



Encouraging Words

Gillian Coote

Evazoum and Chicxulub

Chapter One: Once upon a time, between two hundred and forty-five and sixty-six million years ago, gentle vegan dinosaurs from the Evazoum family were roaming around the vast land mass called Gondwana, foraging on ferns. Their footprints sank into the water-sodden layers of ancient plant debris, their tracks later in-filled by silt and sand which, after millions of years, turned into coal. (Around 85 million years ago, Australia began to separate from Antarctica and had completely separated around 45 million years ago.)

Chapter Two: Sixty-six million years ago, a six-mile wide asteroid hit Chicxulub, in Mexico, which led to the extinction of 75% of species on Earth, including non-avian dinosaurs like the Evazoum. It triggered a mega-earthquake lasting months, with potentially trillions of tonnes of dust kicked up by the event swirling around in the atmosphere for years. Soot, sulphur and dust all have the capacity to block out the sun, contributing to global winters. Photosynthesis shuts down, vegetation fails and mass extinctions follow. (1)

Chapter Three: In 1964, miners working at the Rhondda colliery in New Chum, near Ipswich, make a startling discovery. (2) As they remove the coal from a seam they're following 213 metres below the surface, a series of giant, three-toed tracks become exposed in the ceiling of the mineshaft. It was as if a dinosaur had just walked over their heads. These tracks remain the oldest-known dinosaur fossils in Australia. The Rhondda mine has long closed, and the original tracks are no longer accessible, but archival photos and a plaster cast are in the Queensland Museum. A digitised model of the Rhondda tracks can be accessed from [MorphoSource](#).

So, these gentle Evazoum dinosaurs had their turn at life, long long ago. The impressions left by their feet, as they wandered through the grass, remain.

*I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the field,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life? (3)*

Notes: 1) 'Chicxulub impact winter sustained by fine silicate dust', by Cem Berk Senel and researchers from the Royal Observatory of Belgium, publ. Nature Geoscience, 30/10/23

2) Saurischian dinosaur tracks from the Upper Triassic of southern Queensland: Anthony Romillo et al, publ. University of Queensland. Published online: 16 Oct 2021.

3) Excerpt from Poem 133: [The Summer Day](#), by Mary Oliver, from New and Selected Poems, @ Beacon Press, 1992

Upcoming Events

Rohatsu 2023: The Buddha Sees the Morning Star

How do you honour the Buddha's realisation? How about with a period of intensive practice in the supportive presence of sangha? Rohatsu Sesshin is coming up! Our annual Annandale-based sesshin, to be led by Maggie Gluek, will run from the evening of Friday December 1 through midday Wednesday December 6. The flavour of this city sesshin is one of seamless coming and going. While participants are encouraged to sit as much as possible, the structure allows for fitting sesshin time in around work and family commitments. The schedule will run from 9:30 am to 9 pm, including mid-morning, afternoon and evening blocks. Rohatsu at Annandale is non-residential. Lunch can be brought or purchased in Annandale, supper will be provided.

Application forms and more details will soon be available on the SZC website.

Autumn Session

Thursday 28th March to Thursday 4th April 2024

Subhana will teach this sesshin with Qigong master and Spiritual Director of Medowmind, California. This will be a wonderful opportunity to engage both body and mind in Zen practice at our beautiful bush zendo, Kodoji. We are sure there will be a lot of interest in this sesshin, so we will prioritise attendance by SZC members. So look out for the flyer in the coming months and sign up.

<https://szc.org.au/classes/autumn-sesshin>

Reports

Spring Sesshin 2023

We were blessed with the whole range of weather: hot windy days of 44 degrees, followed by icy cold mornings of 0 degrees; torrential rain, then warm and mellow days in between. Gilly gave some insightful teishos, as well as reading for us a teisho from Will Moon written especially for this sesshin and giving his reflections on the Buddha Way in the Kimberley. On Wednesday, we had a day of complete silence and deep zazen.



At the beginning of sesshin, Gilly unveiled a beautiful pottery statue of Samantabhadra, Bodhisattva of Great Action, whom she had asked Janet Selby to make in memory of Tony. The Bodhisattva took his traditional place on the altar at the side of the Buddha and, in the candlelight, seemed to smile and wink at us as we passed the statue on the altar during kinhin, giving great encouragement to all of us.

As usual, along with all the many beings, we sat with the creatures and birds of Kodoji. The Spring birdsong was as beautiful as ever, and there were many close encounters with the local wildlife. For example, one day a goanna decided to check out Gilly's teisho but, en route, got distracted by the delicious aromas coming from the kitchen. Our fearless Newsletter Organiser (Sean) sprang to shut the door, and kindly directed the goanna to The Hungry Ghost Bar (open all hours).



On Friday, Tony Coote's birthday, we did an outside kinhin pilgrimage led by our Jiki John McLean. First we circled Tony's memorial pole and remembered with loving thanks his 'activity like lightning' (Den Katsu). Then we visited the Bush Buddha and David's memorial pole before returning to the dojo. Our final sharing before the end of sesshin brought many comments on the nourishing support of the Sangha in maintaining our sesshin spirit.

Driving out of Gorricks Run, new-born foals and calves, delicate and beautiful, proclaimed renewal.

Jane Andino

Women's retreat

A wonderful Women's Retreat was held at Kodoji from the 27-29 October 2023. Twelve women attended, enjoying the peace and beauty of the land, the weather was perfect and we managed a lot of zazen in the schedule. Other activities were: morning yoga, bushcare, walking meditation, watercolour ancestor painting, an evening ceremony for Samhain led by Lizzie, which is an older (Irish/Celtic) festival underlying Halloween. It is thought to be a time when the veil between living and dead is thinner.

We honoured our ancestors in a sharing circle with photos and drawings. We shared glorious meals together and on Sunday morning we did metta bowing practice led by Mari. Gratitude and joy were expressed in our sharing.

Jill Steverson

Under the Auspices of Jizo

We were an assembly of five at the Memorial Ceremony on November 12, gathered to remember all travellers in infinite realms of light and dark as well as our particular beloveds and sangha members who have died. Glenys had shaped the side altar as Jizo's realm. This Bodhisattva, also known as Kshtigharba, protects children and travellers through the six worlds. He himself is said to travel to hell to save beings there from suffering. For this occasion Jizo stood on the high shelf, as if to welcome those whose images we brought forward: Glenys' photo of her daughter Krishna Rose, Lisa's photo of herself with her mother Angela, Eran's drawing of his grandmother Malindi, Gilly's portrait of Tony.

And a tiny Jizo figure with a red bib to recall the many children who have died as a result of violent conflicts all around the world. In our intimate sharing circle we cried and laughed and came around to the fact of love at the heart of it all. Because we love, we grieve. And in the words of Kahlil Gibran, "The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain."

Our gathering finished outdoors in the warmth of a summer day, over a delicious potluck lunch. Featured were a splendid large Spanish tortilla and a refreshing salad of watermelon with feta cheese. Any hungry ghosts lingering about would have been well satisfied.

Maggie Gluek



Women's Retreat Pics

Photos: Jill Steverson



Decorations for evening ceremony of Samhain, an old (Irish/Celtic) festival underlying Halloween.



News from the Board

AGM

Thank for everyone for coming to and supporting the sangha at the AGM in October. Welcome to the new Board which was elected – Kerry Stewart (Chair), Joe Gaebel (treasurer), Zoe Thurner (Secretary), Julie Robinson, John McLean, William Verity, and newcomer Aeveen Kirby. We look forward to working together in collaboration with the teachers and sangha. And a deep bow of gratitude to everyone who offered to do the many and varied jobs that keep our Centre functioning so well. Also, at the AGM, several people raised issues and contributed ideas for the year ahead which the Board is discussing and will report on in the coming months. One of those was to have another musical concert!

Concert 2024

Thank you Jane for talking to our talented musical members and asking them to perform next year. We have been able to book the same venue we used last time – the Upstairs Hall of the Annandale Community Centre – for Saturday 7th September, 2024. More news to come closer to that date.

Kickstart your Practice

The New Year is a wonderful time to assess your life and make changes. So why not take advantage of our encouraging morning sits on Zoom three times a week from Thursday 28th December to Saturday 20th January. If you're needing some motivation, they're sure to re-establish your morning practice routine! <https://szc.org.au/classes/kickstart-your-practice>

Summer

As the hot weather approaches, we'd like to remind everyone of our dress code for sitting at the zendo. It's tempting to wear skimpy clothes when the temp rises but please remember to cover your shoulders and knees and wear black, without patterns.

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 for details.

Mondays

Annandale - Subhana

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 Coote

Thursdays online

With Jane Andino or Peter Bursky

7.00–8.00pm Meditation/walking

8.00–8.30pm Discussion/Great Vows

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 Gillian by appointment

The Blue Mountains Zen Group

We usually meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month, 3-5 pm. However, the next meeting is October 29.

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

Email Jane janeandino@yahoo.com.au for more details.



Photo: Spring sesshin, Jill Stevenson



Members of the Board

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

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

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

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				ZAZEN Zoom 7-9pm Peter	1 Rohatsu sesshin	2 Rohatsu sesshin
3 Rohatsu sesshin	4 Rohatsu sesshin	5 Rohatsu sesshin	6 Rohatsu sesshin	7 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Senior students	8	9
10	11 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	12 Board Meeting 6:30pm	13 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	14 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	15	16
17	18 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	19	20 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	21 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	29	30
31						

January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	5	6
7	8 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Peter	9 Board Meeting 6:30pm	10 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	11 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	12	13
14	15 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Peter	16 Orientation	17 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	18 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	19	20
21 Zazenkai Jane	22 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm	23	24 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	25 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	26	27
28	29 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Peter	30	31 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly			