



Encouraging Words

Will Moon

Can do it, can't do it

As students of the way, if we are serious about awakening to our true nature, or Buddha nature, we need to believe that from the beginning we are Buddhas and the realisation of our true nature is our birth right. The following is a koan called 'Nan-chuan's Stone Buddha', and it is case 3 from the Iron Flute collection of koans. It goes like this, Upasaka Liu-keng said to Nan-chuan, "In my house there is a stone that sits up or lies down. I intend to carve it as a Buddha. Can I do it?" Nan-chuan answered, "Yes you can". Upasaka Liu-keng asked again, "Can I not do it?" Nan-chuan answered, "No you cannot do it".

The stone that Liu-keng refers to is himself. His question implies that he must create, or carve out a Buddha. Essentially, we are Buddha, right here, right now. Nothing to create. However, for the purpose of this discussion we will consider this work of creating as the essential inner work of deepening our realisation, embodying this understanding, and undergoing the essential work of developing our character so that we may live in accord with the way.

When Liu-keng asks, "Can I do it?", perhaps he is wondering if he has what it takes. Nan-chuan responds, "Yes you can". As practitioners of the way, we need to believe in our innate ability to fully realise our Buddha nature. I'm sure that everyone has doubts at some time during their practice, but don't get bogged down in them. Take the next step, believe in your ability to realise. Sometimes in koan work, students can become disheartened as they have a feeling that they are getting nowhere with their practice, with their koan. This is perhaps the most important time to continue, drop the idea of getting somewhere, and the time that our faith and our belief in our practice will be really tested. And it's never perfect. I remember as a young student going to dokusan to see Aitken Roshi many times during the training periods that I attended in Hawaii. Sometimes I doubted myself, but the old teacher never doubted me for a minute. I have immense gratitude for this. It helped carry me through my times of doubt. Here, old Nan-chuan has no doubt Liu-keng is innately a buddha with the full potential to realise this.

Sometimes we have baggage or damage from our past, and to walk the path we must also work with our wounds. Sometimes we need to ask for help from a therapist or a counsellor. This is part of our character work which is also an essential part of our maturity on the path. The support of Sangha is also important at these times. When Liu-keng asks, "Can I not do it?", I think he is playing a game here with Nan-chuan but let's take it as literal for a moment. To entertain the thought or doubt of 'cannot do it', in that moment, that belief is all there is, not able to do it. Hence, Nan-chuan's response, "No you cannot do it". At these times, when we have doubts, it is important to identify the thoughts, the belief. Often, we have just built a story from our thoughts, perhaps coloured with a bit of our history and we are convinced by it. It is important to notice our thoughts, and our belief in them. They are just thoughts or beliefs that we give energy to. Don't invest in them. By observing our thoughts, we release the hold that they have on us.

With this koan we have taken a logic interpretation of this dialogue, however the koan is asking for something more than this. We need to transcend the entanglement of 'can do it, and can't do it'. As Wumen says in his verse on case 1 of the Wumen-kuan, "with a bit of has, or has not, body is lost, life it lost".

Upcoming Events

Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Celebration

11 am Annandale, April 14

This is a family-friendly event when the birth of Siddhartha Gautama is celebrated in Zen sanghas around the world. After Gillian's introductory words, we chant the Enmei Jikku Kannon Gyo as, one by one, children and adults approach our statue of the baby Buddha, pour water over him and offer a flower. Then we form a circle, sharing songs and stories and reflecting on what the birth of this baby in India over 4,500 years ago means to us.

Please arrive by 10.45 am with flowers and food to share for our potluck lunch around noon. And do let Janet Selby: janetselby@bigpond.com know if you intend to come, and whether you would like your child named and/or welcomed to our sangha, or if you have any questions. See you there!

Annandale Samu

Sunday 16 June

Please bring your energy and a shared lunch to Annandale for a work day with dharma friends. Samu is an ancient way of giving something valuable back to the sangha through the generosity of your labour. Experience the joy of pruning, building maintenance, cleaning and mending at our city zendo.

Contact Brendon if you plan to come: stewarts34@bigpond.com

Winter sesshin

Annandale 7 - 12 June

The Winter sesshin will take place between Friday June 7 to Wednesday June 12 (including King's Birthday June 10). This non-residential sesshin is led by Jane Andino, and will only be held at the Annandale zendo. As lay practitioners, we will have the opportunity to explore the connection of our zazen to our work, our home life, our place in the wider world, and our response in compassionate action. Winter sesshin begins on Friday evening and closes at midday on Wednesday.

There are four blocks of zazen per day: Early morning, Late morning, Afternoon and Evening. Participants can attend full-time, or sign up for any blocks, but are urged to take advantage of the long weekend and sign up for the full Saturday, Sunday and Monday sittings. Attending the opening of sesshin on the Friday evening is mandatory unless there are exceptional reasons not to. The schedule will include zazen, walking meditation, sutra recitation, dokusan and teisho. Attending sesshin near to your home and with a flexible schedule is a wonderful opportunity to integrate your zazen and work/home practice: we find how to be unbusy in all our activities. Application forms will be available on the SZC website soon. If you have any queries, please email Sean Loughman at lettersforsean@yahoo.co.jp

Reports

Kodoji Autumn Samu

The weather was delightful, we even had a gentle sprinkling of rain on Saturday afternoon cooling the day. Nine of us worked away getting Kodoji ready for the women's retreat and Autumn sesshin. Our neighbour Simon had slashed the paddock and it was clear how high the grass had grown over these warm wet summer months. It was a paddock of hay. Into these mounds of grass William and Jerath took to the lawn mowers and slowly – it was hard going - returned the areas around all the buildings to bowling green lawns. Diana came along with her two wonderful daughters, Ruby and Tara, it was a sweet reminder of sesshins of yesteryear when Ruby and Tara would be there in the creche tent and come over for meals. Congrats to Ruby on her PhD and for Tara's expected baby.

Kerry, Jill, Diana, Tara and Ruby cleaned the hojos (big and small) thoroughly, taking out the mats, sweeping and washing the floors. All curtains have been taken down and are being washed and dried in time for the retreats. Thanks Jill and Kerry for these post samu laundry task. The dojo was swept and washed and in between we swept floors all the time.

Greg Carty came along and wipper snipped everything, aided and guided by Diana's wipper snipping.

Some broken wood work on the showers was fixed by William, the leak in the water tank was looked at, worried about and left. Kindling was gathered and set next to the chip heater, a new entrance was noticed in the cottage through which micro-bats come and go.

So, thanks to Jill, Diana, Ruby, Tara, Kerry, William, Jareth, Greg and Brendon, and not forgetting Sapho the dog. The land is in very good condition at present with amazingly few of the usual annual weeds like fleabane and Paddy's lucerne. The driveway is getting a bit overgrown and would benefit from removal of more of the young acacia trees.

The blackberry is in the long process of being vanquished with just a few sprouts here and there for another control treatment in spring. However, there remains quite a few moth vine seedlings coming up from the previous infestation. This is concerning and it will be important to sweep the deep edges of the paddock as often as possible for any plants, as we don't want any getting away to choko/ seeding stage.



Lunch.



William, mower man among many others including Jerath, Jill, Brendon and Greg.



Jill in her weeding gear.

Women's retreat

Our women's retreat at Kodoji was a wonderfully warm and joyful time for the 9 women and 1 dog who made their way up the valley to spend time together in this glorious place – Oivi, Maggie, Gilly, Jill S, Marianne, Aeveen, Olivia, Lizzie, Cathy & Tilly (Gilly's furry companion).

The days were filled with laughter, song, tears, deep sharing, star gazing, bird song, sitting, walking, samu and much feasting on the copious quantities of delicious and decadent food on offer. Samu tasks included moth vine hunting, stick gathering and rehanging clean curtains.

We were closely monitored by two resident very curious and very large lace monitors/goannas on a number of occasions. They even came up onto the verandah to check us out in the dojo and one had a closer inspection of the inside of the hojo (much to the consternation of Tilly, especially as they seemed to particularly enjoy her water bowl).

We were excited to identify the mysterious nighttime bird call as that of a white throated nightjar. We played 'guess the footprints' with the abundance of wildlife tracks in the creek – goanna, wombat, wallaby and maybe koala? At night we lay on tarps as the limitless stars and galaxies made their milky way across the moonless sky.

Offering a deep gasho in gratitude for a truly wonderful weekend.

Cathy Lukeman



Microbat found at samu at Kodoji

News from the Board

Kodoji

The Causeway into Gorrick's Run has suffered a battering after several floods and Hawkesbury Council advised the Board that it would be replaced in mid-February. No work had begun when we drove up there for samu. The Board contacted the Council and they said that we can expect work to begin in mid-March. Fingers crossed!

The water tanks need to be replaced, so the Board is researching which ones would be best to use. We will need some strong people to help set them up in late Autumn or Winter, so please speak to Brendon if you can help.

Concert 2024

Jane is doing a wonderful job wrangling performers for our concert later this year. She has also come up with the brilliant idea of creating a choir to sing some Buddhist inspired songs. Rehearsals should start around May, so keep an eye out for her call to singers to join.

Becoming engaged

The Board is researching why people who have been orientated come back and commit to our sangha and those who don't. We are sending a Survey Monkey to everyone who has been orientated over the last six months. It will be very interesting to find out this vital information, which will help us assess the way we do things now and make any changes necessary in the future.

Leaders needed

We need more Inos, Jikis and Jishas! Please talk to a leader if you're interested in being trained to do these very important jobs.

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.



Australian Gothic - Kerry and Jerath at Kodoji samu.



Members of the Board

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

Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

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

April 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana Autumn Sesshin	2 Autumn Sesshin	3 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly Autumn Sesshin	4 ZAZEN Zoom 7-9pm Jane Autumn Sesshin	5	6
7	8 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	9 Board Meeting 6:30pm	10 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	11 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	12	13
14 Buddha's Birthday Gillian	15 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	16 Orientation	17 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	18 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	19	20
21 Zazenkai Peter Bursky	22 FMC Not indulging in anger 7-9pm	23	24 FMC Not indulging in anger 7-9pm	25 ZAZEN Zoom FMC Not indulging in anger 7-8:30pm Jane	26	27
28	29 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	30				

May 2024

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 7-9pm Subhana	7	8 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	9 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Peter	10	11
12	13 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	14 Orientation	15 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	16 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	17	18
19 Clay Zazenkai with Janet	20 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Maggie	21	22 Dharma Cafe Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	23 ZAZEN Zoom Dharma Cafe 7-8:30pm Peter	24	25
26	27 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Subhana	28	29 ZAZEN Annandale 7-9pm Gilly	30 ZAZEN Zoom 7-8:30pm Jane	31	