



Encouraging Words from the Teacher

Allan Marett Sensei



Sudden Realisation! Right now!

In 2010, together with Subhana and other members of the Sydney and Melbourne sangha, I was fortunate enough to visit the Fifth Ancestor's temple in China on a tour led by Andy Ferguson. This was where the famous poetry-contest between Huineng and the head monk Shenxui is said to have occurred.¹

I'm sure most of you have heard the story before, but in case not, let me briefly remind you. In order to determine who would succeed him as the Sixth Ancestor, the Fifth Ancestor, Hongren, invited members of his community to write a *gatha* expressing The Essence of Mind.

Shenxui, whom everyone expected to succeed Hongren wrote the following:

身是菩提樹， The body is a Bodhi tree,
 心如明鏡臺。 The mind a standing mirror bright
 時時勤拂拭， At all times polish it diligently,
 勿使惹塵埃。 And let no dust alight.

Huineng was a low ranking, recently arrived member of the community, who, despite his clear insight, had been put to work in the rice-threshing shed. Being illiterate, Huineng had Shenxui's poem read to him, and then dictated his response.

菩提本無樹， Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;
 明鏡亦非臺。 The bright mirror is also not a stand.
 本來無一物， Fundamentally there is not a single thing —
 何處惹塵埃。 Where could any dust be attracted?²

¹ Many of the traditional stories about Huineng are now regarded by historians as apocryphal, but this in no way lessens their power as instruments of the dharma.

² The translations are those found in McRae, John. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. 2000. p. 31 and are quoted in the Wikipedia article on Huineng. They are the most accurate renditions of the *gatha* that I have read.

These two poems are seen as expressing the 'gradual realisation' approach of the so-called Northern School (Shenxui's poem) and the 'sudden or immediate realisation' approach of the so-called Southern School (Huineng's poem). On the basis of his poem, Hongren conveyed to Huineng the robe

Reports

Samu at Gorricks; Buddha's
 Birthday; Talk at Dharma
 Gaia; Easter Sesshin Pages 2-4

Coming Events

Talks, Introductions, Samu,
 Spring Sesshin

Page 5

News From the Board

Including thanks, fundraising
 concert

Page 5

and bowl that marked his dharma succession, and that line has come down to us today.

A wise person once remarked that these poems should be regarded a pair (and this is often how they are displayed—please see the accompanying illustration): one points to the necessity of practice both before and after realisation, and the other to realisation itself. The point is that we need them both.



So what does ‘sudden realisation’ really mean? Quite simply, waking up, right here and now. In fact, when we wake up fully we realise that there is no here and there is no now. Everything falls completely away, and the Buddha mind stands illuminated in all its brilliant clarity. The amazing thing is that this realisation is perennially available to us. We can awaken to it at any time. We can wake up right now. What is it, if not these black and white squiggles that are currently meeting your eyes?

So often we construct our practice in terms of right and wrong: my zazen is good today, my zazen is bad today, oh I’m so unclear today I’ll never realise anything, I’m doing a really good job of cleaning that mirror today, I’m doing a really bad day job of cleaning that mirror today. Forget all that! And simply wake up. In fact, it’s right there in that thought, ‘my zazen is bad today.’ Please don’t construe my words as saying that practice is unimportant. Practice too is realisation, as Dogen insists. Just sitting. That’s it! Just standing up. That is it too!

At the great three month retreat in 1690 Zen Master Bankei addressed the many lay people present and said, “Not a single one of you people at this meeting is unenlightened. Right now, you’re all sitting before me as Buddhas. Each of you received the Buddha-mind from your mothers when you were born, and nothing else. This inherited Buddha-mind is beyond any doubt unborn, with a marvellously bright illuminative wisdom.”

Reports

Samu at Kodoji, End of March

At the end of March, sangha members prepared Kodoji for the Autumn Sesshin. Greg Carty whipper-snipped around the buildings and Gilly, Yvonne, Britta, Georgina, Jill, Lily and Sue pulled out masses of Stinking Roger and Paddy's Lucerne. Tony and Stephen constructed infill to the cottage stair-risers, Jill cleaned the grease trap and updated the inventory. Trish sharpened the knives and, with Ameli, cleaned the dojo inside and out, Raph fixed the road and Will cut down dead wattles. Swami mowed. Jill Stevenson's invention of pot-warmers for sesshin was a success - a pot of rice stayed warm for over an hour. The fridges were cleaned.



We enjoyed zazen in the early morning and late afternoon. Wonderful meals were made, dishes washed, a curtain rail hung in the pantry store, a corner altar fitted to the kitchen and Janet Selby's framed drawing of Gordon Waters hung over the knife rack.

The blackberries by our first gate have reasserted themselves and will need to be addressed at our Spring Samu on August 30-31. Firewood for the Blue Gum Sangha retreat and SZC's Sound of Silence Winter Sesshin was chopped by Bren and Tony in late May.

Gillian Coote

Sue, Jill, Lily and Britta and their stash of weeds (photo Gilly Coote)

Buddha's Birthday and Baby Naming Ceremony April 13 at Annandale

This event was flower-filled and joyful. Before the ceremony, Helen Sanderson inspired Marisol, Leo and their parents to create paper flowers, cards and dancing creatures to decorate the birthday tree by the altar, home to the Baby Buddha statue. Balloons and lanterns added to the colour as an intimate sangha circle - Shauna and Marisol, Stuart, Tara and Leo, Diego and Sean and myself - gathered to welcome Henry Alexander Schweitzer, nearly six months old and gloriously robust. Both Baby Buddha and Henry, cradled in his mother's arms, were offered flowers and it was wonderful to have Meghan Hay amongst us again, SZC's treasurer for many years; she plans to bring Lucy, her first-born, to the Baby Naming Ceremony next year. I encourage all of you to turn up.

Gillian Coote

Introduction to Zen March 20, 27, April 3

Paul's Maloney's 3 week series of talks was well attended with about 12-14 people each evening. It was also noted that there has been an increase in new people attending orientation since the introduction of social media sites and the upgrade of the SZC website. Those people who come to orientation are particularly interested in the teachers' Introduction to Zen Practice. The board appreciates the teachers' commitment to these informative sessions which are of interest and benefit to all sangha members.

Sue Bidwell

Talk at Dharma Gaia Forum 25 April



The second Dharma Gaia Forum was held at the Buddhist Library on 25 April with Gilly Coote speaking. It was an inspirational and heartwarming night. Gilly spoke wonderfully about her work, passion and spiritual practice of Bush Regeneration and how seemingly small activities can not only empower ourselves but those around us - spreading out via the 'Net of Indra' to affect the bigger wider world. Discussion afterwards was wide ranging and stimulating. As a measure of the engagement of everybody there, even after two hours of engaged interaction, participants were reluctant to finish and leave. Deep thanks to Gilly for her unique and wonderful contribution, and to all friends who were able to come and participate.

Peter Thompson

Easter Sesshin 18-25 April at Kodoji

A large number of sitters made their way to Kodoji on the Easter weekend. Welcomed back by the stone Buddha and vivid flags, we settled in for a week of sincere practice, among the wise and gentle teachings of Subhana and Maggie.

The sesshin offered for many the chance to let go, held and nurtured by the strong connectedness of the group. The weather was also unexpectedly kind. There was a sense of light-heartedness alongside dedication and the dojo was often filled with spontaneous laughter. Many offerings, both creative and practical, were given. Kim's daily yoga session eased our aching bodies, and our bellies were nourished by wholesome meals which were prepared without any waste.

On the second last day we witnessed Michael's Jukai ceremony, in which the precepts were taken up as his own. Guests were also welcomed at this special time. But they weren't the only visitors to sesshin! In fact we were joined by many beings, including a bat in the dojo, and a funnel-web in a tent – the latter reminding us all to be extra careful.

On the final day we shared personal journeys, moments of hilarity, or transformations. Warm and open hearts were turned towards Sydney, Melbourne, or whatever daily life was waiting – ready to be nourished in turn. We continue in gratitude to our dear teachers and to the ancient cliffs, the eucalypts, and the all-embracing stars.

Sarah Sherringham



Photos: Lee Nutter



Coming Events

Dharma Gaia Forum at Buddhist Library, 30 May

Dharma Gaia's next speaker at the Buddhist Library, 30 May 6-9pm will be the wonderful Dr Leigh Davison, who has spent many years on the land in a commune, and teaching. He is the husband of Ellen, a teacher in our tradition and SZC member, and was one of the original sitters in 70's from which SZC emerged.

Introduction to Zen, Thursday Evenings

This series on Thursdays June 19, 26 and July 3 will be led by Maggie Gluek and aided by Glenys Jackson. Open to everyone, new, members, non-members. People have found these talks very helpful.

Samu at Annandale 15 June

There will be zazen from 8.30-9.30, followed by the story of building Ring of Bone Zendo, Gary Snyder's project in 1982, with excerpts from the DVD. This project inspired the building of Gorricks Run. After this, we'll all pitch in and do whatever tasks need to be done, such as cleaning, gardening, repairing and work in the library. There will be a shared potluck lunch, and work will end at 4pm. This is an opportunity for us to have fun working together for the benefit of all. Contact Tony Coote: tony@tonycootearchitect.com

Spring Sesshin 2014

September 19-26 at Kodoji with Gillian Coote Roshi

Sesshin invites us to leave the tumbling, noisy, incessant world behind, whether for a few days or the full seven days. At Kodoji, watches are removed, there's no mobile reception or chit-chat and, in this beautiful wilderness valley, we are offered the precious opportunity to wake up moment-by-moment - to the lyrebird's song, the starry heavens, the vastness of this universe and our own true nature, radically shifting the way we live our everyday lives.

Enquiries, Jill Steverson: jillsteverson@gmail.com

News From the Board

The Board and the Sangha are very grateful to Sarah Walls for doing the Roster of Week Night Sittings for seven years. Thank you, Sarah!

The board is working on a number of different ideas as to how best to maintain our various rosters.

Ameli Tanchitsa has given one of his wonderful pictures to SZC that is now hanging behind the altar in the hojo. Thank you, Ameli!

Thanks to Michael Tierney for helping SZC utilize social media more effectively. He has been given permission to buy a hard drive to store all the extra SZC talks. Michael will also talk with Jane Andino who has offered to assist archiving and managing files.

Jason Koh the Treasurer has pruned the membership list of those who have not paid

their dues and give no indication of paying in the future.

The coordinates for Gorricks are in the white book at Gorricks in case of serious injury requiring a helicopter evacuation or in case of fire requiring evacuation. In other cases, after arranging for an ambulance the person should be taken by car to Wiseman's ferry (Webbs Creek ferry) where they should be met by the ambulance.

A fundraising Concert for Kodoji is being organized so that our many talented musicians can come together for our entertainment. The money raised will be used to help maintain our solar electricity system

Simon Wang became an Australian citizen on June 9 at the Town Hall. Congratulations!

The sangha are reminded that the AGM is 19 October so please keep this date free.

Notice Board

Dokusan

MONDAYS:

Subhana June 2, 23, 30 July 7, 21, 28

WEDNESDAYS:

Gillian Coote June 4, 25 July 2, 9, 23, 30

Dharma Café

June 16 + 18 7-9pm

Full Moon Ceremony

July 14 + 16 Not Stealing

Zazenkai

July 20 Maggie talk, dokusan
 No zazenkai in June as there is Samu at Annandale

Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of each month, 6pm sit for 6.30
 start: June 10, July 8

Women's Group

June 20 at Jean's (moved due to Winter Sesshin)
 July 18 at Annandale with Neryl, Janet and Sally

Early Morning Zazen

Ashfield. SZC members living in or close to the inner west who are interested in early-morning zazen and dokusan are invited to join a small group that sits regularly on Tuesday and Friday mornings from 6-7.30am in Ashfield. Contact either Allan Marett allan.marett@gmail.com 04097127767 or Kim Bagot kimballb7@gmail.com 0402321277.

Regular Notices

Gift recipient status for SZC Building Fund

The Australian Tax Office has confirmed that we are a DGR, or Deductible Gift Recipient for a fund (the Sydney Zen Centre Building Fund). This restores the status of gifts to the building fund as tax deductible for the donor. If you would like to make a donation to the building fund, simply flag it as such and we will issue a receipt against which you can claim a tax deduction from your income.

Books for sale

The Roaring Stream. A New Zen Reader, ed. Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker is on sale at Annandale, along with Robert Aitken's books: *Taking the Path of Zen*, *Mind of Clover*, *The Dragon that Never Sleeps*, *Encouraging Words*, *The Morning Star*, *Vegetable Roots Discourse*, *Zen Master Raven* and *The Gateless Barrier*, plus new titles.

Use of Kodoji

Kodoji is available for use by members of the SZC and guests (if accompanied by a member). It can also be hired by other groups if approved by the Board. Fees are \$15 per night for members and \$25 for non-members. There is a \$100 booking fee for non-member groups. Booking of Kodoji is essential

and it is also essential to receive instructions about use of the facility before going there. Please note that the local Fire Brigade has advised restrictions during Summer.

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

Blue Mountains Zen

The Blue Mountains Zen Group meets on the second and fourth Sunday of each month, from 3-5 p.m., at Paul Maloney's home, 19 Russell Road, Leura. Phone 4784 2136. The meeting is occasionally held at another venue, so it is best to check some days before.

Canberra Zen Group

Meets on Wednesday evenings.
 Please contact Gary for more details: 0429 635 412
 email gcaitcheon@gmail.com

Wollongong Sitting Group

Meets on Tuesday evenings, fortnightly from Feb 4.
 Please contact Pip Atkins for more details: 0414 496 414 or email pip.atkins@gmail.com

Contact Information

Brendon Stewart (chair) stewarts34@bigpond.com, Sue Bidwell (secretary) sue.bidwell17@gmail.com, Ameli Tanchitsa (assistant secretary) Ameli.tanchitsa@gmail.com, Jason Koh (Treasurer) zazender@fastmail.fm, Michael Tierney (publications) michaeltierney1@rocketmail.com, Glenys Jackson, Larry Agriesti, Helen Sanderson. Newsletter Editor: Janet Selby janetselby@bigpond.com

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SZC Calendar June-July 2014

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------|
| June 1 | 2 Zazen 7-9 | 3 | 4 Zazen 7-9 | 5 | 6 Winter Sesshin starts at Kodoji  | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 Board Meeting 6.30 | 11 | 12 | 13 sesshin ends | 14 |
| 15 Samu at Annandale 8.30-9.30 Sit/film, Shared lunch + work until 4pm | 16 Dharma Café 7-9 | 17 | 18 Dharma Café 7-9 | 19 Introduction to Zen 1, Maggie | 20 Women's Group Jean's | 21 |
| 22 | 23 Zazen 7-9 | 24 | 25 Zazen 7-9 | 26 Introduction to Zen 2, Maggie | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 Zazen 7-9 | July 1 | 2 Zazen 7-9 | 3 Introduction to Zen 3, Maggie | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 Zazen 7-9 | 8 Board Meeting 6.30 | 9 Zazen 7-9 | 10 | 11 Women's Group Neryl's | 12 |
| 13 | 14 Full Moon Ceremony Not Stealing | 15 | 16 Full Moon Ceremony Not Stealing | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 Zazenkai 8.30-12 Maggie talk and dokusan | 21 Zazen 7-9 | 22 | 23 Zazen 7-9 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 Zazen 7-9 | 29 | 30 Zazen 7-9 | | August 1 | 2 |