

Myōju

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Soto Zen Buddhism in Australia

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Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community Inc. Magazine (A0037927K)



Journal of Recent Activities

Welcome members and friends of Jikishoan to the first newsletter for this year. We trust that you all had a peaceful Christmas and New Year break. Jikishoan continued steady practice activities late last year while Ekai was away for two months in Japan and India. Upon his return, Ekai gave a talk at the Tibetan Spring Festival where he asked, "Are the Buddhists still practicing?" He was referring to the affect the events of September 11th had on people all over the world. All the reaction to this event and talking up of uncertainty in the post September 11 world has created much opportunity for distraction.

Sunday Sanzen-kai

As Ekai headed off on his yearly teaching trip to Japan and India, left in our hands was THE list of people to give A TALK each Sunday in October and November while he was away. Neatly scheduled, with a selection of topics, there was no way out, no excuse of what could I possibly talk about? One by one, each speaker took their place where Ekai usually sits. The words rolled out, each person's life, their story and perspective; each persons experience to share with everyone else, smiles and sadness, pain and joy. Forty minutes and two months later everyone has survived to tell the tale.

Ekai's arrival back from India last month signalled a swelling of numbers at Sunday Sanzen-kai and kept members of the Ino and Tenzo ryos on their toes. Many new faces have graced the zendo, and stayed to share supper and a chat afterwards.

Thursday Evening Members' Practice

At Thursday evening members sitting one is treated to a veritable symphony of sounds whilst sitting in the garage Zendo at Essendon. Smoke drifts from fine incense burning on the altar as one sits with everyone else. Tea is served - sometimes it is strong.

Public talk by the Ven. Chi Kwang Sunim

On Sunday 4th November Jikishoan hosted a public talk given by the Ven. Chi Kwang Sunim from the Daylesford Meditation Centre at the Melbourne Shiatsu College. The Ven. Chi Kwang Sunim shared her rich experience of living and practicing as a zen nun in Korea with a full zendo of Jikishoan regulars and many people visiting for the first time. The talk traced her journey as she packed up her life in Australia and travelled to Korea to deepen her practice, meeting with many life changing experiences and teachers along the way. Everyone was invited to stay and share a meal afterwards, and to meet and talk with Ven. Chi Kwang Sunim.

One Day Intensive Workshop 18th November 2001

At 8.00am on a rainy November Sunday, the support team from the Ino Ryo arrived at Glanmore Estate, to assist Ekai with the one day intensive workshop that was to be held that day. Very soon

they realised that the person who was to meet them to open up the venue was nowhere in sight - only a slight technical delay! A few frantic phone calls later, the keyholder trundled into sight, and with many regretful apologies and a twist of the wrist the door was opened.

The day went well, with about 12 people in attendance, including Hannah, who cooked up a wonderful lunch for all. Over lunch everyone had a chance to exchange histories and ask questions, resulting in

a Dharma discussion which overflowed into the next session. Andrew was Jikido for the day, the person responsible for timekeeping and ringing the bells, and in the more relaxed style of the one day workshops, relaxed right into the swing of things - ching, ching. All the one day workshops have been well attended and are a wonderful introduction for new people and a wellspring of inspiration for those wishing to refresh or deepen their practice. On the 9th December, a one day workshop was also held in Rye.

Bendoho Retreat, 23 – 28th November 2001

Late Friday afternoon, the kookaburras at Adekate looked and laughed, as one by one, cars carrying last year's November



Participants at the August 2001 Adekate Retreat.

retreatees rolled into the little carpark behind the huts and rec-room (soon to be zendo). One by one, sleeping bags, toothbrushes, black gear and more were hauled into empty rooms, cups of tea made, and catch-ups and hellos exchanged before the commencement of 5 days of returning to silence.

Early the next morning, as the kookaburras slept, a lone bell rang loudly to wake the collective dreamers for the 5.00 am zazen and morning service. Throughout the day that followed, 24 people, at the sounds of various signals, made their way through periods of zazen, oryoki meal practice, work practice, chosan (morning tea), teisho (afternoon Dharma talk), evening meal and more zazen. The schedule did not change much over the course of 5 days, and like waves upon the sea, everyone soon settled in, flowing from one activity to the next, with the occasional wave crashing onto the shore. Some could only stay for a short time, others for longer, but everyone seemed to enjoy and deeply appreciate the time that they spent. Entrance and exit ceremonies were conducted as people came and went, providing the forum for those who were leaving to share their experiences with all. A great deal of appreciation goes out to all those who assisted with the preparation before the retreat, in particular to Alison Hutchinson and Hannah Forsyth, and to those who contributed during that time to ensure that things ran as smoothly and harmoniously as possible.

New Year Zazen

At 9.30pm on December 31st, the New Years Eve parties and revelling all over Melbourne had began. And none more-so than at Raleigh Street Essendon, where the zendo was full to the brim of people sitting in the New Year. Whilst the fireworks and Brittany Spears bopped away in the background, a small bell was struck by different participants at regular intervals, a total of 108 times. The 108th bell was struck at exactly 12.00 midnight, upon which Ekai lead everyone in chanting the Heart Sutra. Afterwards, champagne and a light middle of the night supper was kindly provided and Happy New Year's wishes exchanged.

Public Talk



Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community would like to extend a warm invitation for you to attend a Public Talk on

Pure Land Buddhism, to be given by the Ven. Phuoc Tan, of Quang Minh Temple, Braybrook. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

Date: On Sunday February 10th

Time: 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Venue: Australian Shiatsu College Melbourne

For more information, please contact Alison Huchison on (03) 5426 1383 (AH).

August 2001

Corrogated roof - heavy rain.
An awakening!

I am flooded with happiness.

- Anthony

Absent-Mindedness

The things we forget,
things flip-flop away,
a zafu may snafu,
but saddest of all,
is the ino who wrote:

'I left my han in San Francisco'.

- Rod

Donations towards Jikishoan's Activities

Jikishoan relies heavily upon its members and friends for voluntary work and contributions to provide the very busy program of activities. Over the last few months a number of people have made significant donations towards the Jikishoan Building Fund and the equipment needs of the organisation. Our sincere thanks therefore go to Ravi Padmanabhan, Biggi Spiro, Peter Watts, Holly Davis and Robert Prior (Antioch University Buddhist Program).

New Members

Since August 2001, Rohan Harrington, Lorraine Collishaw and Anthony Woodward have transferred from Associate to Practice Members. Paul Geil, Tom Eckerley and Alan Williams have joined Jikishoan as Associate Member. Welcome to Paul, Tom and Alan.

Fundraising Stall at the Tibetan Buddhist Society Festival

Jikishoan would like to thank the Tibetan Buddhist Society for inviting them to hold a stall at their wonderful Spring Festival held on 10 and 11 November 2001 at their peaceful and beautiful property at Yuroke. The stall provided information about Jikishoan activities and had a range of items for sale including incense pots made by Biggi, calligraphy cards made by Jinesh, kneeling benches by Michael. We also appreciated the creative and useful paperweights made by Peter. The stall seemed to be more successful than previous occasions, despite the very rainy weather.

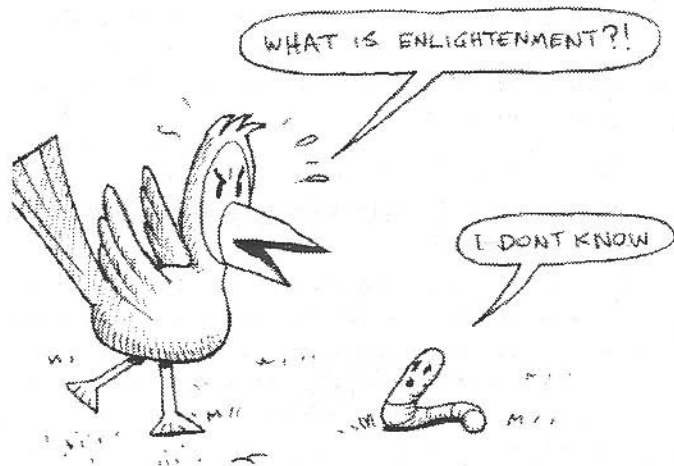
Many thanks to members who assisted with the organisation of the stall before, during and after: Alison, Biggi, Peter, Jinesh, Julie, Michael, Allan, Ekai, Deniz, Matthew and Lisa.

Alison Huchinson - Secretary

Bendoho Retreat

The forest vibrates,
The trees are all
bent over ever so gently.
Every fern, stick and even,
the scared little rabbit,
has its place.

Today, doing kinhin, I could feel the rhythm gently
rocking my body, like a gentle wave.
What a lovely feeling 'gentle' is!



Come with a beginner's mind
and leave more open than before.
Still caught up with dharma,
a long way from Nirvana's shore.
- Helen



Adekate Campsite, November 2001 Retreat

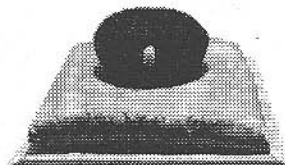
Ballarat Zendo

A regular Sanzen-kai is held at Echoes of Y's, 44 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat every Thursday night at 7.00pm.

Anyone interested in attending should contact the Ballarat Zendo Co-ordinator Rod Hanton on (03) 5331 1567, or Lorraine Collishaw, on (03) 5341 3549.

Uh-Oh

Zafus and zabutons.
Meditation supplies,
Please contact Ekai
on 9370 5847
Incense sticks available.
Please contact Jinesh,
on 9480 4849



Jikishoan Library

Jikishoan is developing a library of Dharma books and tapes at the Essendon Zendo. There is currently a small collection available for loan to members. Please contact Andrew Cawthorn on 9818 0017.

Book donations are always welcome!

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The Fast Train to Zuioji

Wayne Diamond reflects upon his visit to Zuioji Monastery in Japan, and shares aspects of his journey and the experience of practicing with the monks at the temple.

Ekai and I took a shinkansen (fast train) to Shikoku island to his original training temple called Zuioji. These trains have aircraft seats but with room to move, less noise and they are immaculately clean. You do not realise the speed until another one passes going the opposite way – the air pressure changes dramatically in the cabin as it passes. As you go around a bend they tilt to the inside automatically to compensate for the forces. I had a drink cup sitting on a smooth window sill as we flowed around a bend and it did not budge.

There was an immense amount of built up area. In between there were patches of rice fields and hills. Often you would see a rice paddy right in the midst of a housing estate.

We curved to the left and soared above the sea, leaving the main island. We were so high I could not quite believe my senses. I could not see the far side. Craggy islands thick with foliage strewn across the sea. Boats of all sizes steaming along. I imagined medieval boats plying the vast space. We seemed to be barely moving and yet when I looked at the pylons I saw our speed was undiminished. It seemed to take an eternity to reach the other side, then whoosh, back to earth again.

We arrived and made our way to the temple that was nestled in the hills overlooking the town. I had visited temples in Japan some time ago when I first became interested in Zen. This would be my first time though, to stay in a Japanese temple and follow the schedule.

The temple was very old and beautiful. Massive roofs, wood pillars, tatami mats, shoji screens, the bell big enough to climb in! The mokugyo seemed as big as a monk. What I really liked was that you often couldn't tell if you were indoors or not. There was no clear distinction between verandah and interior, and sometimes not even between rooms. I immediately loved this lack of barriers, the freedom and fluidity. Not looking up, not looking down. Initially I just felt this spaciousness, it was sometime until I realised its source.

I was assigned an English speaking monk named Taishin-san to help me get acquainted. He always arrived a few minutes before a bell to let me know what was what. The first instruction was in Japanese bath! I followed him to the public bath and soon found myself talking and laughing with several monks

There are about twenty monks in total at the temple so it is like one big happy family. The following morning Taishin-san gave me a more detailed instruction in the temple procedure. He explained the noble silence and when this is maintained. He said to me, "We never talk during bath time – well, we did last night...but we never talk at this time – this is important."

I went to my first meditation in a Japanese temple on the first evening. I was really looking forward to it. When I arrived at the

hall I was horrified to see there were no mats, just cushions. I could not comprehend that this was possible. Five minutes into the forty minute sitting, the torture began. My body had forgotten the pain that accompanies a lack of familiarity with a particular posture, activity or environment. I felt like I had never sat before. I vowed again to treat my own students with consideration.

We arose at 3.50 am the next morning for meditation. We moved through the half light to the hall. As I sat I listened to the forest waking up. Some time before dawn, a massive booming erupted beside me. Rather it seemed to be surging through me. I looked across and saw a monk 3 or 4 metres away pounding on a large taiko drum with a pair of solid sticks. We had an oryoki breakfast. Rice porridge is quite a challenge with chopsticks.

For the morning working meditation we cut grass and weeds around the creek with a small hand held scythe. We each had a metal container with mosquito coils tied to our waist to drive off the mossies. The air was still and oppressively humid and hot after coming from a Melbourne winter.

We met for morning tea in the hall next to the courtyard. The green tea was stirred and each cup held a layer of froth on top. It was placed in front of each of us in turn. The Zen master spoke in Japanese to Ekai and several others.

Afternoon samu, was hoeing weeds in the vegetable garden with three monks. We did a section about 38 metres x 9 approximately. Hot work. One monk asked what we wanted to drink and disappeared. He came back with cans of soft drink and tea - chilled - excellent. Taishin-san said not to work so hard. The work is far easier than the sitting. After we were finished and were walking up the path the monk said, "Go ahead. I must get rid of the evidence" and he walked away to dispose of the cans!. After the silent bath, dinner and evening sitting, we retired. I think it was about 10 pm.

I loved the boundless freedom of the temple. This freedom was enabled by the structure, but unlike the secular bureaucracies it has not become the oppression of people. This structure for all its superficial solidity was actually fluid and free and was the servant as well as the support of the monks. The monks frolicked within it like dolphins surfing the waves.

I found the warmth, kindness and generosity of the monks overwhelming. This made a deep impact on me – the kind of intimacy one rarely encounters. This was sometimes just a gesture, a word and sometimes an act of kindness. A simple bow to a complete stranger could bring a deep connection; you felt you had known them for ages. I can still see the Zen master standing under the eaves of the verandah.

By Wayne Diamond

A simple bow to a complete stranger could bring a deep connection, that you felt you had known them for ages.



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