### Leadership

Please come along to experience sitting and chanting together once again at Annandale and think about taking up one of the important roles in the dojo. And if you'd like to learn how to become an Ino, Jiki or Jisha, please talk to a leader on a sitting night, so you can do it on the spot. We have a new way of managing the schedule of leaders and teachers – a fabulous interactive google doc that John set up for us. That means it's much easier for everyone to fill out the schedule. Thanks to everyone who devotes their time to the sangha in this generous way.

## Regular Notices

### RETURN TO ANNANDALE ZENDO / CONTINUATION OF ON-LINE MEDITATION

Please see the regular SZC email reminders for Zoom links, or email [info@szc.org.au](mailto:info@szc.org.au) for details.

#### Mondays

**Annandale** - Subhana and other teachers on alternate weeks

#### Tuesdays online

##### Mini morning meditation

6.55–7.00am Join/welcome

7.00–7.25am Meditation

7.25–7.30am Great Vows

#### Wednesdays

**Annandale** - Gillian and Will Moon on alternate weeks

#### Thursdays online

With Jane Andino or Peter Bursky

7.00–8.00pm Meditation/walking

8.00–8.30pm Discussion/Great Vows



'Clarity', calligraphy by Taz Kanahashi

#### Dokusan for members

**Annandale** - Dokusan is offered to members by our teachers on some Mondays and every Wednesday

**Phone** - Dokusan is offered by Subhana on Thursdays and Gilly by appointment

#### The Blue Mountains Zen Group

We meet via Zoom on Sunday afternoons.

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

Please email Jane at [janeandino@yahoo.com.au](mailto:janeandino@yahoo.com.au) for more details.



## Members of the Board

Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) [stewartkerry4@gmail.com](mailto:stewartkerry4@gmail.com), Zoe Thurner (secretary), Joe Gaebel (treasurer), William Verity, John McLean, Helen Sanderson, Julie Robinson.

**Newsletter Editor:** Janet Selby [janetselby@bigpond.com](mailto:janetselby@bigpond.com)

**SZC:** [info@szc.com.au](mailto:info@szc.com.au), [www.szc.org.au](http://www.szc.org.au)

# February 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	2 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	3	4
5	6 ZAZEN Annandale <i>FMC</i> <i>Not</i> <i>Misusing</i> <i>Sex</i> 7-9pm Subhana	7	8 ZAZEN Annandale <i>FMC</i> <i>Not</i> <i>Misusing</i> <i>Sex</i> 7-9pm Gilly	9 ZAZEN Zoom <i>FMC</i> <i>Not</i> <i>Misusing</i> <i>Sex</i> 7-9pm Peter	10	11
12	13  ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Peter	14  Board Meeting 6:30pm	15  ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	16  ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	17	18
19  Zazen kai Talk, Maggie	20  ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	21	22  ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	23  ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	24	25
26	27  ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Maggie	28  Orientation				

# March 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	2 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	3	4 Women's Retreat
5 Women's Retreat	6 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Senior students	7	8 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	9 Dharma Cafe Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	10	11
12	13 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Senior students	14 Board Meeting 6:30pm	15 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	16 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	17	18
19 Zazenka Talk Paul	20 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	21	22 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	23 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	24	25 Kodoji Samu
26 Kodoji Samu	27 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Peter	28 Orientation	29 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	30 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	32	