

February - March 2000

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*When bodhisattvas who live a householder's life cultivate the practices of home-leavers, it is like a lotus blooming in fire. It will always be hard to tame the will for fame and rank and power and position, not to mention all the myriad starting points of vexation and turmoil associated with the burning house of worldly existence. The only way is for you yourself to realise your fundamental, real, wondrous wholeness and reach the stage of great calm and stability and rest.*

Yuan-Wu (1063-1135)

# Sydney Zen Centre Newsletter



## Practice Leader Positions Created

As foreshadowed last year, at its first meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1999 the new SZC board passed a motion that created the new Practice Leader role, so bringing to fruition the work of many sangha members over a period of a few years. The motion reads as follows:

### MOTION FOR CHANGES TO SZC LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

#### PREAMBLE

Inasmuch as the Board of Directors is committed to a revision of the way that responsibilities are shared within the SZC, and seeks to distribute responsibility as widely as possible within the sangha, and seeks to actively encourage participation of all sangha members in every facet of the SZC's activities, and further, inasmuch as the board is committed to meeting the needs of both current sangha members and newcomers to the SZC, the following motion is put:

a) that an **OFFICE** of 'Practice Leader' be created, and that this office be maintained by a pool of up to six persons at any one time. The new office shall be named 'Practice Leader' in accordance with the wishes of a majority of respondents

to the 1999 Board's survey; and, further, that the present office of Dharma Leader, initiated by John Tarrant Roshi, and carried out so diligently and scrupulously by the incumbents, be herewith dissolved; and that:

b) **MIMUMUM ELIGIBILITY** all SZC members, including both koan and Shikantaza students, will be eligible for these positions; and that:

#### c) SUPERVISION

At any time, the Principal Teacher of the SZC will be responsible for supervision of the Practice Leaders, but may delegate that supervisory role in whole or in part, as need befits. (In what follows, when the role of 'Supervisor' is mentioned this should be deemed to refer also to a delegated Supervisor); and that:

#### d) DUTIES

the focus of the role be on supporting Zen Buddhist practice; that is, the role is to serve the SZC practice community. The duties of the position will be determined by the SZC's Principal Teacher and the Board, in ongoing consultation, but broadly speaking, the pool of Practice Leaders will fulfil the functions of:

- Orienting newcomers & visitors to the SZC on a weekly basis;
- One-to-one interviews with beginners on meditation posture, breath-counting, shikantaza, and mindfulness practice in daily life;
- Attendance at the main dojo (currently Annandale), and being responsive to the needs of the practice community in that context;
- Facilitating discussion groups or on-going classes in Buddhist Studies when needed;
- Offering Dharma talks (primarily at Zazenkai), on the invitation of the Supervisor;
- Travelling to lead Zazenkai in non-metropolitan areas;
- Offering and encouraging dojo leadership training;
- Assisting development of harmonious sangha relations;
- Being open and responsive to the needs of the practice community, as they arise;
- Providing orientation to beginners prior to sesshin, and undertaking appropriate follow-up activities after sesshin;
- Giving introductory talks in the wider community - high schools, university, and other community organisations;
- And, other duties at the invitation of, and in consultation with, the Practice Leader Supervisor; and that:

#### e) APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

the appointment of individuals to this office will be conducted in the following manner: the Principal Teacher of the SZC suggests candidates for the positions to the Board of Directors for endorsement, and ratification; members of the community may nominate a member for the position, through a private nomination to the Principal Teacher, who must be in agreement with the nomination; the teacher will pass these nominations on to the board with her/his approval; and, following the endorsement process, the Board will notify the sangha of the intended appointments by publishing them in the next SZC newsletter. Subsequent ratification in office of the prevailing appointees will occur in the Board meeting following such publication; and that:

#### f) TENURE

these positions, having no formal link with the process of emergence of teachers within the SZC, will have a limited tenure - maximum three-year terms, with a minimum of one year off between any two three-year terms. A process of staggered successions as much as possible is to be maintained, so that mentoring of incoming Practice Leaders is possible by incumbent members of the group; and that:

#### g) DUAL OFFICE

Practice Leaders are not excluded from the holding of other offices within the SZC, but it is expected that conflicts of interest in the execution of such duties should be mediated by the

Practice Leader Supervisor in consultation with the Board; and that

#### h) RESOLVING COMPLAINTS, DISPUTES AND BREACHES OF ETHICS CONCERNING LEADERS

the Practice Leaders will be accountable both to the SZC's Principal Teacher, and to the community through the Board; and that their conduct generally should accord with the Precepts of the community; and that the Practice Leaders are bound by whatever ethical or disciplinary codes, and whatever processes of complaint and dispute resolution, are in force in the SZC at the time of any behaviour subject to complaint by a member of the community; and that:

i) the process of appointing Practice Leaders may begin at any time henceforth.

Motion put forward by: John Perrin

Motion seconded by: Richard Sandilands

Motion passed unanimously; secretary noted dissent of Paul Maloney as to the use of the title "Leader".

21<sup>st</sup> December 1999.



Shakyamuni: The home-leaver "is unsustained by anything in the world. Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is unbound right within."

Anguttara Nikaya, 7:58

## 1999 Diamond Sangha Teachers Circle Ethics Agreement

As students of the Way and teachers of the Diamond Sangha, we aspire to right conduct in every aspect of our lives. In this aspiration, we have committed ourselves to maintain the Ten Grave Precepts, and we cannot improve upon them as guides and standards for our thoughts, words, and deeds. The Precepts are open to interpretation, however, so with this Ethics Agreement, we establish a clear and specific set of minimum expectations to which we should be held accountable now and in the future. We hope that publicly specifying these standards of behavior will sharpen our awareness of ethical issues, ensure the trustworthiness of the Diamond Sangha, and serve to protect and perpetuate the Buddha-dharma.

### **Mind Moon Circle**

Contributions are needed for the next issue of *Mind Moon Circle* on the theme of **Psychotherapy & Buddhist Practice**. I'd like to explore the relationship to the practice of Buddha-Dharma of the practice of Psychotherapy. Feel free to send anything related.

Let's share our views and doubts about psychotherapy & Buddhist practice, or on aspects of their relationship.

Contributions of artworks, poems, etc welcome.

**Deadline: 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2000.** Contributions to MMC Editor, (Chris McLean), c/- Sydney Zen Centre, 251 Young St, Annandale.  
2038.

We recognize that our work is founded on trust—the trust placed in us, each by our own teacher, to transmit the Dharma faithfully and the trust placed in us by our students to provide them respectful and appropriate instruction. In this document, we concern ourselves explicitly with the latter trust, but we know full well that the two are inseparable; that is, we cannot hope to fulfill our responsibility to transmit the Dharma if we do not endeavor to live up to the Dharma's ethical implications.

We understand that, in our capacity as Zen teachers, we may fail our students in many ways and to vastly differing degrees. At one end of the range of severity are isolated errors and instances of neglect; it is quite possible, for example, to disappoint a student keenly by forgetting to return a telephone call. While we consider even the slightest failure unfortunate, as fallible beings we will all inevitably suffer lapses of this sort and simply have to be forgiven. The failures that concern us more, and that this Agreement is intended to address, are of greater severity—those that are demonstrably harmful to our students, either to their practice or to their general well-being, either to one individual or to a group. We commit ourselves to refrain altogether from such injurious conduct but especially from any that is intentional, repeated or protracted in duration,

deceitfully concealed, exploitive of a student's trust, or any combination of the foregoing.

To be specific, we commit ourselves:

a. to use our power and authority as teachers to serve the interests of the sangha;

b. to recognize the sangha as the highest authority in its own governance and to exercise discretion in our leadership so that we do not unduly influence decisions;

c. to treat sangha members, including fellow teachers, with honesty and deep respect, not subjecting them to disparagement, coercive pressure, or undesired attention of any kind;

d. to maintain confidences received from students, except as required by law or as explicitly permitted within the sangha;

e. to practice openness and inclusivity in our relationships with sangha members, allowing personal affinities a natural place but avoiding destructive favoritism;

f. to refrain from sexual interaction with members of the sangha, except within the parameters of a committed relationship and, even then, only with the utmost care to ensure that no one is harmed;

g. not to confer teaching authority, and especially Dharma transmission, on our lovers, spouses, siblings, children, employers, or known benefactors, nor to offer such authority as a means to attract, retain, or induce the cooperation of a student;

h. to accept economic support (dana) from individual sangha members only when it is freely given, never making it a direct requirement for instruction or attention; and

i. to join with the sangha in practicing careful stewardship of its resources, not to enrich ourselves by misappropriation of sangha funds or properties.

We ask our fellow Diamond Sangha teachers and the sanghas that we serve to hold us accountable to these standards.



Participants from the SZC who were in the DSTC process that produced the Ethics guidelines and this following open letter have expressed that it involved long, painful, arduous, and scrupulous discussions. May their work bear the fruit of harmony for all.

Chris McLean,  
Newsletter Ed.



**DIAMOND SANGHA  
TEACHERS CIRCLE OPEN  
LETTER TO JOHN  
TARRANT**

December 16, 1999  
Dear John,

We are writing out of our various relationships with you - one of us as the master who gave you authorization to teach the Dharma, a couple of us as your students, many of us as longtime friends, all of us as fellow practitioners and colleagues in the lineage of the Diamond Sangha.

Though you and your community recently chose to separate yourselves from the Diamond Sangha, we remain irrevocably linked by our Dharma heritage, common history, and very deep personal ties.

We find ourselves in an extraordinary dilemma. Over the past three years, we have received from aggrieved members of your sangha numerous, unsolicited complaints of misconduct on your part. We have received all these complaints with heavy hearts and have been hesitant to act on them, recognizing that there are always two sides to a story and not wanting to intervene in private matters. For that reason, we have repeatedly urged people to take their concerns up with you directly and have urged California Diamond Sangha (CDS) to institute an ethics code and grievance process and, when it did, have urged aggrieved parties to use it.

During this period, many of us also have reached out to you by letter, by phone, and in person to raise these concerns and to ask you to give us an accounting that would show either that the complaints themselves were unfounded or that you and CDS had answered them with appropriate remedies. Several of us have received your private acknowledgment that there is substance to at least some of the complaints and that you feel remorse for some of your actions. Others of us have been rebuffed, criticized, or ignored.

At this point, we have seen and heard enough to know that you stand accused of

serious, persistent abuses of power and boundary violations by a significant number of former officers and members of CDS, many of whom regarded themselves earlier as dear friends of yours. This is not simply an in-house problem, for these folks have reported their experiences and expressed their feelings not only to us but also to others in the Mahasangha; we have recently received letters from highly respected members of the North American sangha asking us to take resolute action.

Clearly this is no longer, if ever it was, a problem that can be contained within CDS itself, and for this reason, we now take the painful, long-delayed step of making our concerns public. Many of us feel we have waited far too patiently already, giving too much heed to your needs, too little heed to the needs of those who have left CDS bitter and agonized, in some cases emotionally or psychologically devastated.

We understand that you have, in recent years, changed your conduct in significant ways and that, even more recently, you have made an attempt at reconciliation with some people. We are heartened by this news and urge you to continue and deepen this process.

In particular, we ask that you commit yourself genuinely and publicly to a concerted process that would entail hearing the pain of alienated friends and students fully and deeply, endeavoring to understand their experience, examining how your words or actions might have caused or occasioned their suffering,

