



Encouraging Words from the Teacher

Gillian Coote Roshi



South of Sho, North of Tan, there is gold that fills the land: music and the Gardens of Stone

Hakuin Ekaku, who lived from 1685-1769, gave his students the koan mu before switching to 'the sound of a single hand' in his final decades.

...for forty-five years, not discriminating friend or relative, not abandoning old or young, high-born or low-born, wishing only that they would all attain the power of completely penetrating the great matter, letting them pose questions about themselves, I asked them to investigate mu. In this way I used skillful means to instruct them. Several score of them have attained some result according to their ability, and have rejoiced. In the past five or six years, however, I have used another idea: I have asked everyone to listen to the sound of one hand. There has been a distinct difference from my previous teaching. It is easier for people to get the point of this koan. The difference indeed appears to be tremendous. This being so, I always advise people to concentrate on this koan.' (1)

Hakuin extracted his koan from Hsueh Tou's riposte to Tan Yuan's verse in Case 18 of the Blue Cliff Record, National Teacher Chung's Seamless Tomb.

The Emperor asked Hui-chung, the National Teacher, 'After you die, what do you want me to do?'
The National Teacher replied, 'Build a seamless tomb for this old monk.'
'Please show me the design of the tomb,' said the Emperor.
The National Teacher sat quietly for a while, then asked, 'Do you understand?'
'I do not understand,' replied the Emperor.
I have a Dharma successor, Tan Yuan. After I die, ask him about it.

After the National Teacher died, the Emperor sent for Tan Yuan, and asked him about his teacher's idea. Tan Yuan offered him a poem, the first line of which is:

'South of Sho, north of Tan'

to which Hsueh Tou responded: *The single palm of the hand does not make a sound arbitrarily.* (2)



The sound of a single hand has become almost the only koan widely bandied about in our culture, though it is usually mistranslated as ‘What is the Sound of One Hand Clapping?’ The original Japanese is *sekishu no oto*: the sound of one of a pair of palms; these days students take up, ‘What is the sound of a single hand?’.

Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of a hand

What is the sound of a single rock? The Gardens of Stone National Park ‘centres on Newnes Plateau, the coldest and highest sandstone plateau of the Sydney Basin. Its ecosystems support threatened and endangered indigenous flora and fauna. Another priceless resource, the area’s water, flows into its diverse upland swamps and in turn these contribute to a number of water supplies, including the headwaters of the Coxs River, a key catchment of Warragamba Dam. Coal mining in this area has caused substantial damage to the natural environment primarily through the effects of surface subsidence, but also through associated groundwater and surface water loss, water pollution and consequent weed invasion, and the fragmentation and clearing of habitats for mining infrastructure.’ (3)

Sound explorers Michael Morley, Joyce Hinterding and David Haines – collectively known as Sun Valley – have been recording in threatened World Heritage areas in the Blue Mountains, including the Gardens of Stone National Park, picking up the ‘inaudible soundscape’ not normally heard by the human ear. Using very low frequency antennae, they plug into rock structures, particularly the rugged sandstone pagodas and cliffs with protruding ironstone plates and weathered beehive-shaped rocks - and see if they are resonating in sympathy with something. They’ve discovered that with VLF, the natural electromagnetic forces of rocks, and particularly the ironstone, can be detected and recorded. They’ve discovered that the stones are singing.

‘The earth’s natural radio.’ Haines says. ‘It sounds electronic, because it’s resonating within the electromagnetic spectrum. So the sound is actually humming, popping, it’s almost like a technological sound, crackling, pulsating.’ From these sounds, the group has created a performance piece called **Black Canyon**, backed by instrumentation from synthesisers, guitars and amplifiers.’ The Gardens of Stone are riddled with canyons formed over millions of years. After a coal waste spill in July, the Wollangambe River ran black, hence the title. (4) You can tune in at <https://www.facebook.com/CampbelltownArtsCentre/>



The Newnes Plateau Cliffs
Gardens of Stone National Park, NSW

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/Adventure-sports-experiences/The-Newnes-Plateau-Cliffs

'Who is hearing that sound?' is another Japanese koan which we inherit from Bassui Zenji, a 14th century Rinzai Master, cueing 'Who hears?' to the breath, on or off the cushion, no matter where we are, coming back to the sounds of traffic, our partner's snoring, the drone of the jet coming in to land, the chatter of kids in the street, the screechy music when we're put on hold, or pulsating, crackling stones.

A monk introduced himself to the teacher Hsuan-sha, saying, 'I have just entered this monastery. Please show me where to enter the Way.'

'Do you hear the sound of the valley stream?' asked Hsuan-sha.

'Yes', said the monk.

'Enter there!'

Taking up 'Who is hearing?' one realises over time the constancy of sound, arising and falling away - and its ubiquity - the stars, the sun and the moon - even the stones - are all singing and, as Hakuin put it in his Song of Zazen:

Singing and dancing are the voice of the Law.

Hakuin was a man of extraordinary energy. The master who otherwise 'might be mistaken for a hissing, fuming fanatic, delivering Dharma talks such as 'Licking Up Hsi-keng's Fox Slobber', had diverse talents and 'the ink paintings, calligraphy, letters and other writings that represent his dealings with the laity enrich and humanize our image of him.' (5) He was probably in his early sixties and busy teaching in various temples in Suruga and neighbouring provinces when winter came in 1746, and with it the rohatsu training period. At the same time, he was working on lectures he had started previously on the Lotus Sutra but, from this poem he wrote during that rohatsu, he was equanimous with his intense teaching life.

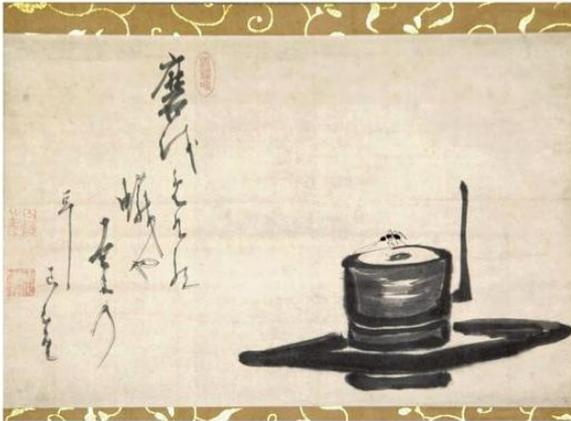
*This noise and bustle, giving talks, chatting with guests,
Grabbing some sleep, are all forms of zazen practice.
When offering incense this morning, I forgot the verse,
After the meal I recited Namu Myoho-rence –kyo instead. (6)*

....zazen that continues in one's daily activities, Hakuin said. And, writing about the single hand and Kannon Bosatsu, he said: "'Kannon' means to observe a sound. It is the sound of one hand. If you understand this point you will be awakened. When your eyes can see, the whole world is Kannon." He also said, "When you hear for yourself the voice of One Hand, whatever you are doing, whether enjoying a bowl of rice or sipping a cup of tea, all of it you do in the samadhi of living with one bestowed with the buddha-mind."

Here's one of Hakuin's 'sound of one hand' poems, the particular painting it inscribes now unknown. (7)

Inscription for a Painting of Ants Walking Around a Mill

*Circling the rim of an iron grindstone,
An ant goes round and round without rest
Like all beings in the six realms of existence,
Born here and dying over there without release,
Now becoming a hungry ghost, then an animal.
If you are searching for freedom from this suffering
You must hear the sound of one hand.*



And here's one of Hakuin's many paintings of an ant crawling around a grindstone.

His inscription reads:

*Circling the grindstone,
an ant – this world's
whisper. (8)*

Notes:

- (1) [Penetrating Laughter: Hakuin's Zen & Art](#), Kazuaki Tanahashi, pub. Overlook Press, NY, p.18
- (2) [Hekigan Roku](#), transl. Diamond Sangha
- (3) <https://www.colongwilderness.org.au/campaigns/the-gardens-of-stone/about-gardens-of-stone#sthash.kk9n108m.dpuf>
- (4) [Sydney Morning Herald](#), 30/10/15, p. 7
- (5) [The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader](#), ed. Nelson Foster & Jack Shoemaker, The Ecco Press, 1996, p.325
- (6) [Poison Blossoms from a Thicket of Thorn: Hakuin Zenji](#), transl. Norman Waddell, pub Counterpoint, 2014, p.62
- (7) [Penetrating Laughter: Hakuin's Zen & Art](#), Kazuaki Tanahashi, pub. Overlook Press, NY, p.89
- (8) [The Sound of One Hand:: Paintings and Calligraphy by Zen Master Hakuin](#), Audrey Yoshiko Seo and Stephen Addiss, pub. Shambhala, 2010, p.149

Reports

Samu at Kodoji, 26-27 September

At various times 15 adults and kids attended a busy samu weekend to prepare Kodoji for the October sesshin. Attendees included Paul Carter, Greg Carty, Tony and Gillian Coote, Julian Evans and his 3 kids, Carl Hooper, Jason Koh, Diana Levy, Will Moon, Helen Sanderson and Greg Try.

Essential work included painting (Paul Carter up ladder), compost hole digging, sorting out the store room behind the Hojo, patching the pot belly stove in the cottage, cleaning, weeding, blackberry eradication, road work and zafu and zabuton airing.

Whipper snippers whipped and mowers mowed. Will Moon checked out and marked a bush walk to be taken during sesshin and in so doing discovered a previously unremarked overhang with Aboriginal drawings quite nearby, which some of us were able to visit during sesshin. Greg Carty presented Kodoji with the magnificent Taiko drum that he made and beat out a tattoo that could be heard as far away as St Albans. The drum performed its first official duty at the Saturday teisho of sesshin – calling the teacher from her room. Its beat added gravitas to the daily closing ceremony at Sesshin and worked up a tsunami of sound at the final closing ceremony with the han and umpan at the end of Sesshin.

And as usual. zazen, warm communal meals, and much laughter.

Tony Coote

Right: Paul Carter up the ladder

Below: Convivial lunch at Kodoji

Photos: Tony Coote



Spring Sesshin at Kodoji, 2 – 9 October

Spring Sesshin was small and intimate, with some coming and going in some extremely hot days, very cold, moon and star lit nights, a bright fire burning in the stove on many mornings. Small numbers meant that the oryoki meals were held in the cottage around the table, everyone proceeding there and back in sitting order, with bowl sets held high. A beautiful simplified ritual that made it easier for cooks and washers up, with no servers.

Every day we swam in bird song- a 6 ft brown snake and goannas were glimpsed. An evening under the stars by the creek filled us with frog song; by night, a barking owl, mopokes, even a koala grunt. We were immersed in sound.

On the fifth day the extreme heat ceased, so everyone set off on a pilgrimage up the hills, led by Will Moon, to a cave and overhang recently found by him, alive with paintings by the Darkinjung. A wonderful time of deep practice. Gratitude to all

Sally Hopkins

(Neal, who sits with [Sydney Insight Meditators] at Kodoji, said how grateful they all were for the wonders of the place. He passed on their deep gratitude to all whose work and care had created the buildings).



Back row l to r: Tony Coote, Neal Cunningham, Ameli Tanchitsa, Paul Carter, Nick Dennington, Lily Lampis.
Front row l to r: Jill Steverson, Sally Hopkins, Gillian Coote, Will Moon, Jason Koh. (absent: Janet Selby, Diana Levy)



Left: Jason Koh announcing teisho on the Taiko drum, made and given by Greg Carty.

Below: Will Moon documenting Darkinjung site at head of Womerah Creek, Kodoji



On the Cave Walk

Drawings:
Janet Selby



what the birds see
eye to eye with the cliffs
saying "Good morning" !

we stop for a rest
the flies are very interested
excited even

splotches of blossom
cream cones
good enough to lick

footprints at the cave
after how many years?
the charcoal man rejoices

Diana Levv

mountain devils secure ground
strike tall stakes of spikes
red flower triumphant

humbled.
roo jumps forth
eons wake up and eat apple

mystery spirits come forth
alive
wake up!

Jill Steverson

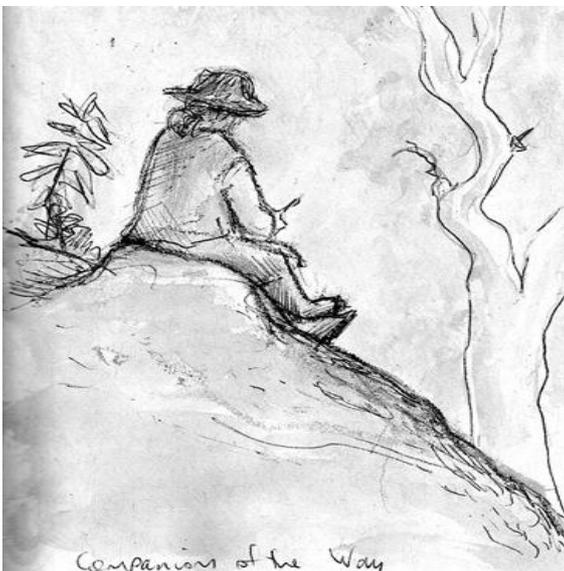


come back to the universe -
to your practice ...
and there you are
drawing kangaroo
at the source of the creek

working quartz
up there on the ridge.

singing country,
singing march flies,
singing the southerly,
swaying angophora
swimming in the river of stars

Gillian Coote



AGM and General Meeting - 18 October

Reports from the Chair and the Teachers, together with Minutes of last year's AGM, were emailed out to members by the Secretary.

Kerry Stewart was appointed Chair, a position very ably and dedicatedly filled by Brendon Stewart for the last three years.

Gratitude was expressed to everyone who came to the SZC AGM, in particular to outgoing Board members Michael Tierney and Glenys Jackson for all their work. New Board members -- Georgina Reid, Brian Gutkin, Alex Budlevskis were welcomed.

A review of the year highlighted a very successful 12 months in terms of events, connections with one another, teachings and positive financial status. The Survey circulated to sangha members asked them to reflect and comment on some questions about SZC's future. The results of the Survey were also reviewed.

Appreciation was given to Will Moon for writing the Survey questions, the Board for their input and the sangha for their responses. The answers and comments of the sangha have been collated.

Thanks were extended to all those who served the SZC in their respective positions throughout the year. Their contributions are an invaluable component of the SZC."

Job allocations for 2016 are listed on the right.

Jobs

Publications: Janet, Diego, Michael

Newsletter: Yvonne, Sally

Sesshin flyers: Janet

MMC: Brendon, Philip, Diana (possibly), Brian

Leadership roster: Peter Bursky

Complaints and Ethics Subcommittee: Julie, Brian, Diana, Janet

Dojo/Hojo Cleaning Roster: Sally

Flowers: Glenys

Email enquiries: Janet

Bookings – Gorricks: Brendon

Leadership training

MON: Peter (Ino)

Yvonne (Ino, Jiki, Jisha)

WED: Janet (Ino, Jiki, Jisha)

Sesshin Coordinators

Easter: Jill Ball

Winter: Jane

Spring: Janet

Rohatsu: Jane

Sesshin Food Coordinators

Autumn, Winter, Spring: Jill Steverson

Rohatsu: Diana

Library: Glenys, Sue

Samu Coordinator: Tony

Artefacts curator: Kerry

Orientation

MON: Kerry, Sue

WED: Janet, Will

Current podcasts: Paul

Archival podcasts: Sue

Kodoji: Tony, Brendon, Diana, Subhana, Jill Ball

Memorial Ceremony at Annandale, 8 November

facilitated by Gillian Coote

Remembrance Day (11 November) commemorates the end of hostilities on the Western Front of World War I. It marks the signing of the armistice between the Allies of World War 1 and Germany at Compiègne, France on 11 November 1918. Each year on this day people pause to observe one minute's silence at 11.00am to remember those who suffered or died in Australia's cause in all wars and armed conflicts.

A Memorial Ceremony is held annually at Annandale on the Sunday closest to Remembrance Day. It is an opportunity to honour the memory of family, friends and loved ones who are no longer with us.

After sitting, Gilly opened the way for us by reading out the names of sangha members who had died.



Maggie then sang the opening verse of *Babylon* (written by Don Maclean) - *By the waters/The waters of Babylon/We lay down and wept/And wept for, thee Zion/We remember, thee remember/Thee remember, thee Zion* - which made many of us weep. Later we sang the verse together as a round. Some people put photos of those they wished to especially remember up on the altar along with Spring native flowers, and we chanted sutras. In a circle we shared stories of husbands, brothers, mothers, fathers, friends, family members going back to WW2 whose death affected everyone forever. We remembered refugees who had lost wives, children, fathers as well as homes. So much shared grief. So much gratitude for all that had been offered and shared by those who were no longer with us in the flesh. Tears, smiles and laughs. Then, with full hearts, a wonderful shared potluck lunch.

Sally Hopkins and Yvonne Hales

Photos of those remembered were placed on the side altar at the Annandale zendo.

Photo: Janet Selby

40th Anniversary Celebration – 15 November

Recent rain eased to blue skies over the Community Centre at Crows Nest, Sydney. A Sunday morning that moved along with the hum of conversation among the sangha interspersed with exclamations of surprise at seeing old friends again. Subhana facilitated the celebration. Welcome to country was given by Gilly. Sutras and dedications were led by Maggie. After tea we sat in a circle arranging ourselves “into decades” – according to when we each arrived at SZC which, for some, took place in the early 1970s. Many stories were told and fond memories were shared by many: early days of chance meetings in the late 1970s through martial arts groups, yoga classes, meeting John Cooper – to hearing Aitken Roshi give a talk in Sydney – to the gratitude expressed to Roshi for his integrity, intelligence and steadiness in starting a zen meditation group; to reminiscing about early days sitting in Lindfield – some of the first sesshins in the 1970s at Burradoo and in the 1980s at Gorricks; John Tarrant's teisho under the chestnut tree at Gorricks; 25 years of the women's group. Gilly read out a letter to the sangha from Michael Kieran (HDS, Hawai'i) in which he congratulated us on our 40th anniversary and also shared his memories of the early days.

Gratitude was expressed to all for participating in the celebration and to Kerry for organizing the event.

Yvonne Hales

This is a short report as the event occurred just prior to going to print (Editor).



Photos: Yvonne Hales



Coming Events

Rohatsu Sesshin 2015

4 – 8 December at Annandale with Maggie Gluek Roshi

Our annual sesshin in the City runs from the evening of Friday December 4 through midday Tuesday December 8. 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 fitting in sesshin time around work and family commitments.

Last date for booking and payment - 28 November.

Sesshin coordinator: Jane Andino janeandino@yahoo.com.au

Notice Board

Dokusan

MONDAYS:
Subhana Dec 14
Allan Jan 11, 18

WEDNESDAYS:
Gillian Coote Dec 2, 9, 16, 23; Jan 20

Dharma Café

Jan 25, 27 7-9pm

Full Moon Ceremony

No FMC in Dec and Jan

Zazenkai

Jan 17 Allan talk, dokusan

Board Meetings

2nd Tuesday: 6pm sit / 6.30pm start: Dec 8, Jan 12

Women's Group

Dec 11 at Caroline's
Jan 8 at Annandale (Sally)

Early Morning Zazen

Ashfield Morning Zazen

SZC members interested in morning zazen and dokusan are invited to join a small group that sits regularly on Tuesday and Friday mornings from 6.00-7.30am. Contact either Allan Marett allan.marett@gmail.com 0409712767 or Kim Bagot kimballb7@gmail.com 0402321277.

Regular Notices

Use of Kodoji

Kodoji is available for use by members of the SZC and guests (if accompanied by a member). It can also be hired by other groups if approved by the Board. Fees are \$20 per night for members and \$30 for non-members. There is a \$100 booking fee for non-member groups. Booking of Kodoji is essential and it is also essential to receive instructions about use of the facility before going there. Please note that the local Fire Brigade has advised restrictions during Summer.

Try giving the family a wonderful weekend or yourself a few days of private retreat. Enquiries to Brendon Stewart, phone 9879 7290, email stewarts34@bigpond.com

Blue Mountains Zen Group

Meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. For details call Paul Maloney (4784 2136) or Jane Andino (0432 355 831). Visitors welcome.

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings. For details call Gary (0429 635 412) or E: gcaitchcon@gmail.com

Books for sale at Annandale

The Roaring Stream. A New Zen Reader (eds) Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker

By Robert Aitken: *Taking the Path of Zen, Mind of Clover, The Dragon that Never Sleeps, The Morning Star, Vegetable Roots Discourse* and *The Gateless Barrier*

By Subhana Barzagli: *Wild Grasses and Falling Wattle* (dharma poetry)

Contact

Board: Kerry Stewart (Chair) stewartkerry4@gmail.com, Jason Koh, Brendon Stewart, Helen Sanderson, Sue Bidwell, Georgina Reid, Brian Gutkin, Alex Budlevskis.

Newsletter Editor: Yvonne Hales yhales6@gmail.com

Sydney Zen Centre Inc., 251 Young Street, Annandale NSW 2038 E: info@szc.org.au

SZC Calendar December 2015-January 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	NOV 30 Zazen 7-9	1 DECEMBER	2 Zazen 7-9	3	4 ROHATSU SESSHIN Annandale 	5 ROHATSU
6 ROHATSU 	7 ROHATSU	8 ROHATSU Board Mtg 6.30pm 	9 Zazen 7-9	10	11 Women's Group at Caroline's	12
13	14 Zazen 7-9	15	16 Zazen 7-9	17	18	19
20	21 Zazen 7-9	22	23 Zazen 7-9	24	25	26
27	28 Boxing Day holiday No sitting	29	30 Zazen 7-9	31	1 JANUARY	2
3	4 Zazen 7-9	5	6 Zazen 7-9	7	8 Women's Group at Annandale	9
10	11 Zazen 7-9	12 Board Mtg 6.30pm	13 Zazen 7-9	14	15	16
17 Zazenkai 8.30-12.00 Allan talk dokusan	18 Zazen 7-9	19	20 Zazen 7-9	21	22	23
24	25 Dharma café 7-9	26	27 Dharma café 7-9	28	29	30