



MIND MOON CIRCLE

SZC Sangha Journal
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Thank you for contributing.
MMC Winter edition is edited by Kerry and Brendon Stewart.

SHE'LL NEVER KNOW

Maggie Gluek

*Many years ago
in a northern spring
I went shopping
with a new friend.*

*She was the mother of Rafe,
my son's playmate,
four years old, stolid, redheaded
and secure—
he could count on his mother
being generous
and not easily thrown
off balance.*

*I can't remember
why we needed food—
was it for a picnic?—
but imprinted on my mind
on my body
is the way she lifted
groceries out of the trolley
and placed them on the counter.*

*I saw this for the first time,
this no effort.*

*Carefully and noiselessly,
one by one,
she took each thing in loving relationship,
meeting the packet of cheese
the loaf of bread
the bottle of juice
with the reverent action
some reserve for
Special Occasions,
and talked animatedly
all the while.*

*I have thought often
of this checkout teaching,
remembering, sometimes
and suddenly,
in the midst of impatiently enduring,
to stop
and embody her peace..*

Before each meal, the Master Chin Niu himself would personally take the rice pail and do a dance in front of the monks' hall: laughing aloud, he would say, "Little Bodhisattvas come and eat your rice!"

Hsueh-tou said, 'Though he acted like this, Chin Niu was not good-hearted.'

Later, a monk asked Ch'ang Ch'ing, "Long ago, a teacher said, "Little Bodhisattvas, come and eat your rice!" What was his meaning?"

Ch'ang Ch'ing said, 'That was a sort of grace before the meal.' (1)

...

That was Chin Niu's expression of the Dharma, which he kept up for twenty years, each time offering his unique spontaneous ceremonial gift to his sangha.

Our Diamond Sangha meal ceremonies are also 'a sort of grace before the meal' - whether we're holding hands in a circle and chanting, 'We venerate the Three Treasures and are grateful for this food, the work of many people and the sharing of other forms of life' or, more formally, led by the Ino, chanting as food is brought in, offered, and served. The sangha chanting as one, grateful for the beings that have given their lives for us, is an experience of ceremonial unity and harmony, as is the Jukai Ceremony, when people take the Precepts as their own, and our Full Moon, Baby Naming and Memorial ceremonies with their timelessness, love and expressions of interbeing.

As a newcomer to Zen practice, I chose to take on the Ino role so I would have to go to Lindfield (where our dojo was back then) each week. There in our sutra ceremony, I'd experience the sangha reuniting after a busy

week and, over many years, the beauty of ceremony deepens.

Then there are those more intimate, personal and idiosyncratic ceremonies.

"Every day, when I wake up and climb out of bed, I get down on the floor where my cat is waiting and press my forehead against his. We both stay there for a minute, breathing through our nostrils, and for years now, that's how the day has started." (2)

How does your day start? Is there a ritual? Or is it different every day?

When I wake, after doing 'in bed zazen', I bring to mind Thich Nhat Hanh's morning gatha:

Waking up this morning, I smile,

24 brand new hours are before me.

I vow to live fully each moment,

And look at all beings

with eyes of compassion.

Mysteriously, at this point my dog shakes herself loudly on the nearby sofa, jumps up onto the bed and hurls her body against mine. If I play dead, she keeps changing her position, throwing herself at my legs or shoulders until I say, "Let's get up!" and throw off the doona. Time for a chicken bone, time for zazen.

How does your day end?

When I was a child, I'd kneel on the floor beside my bed and ask God to take care of the people I loved, no doubt inspired by Christopher Robin. These days, I practise 'in bed' zazen, each breath its own ceremony.

At the end of the sesshin day, the Jisha's powerful words in the evening ceremony walk us across the paddock to our tents:

Life and death is a grave matter,

all thing pass quickly away.

Each of us should be completely alert,

never neglectful, never indulgent.

I recall a sangha friend saying he rolled out his sleeping bag with the same gratitude and attention as when he bowed on entering the dojo, grateful for everything, grateful for this life, every action a ceremony. Brushing his teeth - going to the toilet - chopping carrots - fully present, completely alert.

In the mid-80's, when we began building at Gorricks Run, so as to honour and make sacred our project, we improvised a ceremony, recalling ancient builders' rituals. We placed a coin on a corner concrete pad of the tank stand, the first building, then chanted together. The little band of builders performed this ceremony at the start of every build, whether





toilets, bath-house, cottage, hojo or dojo. When our dojo was officially opened by Aitken Roshi, in 2001, the truly magnificent ceremony was attended by 150 people - and one small dog. He approached Aitken Roshi, who was sitting near the altar, was warmly welcomed and become part of the ceremony. Does the dog...?

Curiously, on one of our very early visits to 'the land' (which is what we called Gorrick's Run back then) we came upon pair of aged



farmers' boots standing neatly together in the paddock, a poignant message from an unknown farmer. We bowed.

Notes:

1. The Blue Cliff Record, Case 74.
2. 'Can a book get me inside my cat's head?' Ronnie Scott, SMH, 8/4/23

CEREMONY: THE QUEST FOR SACRED RITUAL

Caroline Josephs

From Middle English 'cerymonye, from Latin Caerimonia (sacredness, reverence, a sacred rite).

Did my quest for the sacred, for ritual, ceremony, begin in India, in 1967? A series of chance encounters ...serendipity, of a meeting with a young Canadian woman in Ireland, and then to Holland where I had planned to go to hear Krishnamurti speak in Amsterdam.. Krishnamurti was the One Chosen by Annie Besant as the 'new messiah' for the Theosophists. I wanted to see him in person. I had read his book.

Krishnamurti (b.1895- d. 1986) was philosopher, speaker and writer. In his early life he was chosen to be groomed to be the new Teacher/ Messiah, an advanced spiritual position in the Theosophical tradition. He was mentored through this process by Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater. He later rejected the mantle and withdrew from the organisation behind it. His interests included psychological revolution, the nature of mind, meditation, holistic enquiry, human relationships and bringing about radical change in society...I was a fascinated reader of his words and intentions. It was 1967 when I went to hear him speak with an enormous audience in Amsterdam, I was 24 y.o. (It was perhaps, the first time I had heard of 'meditation'.)

After the talk, with my Canadian friend we were invited by a bunch of her Canadian University mates to meet in someone's place,

for food, conversation, drinks...

There we met Gerrit, who was Dutch, but been at university in Canada and was on his way to becoming a Canadian University volunteer in India. But first he was visiting his parents in Veenendahl. We two were invited to join him. G. and I biked along the walls of the canals...visiting family in Holland, and then I went on, to learn Italian language in Perugia, Italy, and he went on to India. He was to be a Canadian University volunteer - teaching in Chandigarh, a modern, planned city in the Punjab.

Much later, when I left London to return home at the end of that year, I decided to stop off briefly to visit the Srivastava family in Punjab where Gerrit was staying, teaching (and on his way later, to becoming a monk). My stay in India... was to turn into 6 months!

On my first day in Chandigarh, I was invited with the Srivastava family to their neighbour's daughter's wedding. A very important sacred Hindu Ceremony. I remember being introduced to the silent bride (she had never seen her husband to be...). The ceremony and all that was to follow arranged for the two principal participants by their parents. The young women sat, veiled, with hands inscribed with red dyes...patterns of significance. I was invited with other women to view her sitting, oh so still, awaiting the ceremony to determine her future. The groom arrives with entourage of males...on a handsome horse.. I recall the colour, the movement.

Srivastava, the father of the family where I stayed (with his wife and 5 children)...

was a guide for Maharishi Mahesh Yogi... of Transcendental Meditation fame. I was taught the beginnings of meditation, and given a mantra. Although the home was modest, one entire room was set aside solely for meditation. Later my Canadian teacher friend Gerrit and I were invited to speak at a very large gathering in Amritsar of followers of T.M. -- on our experience. (As foreigners in that time we were objects of curiosity. You couldn't stand still and chat in the street, or a crowd would gather to observe!)

Later, through the Canadian volunteers, I am invited to a Sikh's house for a beautiful dinner, with servants, a variety of people -- diplomats, artists, writers, well-educated Indians. The Sikh is a patron and supporter of the Arts, artists, and has a wide circle of friends. To thank him for the evening, I go to the market looking for a gift. I find a garland, of marigolds -- and hang it with a thank-you note on his front door. And leave. He comes to where I am staying in a very modest hotel, sitting reading on the charpoy bed. The door opens. He says, 'You know what you brought me? A wedding garland! So...will you marry me?'

The Sikh has studied and lived in America (is working as an architect for the American Embassy in India, degrees from Harvard, Rochester). We travel together to Rishikesh. It is Feb 1968 and I have been living in India for a few months. The Beatles (not sighted) are in residence as the Maharishi gives a talk to a small intimate audience...I have already requested and been given, in Delhi, an audience with him -- where I offer to work as volunteer for the movement.

As the Sikh and I travel in the Himalayas,

we swim in the Ganges (myself wrapped in a sheet I recall) watching the logs floating down from forest culling -- further up the river).

After some months in Delhi, I depart --for Sydney, homesick for the coast of Australia...

Or I am wondering....did my quest for the sacred, for ceremony...begin back in early 1950s in Manly,

I grew up in Manly, (Sydney). When the Scripture classes were being determined in primary school -- I chose to be in the Church of England group, as did NOT want to be with the 'Others'...a small group of people who did not fit anywhere. I wanted to BELONG.

And so, every week, the Reverend Begbie, the minister from St Matthew's Church on the Corso in Manly beguiled us with stories of 'Pilgrim's Progress', a step by step adventure. I wasn't to know then, that this was a journey in search of the sacred. A sacred allegory. I loved it! And I was then asked to accompany a few others and Richard Begbie (the minister's son and friend since Infants' School)...to meet with his father in the church one afternoon a week, while he told us Bible stories. We were to draw pictures from them, and speak of our drawings...

Or did my serious search for the sacred, for ritual and ceremony, begin in 1979? After a 10-year marriage ended. I had 2 children. I was teaching, studying...?? Living in Canberra...

Sometime about then I was to encounter Zen. The rituals of sitting, chanting, of kin hin... I had met Zen practice in Canberra where

I was living, through a senior student who came to visit. My partner and I at the time 1979-1986 set up a small sitting group in our home...We listened to Aitken Roshi tapes, we read articles from Hawaii, and we meditated. The group dispersed after a time.

I went searching again. At first, I found the Quakers who were not into 'ceremony'...just silence, and speaking truth in a circle. Social action was important. It was comforting to be with these people -- a time of uncertainty about my life.

My work was all-consuming, guiding a huge project, across the Arts, across Australia...I increased my time with the project over years as I worked part-time when the kids were small, to full-time later as the project matured as they did. I sold my home, moved from Canberra to Sydney, my hometown. My children growing. Studying in Melbourne, Canberra...

Or was it the time of Siddha and reconnecting with Zen that the sacred, ritual, ceremony were revealed? Late 1980s. Then through friends steeped in Hindu-based Siddha Yoga practices, I found Siddha in Dulwich Hill...a marvellous entry to ritual dancing, colour, sound, talks, food wonders...where I went weekly for some time, culminating in meeting the young, beautiful leader from India, Gurumayi, and being 'bopped' on the head by her, with the peacock feather (another ritual of the sacred!) in the presence of about three thousand other curious seekers at Darling Harbour! And in Sydney at the Harold Park Hotel Poetry readings (that occurred on a regular basis at that time)...sat next to Gilly!! And she introduced myself and my companion, to Sydney Zen Centre.

I began to sit there...only about max 10 people. No teacher. I had jobs. My children growing, one in Melbourne studying. Or did some other form of ceremony, another culture... imprint Country with Sacred - Darwin meeting?

In the 1990s I was giving a presentation in Darwin, on the project I was coordinating from Canberra--, across the Arts, across 3 states of Australia, for primary and secondary school teachers...As I finished my presentation, an Indigenous man came up to shake my hand and thank me for the story of the Rainbow. I didn't realise then, how significant the rainbow was as a sacred symbol for the Yolngu. It was Wandjuk Marika. We sat together in the garden and talked for hours. He told me 3 of his dreaming stories. I wrote them down later, although I had no idea what they were about. This was to lead me more and more into the Yolngu culture and the ceremonies at Garma (Yolngu cultural event - I visited 3 times in early 2000s, meeting Gulumbu who called me 'sister' and took me bush with a small group of women to find plants for basket weaving, for healing)...It was the beginning of another exploration of the sacred. At Garma each evening would be dancing. I was able to join in there too, again by chance. That's another story....

The third time I was at Garma, at the end of the time there --All the other foreigners had left the campground homeward bound. I discovered that there was to be a sacred ceremony -- the initiation of the boys as they became men. They were to leave the 'mothers' and join the 'men', the fathers, uncles...I sat and watched the whole thing. No one indicated that it was secret. I had been accepted into the group it seemed.

Wandjuk had given my children Aboriginal names. Gulumbu allowed me this privilege to observe what was not hidden.

I had already met Uncle Max, a Yuin Elder, as I worked and studied at UWS. He became an important part of my life...from the 1990s, as I organised many trips with whitefellas and U. Max to walk Country and hear his stories. On the south coast, on Gulaga mountain...sacred to the Yuin. There we did ceremony, as he prepared the group to go in silence. To experience the magnificent rocks there along the walk, each one a time of absorption in Nature, in Country. We had walked for two hours to reach the top of the mountain.

Or did my search intensify as I felt free to explore my own hidden heritage through the "Jew in the Lotus"? Rabbis' meetings with a Buddhist (the Dalai Lama) to ask questions.

Some years after the dissolution of my first marriage to a German, I decided to take up attempting to understand my own hidden silenced heritage. I read a book, 'The Jew in the Lotus', about 12 rabbis who go on a journey to meet the Dalai Lama, asking him many questions. I was a Zen Buddhist. I knew there was only one Rabbi in the contingent that interested me: it was Rabbi Schachter-Sholomi! I rang him in America. His wife answered. He was sick...at that time. I read his books. Eventually, he was to visit Sydney for the first time. I organised to meet him. To take Uncle Max to meet him. The Rabbi's wife was also a lively, interesting person...and I did a workshop on storytelling with her.

They both presented at Temple Emanuel and some of my group (I had formed a 'Jewish Affinities Group' with friends, of oddball

Jews -- who were interested in sharing experiences, meditations, dance and music, telling stories. We met regularly.

I also did two seven-day retreats in upstate NY with another Rabbi, David Cooper and his wife Shoshana, who were disciples of Schachter-Sholomi's. David Cooper had been born Jewish but was Buddhist for 15 years. Marvellous people full of wisdom, humour and insight. Rabbi Cooper would un-pack each of the Hebrew words of the prayers... which was wondrous for me! And allow us full space to dance to the chants! Superb experiences in a snow-covered commune setting, where each day I also did 5 Rhythms Dance in a beautiful simple synagogue, looking out to a frozen lake, squirrels, and sky...

And so began my dual investigations...slowly slowly, the Judaic, Zen as primary, (Jukai in 1994) and later also 'Diamond Essence' and 'Hakomi' (from North American greeting, "How is it with you in the many realms?" In 2022, Donald and I married...we had the Judaic chuppah, the glorious voice in Hebrew of my dear friend Angela, the Jewish Celebrant, the 3 times circling of each of the partners, the vows, the breaking of the bottle....And the Zen ceremony with Subhana, as long-time celebrant too, invoking all the creatures, the wind, sea on our perch on the deck of the ocean swim pool...where we swim each day, relishing nature, the ocean, sky. Always the sacred...Always will be doing that...to become the questing, the learning, the sacred, the ritual, the ceremony.

...

for Sally

*When everything quiets down,
there is a sound clear and new,
out of no space hands
find each other in gasho.*

*Moving through the whole body
like two grains of salt in water,
never knowing whether
crying or laughing.*

*Sun is almost up, its time to go,
there are things to be done but first
glance at the mirror and see
the true world.*



Photograph by Glenys Jackson

SPRINKLING HOLY WATER ON THE DRAGON'S TAIL

Subhana Barzaghi

The 'Four Divine Abodes' are known as the 'Brahma Viharas' in the Pali language or are called the 'Four Immeasurables' in the Mahayana and Zen tradition. The immeasurable qualities of the Boundless Heart are; Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity. They are considered immeasurable because you cannot quantify them. There is no end to their cultivation and if you practice them, they will grow, expand and embrace your life and the world. An open heart has the power to heal and transform your life from the inside out and give deep meaning to your life. With consistent dedicated practice they can become your natural abiding place.

Love is; a practice, a path, an intention, an action, a choice and a divine doorway. It is also one of the great Koans, something that the heart needs to resolve. How to love well in this life is a great noble task. In my opinion, love is one of the most important koans after the foundational koan 'Mu'. Love sits alongside, Ch'ang-sha's profound invocation, "Take a step from the top of the 100ft pole and the worlds of the 10 directions are your total body" and Yun Men's promise, "Every day is a Good day".

There is a medieval Christian legend of Sprinkling Holy Water on the Dragon's tail which is very instructive in how to respond with love and compassion to difficult situations and suffering. I first heard about this legend from dear friend, Interfaith minister and acclaimed writer, Rev., Stephanie Dowrick. Stephanie recounts this legend beautifully in her latest book, "Anxiety is Not Your Name". It is a story about Martha the sister of Mary Magdalene, both devotees of Jesus of Nazareth. The sisters moved to south France after Jesus died and started a Christian community there. Historically that part seems to be true. Now, this is where the legend kicks in.

The village where Martha ended up was visited by a dragon that unsurprisingly terrified the villagers. The dragon was half fish, half animal, had a head of a lion with horns and sharp teeth and the tail of a serpent. The villagers' first impulse was to slay the dragon. But Martha's way was different. First, she sprinkled the tail of the dragon with holy water, offered a blessing, then she tied her own silken belt around its neck. Perhaps she spoke some soothing words to the dragon saying, "I will not harm you." Martha tamed the dragon and led the beast out of the village... and the dragon allowed itself to be led.

As with all legends, each of these characters is an archetype that resonates inside you and me. Each of us is Martha, the terrified villager and has a dragon part which could be related to our primitive brain, our archaic untamed impulses or automatic reactivity. Often our first



TAMING THE DRAGON, Painting by Mayumi Oda

impulse is to get rid of what endangers us, is unpleasant or what we don't like. Treating an unwelcome visitor to our minds with kindness and compassion as well as skill is a transformative choice we can make. Each of us also has the capacity for deep listening, observing, discerning, capable of a loving and compassionate response.

As Stephanie invites us, "What would change if you were to treat yourself with greater kindness? How would that change your experiences of suffering; your anxiety, your disruptive moods, feelings of anger and irritability, that can be unwelcome visitors? How could you sprinkle holy water onto the 'tail' of your vulnerability, anxiety or inner harsh critic? Or on that difficult relationship in your life. How could you move your silken belt (that keeps things secure) from one part of your body-mind to where it is most needed?"

I told this legend to a dear dharma friend and dharma teacher who recently had surgery for breast cancer. She is now facing radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatment due to an aggressive form of cancer. Chemotherapy was something that she was dreading. She loved this legend and the inspiration of sprinkling holy water on the cancer and leading in out of her body... her village. She said, "I don't hate the cancer, I'm not going to do battle with the dragon, so this compassionate approach feels like a way forward."

The Pali word for loving-kindness is metta which has two root meanings. One is, “gentle’, like the gentle rain that moistens the parched earth and nourishes the many beings, the other is, ‘friend’. The healing art of metta is to be such a good friend to oneself and others. One of the more challenging tasks of love is learning to befriend oneself. It’s a practice of welcoming all the many parts of oneself, warts and all. Welcoming old regrets, vulnerability, pain, anxiety, sorrow, hurt and grief into the compassionate crucible of zazen. Breathe and soothe, attend and befriend’ has been my healing moto. As Rumi invites us in his poem called ‘Guest House’.....make of yourself a guest house... “even if they’re a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture, still, treat each guest honourably, they may be clearing you out for some new delight.”

‘Beloved singer, songwriter Leonard Cohen in his song ‘Anthem’ invites us to honour our tender painful places of our inner life.

“Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in.”

Our inner work is to also inquire into all the ways in which we block love, the barriers that we have constructed against the flow of love. We block the open heart through our judgements, criticisms, comparing mind, attachment to views. When we find it difficult to love, it is because we have built up and identify with a defended ‘ego self’ rather than abiding in the inter-connected oneness of everything. We have created ‘selfing’ and ‘othering’. Who is that other is a worthy koan?

In the wisdom teachings, the conceit of ‘I am’ is the subtle conceit of the self that separates us from the rest of life. If we think, “I am better than you, I am less than you or equal to you”, this is the projection of self against other. It is not the boundless immeasurable nature of loving-kindness.

I’m still a child at heart and enjoy the delightful characters in the children’s story, “Winnie the Pooh” by English author A.A. Milne. They are simple tales of joyful mischief and friendship. Winnie the Pooh is a cute bear with little brain but has a good heart and loves honey. Piglet is a joyful character and Poohs best friend and Eeyore is the sad depressive donkey.

“It occurred to Pooh and Piglet that they hadn’t heard from Eeyore for several days, so they put on their hats and coats and trotted across the Hundred Acre Wood to Eeyore’s house. Inside the house was Eeyore. “Hello Eeyore,” said Pooh.

"Hello Pooh. Hello Piglet" said Eeyore, in a glum sounding voice.

"We just thought we'd check on you," said Piglet, "because we hadn't heard from you, and so we wanted to know if you were okay."

Eeyore was silent for a moment. "Am I okay?" he asked, eventually. "Well, I don't know, to be honest. Are any of us really, okay? That's what I ask myself. All I can tell you, Pooh and Piglet, is that right now I feel really rather sad, and alone, and not much fun to be around at all. Which is why I haven't bothered you. Because you wouldn't want to waste your time with someone who is sad, and alone, and not much fun to be around at all, would you now?"

Pooh looked and Piglet, and Piglet looked at Pooh, and they both sat down, one on either side of Eeyore in his stick house. Eeyore looked at them in surprise. "What are you doing?" "We're sitting here with you, because we are your friends", said Pooh. "And true friends don't care if someone is feeling sad or alone, or not much fun to be around at all. True friends are there for you anyway. And so here we are."

"Oh," said Eeyore. "Oh." And the three of them sat there in silence, and while Pooh and Piglet said nothing at all; somehow, almost imperceptibly, Eeyore started to feel a tiny little bit better, because Pooh and Piglet were there."

Just like the characters in this story we sit together side by side in silence at sesshin. Sangha companions accompanying each other along the path, the practice of Sangha relations becoming complete. When we are simply being present, we start to feel better because of that presence.

We are built for love, born to love, it is hard-wired in us for survival. No doubt you have felt, tasted and known love's softening, longing and intimacy. Do doubt you have also hungered for the deep need to be loved. We are relational beings. We wake up in the morning in a relational network to the life of breath and the light streaming in the window illuminating the day. We are constantly in relationship whether it is with friends, loved ones, family, work colleagues, strangers, the local bus driver or the café barista. Cultivating the boundless heart is to cultivate a friendliness to all beings whether we like them or not.

The relational mirror instantly reveals equally those painful valleys as well as the peaks of joy. There is nothing like intimacy to reveal where we hold back, contract and avoid loves steady gaze. We can be hijacked by our; fears, insecurity, our irritableness, our unrealistic expectations of one another, projections, arguments, excessive neediness, defensiveness and the lack of forgiveness. Of course, there is the broken-heartedness that we can experience



BUTTERFLIES DRINKING TURTLES TEARS.

when we open the door of love and it goes awry. Who amongst us has not been hurt in an intimate relationship? Zen teacher, John Tarrant Roshi said, "The Tao breaks our hearts so that we may know our own depths." I've treasured those words especially when things are not easy. When I have felt broken hearted and practiced self-compassion it has transformed my pain and that same quivering in the heart can respond to others suffering.

When we feel empty, lonely and needy it initially makes sense to seek out someone to love us. This emptiness however is not the emptiness of realisation but an empty lonely gnawing hole inside of us. No one in the history of the world has been able to fill the emptiness of another person. Even a good loving relationship only fills the well for brief amounts of time. Finally, we learn to stop trying to find fulfillment out there from others. If I am needy of your love then I am at your mercy. I am entangled with you. You may choose to give or withhold love. That hole can only be filled by you. It is a poignant and hard lesson to learn.

If I choose to love for no other reason than for love's sake, then I am not entangled with you, my heart is free and open to embrace life. Jeff Kober a Vedanta teacher said, "I can choose to love you, whether you know I'm doing it or not, whether you reciprocate this or not. I can

choose to love you in spite of your difficulties with me. I can love you anytime, anywhere.”

Altruistic Compassion

When love meets suffering it turns to compassion. Compassion is a multi-textured mature response to pain, sorrow, anguish and distress. Compassion is a combination of; kindness, empathy, generosity plus an intention to alleviate suffering. Professor Paul Gilbert founder of the Compassionate Mind Foundation says that compassion is much more of an action than a feeling. Compassion underlies the whole path of awakening; it is a caring response to all beings whether they are in our close circle or not. It's compassion for the inevitable adversity that all human beings will experience whether it is sickness, ageing and death or the psychological and emotional afflictions that cause anguish in the mind. Not all pain can be 'fixed' or 'solved' but all suffering is made more approachable in a landscape of kindness.

Sprinkling holy water on the dragon's tail is also offering compassion to the so called 'dragon enemy' or difficult relationship. What about your relationship with your ex-partner? I have to admit I am still working on that one. We need to dig deep. Courage, forgiveness and equanimity all play their part and are equally woven into the cloth of altruistic compassion. The Dalai Lama said, compassion is a moral force and the experience of it has a radiating effect, it extends kindness and forgiveness toward others even those who have intentionally hurt us and transgressed.

I heard poet and activist Anastasia Radievska from Ukraine speak of such deep wisdom and compassion on Soul Search RN. She said, "When we suffer with someone, when we allow someone's suffering to break open our shell of ourselves and turn us towards them, turn us to something that is not ourselves ... there's a seed of community there, there's a co-existence. Because your suffering is my suffering, therefore we have to do something about it, right?" According to ground-breaking interpersonal, neurobiologist and researcher Dr. Daniel Siegel: the mind is a "we" not an "I". The 'we' emerges out of the alchemy between our brain and our relationships that develop over the life span. We are not an isolated island but develop through all those inter-personal relational experiences.

At the deepest level altruistic love and compassion is based on the insight and understanding of our inter-connectedness and oneness with all of life. I came across an interesting true story of inter-species connection and dependency. There are yellow spotted river turtles that live in the rain forest of the western Amazon. While they sun back on the banks of the river, they attract golden butterflies that drink their tears. I am struck by the beautiful image of the butterflies descending and fluttering around the turtles' eyes. Scientists think that they

are attracted to the salt in the watery tears. Salt is an important rare mineral in the Amazon jungle which it is about 1,000kms from the ocean. Turtles get plenty of sodium through their carnivorous diet.

Can you recognise your butterfly and turtle nature? The experience of inter-being invites us to reach out and touch the immense diversity of the human condition. The open heart is the way of inclusion, Walt Whitman said in his famous poem, 'Song of Myself', "I am large, I contain multitudes". Walt Whitman's poetry was based on the understanding of an expansive vision of ourselves that contains all of humanity. In this vein we are the dark starry night, the screech of the cockatoos flying south, the ache in the heart, the poor refugee, the burnt forest, the difficult person, those sick and suffering, all can be held in a compassionate embrace. It's an invitation to cultivate that quality of kindness and compassion to free our hearts from fear, separation and alienation.

Embodying unconditional love and wisdom. The boundless heart is a wide-open joyful gateway to our self-less nature. Abiding in love is also an act of stepping beyond one's small self, to truly meet and surrender to love is also to meet the great mystery in your heart which is vast and fathomless. Advaita Vedanta teacher Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj encapsulates the essence of an awakened heart-mind in his famous verse:

"Wisdom teaches me I am nothing,
love teaches me I am everything,
between these two poles my life flows."

The combination of wisdom and love is so beautifully expressed in To-Rei Zenji's Bodhisattva's Vow, "When I regard the true nature of the many dharmas I find them all to be the sacred forms of the Tathagata's never-failing essence. Each particle of matter, each moment is no other than the Tathagata's inexpressible radiance." Inexpressible love.

Love teaches me I am everything. With this opening you can feel your joyful inter-connectedness to the mountains and rivers, stones and clouds, flowers and all creatures great and small. As Aitken Roshi said, awakening is often referred to as true intimacy. In the light of true intimacy, I am you, you are me. We enter the way and find a true intimacy and belonging with the river of our own true nature right where we stand. I am reminded of Dongshan Liangjie's deep realisation as he was crossing a stream and saw his reflection in the water. Later he composed a verse to express it:

Don't seek after other places or the self will recede far away.

Now I walk alone, yet everywhere I meet it.

It's no other than myself, yet "I" am not it.

You must see it like this to merge with "suchness."

When Dongshan Liangjie was ready to continue on, Master Yuanzhou said, "Make a thorough study of the Way of Awakening and broadly benefit the world."

Dongshan said, "I have no question about studying the Way of Awakening, but how does one broadly benefit the world?"

Yuanzhou said, "Not to disregard a single being."

Love of the Way and fulfilling our Bodhisattva vows of saving the many beings is to not disregard a single being. This is the way of true intimacy that broadly benefits the world.

Love and wisdom are to be embodied. Its currency is immeasurable. You can find true ease and peace in this sublime abiding.

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A MEDITATION ON RITUAL AND CEREMONY

Maggie Gluek

Yun men said, "See how vast and wide the world is. Why do you put on your seven-piece robe at the sound of the bell?"

The world is vast and wide and your options are endless. Why do you put on your dark and loose-fitting clothes and get in the car and travel to spend the day/evening in this room and stand up when the inkin rings? It's a good question and I can't answer it for you. The wonderful thing about the deepest questions—here we have the vastness of "Why?"—is that only you can make them real, only you can realize them as your life. That's the only way they can be significant. And it's never simply a matter of logic.

I want to offer some reflections on what we do here at Annandale, and of course at sesshin; reflections specifically about the forms and rituals that we participate in and perform, and about how we realize ourselves in the process. As a point of clarification, because they are often conflated, ritual and ceremony might be distinguished in this way: ritual is the structure and the idea, ceremony is the performing of it. Ceremony may be customized, personalized—a wedding, a funeral, a baby naming, for example—while still adhering to a ritual structure.

It fascinates me that an ordinary room can transform into a dojo, a place of practice. How does that happen? There are fixed objects, most strikingly an altar and ceremonial objects on the altar. The aesthetic is refined. The bowls and figures have been chosen with care, many were gifts; they have character, history and beauty. This is a place of beauty, a place you want to remain in. The requisite elements are laid, sensual reminders: a dish of water, clear and life giving; two candles, light giving; incense, a vision of impermanence and a scented reminder when eyes are half-closed in meditation; flowers on the altar that bring joy, the beauty of the natural world and perhaps a particular season.

The Buddha is centrally placed, of course, with posture upright, body at ease. His face conveys deep samadhi. His earth-touching hand grounds this very present reality. The other unique denizens of the altar--Manjusri, Kuan Yin, Jizo, Tara-- bring forward different dimensions of the Dharma. It's good to have a look at them, let them speak to you. What do they have to say?

So, the altar is set. The cushions and instruments are placed appropriately, that is to say ordered. You and I smooth our zabutons, making sure they are in a straight line, plump up our zafus. Nothing is left randomly strewn. The care is significant. Each of us tends the dojo in this way and helps make it a place of beauty for others. An ordered environment

is important. I think of my bedroom when we haven't made the bed and how uninviting it is. A messy room—we all have them, as well as unmade beds—may be a source of creative inspiration. Nevertheless, along with a messy mind, it can be a distraction in practice. It's quite enough to work with that messy mind.

We chant sutras, describing a sacred space with our voices. The service is unvarying. And with time, the sutras and what they communicate—even if you don't understand a word--become mysteriously absorbed. They're focusing too. You enter wholeheartedly into each syllable. No time to miss a beat or ponder. We walk, circumambulating the room clockwise, an ancient ritual. And then sit down, settling into the zazen posture. This room is designated as a dojo, imbued with countless hours of zazen, with silence. But still, you and I remake it afresh each time we come here with the intention to practice. Bodhicitta is literally "raising the thought of enlightenment", the aspiration to enlightenment. Consciously or not, this aspiration, I believe, is what brings us to practice. Our motivation is not, as it may seem, selfish desire, but altogether the opposite. Namely, that bushes and grasses and we ourselves may realise together the truth of who we are. It is, happily, the work of a lifetime.

One of the great virtues of prescribed forms, of ritual, is that it frees you—perhaps even "trains" you-- to be truly present. Right here! There is no need to think about when or what to "do." Bells and clappers let you know. Nor is there really the option to think about what you do or do not want to do. You are freed in this time from the me that comes with the business of desire and aversion, wanting what is best for this little self. That wearying mind, along with the energetic planning/decision-making mind, and the random chattering mind, can be embraced by something bigger. Thus resolved and supported by the group in this common enterprise, you can give yourself completely to your zazen. Simply being in a dojo facilitates practice. When you step inside, workaday concerns are left at the door. You can fall in with the Way.

A bow of gratitude to Maezumi Roshi whose essay *On Ceremonial Action* has informed these reflections. He writes: We practice the Buddha Way, which is literally the laws or teachings of the Buddha. Dogen Zenji says "To practice the Buddha Way is to study oneself. To study oneself is to forget the self." What happens when you forget the self? The Buddha Way is revealed as your own life. This is the purpose of ceremony.....Ceremony can be defined as a form or discipline by which we avoid self-centeredness which causes our difficulty. By taking care of things in a ceremonial way, we become unified. Unifying yourself with Yourself as well as with everything."

What we do, we do together, as unique individuals but also as one. That is sangha—together

realizing, foregrounding, the empty interpenetrating spaciousness of one mind. The world is vast and wide!

Infinite realms of light and dark convey the Buddha Mind...birds and trees and stars and we ourselves come forth in perfect harmony.

In our chanting harmony can be heard literally. There's an anecdote, possibly apocryphal but it rings true, about a group of monastics who always chanted the divine offices together. One day for some reason they discontinued the practice. And then many monks begin to become ill more often. Finally someone thinks to reinstate chanting and good health returns to the monastery. Ceremony can heal, a word cognate with whole. To heal is to make whole. No-mind is the whole.

The world is vast and wide. There's always marvelous detail presenting itself, endless invitations to pay attention, to be present. And free. Here in the dojo? Detailed awareness of the breath and body. How you handle a sutra book, how you place one foot after another in kinhin, subtle things. How you strike an instrument to get the clearest sound. There is always an opportunity to refine how one practices anything. How you sit down and place yourself in zazen, arrange your legs and hands, checking to see that your body is straight, awake but at ease. How you bow. The bow is a perfect little ceremony in itself, in the sequence of movements, in the implicit surrender, throwing everything away. It's an act of dana, offering up the self and all the virtue of your zazen.

Elder Ting forgot himself, in another old Zen story.

Elder Ting asked Linchi, "What is the essence of Buddhism?"

Linchi descended from his Zen seat, grasped Elder Ting by the lapels of his robe, shook him, slapped him and pushed him away.

Ting just stood there.

"Elder Ting! Why don't you bow?" asked a monk.

As Ting bowed, he suddenly had great satori.

For him there was only that bow—as they say—in the whole universe.

An action that one takes again and again can be mechanical. "I already know what that is and meanwhile I need to figure out what to make for dinner." The "rote" rite. Or you can come to it fresh. No instant is ever repeated, after all. And right now—any "right now"—is an opportunity to wake up. Your regular zazen night may be the training ground, but that training extends and is implemented beyond the meditation hall.

Dogen Zenji, the great 12th c Japanese Zen teacher and writer, acknowledged as the founder of the Soto school, emphasized the significance of

understanding action in everyday life as practice. As a young man he had an encounter which was to have a profound influence on his subsequent understanding of the true nature of Buddhist practice. Having arrived in China, he was detained on the boat. There he met an old cook, one of the visitors to the boat, with whom he had many interesting exchanges. He asked the old man if could not stay on board a little longer. This is Dogen's account of what happened then....

"I'm sorry" said the cook, "but without my supervision, tomorrow's meals will not go well."

I replied, "In such a large monastery...there must be enough cooking monks to prepare the meal."

"Old as I am, I hold the office of tenzo. That is my training during my old age. How can I leave this duty to others?"

"Venerable sir! Why don't you do zazen or study the koans of ancient masters? What is the use of working so hard as a tenzo- cook?"

On hearing my remarks, he broke into laughter and said, "Good foreigner! You seem to be ignorant of the true training and meaning of Buddhism."

Dogen was still holding zazen and koan study on one hand, and everyday activity on the other. Later, to emphasize the primacy of every activity of our lives as the embodiment of the Dharma, he wrote prescriptions for his monks for, well, every activity. Famously there are rules for the cook. Rules for how you move into and out of the zendo--perhaps some of the ones we use today. Rules for oryoki--the meal ceremony, again still practiced by us today at sesshin. Instructions for washing oneself, for using the toilet.

All these do's and don'ts can look fussy to us. It's not a matter of right and wrong, but rather of supporting an opportunity to pay complete attention. "Unless you concentrate on one practice," says Dogen, "you cannot attain the one wisdom."

So, you can "get through" your daily routines to move onto what is more important or you can honor them as rituals. "Right" rites. Eating, pissing, doing the dishes, making your friend a cup of tea, typing on your laptop. The door is always wide open, isn't it? There's so much to celebrate right where you are.

The ceremonial spectacle of little things

Brendon Stewart

I work in our garden with Kerry most days. It's an old garden, an old suburban garden with many plantings that date back just on one hundred years. My grandfather tended this garden, planting out vegetable plots, some decorative perennials and setting aside a large chook yard. My father kept this up and during the years just following the second war our back yard, as these gardens were commonly called was almost all vegetable beds, although dad had a fascination for gladioli (RIP Barry Humphries). Kerry and I potter about, tending to a delicate bonsai forest, pruning and culling here and there but mostly just being with it.

The garden has taken on the dynamic of an ecosystem that more or less self sustains, we are just two participating big mammals here along with smaller animal, like possums and earth worms, rats and mice, frogs, various birds and lizards. Together we are all active in this self-producing, self-organising system, ecologists might say our garden and us all in it, is a generative mechanism.

There are shrines set in our garden. Two of them are clearly figurative, a reclining Buddha and a Grecian-urn lady; then too there is an explicitly sexual abstract piece prominent in amongst the orchids. The rooms in our garden are also charged with devotion, one room has bits'n'pieces and pictures of family ancestors, another has Buddha and her/his attendants on an alter and yet another is devoted to moon and star gazing when not being enjoyed for outdoor bathing.

We think of the garden as our place. Places are conceived as having an essential component of character, identity or 'spirit'. A place is clearly more than a topographical location or a physical structure. Places are interactive where some form of emerging meaning enlightens any experience there. This intangible feeling arises because our understanding of a place is bound up with that inexplicable sense of ourselves in the world, our being-in-the-world as Heidegger suggests.

All this simple story telling is to say that our garden time is gently ceremonial, I at least, offer small silent prayers to the enshrined beings of stone, vague prayers that search back to ancestors or seek some deliverance sometimes with a certain self-centred plea for wellbeing.

During sesshin I find myself caught in the quite ceremony of being alone with my body's complaints and strengths and the whirligig of my mind; present to my being-in-the-world. Sesshin highlights the sacred: our dojo - the sacred hall, the morning chorus of bird songs,



the Hungary ghosts that linger about, tents that dance to the strain of a rushing wind, dirty washing-up water, night time and the stars, the sweet putrid smell of the toilets, warm water.

Some ceremony seems raucous: big football games, hens or stag nights, burn-outs at a B'n'S ball, but they can hold us together, it's not always necessary to be silent with eyes downcast. Grand final fever lifts and shreds emotions just as a loving marriage ceremony can. Something good in being-in-the-world as a human is let free with these raucous ceremonies, there is a presentation of the red thread koan, erotic and erratic all at once.

Quietly however at sesshin, we take our meals each day, spreading our Oryoki bowls - has anyone ever tamed the blue bowl napkin?? These formal ceremonies of eating 'just the right amount' are so complete.

And then again under certain circumstances, as Henry James apparently said there are few hours in life more agreeable than those dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea.

The little ceremonies that get nurtured in a family: thank you at dinner time: the work of many hands and the sharing of other forms of life and stories being read in bed with favourite books over and over. Cuddles that smell of garlic and the day's labour. Ceremonies are archetypal - they gesture beyond need, standing to attention as the mystery of being in community is remembered and shared



k, so I'll ask myself why do I practice? Not everyone's practice will look the same.

A Zen teacher once said to me "Thoughts and feeling are empty, not everyone knows that." And when I sit not pursuing thoughts; not creating scenarios in my mind. Though sometimes I find myself doing just that and drop it.

I also think about the "I" and what it actually is. Can I free myself from false identities and painful states of mind? The "I" or this "me" seems to be a conglomerate of selves clamouring for attention. Some fly under the radar and can be difficult to apprehend. We sometimes hear about our shadow side. The exiled parts of ourselves we hide away in the basement and try to forget about. Do we have more than one shadow? Does doing a zazen practice help us to bond with our shadow and give them the recognition they crave?

A psychotherapist I read talks about 'the maze'. When we're stuck in the maze we're nursing old grievances and resentments and letting people take up (unwanted) residence in our minds. The way out of the maze is to send 'active love' or metta to the other person who's injured us. So, can we dissolve painful states of mind? Can we dissolve and let go of intrusive thoughts? And would this be a good reason to keep up an ongoing zazen/spiritual practice?

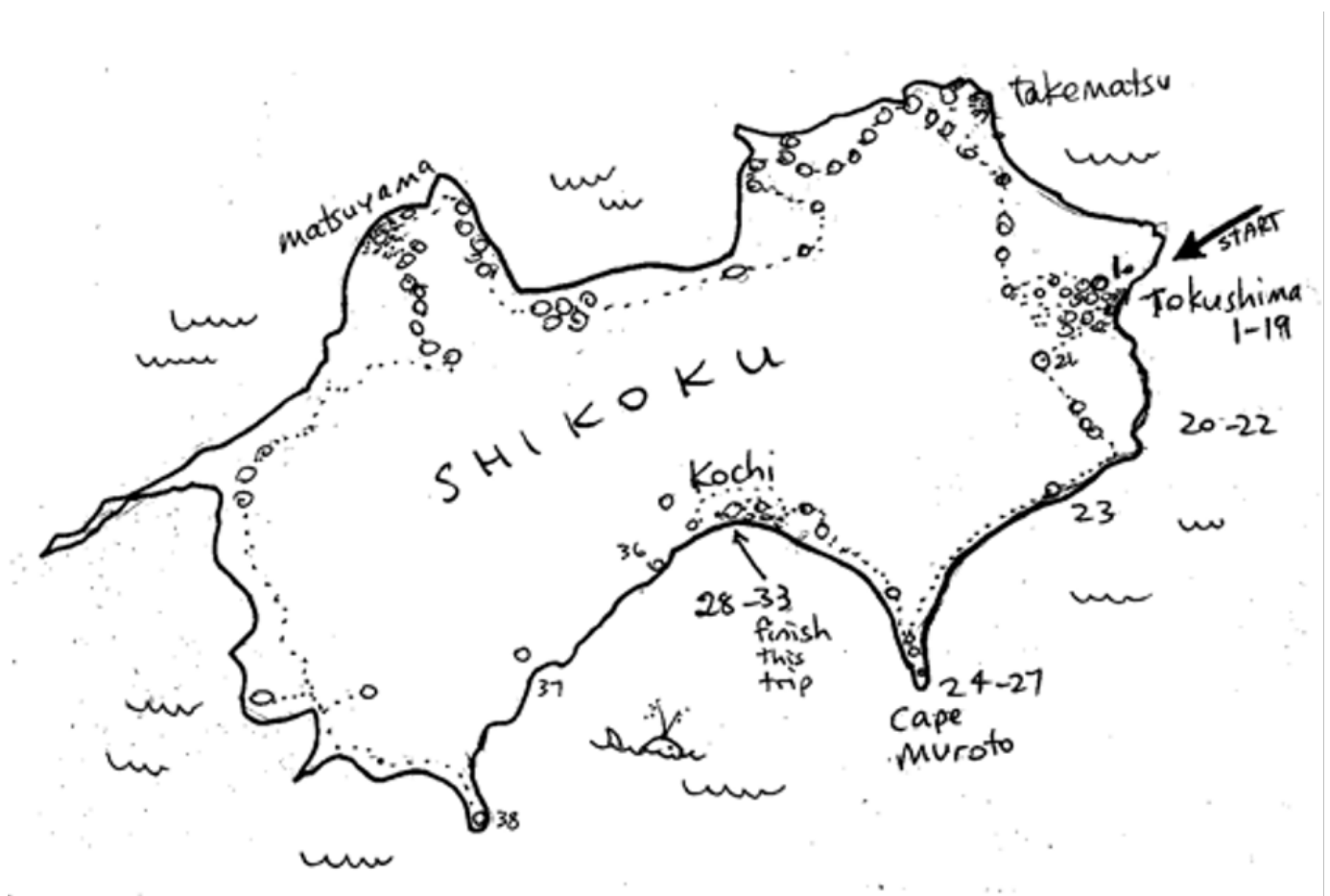
Not taking the daily things we encounter personally. Letting them fall away. Moving forward in our lives and not getting caught in the same harmful patterns of behaviour.

RITUAL ON SHIKOKU 88 PILGRIMAGE

Janet Selby

In 2017, I embarked on a three-week journey of ritual and ceremony with Allan Maratt, joined by Jillian Ball mid-way. This is some of my experience of that trip to the island of Shikoku, Japan.

The Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage is one of the few circular-shaped pilgrimages in the world. It includes 88 "official" temples and numerous other sacred sites where Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi) is believed to have trained or have spent time during the 9th Century. People undertake this journey for various reasons. Some go around the entire circuit in the temple order. Each temple is numbered 1 to 88. Some do it in smaller sections during their holidays. Some are just tourists. Or some people wish to spend time alone in reflection and to find oneself.



The Shikoku Pilgrimage started roughly 1,200 years ago. In the modern age, with the development of roads, more and more people are coming to make the pilgrimage either by car or bus. In recent years, however, the number of walking pilgrims from around the world has also been increasing.

Who is Kobo Daishi?

Kūkai, (774– 835) was posthumously called Kōbō Daishi ("The Grand Master who Propagated the Dharma"). He was a Japanese Buddhist monk, calligrapher, and poet who founded the esoteric Shingon school of Buddhism. Contrary to popular belief, Kūkai did not build all 88 temples which form the pilgrimage today. He never circled the island, nor did he perform the first pilgrimage. Kūkai only ever personally travelled to a few mountains on the island where some of the temples are located, although he was born in Temple 75. A guidebook for pilgrims first appeared in 1687, documenting the 88 temples in order. Pilgrims who undertake the journey are called Henro.

The kit:

1. sedge hat (菅笠 / sugegasa) It is useful to block the sun or rain.
2. white vest (白衣 / hakui) The white clothing worn by the pilgrim represents purity and innocence, however in the past it also held the meaning of a death shroud, symbolizing that the pilgrim was prepared to die at any time.



3. rosary (数珠 / juzu) This is a very familiar religious object to the Japanese. If you hold this while holding your hands together, it is said that the illusions of the mind will disappear, and good fortune will come upon you.
4. bell (持鈴 / jirei) The bell should be rung after each sutra is recited.
5. bag (頭陀袋 / zudabukuro) Items such as candles, incense, nameslips, pilgrimage book etc. are put in here.
6. stole (輪袈裟 / wagesa) This is symbolic of the full Buddhist robe and shows one's devotion. (like a mini rakusu)
7. staff (金剛杖 / kongōzue) This is said to be the embodiment of Kōbō Daishi, who guides pilgrims around the route.
8. nameslips (納札 / osamefuda) Write your name, address, date and place it in the nameslip box at the Main hall and Daishi hall. Give it to people from whom you receive gifts. (Locals run after you to offer gifts of snacks or lollies to the pilgrim who represents Kukai himself.)
9. pilgrimage book (納経帳 / nōkyōchō) This acts as proof that you have visited each temple. Have it signed and stamped after worshipping at each sacred site.



Ritual - What to do:

1. Main Gate (山門) Stand to the left of the main gate, put your hands together and bow once.
2. Wash basin (水屋) Wash your hands and mouth here, and then put on your wagersa and juzu.
3. Bell tower (鐘楼) Ring the bell once. It is bad luck to ring it when you leave.
4. Main Hall (本堂) This hall is for the Buddha. Place your nameslip in the appropriate box, light three sticks of incense and one candle, place a donation in the offertory box, stand to the left, put your hands together, and recite the Heart sutra.
5. Daishi Hall (大師堂) Worship in the same way as at the Main hall. This is the hall dedicated to Kobo Daishi.
6. Administration Office (納経所) Get your pilgrimage book stamped and signed here. (The tradition of temple stamps obtained at each temple originated in the Edo Period, when traveling was restrictive and highly regulated.)
7. Main gate (山門) Exit the main gate on the left side, turn around, and bow once.

What did it mean for me?

Having the benefit of the experienced Allan Maratt as my guide, I quickly formed a routine of assembling my kit, putting on my white henro robe, hat and staff (with little bell). Then the last item was the backpack. As we stayed in local inns along the way, we needed to carry all our gear with us. On emerging in this outfit each morning, I immediately felt part of a greater historic joint effort. Seeing other pilgrims along the way, finding them at the next temple, was a feeling of collaboration. On the same path, literally.

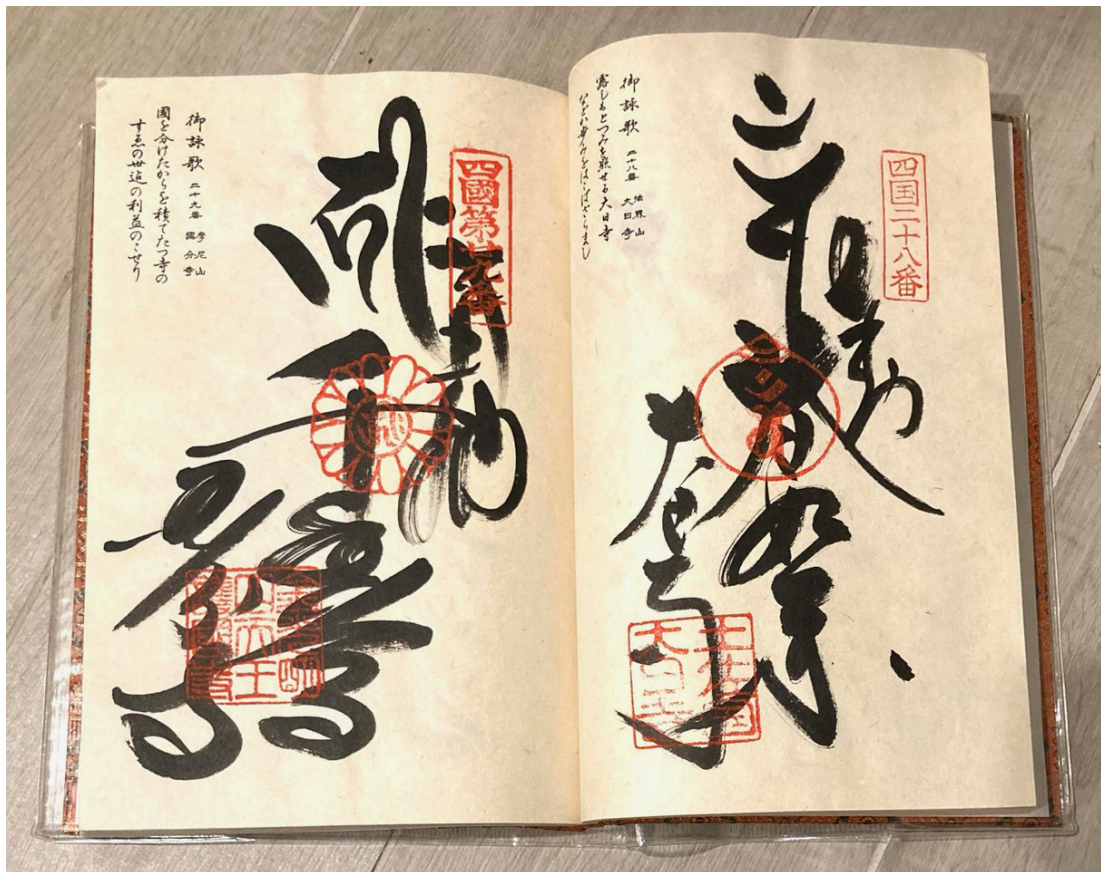
Reciting the Heart Sutra twice at each temple in Sino-Japanese, reverberated for years afterwards, like a familiar friend holding those memories. The rhythm and vibrations are still embedded somewhere in my psyche.

At each temple, we would bow at the main gate, take off our heavy back packs, wash our hands, ring the bell then enjoy the temple complex. There are two halls and an office. Sometimes a souvenir shop.

The ritual equipment is taken out – a candle (don't forget the matches), three sticks of incense (for the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), name slip, a small coin donation, we put on the wagersa (mini rakusu), chant the Heart sutra. Then find the second hall and do all that again. After this ritual is done, we find the office take our book of temple stamps, pay 300 yen and get the calligraphy done by the clerk who stamps it with the red temple seal.

After this we sit down and relax, have a look around, have a snack, chat, find your staff which had been placed in the umbrella-like stand beside the office. Sometimes people forget their staff and realise they need it on the mountain path – (me).

I added another ritual – painting the scenery. The character of each temple complex was unique and this helped me remember it better than photos on my phone. Drawing is my practice, and added to these prescribed rituals, I felt complete in my spiritual pilgrimage full of meaning and wonderment.



I arrived at Kodoji in the utmost style. Gliding into the Forgotten Valley in the comfort of the luxurious upholstery of Citroen Pallas. I was in love with these cars as a boy and mesmerised by 70's French Noir Film car chases on streets of Paris. What a journey it has been since then to arrive at the Luminosity of Australian Paddock, in the same car as an adult. Thank you so much, Brendon.

Kodoji was glistening in Autumn light. It looked so loved with every corner of it being cleaned and cared for at Samu a few weeks ago. Starting Sesshin was a seamless transition for everyone. Especially for many attending for the first time. Storms came over the valley during Sesshin's Cautions just to add to the countless causes and conditions. Days started rolling in and out under the watchful presence of the full moon. Caressed by the morning mist and Golden Wind, Sesshin heeled effortlessly like a fine boat.

At the end of day three, in closing words, Lindy turned her favourite phrase: "Be the tree more ancient than the forest which is part of". On the morning of day four, I woke up with my original face on. As I was making early morning tea by myself in the kitchen, an elderly woman appeared out of nowhere. She looked fearless. As she tucked her dragon tail under her robe, she said in the most loving voice: "I have come here from the foothills of Five Peak Mountain to tell you something. My dear one, you don't need to go to distant places to find what you are looking for. That which you are looking for is always where you are. Always where you are".

And with that, like a flash, she disappeared. Water in the kettle boiling to the gentle thumping of fast kinhin on the verandah. Her tail spread over the paddock like a sun-kissed cliff. A tear rolled down my cheek and into Gorrics Creek. It flowed into Macdonald River and into Hawkesbury. On its way to South Pacific, it passed through Milsons Passage where my home sits on the hillside and it continued further into the Great Ocean of Birth and Death. A brief moment so intensely beautiful...

In gratitude to all.



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