

THE WOBBLY POT

November-December 2009



Monks these days study hard in order to turn a fine phrase and win fame as talented poets. At Crazy Clouds hut there is no such talent, but he serves up the taste of truth as he boils rice in a wobbly old pot. - Ikkyu

Newsletter of the Zen Group of Western Australia

ZGWA Calendar & Contacts

About the ZGWA

The Zen Group of W.A. was formed in 1983. Today the ZGWA mails out to more than 120 members and associates & meditation retreats (sesshins) are available through the year on a regular basis.

The group is affiliated with the Diamond Sangha which was founded in Hawaii in 1959 by Robert Aitken Roshi. Aitken Roshi's book, "Taking the Path of Zen" is a wonderful introduction to Zen practice and is available for purchase at the Zendo.

Group Zazen Schedule

The ZGWA meets regularly for group sitting, dokusan and dharma talks. Please come along (if you're new, please aim to be 15 mins early or arrange for orientation) and bring all your questions!.

- Thursday Evening 7:00pm – 9:00pm
- Sunday Morning 5:30am – 7:30am, 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month.

The venue is St Paul's Church Hall, 162 Hampton Road, Beaconsfield, WA.

Orientation

Orientation for newcomers is available by arrangement. Please visit our website for up to date contact details.

Events Calendar: November 2009

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 Zazen & dokusan, 5:30-7:30am	2	3	4	5 Zazen with dharma talk, 7-9pm	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Zazen, 7-9pm	13	14
15 Zazen, 5:30-7:30am	16	17	18	19 Sitting Cancelled	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Zazen, 7-9pm	27	28
29	30					

Committee Members

The ZGWA council meets on a monthly basis to manage events and daily business of the group.

Current members are:

- Jak Baddams
- Kevin Donohue
- Mary Heath (Membership Secretary)
- Paul Wilson (Treasurer)
- Peter Nolin
- Phil McNamara (Secretary & Librarian)

Membership & Newsletter Subscription

Enquiries about subscribing to the newsletter, or becoming a financial member may be directed to any council member at the zendo, or directly via email on our website.

Newsletter Contributions

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, whether it be a written piece, something found or otherwise please send contributions to Jak Baddams at unporkoboe@hotmail.com

[All contributions are warmly received!](#)

Website: www.zgwa.org.au

2010 Sesshin Dates (Tentative)

- 23rd - 27th April (Autumn)
- 24th September - 1st October (Spring)

Events Calendar: December 2009

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 Zazen with dharma talk 7-9pm	4	5 Zazenkai, 1pm - 9pm
6 Zazenkai 5:30-7:30am	7	8	9	10 Zazen 7-9pm	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 Zazen & dokusan 7-9pm	18	19
20 Zazen, 5:30-7:30am	21	22	23	24 Zazen 7-9pm (To be confirmed)	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 Sitting Cancelled		

Events Calendar: January 2010

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1 <i>NY Day Zazen</i>	2
3 Zazen & dokusan, 5:30-7:30am	4	5	6	7 Zazen with dharma talk, 7-9pm	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Zazen, 7-9pm	15	16
17 Zazen, 5:30-7:30am	18	19	20	21 Zazen & dokusan 7-9pm	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Zazen, 7-9pm	29	30
31						

Reflections On Happiness –Phillip McNamara

Happiness to me is trying to make every act expressive of my deepest values. This often involves simple acknowledgment (to myself, not necessarily to others) of paradoxical emotions and desires so that I discover or uncover my compassionate core. Thus happiness, at its most human level, is openness to the suffering of contradictions that then opens to a clearer awareness of situations and conditions. Such awareness generates a skilful response. A skilful response is guided by moral action considerate of context.

Though the terms moral and awareness may suggest an intellectual or idealistic overlay, eventually skilful responses (though initially forged out of a sense of purpose based around self discipline and motivating principles) becomes an expression of genuine compassion no matter the circumstances or situation. Such a response has inherent capacity and has let all notions of happiness go. This is boundless, unconditioned love.

The term happiness fosters a conceptual mixture motivating one to be concerned with thoughts of pleasure and pain. Such thoughts lead to self-justified choices which in turn lead to further choices and their consequences. These choices twist and turn because they are tied to temporary desires. As Sharon Salzberg says in her book *Loving Kindness The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* :

Desire – grasping, clinging, greed, attachment – is a state of mind that defines what we think we need in order to be happy. We project all of our hopes and dreams of fulfilment onto some object of our attention. This may be a certain activity or outcome, a particular thing or person. Deluded by our temporary enchantment, we view the world with tunnel vision.¹

As Dr Clive Hamilton observes in his bestseller *Growth Fetish*, our cultures rampant obsession with consumerism has led to a redefining of happiness which in turn has led to disconnection and distorted values. He warns that hedonistic habits aren't what life is about. He suggests that "Nowadays happiness is about maximising emotional and physical highs and minimising the lows. It's a very distorted notion of what life is really about. Pursuing happiness isn't what life's about. It's about finding meaning and living a life that has purpose."²

The warning is that no object or person, indeed no desire, will make us happy.

By its very nature desire is unfulfilled.

Deep enquiry will show that pleasure never lasts; that too much pleasure makes us lazy and forgetful of the fact that dissatisfaction lurks around its boundary. Aversion, disappointment or anger are the eventual outcome of such motivations. We either become enveloped in self-judgment and criticism, or we become self indulgent by burying our dissatisfaction in states of temporary satisfaction. The latter often relies on becoming unaware of our pain or unconscious of our motivations; all forms of aversion to seeing our

1 Salzberg, Sharon. *Loving Kindness The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*, Shambhala Publications Inc. Boston, 1995, p.49.

2 Quoted in the feature article "Are We Having Fun Yet?" by Liz van den Nieuwenhof, The Weekend Australian, March 26-27, 2005.

state .Deep enquiry will also show that though pain will distract us, it too doesn't last.

What then is the reality of each moment? How can we begin to transcend the cycle of discontent and our never ending desires?

If we gain an openness and spaciousness we will see that all emotions are conditioned responses to both conditions and context. Beyond the agitation of such responses is compassionate understanding. With such understanding our responses gain clarity. We become aware that happiness and unhappiness depend on our actions and that every action has consequences which pattern our lives.

In Buddhist terms we begin to see the karmic echo and return of our choices. We begin to see the impersonal laws affecting all. We perhaps begin the challenge of seeing our motivations or desires. We perhaps resolve to take up a practice which allows us to become unswayed and eventually wise in our actions and reactions. Salzberg describes this as building a wave of moral force built upon generosity, patience, and morality. In Zen terms it is the resolve to take up the aspiration to become a Bodhisattva and abandon greed, hatred and ignorance. In doing so one comes to embody fully the Buddhist Way.

Selected Verses from “The dragon who never sleeps’

Verses for Zen Buddhist Practice by Robert Aitken.

Turning for refuge to Buddha
I vow with all beings
to walk past pure and impure
straight down the Middle Way

Turning for refuge to Dharma
I vow with all beings
to oil and sharpen my tools
and fashion of home of the Tao.

Turning for refuge in Sangha
I vow with all beings
To open myself to the geckos
And the strange behaviour of friends.

When I bow to my sisters and brothers,
I vow with all beings
to freshen our intimate kinship
and enliven the practice we share.

When someone is late for a meeting,
I vow with all beings
to give up the past and the future
and relax where nothing begins.

When the soup is too pungent with pepper
I vow with all beings
to smile at my hostess and sip it
and tell a long funny story.



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