

Mind Moon Circle

Zen, Nature and Climate Change



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Autumn 2013

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The theme for Winter issue will be 'Zen and the Body'. Please send contributions to next issue to Michael Tierney at michaeltierney1@rocketmail.com by 30 June 2013

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Zen, Nature and Climate Change

Peter Joshu Thompson (Editor)

To begin with I would like to introduce myself as I have not been very active in the Sydney Zen Centre for some time. My dharma name, Joshu was given to me in 1991 by the Zen teacher Reverend Hogen Yamahata (a dharma descendant of Daiun Sogaku, through Tange Harada Roshi) when he was staying with me in Lismore, Northern NSW. I kept this dharma name when I took Jukai Ceremony with Subhana in 1994. I was a foundation practitioner of the Sydney Zen Centre in 1975 at the family home of Leigh Davison at Lindfield in Sydney. I was a high school teacher for 24 years and now teach adult education.

In this issue of Mind Moon Circle we are looking at the relationship of Zen to Nature (now and historically). This is particularly timely as we find ourselves in the midst of an unprecedented climate crisis. The long term survival of mankind and other species on earth has now become quite uncertain, as tragically we have not yet found the popular and political will to begin to alleviate, let alone resolve this terrible human-made crisis. The insatiable greed of humankind for energy from fossil fuels has mostly created this situation – 60,000 tons and rising of human-made CO2 are produced every minute.

Traditional religion and culture tended to be more friendly towards nature. The older religions, whether Aboriginal, Druid, Bon, etc tended to be pantheistic and animistic. Humans worshipped nature and enjoyed a sympathetic and friendly relationship to animals, plants, rocks, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars - the "Brother Sun and Sister Moon" of St Francis. A family-like kinship was felt with nature. When Buddhism arrived in China it encountered a Taoist religion that was very grounded in nature. The Tao itself was called the Watercourse Way, often represented as a wild mountain waterfall and stream which tumbled out of the steep Chinese mountains and found its way without obstacle or resistance around boulders and rocks. Likewise, Taoism itself was seen to flow with the nature of things without obstruction or blocking. Here the practice of *we wei* or letting be was central. However, even here there was still an "I-Thou", subject-object relationship. Dualism still existed. The radical Zen of Bodhidharma transcended this split. Instead of identifying *with* nature, one *became* nature and so there was ONLY THIS! There was no more need even for a relationship. This went beyond the dual nature of any relationship to a oneness, and then went even beyond oneness! This is well illustrated in the koan dialogue between Layman Pang and Matsu, with Matsu replying to Layman Pang that before he answered his question, he would need to "to swallow the whole of the West River in one gulp". Can WE do this?

Man-made objects often feature in Zen koans and stories, for example the whisk, the dried shit-stick, the storehouse, the gate, the cart. However the natural objects of the mountain, the river, the cypress tree, etc seem to possess a special feel and energy because they have not been created by human thought. Zen temples and monasteries were often located in isolated, wild, natural and mountainous places, far from thought-created cities.

Given our Zen sense of a transcendent union with nature and the natural world, what is our responsibility to it? And what is our response to dangerous threats to the

environment and our survival? In our Zen tradition we have always understood the simple importance of doing the needful, doing the necessary. "When thirsty, I drink, when hungry I eat" (Bankei Zenji). Even after enlightenment, "wondrous activity, chop wood and carry water" (Layman Pang). Joshu's response to the new young monk when asked about the Way, was to ask him had he finished his porridge. "Yes," the monk replied. "Then wash your bowl!" Joshu retorted. If a friend is in need or danger, I help or rescue the friend. In Zen the simple response to need or danger is seen as a simple but wondrous activity. What then is our response if the need or threat is much bigger and much greater? In this case the whole planet and indeed our whole survival is under threat. Here of course, the challenge seems to be so great that the first response may be one of complete despair, depression and powerlessness. If the response of everyone is powerlessness this challenge certainly won't be met. To quote the famous AA prayer, we need the courage "to change the things which can be changed". What might we do here?

1. We can lessen our own carbon emission footprint, e.g walk, cycle, train, instead of car,
2. we can begin to use solar and wind and other renewable energies,
3. we can grow and / or can donate money for more trees to be grown,
5. we can join environmental and green political groups to campaign for a cleaner, greener world,
6. we can try to educate and inform as many people as we can about the science involved and the huge threat to survival we are facing. The internet is a good place to start e.g. Facebook,
7. we can eat more plant based food to lessen our dependence on animal production which consumes huge amounts of resources and produces vast amounts of methane emissions.

Any of these actions we could call in Zen terms, *Upaya*, or skillful means, i.e. doing the needful, doing the necessary. If a person can see no way ahead and no hope, she/he loses all energy. As soon as she/he sees any glimmer of hope the energy comes flooding back. Even one of these skillful actions can begin to empower us and bring some of our creative energy back. Of course, in the end if there is no hope of survival despite our best efforts, in our own Zen way we can become like Master Ganto whose shout could be heard for miles around as he became one with the sword which penetrated his body. WE may need to become one with the rising temperatures.

Our own teacher Robert Aitken, sat numb and powerless in dokusan for more years than he cared to remember (20 years) until he found his voice and his power to respond. With his breakthrough, he then became not only a life-giving Zen teacher but also a man involved in social action to the extent of withholding taxes in protest against the US build-up of its nuclear weapons.

In our present Zen world we have the great example of a very accomplished Zen teacher in Bernard Tetsugen Glassman Roshi. As a way of returning to the marketplace, Bernard has set up the Zen Peacemaker Order. The main principles are: approaching any problem with not-knowing; bearing witness to the sufferings of the world; and healing ourselves and others through right understanding and right action.

Hakuin Zenji fought continuously for the rights and fair treatment of the poor farmers and rural workers who lived around him. This is the same Hakuin who was beaten and pushed from the verandah by his compassionate master to shake him out of

his “Zen sickness” or his stuck-ness in emptiness. His master laughed and called him a “denizen of the dark cave of ignorance”. Hakuin had felt himself enlightened before this event. Being stuck in emptiness is called a “Zen sickness”. In our days on the north coast we used to call this the “Byron Bay disease” as that is where it was prevalent, often encouraged by the spiritual teachings of Advaita Vedanta and A Course in Miracles.

To see that form is emptiness is a necessary first part of our Zen understanding. Robert Aitken used to caution “Don’t stop there!” We then need to step off the hundred-foot pole, back into the myriad world of form - the ten thousand things (emptiness is exactly form - Heart Sutra). In the ten ox herding pictures, this is our return to the market place, at picture ten, and this work continues endlessly. Nothing really seems to matter in our state of emptiness Samadhi, and therefore it is easy to feel useless and powerless to respond to challenges in the so-called world of form. A monk, who seemed to be stuck in emptiness, asked Master Rinzai why he was planting pine trees on the mountainside. “For future generations,” Rinzai replied. Can we learn from this? Surely we need to honour both our dharma and blood ancestors, and but also make provision for future generations.

Given that, as most experts agree, we shall not be able to stop the immediate effects and changes which the climate crisis is bringing, we will need to make obvious changes immediately to help our survival individually and communally. It is said that our Zen sect was able to adapt and survive the great persecutions in pre-Tang and Tang Dynasty China (845 AD). Much of this was attributed to the ability of our dharma ancestors to subsist on very little, to grow their own food and live off the land with frugality and simplicity. Their strong sense of sangha and practice also helped a great deal in their ability to survive (please see the article by Leigh Davison in this issue).

The climate crisis we are now facing may necessitate

1. we grow and produce more of our own food,
2. we build underground / inground houses to protect ourselves from cyclonic winds, devastating, ferocious bush fires, and also to keep cool in rising temperatures,
3. to move away from our reliance on the power grid for our energy (solar, wind, other renewables),
4. to rely more fully on our community support networks including our own sangha,
5. to relocate from areas badly effected by climate change (e.g. sea-side, flood- and fire-prone areas).

May we all survive and thrive in these troubled and tumultuous times, now and in the future, and may all beings be happy no matter what the temperature or climate circumstances.



Oxherding picture 10, by Master Kakuan, China, 12th century.

Gandhi, Dogen, and Deep Ecology

Robert Aitken

*Excerpts from an essay published in 'The Mind of Clover - Essays in Buddhist Ethics'
by Robert Aitken. Northpoint Press, San Francisco, 1984*

The conventional view that serving others is a means for self-aggrandizement is the view that accepts exploitation of people and the environment, wars between nations, and conflicts within the family. As Yasutani Roshi used to say, the fundamental delusion of humanity is to suppose that I am here and you are there.

Gandhi's view is traditionally Eastern, and is found with differing emphases in Hinduism, Taoism, and in Theraveda and Mahayana Buddhism. For Dogen Senji and for Zen Buddhists generally, the way is openness to all beings, all things. Each being confirms my self-nature, but if I seek to control the other, I fall into delusion. The *Genjokoan* again:

That the self advances and confirms the myriad things is called delusion.

That the myriad things advance and confirm the self is enlightenment.

The self imposing upon the other is not only something called delusion, it is the ruination of our planet and all of its creatures. But enlightenment is not just a matter of learning from another human being. When the self is forgotten, it is recreated again and again, ever more richly, by the myriad things and beings of the universe:

The wild deer, wand'ring here & there
Keeps the Human Soul from Care.

This is not just a matter of sensing the oneness of the universe. Stars of a tropical sky spread across the ceiling of my mind, and the cool wind unlocks my ear.

Such experiences are not philosophy and are not confined to the traditional East, but in the past two hundred years, East or West, we must look to the periphery of culture, rather than to the mainstream, to find anything similar. The mainstream follows a utilitarian interpretation of God's instructions to Noah:

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth on the earth, and upon all the fished of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.

It is only a few, relatively isolated geniuses in the West, such as Wordsworth and Thoreau, who have taught confirmation of the human self by nature, and the crime of confirming nature by the self. For example, here Wordsworth echoes Dogen:

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

Openness to the myriad things follows what George Sessions, in his discussion of deep ecology, calls conversion:

The forester ecologist Aldo Leopold underwent a dramatic conversion from the “stewardship” shallow ecology resource-management mentality of man-over-nature to announce that humans should see themselves realistically as “plain members” of the biotic community. After the conversion, Leopold saw steadily and with “shining clarity” as he broke through the anthropocentric illusions of his time and began “thinking like a mountain.”

Man-over-nature is the self advancing and confirming the myriad things, and anthropocentric delusion. It is the same mind-set as Americans over Vietnamese, or men over women, or managers over worker, or whites over blacks.

The Deep Ecology movement has grown out of the despair of ecologists over the conventional resource-management mentality that is rapidly depleting our minerals, razing our forests, and poisoning our rivers and lakes. It is precisely the same as the welfare society mentality that manages human resources for the short-term benefit of the managers themselves.

Readers of the conventional media have more awareness of the dangers of war and nuclear poison than they have of the biological holocaust involved in clearing jungles, stripping mountains, disrupting the balance of life in oceans, and draining coastal swamps. One must read the journals and bulletins of ecological societies to gain a perspective of the accelerating global disaster that our luxurious way of life is bringing down upon us all.

But even with knowledge, I wonder if it would be possible to reverse the machine of death and destruction. We in the peace movement have sought to levitate the Pentagon, falling into the same delusion that Dogen Zenji warns us about. When we stopped the B1 Bomber, we got the Cruise Missile. When we stopped the Omnibus Crime Bill, we got another Omnibus Crime Bill. When we stopped LBJ, we got Richard Nixon.

The point is that, with all our good intentions, we are still seeking to advance and control the myriad things. The alternative is not just to respond passively or to run away. Once one thinks like a mountain, the whole world is converted. All things confirm me. Then I sit on dojo cushions that do not move. There is no controller and no one to control.

I think again of Gandhi, urging each of us to follow our own light. Erik H. Erikson suggests that Gandhi held fast to his values to the exclusion of human needs in his family and even his nation. Probably so. We need not venerate him blindly. With all his flaws, he was surely a forerunner of a New Reformation that seeks to encourage self-sufficiency and personal responsibility for all beings and all things.

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1. Maezumi, *The Way of Everyday Life*.
 2. Blake, “Auguries of Innocence,” *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*
 3. Genesis 9 : 2
 4. William Wordsworth, “Expostulations and Reply,” *Lyrical Ballads*.
 5. Sessions, “Spinoza, Perennial Philosophy, and Deep Ecology”.
 6. Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*.

Kanzeon in the Bush

Gillian Coote

*Journeying through the world
to and fro, to and fro,
cultivating a small field. [1]*

Living under the shadow of climate change and species extinction, people can become numb and cynical. What can one person do? It's all too hard, too frightening. But it's when we *forget* the self and realise our essential interconnectedness that an inevitable and entirely natural sense of responsibility arises, with respect and trust towards the whole of creation. Just as we respond to the suffering of other people, we respond to the suffering of the ecosystem, working, literally, at the grassroots. Out beyond the suburbs where we've built Kodoji, Temple of the Ancient Ground, on land adjoining the Hawkesbury Sandstone wilderness that is Yengo National Park, our sangha practises bush regeneration - caring for country- removing blackberry, pigeon grass, *Solanum nigrum* and many other weeds which, like greed, hatred and ignorance, rise endlessly. How does the Bodhisattva Kanzeon use all those many hands and eyes? It is like someone at the edge of the paddock pulling fleabane.

For many years I have been getting up in the dark during the week to do *samu* - work practice - one of the three mainstays of Zen training - with a bush regeneration co-op in Sydney. It has contracts with local councils and the National Parks & Wildlife Service to manage remnant bushland, mainly in the Turranburra (Lane Cover River) catchment. I do this work to pay homage to the spirit of this country, to give something back. Our biodiversity is under threat. It was estimated recently that weeds comprise 21% of flora in NSW.

Like many Australians, I grew up in the bush; the houses petered out, and there it was, this dreaming, singing, barefoot place for magical games, splashing in creeks, edging past snakes, padding along sandy bush tracks edged with banksia leading to the beach, clambering over magical honeycombed rocks and gazing into perfectly rounded pink pools, full of creatures.

*Birds and stars and trees and we ourselves
come forth in perfect harmony. [2]*

Aboriginal people have been in intimate relationship with this country for over 40,000 years, treading lightly, singing and dancing their interdependence. At the beginning of 1788, the bushland of Sydney - an uninterrupted mosaic of forests, woodlands, heaths, scrub, sedgeland and swamps - stretched from the coast, west to the Nepean-Hawkesbury River. Sadly, since 1788, some humans have trodden very heavily, driven by fear, greed, ignorance and impatience. The few patches of remnant urban bushland - usually in deep gullies where creeks inevitably feature sewer lines and storm water pipes - are subject to continual assault in the form of run-off from the streets, which carries nutrients the bush doesn't want or need, and free-floating rubbish that people have chucked out of car windows, or dropped in gutters - coke bottles, cigarette packets, bongos, plastic bags, lolly wrappers. And to those invasive

opportunistic plants we call weeds.

So much bushland has gone, and so much is still being destroyed all over this country as I write. As a prominent developer said recently, "If you want trees, go to the Blue Mountains". The old notion that the bush is just rubbish unless there's something you can get out of it, persists. Around our city, the best timber's long gone, and the lyrebirds are few and far between but there are still bush rocks to be stolen, as well as orchids, grasstrees, snakes and birds. These days, National Parks rangers even paint the waratah flowers blue to deter flower thieves. It's still a good place to dump a car, a sawn-off shotgun or, on one site I work on, an entire ATM, buried under a pile of hacked-off foliage.

For an excellent overview of the variety of vegetation, geology and soils in each municipality and what remains, I recommend Doug Benson & Jocelyn Howell's "Taken for Granted - the Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs". [3] Amazingly, this book shows how many small fragments of bush remain, hidden in pockets, and rarely visited.

Grace, our dog, is thrilled that I'm getting up so early. She follows me to the kitchen where I warm up the thermos, put on the kettle, prepare the backpack, eat breakfast, and leave the house. The sun has just come up. It'll be another warm day.

Bush regeneration is about bushland management and ecological restoration, the work of maintaining biodiversity and restoring ecosystems in which natural regeneration can occur, the work of healing and restoring the bush. This ethic of caring for nature exists in most cultures and, as Sydney people realise the extraordinary heritage of the flora and fauna of the Hawkesbury Sandstone ecosystem, perhaps they will respond with greater sensitivity and protective behaviour. Perhaps they will think twice before tipping their grass clippings over the back fence into the bush, or stealing attractive rocks to put by the pool. Perhaps they'll join a local volunteer bushcare group. As Hushpuppy, the extraordinary six-year old girl in the film "Beasts of the Southern Wild", says: "The whole universe depends on everything fitting together, just right. If you can fix the broken piece, everything can go right back. When you're small, you gotta fix what you can. When I'm quiet, behind my eyes I see I'm just a little part of this whole universe."

This morning we'll be working in the Field of Mars Nature Reserve, Ryde. This was declared Common Land for grazing stock in 1804. Now, much reduced in area, there's a cemetery at one end, and suburbs all around. We've been restoring the saltmarsh along Stranger's Creek, away from the resilient core. While ducks bob serenely on the creek, people's rubbish washes in on the tide, a doleful collection of muddy wrappers and bottles lodging among the casuarinas and mangroves.

Clattering over the bridge to join the others, our supervisor describes today's work, and what weeds we'll target, and soon some of us are freeing up native grasses, trees and small herbs, while others are scraping and poisoning the bases of *Ipomoea indica* - morning glory - which has been choking the paperbark trees. As I roll *Ipomoea* vines into wreaths, the wind sings in the casuarinas, pierced by the shrill call of king parrots and the varying calls of currawong. Now spindly orange insects emerge from the cover of trad (*Tradescantia fluminensis*- wandering jew), now pale brown spiders; now

a girl in yellow spandex careers down the bush track on her mountain bike, a retiree jogs up the hill and, a bunch of high school kids on an environmental education excursion laugh raucously. Now the wind sings in the casuarinas again.

*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 valley stream?" asked Hsuan-sha.
"Yes!" said the monk.
"Enter there!"*

The work requires patience, one of the six paramitas or perfections, as well as discrimination and close attention. Before that privet seedling comes out, be sure it isn't a baby blueberry ash. Perhaps the lantana is a habitat for wrens? Best not take it all at once. Over the last fifteen years, these responses have become second-nature but bush regeneration seemed strange at first, strange but fascinating. I'd read Joan Bradley's hand-printed little book in the early 70's (later reprinted) [4] which is in our SZC Library. And in the early 1980's, I'd made a film biography of the pioneering Buddhist, lawyer and conservationist who trained with the Bradley sisters, Marie Beuzeville Byles. Ten years later, I began training in bush regen.

I practise *wu-wei* gardening at home too, removing weeds and exotics, watching and waiting to see what indigenous plants come up, each appearance a miracle of regeneration - *Dianella caerulea*, a graceful plant with tiny blue and yellow flowers and purple berries, the slender climber *Glycine clandestina*, *Pteridium esculentum*, or bracken, *Omalanthus populifolius*, or bleeding heart, with its distinctive bodhi-shaped leaves; *Breynia oblongifolia*, a shrub common in rainforest margins and moist gullies, *Oplismenus*, a native ground cover and the hardy groundcover, *Commelina cyanea*, with its distinctive Brett Whitely-blue flowers, often mistaken for 'trad". The seeds of all these indigenous plants have been lying dormant in the soil, awaiting their chance, somewhat akin to our Buddha-nature. Our suburban garden habitat also supports a range of bird species, water dragons, snakes, skinks, rats, possums and frogs, and an abundant insect world. In remnant bushland, bandicoots and echidnas are being seen.

Down at Stranger's Creek, we sit together near the bridge for morning tea, then resume our work. When we eventually leave the site, dirty, hot and tired, another mountain of weeds will have been removed. The five main requirements for plant growth - sunlight, water, nutrients, optimum temperature, and air - are not so very different for our own requirements really - and our work this morning has given breathing space for more indigenous species to establish themselves. In just twelve months, the saltmarsh in the Field of Mars is transforming from a swamp infested by buffalo grass and dockweed to a delicate carpet of *Samolus repens*, a tiny shrub with white star-shaped flowers, bordered by a field of the edible-rooted cumbungi or Typha. And each time we visit there are fewer weeds though, like Zen practice, if there is no regular sustained maintenance, this site will rapidly fall backwards.

Transformations like this are happening in remnant bushland all over Sydney and not just to the flora and fauna. As Joanna Macy says, there is the sense of being acted through and sustained by those very beings on whose behalf one acts. [5]

*Grass as fine
as human hair lives
with the brushstroke wind.
This vast untidy Buddhist temple
of the bush mutters and jingles. [6]*

This temple holds the miracle of two Powerful Owls, perched on high in an old eucalypt. The larger of the pair moves its head ever so slightly, unperturbed as we walk below. This vast temple - beyond tidy and untidy - the warm generative earth, the wind and the rain; and the plant and animal communities who make their homes here, in spite of everything, is one of our greatest treasures, our precious sangha. And as I kneel on the earth, week after week, experiencing resilience, intimacy and regeneration, I'm grateful for such profound Dharma teachings.

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1. Haiku, 4 vols. R. H. Blyth, (Tokyo, Hokuseido Press, 1949-52) Vol IV, p. 290
 2. Excerpt from Diamond Sangha sutra dedication, Robert Aitken Roshi,
 3. Taken for Granted - the Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs, Doug Benson & Jocelyn Howell, Kangaroo Press, 1995
 4. Bringing back the Bush, Joan Bradley, Landsdowne Press, 1988
 5. World as Lover, World as Self, Joanna Macy, New Society Publishers, 1991, p.192
 6. Selected Poems, Rodney Hall, UQP Press, 1975, p.189

This essay has been slightly revised since it was first published in Mind Moon Circle, October 2003.



Considering Who We Are

Maggie Gluek

Recently an interesting online discussion took place within the Sydney Zen Centre community. The thrust of the input was loosely around our future. *Whither SZC?* Many voices participated, contributing diverse points of view. New visions were generated and debated. It wasn't about reaching conclusions but rather encouraging us all to think outside of the box.

One of the topics of discussion was Kodoji, our country property, located at (and often referred to as) Gorricks Run, some two and a half hours north/northwest of Sydney. Here on disused pasture land, surrounded by bush and sandstone cliffs, stands the modest complex of buildings-- dojo, hojo and kitchen/dormitory cottage--constructed by sangha members. Here, since 1987, sesshin, transmission ceremonies, marriages, funerals and many colourful gatherings have taken place. Last remains of friends have been scattered through this landscape. In the time before time, Kodoji, *Ancient Ground Temple*, was home to Aboriginal people, in proximity to sacred mountains, their sacred land.

In the course of the online exchange the word *asset* was used in conjunction with Gorricks Run. In the context, I read this as an economic term. Sydney Zen Centre owns the land and its value, and duly pays rates on it. It in turn generates income for the centre through sesshin fees and through being hired out to a few other trusted groups. When local rivers flood, the property is inaccessible, and in the last few years with *la niña* operative, at least three sesshin have had to be cancelled or curtailed for this reason. During summer months when extreme hot weather creates a bushfire threat, it's considered too risky to hold sesshin up there. In this calendar year, the place will be used less by our sister sangha. Is Gorricks pulling its weight as an asset? Is it "worth it", especially if we are compelled to run sesshin elsewhere? Should we rent it out more widely?

I suggest we take a step back and ask the wider question "What is an asset?" Whom does it benefit? As followers of the Way, we vow to save the many beings. They may be numberless, but across the world, and no less here in Australia, species numbers are in decline. The bulk of the 16 hectares/40 acres at Gorricks is wild enough and sufficiently unvisited to offer sanctuary for native animals and plants whose natural habitats elsewhere are under threat from human development and intrusion. Zoned as environmental, Kodoji's development prospects are limited, as are those of neighbouring properties. Adjacent on two sides to national park, it offers an extended wildlife corridor.

Plenty of good people I know donate money to wildlife conservancy organisations, groups that buy up parcels of land where species and their habitat can be protected. If we think of a mission statement for Kodoji, I believe that conservancy should be primary. This reflects the first of the Ten Grave Precepts, Not Killing. In other words encouraging life, speaking and acting on behalf of non-humans, preserving biodiversity. {1} As wise caretakers, we can maintain a modest presence dedicated to Zen practice while helping to stop the spread of weeds and keeping human impact minimal. (Perhaps it's a wonderful thing that access is problematic, discouraging easy traffic.) If we never held another

sesshin there (which we will, of course!), Kodoji remains our treasure and our responsibility [2]. It's up to us to see that the wisdom of the friarbirds, the black snakes and the blue gums endures.

Whose refuge? Being at Kodoji offers the opportunity to live simply, to experience the liberation of being unencumbered. To realise, as John Tarrant put it, that we are all just camping out in the universe. (Wonderfully literal in a sleeping bag underneath the Southern Sky!) Moreover it functions as a training ground, and not only in formal Zen practice. Lessons learned there may have far-reaching implications. In this moment when the wellbeing of our earth home is threatened, we are urged to reduce the size of the "footprint" we leave, to minimise our use of the planet's limited and precious resources. Up on the land you learn to take only what you need: a little gas from a cylinder for cooking, a little water heated by burning sticks for showers, a patch of ground for your tent. You become mindful about conserving the sun-derived power and the rain-supplied water, and limiting waste generally [3]. You see the way things work, when they're not sanitised or hidden or "convenient." And you learn how little you do need to live well. In the economy of simplicity, without excessive stuff to be managed, time expands. You are free to marvel at treasures that cannot be acquired but are freely available.

Who gives? Who receives? Whose voice is calling in the trees? Everywhere the natural world holds up for us the vivid mirror. Try peering down into the pans of the toilets at Gorricks. A friend reminded me of Aitken Roshi's experience when he was a prisoner of war, looking at the contents of the outdoor "latrine." We're all connected! he realised. Creatures eat our shit! People are part of this whole thing! Benefit is mutual and immeasurable.

The fact of the whole can save us from our greedy selves. In protecting Kodoji as best we can, we honour the Buddha Dharma, our ancestors on the land, those generations yet to come and the richness of the Mahasangha.

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1. The particular ecosystem the land belongs to, Sydney Hawkesbury Sandstone, is incidentally, in terms of its flora, one of the most biodiverse in Australia. I always find this fact wonderfully counterintuitive, given how nutrient poor sandstone soils are.
 2. On SZC days gone by, when creeks flooded we left cars at the ford and walked into Kodoji. A practice to reconsider, perhaps, with logistical refinements?
 3. For photos of Kodoji, details about the design and construction of the buildings and how the complex is serviced, see Tony Coote's website: tonycootearchitect.com

Kodoji – a Zen Temple

Tony Coote

Excerpts from www.tonycootearchitect.com

This group of buildings, or Zendo, in a paddock at Gorricks Run, near St Albans NSW (about 2 hours drive from Sydney), was built for and by members of the Sydney Zen Centre. The Zendo is for meditation retreats, which are from 5 to 7 days long. People come from all states of Australia, sometimes from overseas, to attend, camping in the paddock. The project was started in 1984 with a single pit toilet. The most recent building



is the meditation hall (or Dojo), which was completed in 2001.

Horses, wallabies, wombats and cattle often wander around in the paddock so there was a need to have a vertical separation from the ground to the buildings. The raised verandahs provide an intermediate space between outside and inside – they provide shade,

shelter and sleeping spaces. They are corridors and places of walking meditation as well as keeping the various animals at bay.

The buildings have been designed to reflect the forms of the farm buildings and sheds that have been built in the area since white settlement in the 1820s. The idea was that the new buildings should not stand out, but rather they should appear entirely appropriate to the setting. The simple roof forms and surrounding verandahs of the new Dojo also relate to the forms of traditional Japanese Buddhist meditation halls.

Sustainable and green

Sustainability – an impossibility?

Among the many definitions of *sustainable*

The Worldwatch Institute

<http://www.worldwatch.org/> defines it as

"meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future



generations to meet their own needs." For example, wood harvested from a "sustainable

forest" means that the wood is derived from a forest managed in a manner so that the trees harvested will be replaced at a rate that matches the rate of removal. In this regard, the forest will continue producing wood for successive generations.

To embrace the true meaning of sustainability is not possible without a massive change in our levels of consumption, the way we make things and the way we live. The urgent need to make these changes is underscored by the fact that the world supplies of oil are running out more quickly than anticipated and the levels of global warming are increasing more quickly than previously thought.

We can do something

Despite the hugeness of the task we *can* start to do things individually to help to turn things around. A lot of these actions relate to the profligacy of our consumptive behaviour across many fields and that includes what we do in our houses.

Many sustainable practices in the home represent a return to simpler, less energy consuming ways of doing things, which were common practice fifty years ago, such as:

- Natural ventilation instead of air conditioning
- Natural lighting instead of artificial
- Recycling rainwater by collecting it in tanks
- The adaptive re-use of existing housing
- Having smaller rooms to heat and cool.

On the left below: the framing of the cottage, which has an additional storey in the roof space, allowing a considerable saving. Other savings were made by using 35 mm wide wall framing instead of the usual 45 mm.

The choice of timber framing for the structures was governed by a number of criteria, including the fact that timber is one of the very few renewable resources. It is also easy to transport (often on car roof racks), easy to lift into place, relatively easy to work with and there is no need for site excavation.



Tracking Patagonia: Glaciers, Rivers, and the Precept of Not Stealing

Sarah Athanas

Coming from a relatively privileged and comfortable upbringing, I've enjoyed material abundance for most of my life without having a direct experience of the consequence. So when I land in an isolated corner of Chilean Patagonia as a volunteer English teacher, I learn to understand abundance, survival, and the difference between what I want and what I need in a very different way. This experience calls to mind what Robert Aitken wrote about the precept of not stealing:

"Not stealing" is contentment, no thought of obtaining. This starts much deeper in the mind than deciding to do without luxuries. It is none other than the open gate of emancipation, anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, the mind that experiences the transparency of all things and their intimate interrelationships. [1]

Geographically isolated, sparsely populated, and underdeveloped, Chile's Region of Aysén has historically been ignored by the Chilean government. The region lacks adequate hospitals or health clinics, there is no local university, and the cost of basic utilities (water, gas, electricity) is the highest in the country. The region is also physically isolated from the rest of Chile, with no direct roads connecting it to the north or south.

I come to know Aysén at a time when it is also struggling to face a controversial hydroelectric development project. The proposed project would generate roughly 2.750 megawatts of energy via five dams on the Baker and Pascua Rivers. This energy would be used primarily for mining operations in Northern Chile.

After eight months of teaching in the public schools of Aysén, my friends and I hatch a plan to spend the summer travelling by bicycle and raft throughout the region, interviewing the pioneers and settlers whose lives would be most affected by hydroelectric development. I am deeply moved by what we find, and spend the next two years editing what becomes my first documentary, *Tracking Patagonia*.

The trip is the adventure of a lifetime. We ride up and down dusty dirt roads, over hills and along rivers, knocking on doors and sharing rounds of *yerba mate* with the proud people who have created a home in this unlikely stretch of land. Many of these people live without electricity or running water. Most live in humble homes and eat meat raised on their own land. They bake their own bread. Vegetables and fruit are scarce.

These people produce what they need to survive. They work hard. They endure hardships such as freezing winters, hunger, and loneliness. And they open their homes to us, offering food, warmth and stories.

Aysén is home to large parts of both the Northern and Southern Ice Fields, the largest masses of ice outside of Antarctica in the southern hemisphere. According to recent studies, both ice fields are receding at an alarmingly fast rate. This can lead to serious glacial hazards, such as the vanishing Lago Cachet II, a lake near the Baker River fed by the Colonia Glacier on the Northern Ice Field.

The Colonia Glacier normally acts as a dam to contain the lake's water, but rising temperatures have caused it to weaken. In 2012, there were two recorded incidents when Lago Cachet II emptied in its entirety to flood the Baker River and triple its volume in a matter of hours.

Would a dam on the Baker River withstand a flood from Lago Cachet II, or would it place the lives of families downstream in serious danger? Does it make sense to construct a hydroelectric complex of five dams on glacial-fed rivers, at a time when these glaciers are receding and the future is uncertain? Does Chile really need this project to produce a surplus of energy to fuel industrial development and boost its economic growth?

The story of Patagonia is a familiar story. In developed countries, we enjoy our long, hot showers and drive to work in our air-conditioned cars, while our friends in Patagonia watch as their glaciers melt and their rivers flood. Multinationals plot to dam rivers and stuff their own pockets with the profits of excess megawatts, while farmers are left without their livelihood in a land scarred by reservoirs and power lines.

One of my favourite interviews during our journey is with a 90-year-old man known to his friends as Don "Lolo." He is one of the original settlers of a tiny hamlet called Caleta Tortel, located where the Baker River empties into the fiords that lead to the open ocean. Don Lolo tells us about the early days in Tortel when he would undertake arduous, month-long journeys to sell his animals and buy provisions. When he neared home towards the end of the journey, he could tell his family was still alive when he saw woodsmoke rising over the mountains.

We stand enthralled behind the camera as the rain pounds on the tin roof of Don Lolo's tiny house perched high above the harbour. The wood stove crackles. Smoke is surely rising from the chimney over the mountains outside. Don Lolo looks at us with sharp and alert eyes from underneath a carefully placed black beret. "I'm satisfied," he tells us, "with what there is."

Many years after my experience in Patagonia, the words of Don Lolo remind me time and again to question what I need to be satisfied. Working to reach that place where we can reduce our needs effortlessly, we are working to save Don Lolo, to save the rivers, and to save ourselves from the threat of climate change.

May we, together with farmers, dam developers, and multinationals, find the place of Don Lolo's satisfaction. May we listen to him and to the rivers of Patagonia until we become them, and care for them as if caring for our own selves.

1. Robert Aitken, "The Mind of Clover" (New York: Northpoint Press, 1984), p 31

Sarah Athanas is a student of Daniel Terragno and practices with the Sangha Zen Viento del Sur in Buenos Aires. You can see her documentary online at www.TrackingPatagonia.com.

Reflections on the Human Predicament

Leigh Davison

Leigh Davison wrote this article especially for MMC. Even though it does not deal specifically with Zen Practice, Leigh points directly to the frugality and simplicity which has always been part of our Zen Tradition. Leigh is a rare and remarkable person - a leader in almost every area that his activity has touched. Sydney Zen Centre had its beginnings primarily as his vision and his action in 1975-78. He is married to our Diamond Sangha Teacher Ellen Davison (Kuan Yin Centre, Lismore). (Ed.)

‘ Environmental problems have contributed to numerous collapses of civilizations in the past. Now, for the first time, a global collapse appears likely. Overpopulation, overconsumption by the rich and poor choices of technologies are major drivers; dramatic cultural change provides the main hope of averting calamity. ‘ Paul and Anne Ehrlich, 2013 (1)

Like most members of my species I am hard-wired for instant gratification. Social anthropologists tell us that this is because natural selection favoured the genes of those hunter gatherer ancestors who excelled at the quick fix at the expense of the genes of long term strategic thinkers. This is probably why our democratic political system has a tendency to focus on the short term concerns of voters at the expense longer term issues. Our elected leaders are afraid to inflict significant short term pain for the sake of long term gain. I became aware of the need for some high level long term strategic thinking about the fate of humanity as long ago as 1972 when I read the Club of Rome’s report, *The Limits to Growth* [2]. The authors predicted systemic breakdown of the global human enterprise around mid 21st century due to collapse of the ecosystem service capacity if a business as usual approach was pursued. A recent CSIRO report [3] confirms that it has indeed been business as usual (i.e. escalating mass gratification).

Back in 1972 I was a research student in the Faculty of Engineering at UNSW. My concern at the situation described in *Limits* was at two levels: the global and the personal. At the global level it was obvious that business as usual (ie full speed ahead with economic growth) was just a dumb way to manage a system that we should be handing on to future generations in good shape. At this level my question was “what can I do to help mitigate the problem of human impact on the planetary life-support system?” At the personal level I was concerned at my own vulnerability. On critical inspection the supply systems on which my welfare depended (water, energy, food etc) appeared, notwithstanding their relative technical sophistication, to be extremely fragile. At this level the question was “how can I adapt my circumstances to make survival of the probable collapse more likely?”

With regard to the first question (global mitigation) I helped establish, together with some student colleagues, the “Society for Environmental Action” at UNSW. We organised meetings with speakers on a variety of resource and environmental topics. We linked up with environmental groups in the wider community. The early 70’s was a time of environmental awakening. An American mining company, Clutha, wanted to build a coal loading conveyor down the cliffs at Bulli, south of Sydney. Another company wanted to turn the Colong Caves into a cement mine. We won both of those campaigns. I well remember a demo at Sydney Airport when the first Concorde supersonic airliner visited

Australia on a promotional tour. One of my mates carried a placard: "We don't have to do it just because we are able to". That slogan sums up the fact that as a species we are good at getting things done but we are not so good at deciding what it is that we need to do.

As a result of our group's exploration of planetary management processes I became interested in the way food was produced. I was surprised and alarmed when I discovered the inhumane conditions to which animals in intensive industrial style "farms" are subjected. It was not long before I felt the need to stop reading and start doing. I rented some land outside of Sydney and established a small organic market garden while still working on my research which was funded by the Royal Australian Navy. In 1973 I attended the Aquarius Festival at Nimbin. That experience briefly gave me the illusion, one year after the publication of *Limits*, that our species was coming to its senses and that the Aquarius Festival was probably a turning point for humanity. It did not quite work out that way for humanity but the festival certainly helped me to shift my own life in a direction which I thought might help in relation to my second question (personal adaptation and survival).

Voluntary Simplicity was a term in common currency in those days. "Live simply so that others may simply live" was a slogan that expressed the ethical obligation to less fortunate members of our species. I decided to start delaying gratification in a serious way. In 1976, after spending several months in a Zen monastery in England, I launched into a campaign of extreme personal simplicity. I slept on a yoga mat in a bare room. Every morning I would roll up the bedding and stash it into a small broom cupboard which contained all of my clothing and personal effects to turn my room into a Zendo. Apart from my one-ton truck, my push bike, my rotary hoe and garden tools that was the extent of my personal belongings.

I had completed my research on ship structural optimisation for the Navy in 1974 and, having decided that mass gratification posed a bigger threat to national security than the Viet Cong, I had knocked back a pretty good job offer and had started to think about sustainable systems and how I could somehow make a meaningful contribution (to saving humanity).

Back in 1971 Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren [4] proposed a simple model for the impact (I) of a society on its environment and resource base as the product of three factors: population size (P), per capita consumption or affluence (A) and a factor related to the technologies (T) deployed by the society to achieve its goals (carbon footprint is a good example of a T factor). To express the relationship symbolically: $I = PAT$. With my engineering background I was naturally attracted to working on the technology factor.

At that time a lot of creative people were thinking about low impact technologies. It was the era of the "Whole Earth Catalogue" which aimed to provide "access to tools" for supporting simple (there's that word again) sustainable lifestyles. At the time there was much talk about the environmental benefits of sharing equipment and infrastructure by living communally. I took out a lifetime subscription to an American magazine, *Mother Earth News* and immersed myself in the literature of the burgeoning "back to the land" movement. Being extremely impecunious I could not, myself, afford to buy a plot of land to go back to. Nevertheless a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for land ownership was unfolding on the NSW north coast. As a result of a slump in cattle prices degraded

farming country in that area was being sold very cheaply. I made a connection with one group of idealistic “new settlers” in 1977 and in 1979 together with my wife, Ellen, moved onto their property, an emerging rural intentional community with self-sufficiency aspirations. Our collective aspiration was to create a system that would (a) make our own survival more likely and (b) provide a model for others to emulate in the event of partial or total societal collapse.

Our property was virgin forest until selected in 1904. The original farmer managed to clear the entire 102 ha for dairying and bananas by 1924. However the steepness of the terrain made commercial agriculture difficult and by the mid 1970’s lantana and other weeds were rapidly encroaching. We decided to limit our agricultural activities to the 15% of the property which is most easily manageable. We run a small herd of dairy cows on most of this land and they provide protein via milk, cheese, yoghurt etc. We have about 0.5 ha of community vegetable garden and various orchards in which we grow a variety of fruits including bananas, avocados, citrus, papaya etc. Staples include potato, sweet potato, pumpkin, corn and bananas. It would be nice to say that we don’t burn any diesel to accomplish this but idealism has given way to pragmatism and we use a 35 HP tractor and a shed full of implements to help us out. Diesel is still cheaper than sweat. It would also be nice to say that we grow all our own food but we buy things like rice and flour. Nevertheless it would be possible with a modicum of extra effort and a narrowing of the dietary variety to achieve food self-sufficiency if necessary. Garden and farm work is shared, much of it being done on Friday or Saturday mornings when we all work together and have group morning tea. These shared tasks help to create community cohesiveness and an appreciation of each other’s contributions to the common good.

Various commentators have suggested that in the event of societal collapse (which would include breakdown of the financial system) the most useful things to have in one’s possession would be tradeable goods (for barter), actual cash (as opposed to a credit card) and fertile soil along with the knowledge of how to husband it [5]. On this latter issue we would be in better shape to feed ourselves than most but it would be hard work in the absence of the support systems that our complex society provides (eg tractor spare parts from Japan). Our efforts to survive societal collapse would be assisted by the resilience arising from the social cohesiveness mentioned above.

The harvesting and consumption of food needs to be acknowledged as just one phase in a complex of larger ecological cycles. In nature animals ingest and excrete nutrients which return to the soil or the atmosphere and eventually become incorporated once more into plant material and available for re-consumption. By contrast modern industrial agriculture retrieves nutrients from holes in the ground (fertiliser mines which are depleting at a significant rate) [6] or from the atmosphere via energy intensive industrial processes. Applied to the soil as fertiliser, up to 80% of these nutrients can be either volatilised to the atmosphere or leached from the topsoil to pollute ground and surface waters. The remaining nutrients are taken up by the target crop, harvested, processed, sent to a super market, carried home, ingested, excreted and (in wealthy countries) flushed down a toilet and discharged with varying levels of treatment into a water body.

Ecological sanitation (ECOSAN) is an approach to the management of the domestic

waste stream that takes the components (urine, faeces, kitchen scraps, greywater etc) individually or in judicious combinations to retrieve useful plant nutrients, energy and fit-for-purpose water. The composting toilet is an ECOSAN technology that uses no water and conserves nutrients in a compact, plant-available but non-leachable form. All twelve houses on our community have a composting toilet and composted end-product is fed to the bananas and fruit trees. Community members have been active in the development and transfer to the wider community of this technology [7]. As a result we are the premier “toilet tourism” destination on the north coast. If every house in Sydney had a composting toilet there would be no need for a desalination plant. Many of our houses direct greywater to banana plots below the house.

On several occasions, mindful of the rate of development in our bioregion (the moist sub-tropics of the east coast) I have had the opportunity to advocate for similar closed cycle neighbourhood metabolisms in larger settlements [8].

Any society with aspirations to sustainability will have to feed its population. In an era of declining resource availability and increasing constraints on fossil fuel use this will probably be most easily accomplished in the medium to long term with a food retrieval system embedded in local nutrient cycles. Community gardens and ecological sanitation can play an important role in bringing this to fruition. There is a growing body of literature on the subject of sustainable urbanism [9] where the basic planning unit is a biophilic neighbourhood of between 20 and 100 ha. Such neighbourhoods could most easily be implemented on greenfield sites but retrofitting existing settlements would certainly pose problems. Nevertheless as long ago as 1985 thinkers like Ted Trainer [10] were putting forward transition models for the suburban landscapes common to Australian cities.

In my view closed nutrient cycles will be a necessary (but by no means sufficient) condition for the creation of human settlements that will be sustainable in the medium to long term. In the technology realm we will also need to create settlements which are sufficiently dense to make public transport economical and where people can walk or cycle between places of domicile, work and recreation. With regard to population we will have to control our numbers. Australia is currently growing at a rate of over 300,000 humans per annum (1.6%). At this rate population will double (and continue to grow) by 2050. Just imagine Sydney with 10 million people (and growing). Organisations like Sustainable Population Australia [11] advocate and lobby for policies which can stabilise our population. With respect to the problem of affluence we have to deal with our genetic propensity for instant gratification. I can think of no better coping mechanism than the Buddhist practice of mindful contemplation: “do I really need to make this purchase of . . . fashion accessory . . . airline ticket . . . etc?”

But what hope is there for the “dramatic cultural change” that will be needed to avert the calamity alluded to in the introductory quote to this article? Ironically the retreat from affluence and instant gratification may be assisted by the process of natural selection that originally advanced it. Psychologist Geoffery Miller [12] suggests that:

Darwinian critiques of runaway consumer capitalism should undermine the social and sexual appeal of conspicuous consumption.

In other words: FRUGAL IS THE NEW SEXY. Tell all your friends!

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Dr Leigh Davison and Ellen Davison with the composting toilet on the left.
<http://www.northernstar.com.au/news/sustainability-menu/1515294/>

Frugal is the New Sexy (And the Old Ordinary!)

A brief tribute to the continuing life's work of Dr Leigh Davison

Peter Thompson

I first met Leigh Davison at a party for Tibetan Buddhists at Crows Nest, circa September 1975. Remarkably, I can still see Leigh in his red turtleneck jumper and round John Denver spectacles. It was there that we planned the first sitting of what was to become Sydney Zen Centre. As long-time dharma brother Kim Bagot said recently to me, one thing that stood out about Leigh was his dynamism—he got things done—he walked the walk. He was soon to set up the first Sydney Zen Centre just around the corner from where I was living in Gladstone Parade, Lindfield. It was in these years that Leigh began publishing what was to become the forerunner of Mind Moon Circle. It was called Nothing Special.

I went on to live on the Dharmananda Community with Leigh and his wife Ellen, and others from 1982-84. Leigh was always thinking and planning brilliantly ahead on any important issue of self-sufficiency and sustainability. I became aware that it was no accident that he had a PHD in Applied Mathematics. Even so, our mutual Zen mantra became a jokingly “keep it simple chaps”. He has always shown himself to be a self-effacing and humble leader. He represents a complete example of the classic model “Act Locally, Think Globally”. Even in 1982, the advent of Peak Oil and its consequences were a frequent dinner-time discussion around our table. Over the years Leigh has shown himself to be a forerunner in the fields of Zen, sustainable agriculture, permaculture, biodynamic farming, alternative dairy food production, composting toilets, grey water systems design and construction, alternative building design and construction, and water resources management (the area he very successfully lectured in at Southern Cross University for many years. He has just formally retired from this post). There are too many areas to mention where Leigh has been involved. Whether at a Leigh Davison field day, composting toilet seminar or university lecture, multitudes have benefited from Leigh’s research, experience, thinking and knowledge.

It is an extraordinary achievement that Leigh, Ellen and other members have not only survived but thrived for nearly 35 years on Dharmananda, perhaps one of the most successful, self-sufficient, small communities in both Australia and the world.

I feel quite sure that Leigh’s example and service to the world is now needed more than ever and that his knowledge and expertise will be greatly called upon as the world transitions from an indulgent, greedy, destructive and wasteful fossil-fuel based economy and way of life, to a FRUGAL, sustainable and renewable, communal future.



The Sneaky Professor

Michael Tierney

There once was a sneaky Geography professor who named his course 'Environmental Change', during the time when it was a hot topic of debate, when the scientific community hadn't landed on a consensus as yet (2007 or so). Instead of outlining the issue on everybody's lips at the time, we got instead a course in the entire geological history of the earth, his favourite topic. Every seat in his class was full, double its previous years when it was called "6 billion years of yawning" or some such.

The professor's point with this naming of his course was that environmental change was the natural state of affairs, he was at that time leaning towards the skeptical side of the debate though he was not entirely convinced either way. Since then the scientific community have come into consensus agreeing that climate change will pose some serious problems, beyond it 'just getting a bit hotter.'

Professor Mooney did note a pattern to Environmental Change in the history of the earth - long periods of equilibrium followed by brief catastrophic periods of change followed by long periods of a *new equilibrium*.

Usually the causes of global environmental change are to do with the onset and recession of ice ages, caused he says by a coincidence of three aspects of the earth's orbit and spin. When conditions are ripe for it an ice age comes and this happens with a kind of Swiss clock regularity, entirely predictable and precise.

But there are two other unpredictable causes of global environmental change, - catastrophic events such as the meteor that struck near Mexico and ended the reign of Dinosaurs as it is thought, and then there is species induced catastrophic changes. The humble bacteria is in fact a mass-murderer, responsible through its natural activity for the 'oxygen catastrophe' a calamity that changed the earth forever 2.4 billion years ago, ending the reign of Nitrogen in the atmosphere and allowing for such 'newbie' oxygen breathing species as ourselves to flourish. The bacteria killed everything else with its rampant oxygen production, poison to species at the time.

There have been six major extinctions in the past 500 million years or so evidenced by reductions in species families ranging from 17% up to 55% in the third great extinction 245 million years ago. The cause of the sixth great extinction is humans.

This was accepted as true before there was a climate change debate. We are responsible for as great a decline in species as was caused by the meteor strike in Mexico. We are the equivalent of an ice age. We cause as much stress to the ecosystem as a massive meteor strike and we have been at it for some time.

Phase 1 of the human driven extinction occurred 100,000 years ago when we began to disperse throughout the world. Phase 2 began 10,000 years ago when we turned to agriculture. In all places where humans have turned up the fossil records show a decline in the larger species.

Our dispersion happened at different times - 40,000 years ago we headed for

Australia - and right there in the fossil record we have the end of the Megafauna (bus sized wombats as I understand it). 38,000 years later we arrive in Madagascar - an anomaly compared to the rest of our dispersion - we arrived there just 2,000 years ago and there at this time in the fossil record was the end of large species that lived there (elephant birds, large lemurs and a species of hippo). So it can be shown that these events are related by weight of evidence (these are just two examples).

We accomplished this massive destruction of species not with climate change as it is understood now, and not with aggressive action such as ended the career of the Megafauna (perhaps) or the Dodo (definitely), most of our destruction we did with competitive displacement. That's species being forced into competing for a smaller and smaller pool of resources due to our occupation, use or destruction of other resources, deforestation for example. And our dominion extends even into environments where we cannot live, such as the oceans due to our hunting habits, industrialised use of natural resources, habitat destruction and knock-on food chain effects.

In other words, we were already doing massive damage- climate change is only the latest outrage, though to be fair to climate change it has the potential to outdo any of our destructive habits thus far, Phase 3 perhaps. What I'm trying to say is that as a species so far we have been as destructive as any ice age, meteor or volcanic eruption out there, but with our new threat of altering the earth's climate, we're just getting warmed up - such changes are associated with mass-extinctions in the fossil record, 55% of families at the highest.

The thing about climate change is, it's really terribly quite complicated and we can only guess at implications truly. There is an entanglement between atmospheric chemistry, geochemistry, geography, plate tectonics, species evolution and diversification and climate, to name some of the inputs all of which are quite complicated in themselves and entangled with other things, entangled with entanglements. It seems to us that this bundle we call climate operates at a kind of steady state, but the reality is that our lives are too short to appreciate the drastic shifts that can and have taken place. What we are witnessing is the result of a disastrous impact on the entanglement, we humans, like a stick in the spider's web, twisting in the wind.

Thicht Nhat Hahn has hope for us. In an interview when asked about climate change Thay expressed the need for us to embrace the possibility of our destruction. From this place of understanding, our intellects might be brought to bear on the problem in a clear way.



Minding the Earth, Mending the World

A New Book by Susan Murphy

Dr Susan Murphy is a writer, Diamond Sangha teacher at Open Circle Zen Sangha. Her previous book was Upside Down Zen (2004). Film and television writing credits include The Midas Touch, Secrets & her own feature film as writer-director, Breathing Under Water. In 1997 she was awarded a five-year QEII Research Fellowship by the Australian Research Council in social ecology.

Excerpts from online interview:

http://www.ecobuddhism.org/wisdom/interviews/smr_int1/

Ecobuddhism: What moved you to write your book, Minding the Earth, Mending the World?

Susan Murphy Roshi: The simplest thing I can say is that I had no choice. It felt like a kind of pressure building in me over many years. It came from my whole life in many ways. I've been feeling, for at least a couple of decades, that there's a kind of low-grade haunting going on—inside of me and other people as well. A sense of something that was almost impossible to turn to and address, yet we all knew what it was. And it was so big it just made you shrink away or feel numb. Your heart sinks when you think "What can I do?" What is the something that no one has thought of yet?

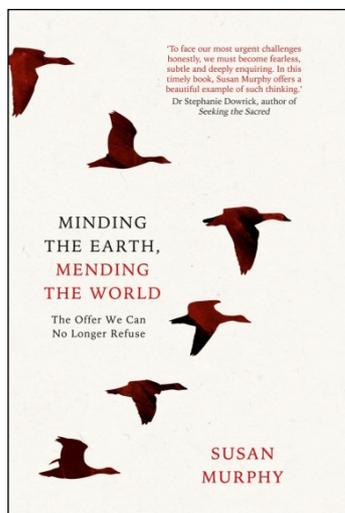
Of course that is not what my book is about at all. My book tries to find the non-thing that can restore the relational basis of mind and the Earth--if that can be re-established. It's about settling into caring for the Earth and about whatever we need to do to wake that back up, or retrieve it from wherever it's been pushed away to. It's never been pushed away from me. I've always been in love with the Earth, but I don't see that in everybody around me. I don't see it being cultivated in children, and that worries me deeply.

So I was moved to write this book. It's like standing up on the deck of the Titanic and saying to people, "Sorry to interrupt your good time and tell you this, but there is an iceberg right ahead and we are sailing right towards it." It was a sense of urgency. Coming as I do from a Zen and Buddhist position, I strongly felt it is imperative for Dharma to rise to meet this amazing occasion we are in. I always count myself lucky to be here at this time. Frightening as it is, it is also the first time when everybody on Earth is both utterly in this together, and also able to be aware of the whole extraordinary revelation about what we know led up to this moment—the story of the Earth and of the Universe. That's a very unusual moment, the first time it has ever happened. There is a strong sense in me that if I'm a teacher of Dharma, I need to let this wake up in my own heart and bring it forth.

Book Review

Joyce Kornblatt

In *MINDING THE EARTH, MENDING THE WORLD*, Zen Roshi Susan Murphy closes



the gaps between environmental activism, mythic wisdom, moral accountability and Zen practice. The text itself is an example of the ‘deep ecology’ for which it advocates, a layered rendering of the emergency we face and the ‘medicine’ at hand. We are invited to join Susan in a creative inquiry which integrates many kinds of knowing and not-knowing: the research of climate scientists, the creation stories of indigenous peoples, the insights of human psychology and the practice of Zen koan study. Rather than disputation, or choosing one kind of understanding over another, Susan’s holistic vision itself an example of the healing for which the planet yearns.

Open the book anywhere, and sentences burn off the page as fiery warnings and radiant faith. Like Joanna Macy and Thomas Berry, Susan suggests that despair is irresponsible when things are most dire. “So rather than a cold infinity that makes us curl up in fear,” she writes, “we can discover in the Universe Story a humanity capable of both astonishment and compassion. From here, we can begin to sense and engage the unique intelligence and creativity of the earth as our own.” While the book catalogues all the ways we have pillaged the earth that sustains us, Susan insists that apocalyptic thinking is part of the old story that created the very conditions which bring us to anguish or numbness. Instead: “A great crisis calls up the human spirit, ingenuity, imagination, mental discipline and technological sophistication. It is in fact an unparalleled opportunity that looms before us, as impossible to avoid as it is easy to bungle”

Lyrical without a smidgen of sentimentality, optimistic without a hint of denial, deeply serious without any sacrifice of playfulness, *MINDING THE EARTH, MENDING THE WORLD* is a true Zen koan from beginning to end. Although it is the last section of the book which looks explicitly at koan work as a resource at hand, the entire text vibrates with koan-like holographic penetration. “So every koan in a particular way mends a tear in our relationship with reality,” Susan writes, “helps reverse our fear-based withdrawal from it, which has cruelled our own lives and been so violently damaging to the world....Koans invite us to enter the mind of someone who can see whole.”

That is Susan’s gift to her reader: an invitation for us to enter her own mind as she sees things whole, to join her in the world-mending task, to find our own way out of an old and crippling narrative into one which might save us and our planet from destruction. “So prophesy courage,” she requests at her wise book’s end, ‘have the imagination to break the silence, end the isolation, change the story. Concede to the ripeness of things as the great chance itself.”

Joyce Kornblatt is a novelist, essayist, and the founding teacher of Cloud Refuge Sangha in Blackheath, NSW.

Excerpt from Koans

Minding the Earth, Mending the World

13. Reconcile with this!



Explanatory note: Uncle Max Harrison, Dulumunmun, is an Aboriginal elder from Yuin country (south coast of New South Wales) who has been right through initiation into blackfella Law. When born in the 1930's, he was still classed under an antique law as 'fauna'. Since the 1980's, whitefella concern about past and present wrongs became the Reconciliation movement, supported by government to draw both 'mobs' together. Blackfellas were invited to sit down with whitefellas to talk about the impact of past and present government policy and share their life stories, law and culture.

The Koan: Uncle Max said, 'I don't hold with this talk of reconciliation.' The people

listening were shocked. He continued, 'How can you have reconciliation where there's never been a relationship in the first place?' He knelt and cupped a handful of dirt from the ground. 'I just tell both mobs, 'Reconcile with this!' and you won't need any 'reconciliation' after that.'

'Become like this', 'Reconcile with this' – what's the difference?

Is there one? How do you reconcile with a handful of red dirt?

Watercolour by Janet Selby, 2013

Words From Uncle Max, Dulummun

Excerpts from the book 'My People's Dreaming', Max Dulummun Harrison, with recordings by Peter McConchie, Finch Publishing 2009

Begin with Mother Earth

Mother Earth births everything for us. Father Sky carries the water and oxygen for us to breathe.

Grandfather Sun warms the planet, warms our body, gives us light so we can see, raises the food that the Mother births and raises most of our relations, all our plants and trees. Grandmother Moon moves the water and gives us the woman-time and our birthing.

Reading the Land

It is so important to read the land, to be observant of the changing colour of the leaves, and the changes in behaviour of the animals, so we can become aware and recognise the messages the land is sending us.

Our Laws and Punishment

Our laws are about protection; protection of our safety and protection of Mother Earth. Laws are living things - they are our way of life.



Totems

Each mob has a collection of totems that represent special areas or animals to their community. It is a way of preserving the ecology. Mobs can't or won't eat those particular totems because if they ate everything there would be nothing left for other mobs to eat. As an extra protection, each

person within the mob has their own personal totem as well. If I ate one of my grandkids' personal totems I could be in big trouble.

Sacred Places

You often hear an old blackfella trying to say, 'That's a sacred tree' or 'That's a sacred rock,' and people tell him, 'Garbage!' People just don't understand our spiritual connectedness to the spirit of that tree, or the spirit of that water or that rock. It is so hard to explain and get people to understand our traditional practices of spirituality, our traditional practices of being in touch with our spiritual ancestors.

Watercolour by Janet Selby, 2011

Ramblings about a change of climate

Will Moon

Climate change is problematic. If you sit in a room in your home or office and look around you everything has required energy to produce, modify or shape. If you take a wider look around your immediate home toward the greater city you find that the entire city has been shaped and constructed, all requiring energy. Then if you look wider again to all the cities on the planet they have all required the same thing. What they all have in common is that this energy, for the most part has come from burning fossil fuels. Also if you think about everything you do during the day from boiling the jug to make a coffee, eating the cereal brought to you from truck delivery to your local Coles or IGA, catching the bus to work and logging on, it all requires energy and again it mostly comes from fossil fuels. Our entire society, in fact the global society has been built upon this foundation of using fossil fuels for energy. In fact it is quite possible that without using fossil fuels for energy you might not have had the opportunity to live. Fossil fuels have made lives easier including producing and sustaining new lives. We all know this but it is good to remind ourselves sometimes.

Back in the eighties I worked as a boilermaker during the construction of Mount Piper power station out near Lithgow. I remember being astonished at the statistics for one individual 660 Megawatt boiler. It consumes 4 tonnes of coal per minute! Conveyors feed the coal into mills that pulverise it into such a fine dust that it is then mixed with air and sprayed into the boiler house that burns it as though it were a gas. When it is burnt the Carbon and Oxygen molecules combine and one tonne of coal becomes about 2.7 tonnes of CO₂. The 4 tonnes of coal per minute becomes 5400 cubic metres (almost 4 Olympic pools) of CO₂ per minute. This is one of dozens of boilers this size across the country and one of tens of thousands across the globe that burn coal at this rate all day and all night. They light up the cities and provide for the kind of lifestyle that we have today.

Well we know what the problem with all this is and we are starting to see some of the affects. The oceans and the forests can suck up a fair amount of the CO₂ however the oceans are fast reaching saturation point and the forests can't keep up with the rate at which we produce it. At a certain point in time we will reach a point where the warming will no longer be restrained. It becomes a runaway greenhouse effect.

To move away from our dependence upon fossil fuels is going to take a major shift in the way the people across the entire planet do things and this is not going to happen overnight. The changes in the way we do things have started however there is so much more to be done. The changes in the climate have also started.

I think that an important aspect of practice in relation to global warming is acceptance. This acceptance is not resignation, not inaction, nor is it negative. We have built the world on fossil fuels and some amazing individuals are coming to the fore,

maybe you are one of them, and making the differences that are needed. However there is also an aspect of climate change that we can't change any more than we can change the fact that we are going to die. The reality is that it is going to take time for the world to move from its dependence on fossil fuels. There are vested interested, there is greed, there is poverty and there is ignorance. Can you afford to go and buy an electric car tomorrow and put solar panels on your roof the next day? And then don't drive to work, ride to work? No it takes time, or is inconvenient if we are real about it, and we are the wealthy ones most likely to be in a position to make those choices.

So acceptance is about accepting that it is going to take time to change, and that our lives and those of our children are going to be changed by global warming in ways that we can't comprehend yet.

Feelings that come up with this realisation include fear, anger, rage, disbelief, confusion, powerlessness and despair. It can also include feeling like we want to change things, feeling empowered, feeling like we are making a difference, feeling like we know what we want to do, having a sense of purpose, a knowing of what is the right thing to do.

Fear and anger and rage can come from that place where we are trying to save our lives, our world, all the things we love, all the things we don't want to change. We fear we are going to lose it all. When we hear someone denying climate change we get furious and perhaps verbally attack them, or criticise them or similar, 'Those bloody climate change sceptics'. This is all fertile ground for Zen practice. Noticing our fear and understanding it. What is it we are trying to save? Can we really save it? With our anger we create a situation that I'm here and those others are there. So with fear and anger, and self and other, can we really achieve anything? Can we really appeal to someone's better nature from this place? Not really, our anger and defensiveness is not likely to achieve much. We are too fixed on being 'right'.

After spending many years bushwalking, climbing, canyoning, mountain biking and kayaking in the outdoors, a lot of what has sustained me has been a love of the environment. And to watch its slow demise has charged me with plenty of emotion. I really want to be able to snorkel amongst the colourful fish on the reef with Lily when she grows up. I want her to experience the beauty that I have had the privilege to experience. The whole debate, if you can really call it that, about climate change has always tapped into these strong emotions.

I have an old climbing friend who I see from time to time. He has always had an ability to say things out of left field that I don't agree with. He is a forceful and quite abrasive character. He has always caught me by surprise with his comments and I have either been too surprised to respond or I have responded in a way that has been charged with emotion, and when that happens I've already lost. Over New Years a group of us went up to Kanangra Walls to camp and walk for a few days and as usual my friend with his uncanny ability to catch us off guard regularly cast his bait ready to catch the unwary. For the first time I responded from a different place, without the same level of investment

of the personal, the self with all its fears. There was not the same need to be 'right' but rather to engage in a way that effectively conveyed an alternative view and point out what I saw as the flaws in some of his ideas. I had a sense that for the first time I could really engage in the debate on this issue in an effective way without the emotional burden that tends to derail things. This was very exciting. I can only put this change down to many years of facing the dilemma that Zen puts to us in our lives and on our cushions, 'does a dog have Buddha nature' or Hahahahahaha. Sorry, just being silly, but really that dilemma of 'what is mu?' is a dilemma that slowly transforms us, the personal or the self becomes less convincing, something broader opens out and we can respond from a place where there is nothing to defend. When there is nothing to defend, we are free to act and we have a sense of being empowered to make change, to make a difference.

If humanity can't stop the planet warming then we will all go down with it and maybe cockroaches will evolve to dominate the planet. Cockroach archaeologists will look back at the mistakes that humans made and marvel at our inability to change from what we saw coming.

Poems by Sally Hopkins

Seven Blue wrens
bouncing in the bushes.
Seventy thousand bits of rubbish
floating in the creek.

Some rocks here
4,400 millions years.
What is this life of ours?
This vibrant moment!

Eyes shut , we can't see
that our lives hang
d
e
p
e
n
d
e
n
t
no safety nets.

The Old Gods kept us humble;
mysteries beyond our control.
Now? "We can do!" But what?
A plane's lights pierce the darkness.

"There will be no fish in 38 years"
"No fish?" "No fish."
No fish anywhere".
We watch the sparkling green
of Parsley Bay waters,
hear the gentle plop, plop, plop
of the waves on the sand.
The tide is on the move.
"No fish. No fish. No fish."

Mother Nature Has Pneumonia

Diana Levy

The first of our great vows states, “The many beings are numberless; I vow to save them”. This is true bodhisattva work, impossible and selfless and entirely possible.

In 2000 I began to go walking with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society every week. The group I walked with called themselves the “Interpretives”. On those walks every Thursday I gradually added to my knowledge of my bioregion and its plants, birds, animals, Aboriginal ways of living, scats, insects, white history, Aboriginal history, sites, and geology. The people in the group were interested in all this, and had knowledge and political savvy. I began to work on a book based on walks in Gundungurra country and I walked, and led walks, with this group for about eleven years. What we noticed over that time was changes. Wattle was flowering earlier and earlier every year, the *Acacia terminalis* coming out in May rather than June, a distinctive bush such as *Leptospermum macrocarpa* was blossoming earlier. Other bushwalkers I met confirmed this. In 2009, out on my own, I spotted a bird called a noisy pitta in the Glenbrook creek area just near my home. This was odd, since the southern range of this bird was supposed to be the mid-north coast, according to my Pizzey. [1] When I spoke to professional twitcher Carol Proberts about this, she confirmed that this bird had been seen in the Wollongong area. Birds and fish are gradually migrating south freely because they are not so subject to man-made barriers. There are now fifty species of NSW fish in the waters off Tasmania. This was the effects of climate change right before us, indisputably.

I would write haiku on these walks. Ever since I met Robert Aitken Roshi, I’ve been playing around with haiku, which are short poems about nature. When I had just moved to Australia, and had a job with Telecom, I’d relieve the tedium of clerk level one by going at lunchtime to a park and reading his “*A zen wave: Basho's haiku and zen*”. But one of the important facets about haiku, as a traditional Japanese literary form, is that there should be a *kigo*, a season word in each poem. There is a whole rich bank of associations with these *kigo* - crickets for autumn: melancholy. So it was interesting to me to study the seasons in the Blue Mountains. How many seasons were there? According to local Aboriginal aunties, the Gundungurra considered that there were seven. The pagan priestess Glenys Livingstone, of Springwood where I live, posited twelve. Or was there not a yearly cycle at all, but in the sunburnt country, sometimes droughts and then flooding rains? Stressed plants in this country put on an out-of-season floral display if conditions are dire and it is their last chance of reproducing.

So every now and then I would lead a haiku workshop with *ginko* (nature walk), and this question of what is happening now, in the bush, and what season it is, would come up. People have to really look. And the question of how things were changing might come up, and I could see that for some people, climate change was an unwelcome concept.

And that’s another thing: how do you raise this topic in the community, be the Cassandra with really bad news? Ok, there’s rallies like the “Walk against Warming”, gave me a warm inner glow but did it really achieve anything? Though I did write this

senryu (satirical take on human affairs):

Unseasonal rain

falling on

climate change protesters

I've sided with the Greens, lent them my time, offered petitions, run stalls, written letters, inserted this issue into other local issues. I once sat on a pre-poll stall handing out leaflets, and was discussing all this, and my sense of futility, with another politically active fellow.

He said, "People don't think about the environment until their lawns dry up".
Hmm.

How do you raise the issue with friends and family? I try to have the arguments at hand, but I get enormously emotional when I meet the "climate change is crap" view. And am derided or goaded. But I have learned one thing through my community activism, and it is to do with the second vow "Greed, hatred and ignorance rise endlessly; I vow to abandon them". I was involved in a campaign to prevent our City Council from getting into bed with Woolworths who wanted to lease community land for a big box store, in exchange for a "revitalisation" of Springwood. This was truly a "my lawn" issue; it was something that would affect people directly. The community was up in arms. I stuck my neck out as usual and found I was locking horns fairly directly with a Liberal party councillor who is now our Mayor. I realised, in talking to this man in our town square, that he disliked me very much. I had the chance to ask dharma teacher Christopher Titmuss about all this at a dharma dialogue session. Whatever he said, and whatever I said, I realised afterwards that I returned the councillor's sentiment. I saw my own aversion. And I further realised that I had been pulled into the adversarial style of Australian politics. I could have acted from aversion to this man, and the conviction that I was right. And that is the wrong impulse - Buddha called it the *cetana* - motivation. "Hatreds never cease through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease. This is an eternal law." from the "Dhammapada", a collection of short sayings of the Buddha, translated here by Narada Thera. The word he translates as 'love', *avera*, literally means non-anger.

So this whole episode is also an example of the third vow, because it was a dharma gate I walked through and learned something important. After three years we won our fight - we defended our town, and for now we have a vibrant main street, funding from the Federal government to improve community facilities, and a very interesting new set of councillors. Our persistence and organising paid off.

The slackers' view is that Mother Nature can right herself, as she always does. But she is lying deathly sick, and we are like errant children, leaving the windows open for the cold breeze to blow in. Or, more accurately, we are not separate - Zen teaches us this - for our species, as Tim Flannery puts it, is now the Weathermaker. There is a lag, but we ourselves will be ill if we do not urgently begin to transition to a low carbon economy. The carbon that we are discharging now into the atmosphere will be around for a long time..."around 56 per cent of all the CO2 that humans have liberated by burning fossil fuel in the past century is still aloft, which is the cause -directly and

indirectly -of around 80 per cent of all global warming".[2]

I remember Robert Aitken Roshi quoting Winston Churchill's dictum, with a kind of New York drawl: "Democracy is the worst possible system - except for all the rest". The Quakers, whom Roshi often respectfully referred to, believe strongly in engaging with political systems. A few years ago I was at a forum, at which a Quaker woman talked of a concept called Fair Share, where one set goals for oneself over a year to help spread wealth. It used a numerical formula (5, 10, 5, 10). One of the goals was about engaging in the democracy (which we all have the good fortune to be citizens of) ten times, to act as though the system works for you, that MP really does represent you. Those ten actions might be, write a letter to a politician, visit a pollie, sign a petition, vote. This does not just mean protest. You could write a letter congratulating a pollie: "Nice work". I received one of the most prompt and personal letters in reply from a local member, when I congratulated him for his efforts in drug law reform. I think as I absorbed the Quaker idea, my engagement has grown.

I'd like to suggest the **haiku template of transition** (typically, haiku are in three lines, first of five syllables, then seven, and finally five syllables).

5. In a year, **five** acts of consciously reducing your carbon footprint (simple purchases - public transport - second hand - grow your own lettuce)

7. In a year, **seven** acts of engaging actively in your democracy. This year you can vote!

5. In a year, do **five** enjoyable things in your local community.

I learned an important guideline to social action from my friend Allan Rees, who has engaged for years on "cities for people not profit", kind of issues in Sydney. Al has been right about a lot of things, but, as they begin to pull the monorail down, is he going to say, "I told you so"? I asked him once, "Where should I start with..." my burning issue at the time was a nuclear-free Pacific. He said, "Educate yourself". So I've listed a couple of books below which are a good place to start educating yourself about climate change.[2] & [4].

As a keen vegetable and fruit gardener I've got skin in the game, as they say - it matters to me what the weather is doing (and weather all added up, makes climate). I've lived in the same house and garden for 23 years, and now I grow about half of my fruit and most of my vegetables (all of which are absorbing CO₂, producing O). The petrol miles between the gate and the plate are zero! And it is singing from the same sad songsheet - plum tree blossoming earlier, then struggling to survive through the drought of 2002 - 7, elm tree dying, disappearance of frosts. Bees, where are you bees? This morning, Easter Sunday, I saw that my plum tree has produced a second round of runt plums - how exhausting! And I have been thinking ahead to the changes that are inevitable. So I chose pear trees to shade a skillion roof for their tolerance of warmth, and of course they drop their leaves in winter.

What is a good Buddhist to do? "Save the many beings". Are you joking? Gotama pondered the futility of teaching the Dhamma. "Who will understand this dhamma quickly?" [3] He pondered, and pondered, and eventually decided that his erstwhile five companions were ripe for it. Notice that he wanted students who would understand quickly. It was a very targeted move, expedient, pragmatic, skilful. Had he not decided

to engage, you would not be reading this. It would have died with him. "I vow to embody his way fully".

1. Pizzey, Graham and Knight, Frank "The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia" 2002
2. Flannery, Tim "We are the Weathermakers", 2007, p. 23
3. "In the Buddha's words: an anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon" ed. Bhikku Bodhi, p.70
4. Gilding, Paul "The Great Disruption" 2012 (I reviewed Paul Gilding's book for Blue Mountains Conservation Society, also in Hutnews, July 2011, see their website and Hutnews archives)

One way that I can discharge my feelings around people fiddling while the world is burning, is write a satirical poem. The kick-off for this poem was the comment that Tony Abbott made, to a room full of farmers, that "the argument on climate change is absolute crap". He had started out as a supporter of the Emissions Trading Scheme which was the Liberal Party's policy under Turnbull, but he began to listen to the hard man of the right from SA, the climate change denier Nick Minchin. The poem went through various manifestations and changes, and this version of this poem was performed at the Blue Mountains Folk Festival Poets' Breakfast with a rather wonky life-saver's cap on my head, and an odd collection of swimming garments. I couldn't make my ears tilt forward. This was a reference to Abbott's habit of leaping out of the surf in front of cameras. The next time I got up onto this stage the MC introduced me as the president of the Lapstone Surf Lifesavers' Club!

If it isn't crap, there'll be sunny days

Diana Levy

When carbon levels double
wonders will not cease,
the sea will lap at Lapstone
property values will increase!

No Sydney morning traffic jam,
no M4, M7, e-tag,
just gentle waves and real estate
with a Palm beach price-tag

When carbon levels triple
wonders will not cease,
I'll gaze from my verandah
down on Springwood-by-the-Sea

I'll buy a fleet of ice-cream trucks,
they'll tootle round the bays,
stocked up with hats and sunscreen
to combat UV rays.

When carbon levels quadruple
wonders still amaze,

Government's in Katoomba
we were the Fire Brigade

From our bunker in the village
we'll survey the razed horizon:
revenues are down
but the insect life is thrivin'!

When carbon levels quintuple
options still abound:
the Desert starts at Lithgow,
we all live underground

I'll get a herd of camels
and learn the trekking game,
then market it to Russians
call my business Sunny Days'.

When carbon levels sextuple
all wonder has deceased:
though now that I am all alone
cockroaches are a feast

The Ultimate Invasive

by Wendy Adamek

Someday we will protect the things that can't move or don't want to from the things that do. As we move we will step softly around the things that don't. And we will do this because of the way evolution favors our invasive species, not in spite of it. Nomad blood runs in our veins, humans have been relentless waves spreading overseas thick with life to be taken. But what is the ultimate invasive? What is unmoving, I would say, what is irresistible.

Things that can't move or don't want to: trees, dead bodies, children absorbed, stones, sleeping animals, readers. Men and women, sometimes.

A pair of *'apapane*, red-black forest birds, recently moved into our garden on Maui. They will stay and build a nest if nothing kills them. Their genes will keep moving if they meet no mosquitoes carrying avian pox, no neighborhood cats, no invasive non-native lizard, mongoose, or rat.

A solitary *kōlea*, golden-grey plover, hunts insects by our pond in the morning. Every spring the plovers travel to Alaska, there to summer and raise young whose wings will flow in turn down the invisible current of migration.

A Hawaiian chant laments and scolds, "Oh, you plover-shooting *haole*." But Hawaiians love meanings that pivot like a feather dropped from a sea-cliff. The *haole*, the whites, are also plovers. They wander far, they hunt, they take and don't leave anything behind, their young are not tied to the life of this land. Their wings aspire to invisible currents. The plover, who frowns white-browed down his beak at his prey, is brother to the white man who stares down the barrel of a gun. They are affines, the plover is *kauna* to the restless man and cries at night like an abandoned child.

Once in New York, ant-like, I was marching along an urban trail when I ran into something that moved me and did not move. A young couple, quite beautiful and as one animal entwined, lay brow-to-brow on the meridian between the up-and-down traffic streams of Broadway at 108th. In the path of crossing pedestrians their long fine hair fell on gritty paving stones. Their lips moved, they talked privately under the roar of traffic. Nearby ice-cream eaters on a bench watched their winter-pale performance-art of self-and-other absorption.

And the ultimate invasive shone in the first hot sun of spring, the smell of bilious buses, the old man frowning down at their gift of oblivion to his envy. Invaded and slowed, I stepped softly around a strand of the girl's golden hair.

Dr. Wendi Adamek has been a Buddhist practitioner for many years, beginning with her introduction to Zen by Aitken Roshi at the Maui Zendo in 1975. She currently lectures in Chan and Zen studies at Sydney University and has a particular interest in the environment.

An Exploration of Engaged Buddhism

Excerpts from a draft article by John Seed

In August 1979, I was part of what is believed to be the world's first direct action in defense of rainforests which took place at Terania Creek some 8km from Bodhi Farm[Northern NSW]. Since that time my life has been devoted to the protection of Nature and I have had a recurring interest to bring together these realms of spiritual enlightenment and the conservation of the natural world.

One of my teachers, the late Vimala Thakar (1921-2009) saw the film about the Terania Creek actions, "Give Trees a Chance", and she exclaimed "But this is pure Gandhi! People in India have forgotten how powerful non-violent direct action can be. Please take this film and the story of Terania Creek to India."

Not long before her death, Vimala wrote, "In this era, to become a spiritual inquirer without social consciousness is a luxury that we can ill afford, and to be a social activist without a scientific understanding of the inner workings of the mind is the worst folly. Neither approach in isolation has had any significant success. There is no question now that an inquirer will have to make an effort to be socially conscious or that an activist will have to be persuaded of the moral crisis in the human psyche, the significance of being attentive to the inner life. The challenge awaiting us is to go much deeper as human beings, to abandon superficial prejudices and preferences, to expand understanding to a global scale, integrating the totality of living, and to become aware of the wholeness of which we are a manifestation." (from *Moving in Wholeness*, 2007)

And it was with these words that I introduced the Buddha Touched the Earth workshop to the participants. One of these projects was the ordination of trees by Thai forest monks who protected important old growth forests by ordaining literally millions of trees in the 1990's. A suitably qualified monk performs the ordination ceremony and wraps orange cloth around the tree offering it considerable protection from woodcutters and developers.

For photos see <http://rainforestinfo.org.au/projects/DGT/thaiord.htm>

John Seed is a famous Buddhist Activist particularly engaged in saving rainforests world-side.

Quotes from the back cover

A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency

*Edited by John Stanley, David R. Loy, and Gyurme Dorje,
Wisdom Publications, 2009*

“Eminent scientists have said that global warming is as dangerous for our future as nuclear war. We have entered the uncharted territory of a global emergency, where ‘business as usual’ cannot continue. We must take the initiative to repair and protect this world, ensuring a safe-climate future for all people and all species.... It is now urgent that we take corrective action to ensure a safe-climate future for coming generations of human beings and other species.”
— The Dalai Lama

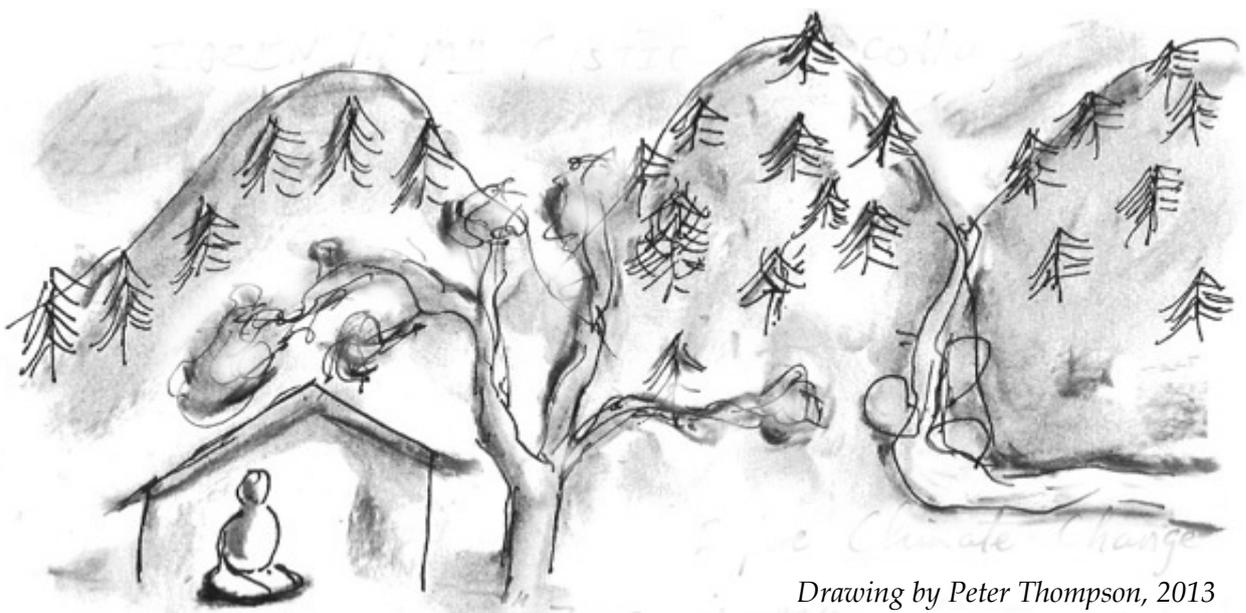
“If we continue abusing the earth this way, there is no doubt that our civilisation will be destroyed. This will require enlightenment, awakening. The Buddha attained individual awakening. Now we need a collective enlightenment to stop this course of destruction.”
— Thich Nhat Hanh

“The world itself has a role to play in our awakening. Its very brokenness and need call to us, summoning us to walk out of the prison of self-concern.”
— Joanna Macy

“Each of us must take complete responsibility for the world, as if the world’s fate depended on our words and actions. And whether we know it or not, it does.”
— Hozan Alan Senauke

“This surely must rivet the urgent, critical attention of anyone who takes the bodhisattva vows.”
— Susan Murphy Roshi

“This is the time for humankind to embark upon a new historical epoch. We ourselves have to make the critical decisions, individually and collectively, that will determine our future destiny.”
— Bikkhu Bodhi



Drawing by Peter Thompson, 2013

‘Zazen in my rustic cottage is peaceful, lonely, and truly comfortable.’

— Shodoka



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