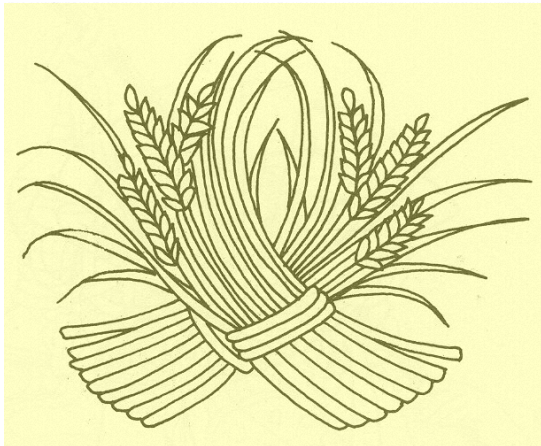


Harvest Koans Autumn 1999



Joan Sutherland

1 : *Changqing Da'an's White Ox*

Changqing Da'an said, "I lived with Guishan more than thirty years. I ate Guishan's food, I shat Guishan's shit, but I did not study Guishan's Zen. All I did was look after an ox. If he got off the road, I dragged him back; if he trampled the grain in others' fields, I trained him by flogging him with a whip. For a long time how pitiful he was, at the mercy of everyone's words! Now he has changed into the white ox on the bare ground and always stays in front of my face. All day long he clearly reveals himself. Even if I chase him he doesn't go away."¹

2 : *Yu the Donut Maker*

Yu was from Jinling and worked in the town as a donut-maker. She used to visit Zen Master Langya Qi and ask him questions with the others. To teach her, the Zen Master used Linji's saying, "The true person of no rank."

One day she heard a beggar singing the song *Delights of Lotus Flowers* : "If you haven't heard the song of Yang Yi, how can you find Lake Tunting?" Hearing this, she was greatly enlightened. She threw her donut pan onto the ground.

Her husband glared at her and asked, "Are you crazy?"

She said, "This is not your realm." She went to see Langya. Langya, seeing her at a distance, knew she had attained realization.

He asked her, "What is the true person of no rank?"

She immediately said, "There's someone of no position with six arms and three heads, working furiously, smashing Flower Mountain into two with a single blow. 'For ten thousand years the flowing water doesn't know the spring.'" Thereafter she became famous.²

3 : Yunmen's Inward and Outward Radiance

Someone asked, "What is the inward-and-outward radiance?"

Master Yunmen asked back, "In what direction is your question pointed?"

The questioner said, "What is reaching the light?"

The master asked, "If someone suddenly asked you this, what would you say?"

The questioner continued, "How about after reaching the light?"

The master replied, "Forget the light; give me first the reaching!"³

4 : Dongshan's Mending

Shenshan was mending clothes with a needle and thread. Dongshan asked, "What are you doing?"

Shenshan said, "Mending."

Dongshan asked, "How are you mending?"

Shenshan said, "One stitch is like the next."

Dongshan said, "We've been traveling together for twenty years now, and you can still say such a thing! How can there be such craftiness?"

Shenshan asked, "How do you mend?"

Dongshan said, "As if the whole earth were spewing flames."⁴

5 : The Station Lady

The woman at the station in Hakuin's district called on Hakuin and was greatly enlightened. Her name is unknown, and it is not known when she was born or died.

She once attended a lecture by Hakuin where Hakuin said, "The Pure Land of mind only, the Amida of one's own body – once Amida appears, mountains, rivers, and earth, plants, trees, and forests, all at once emanate a great light. If anyone wants to know this, you should look into your own heart. Since it is the Pure Land of mind only, what kind of embellishments does it have? Since it is the Amida of you own body, what kind of distinguishing marks does it have?"

Hearing this, the woman said to herself, "This is not such a hard thing." Returning to her home, she meditated day and night, bringing this to mind both in wakefulness and during sleep. One day, as she was washing a pot, she suddenly broke through; tossing the pot aside, she rushed to see Hakuin. She said, "I've run across Amida in my own body – everything

on earth is emanating a great light. How wonderful!" She danced with joy.

Hakuin said, "So you say, but what about a cesspool – does it also emanate light?"

The woman went up to him, gave him a slap, and said, "This old guy still hasn't penetrated." Hakuin roared with laughter.⁵

6 : *Guishan's Self-Cultivation*

A monk asked Guishan, Does someone who has attained enlightenment still need to continue with self-cultivation?"

The master said, "Through meditation a student may attain thoughtless thought, become suddenly enlightened, and realize his original nature. But there are still delusions that have accumulated over numberless kalpas and cannot be purified in a single moment. Therefore she should be taught how to eliminate the karmic tendencies and mental habits. There is no other way of cultivation."⁶

7 : *Linji's Nothing*

Linji said, "There is nothing I dislike."⁷

8 : *Pang Lingzhao Helps Her Father*

Layman Pang was once selling bamboo baskets. Coming down off a bridge he stumbled and fell. When Pang Lingzhao saw this she ran to her father's side and threw herself down.

"What are you doing?" cried the Layman

"I saw Papa fall to the ground, so I'm helping," replied Lingzhao.

"Luckily no one was looking," remarked the Layman.⁸

9 : *Zhaozhou's Practice*

The high official Ma said, "Master, do you practice?"

Zhaozhou said, "It would be a disaster if I did."

Ma said, "If you yourself do not practice, to whom can you teach the practice?"

Zhaozhou said, "You."

Ma said, "How can you call someone like me a practitioner?"

Zhaozhou said, "If you did not practice, how could you have overcome hunger and cold, and attained the status of a king?"

With tears in his eyes the high official bowed in gratitude.⁹

10 : *The Stone*

This is the stone, drenched with rain
that points the way.¹⁰

11 : *The Master Song Man*

In Arnhem Land a man named Maralung was sleeping. In a dream a master song man who lived 200 years ago came to him and said, "Wake up, I have a song to teach you." At first there was a light approaching, through the trees. But when the light arrived it was a human being. The dreamer woke up and the master taught him the song. But then the dreamer went back to sleep and forgot the song. Next day a musicologist asked him for the song. So the next night Maralung dreamed again and it happened the same way. Again the master came into his dream and woke him and taught him the song while he was awake and again he fell asleep afterwards. But in the morning he remembered the song.

Now, here is the question. Maralung knew the difference between dream and waking. So, was the master song man really there or not?¹¹

12 : *Zhaozhou's "That's It!"*

Someone asked, "When one is confronted with disaster, how can one avoid it?"

Zhaozhou said, "That's it!"¹²

13 : *Jiashan's State*

A monk asked Jiashan, "What is the state of Jiashan?"

Jiashan replied :

The monkeys, clasping their young to their
breasts,
have returned behind the blue peaks;
a bird, holding a flower in its beak,
alights before the green grotto.¹³

14 : *from Dongshan's "Jewel Mirror Samadhi"*

The wooden man begins to sing, and the stone
woman rises to dance.¹⁴

15 : *from Dogen*

The stone woman gives birth in the middle of the
night.

16 : *Only for your Benefit*

One time when Dongshan was washing his bowls,
he saw two crows fighting over a frog. A monk who
also saw this asked, "Why does it come to that?"

The Master replied, "It's only for your benefit,
Acharya."

16. *Sunlight, Firelight*

A monk said, "In the day there is sunlight, at night there is firelight. What is 'divine light'?"

Zhaozhou replied, "Sunlight, firelight."¹⁵

¹ Adapted from Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust*

² Adapted from Thomas Cleary, "Kahawai Koans"

³ Urs App, *Master Yunmen*

⁴ William F. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*

⁵ Adapted from Thomas Cleary, "Kahawai Koans"

⁶ From Stephen Mitchell

⁷ James Green, *The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*

⁸ Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Man of Zen*

⁹ Adapted from Yoel Hoffman, *Radical Zen*

¹⁰ *Santoku*

¹¹ Alan Marrett

¹² Adapted from Yoel Hoffman, *Radical Zen*

¹³ Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust*

¹⁴ William F. Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan*

¹⁵ James Green, *The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu*