

ZEN NOTES



Rinzai Reed

Why do I say this? Do you grasp the meaning of my words? Brothers, because you cannot keep your minds from wandering, you are trapped in the same useless devices resorted to by men in the past.

Brothers, you must make the head of the Trikaya Buddha your seat of meditation. The bodhisattva who is satisfied with the tenth stage of enlightenment is like someone who leaves his own home and becomes a hanger-on in an alien land. The bodhisattva whose attainment is equal to the Buddha's and the bodhisattva whose attainment qualifies him to be a Buddha are like criminals in cages. The arhat and the pratyeka-buddha are like the filth in drains. Bodhi and Nirvana are like hitching-posts for mules and asses. Why?

Brothers, it is because for countless kalpas they failed to attain the full realization of Emptiness. These are barriers that impede progress in attaining enlightenment.

Cangue--a square wooden collar, three or four feet across, in which the neck and (usually) the hands are confined--formerly used in China in punishing minor crimes.

SOKEI-AN SAYS Rinzai has been speaking of the Buddha in one's self, Buddha the Knower of the universe. There are many "Buddhas." The Buddha in human form two thousand five hundred years ago was one of them. We are now speaking of the universal Buddha who is incarnated in all sentient beings. It is a personal Buddha in the sense that the Christian speaks of a personal God enshrined in everyone's heart: God in you, Buddha in you, Buddha nature in you.

I need not say anything more, because if I say something else you will cling to it, will forget the Buddha in yourself and try to search outside--from the lips of a teacher, from an image carved in wood; you will study a word from the outside, or a word made of your mindstuff. You forget how to search for the searcher, who is Buddha; the object which is searched for is not Buddha. Compare this to a sword: the sword cannot cut itself, but it can cut something else--the sword itself is Buddha. Fire cannot burn fire, only something else; the fire that burns all is Buddha. You must

find Buddha in the searcher. You need no devices. Give up all devices, all methods, and when you come to yourself--HMM! I understand. In such a way you must find the Buddha.

The Buddha taught us how to meditate. In meditation, you separate yourself from the circumference of your environment and realize the Buddha in yourself. There is no other Buddhism in the world. The Master is in *here*. You have to knock at the door and ask to meet the Master! The answer comes from the *inside*, not the outside. But to call, you must make an effort, must knock at the door of your heart. When you meet Him, give up the knocking. At midnight, if you try to get into a monastery, banging on the door with your fist, no answer. Then with a stone--bang-bang--! "Yes." Then you throw away the stone. Meditation and concentration are stones to find the Master; there comes a time when you do not need them any more. The door of the temple is not the Master, do not mistake it. Many people think that meditation and concentration are Buddhism.

In the Tang Dynasty (618-907) Buddhism came to its height of metaphysical understanding and reached an impasse, became stagnant. Bodhidharma came in the 5th century and three hundred years after, his disciples started to destroy that metaphysical theory and tried to realize Buddhism in themselves. That school is called Zen. It is this Buddhism that I am trying to carry into America. You as modern mankind must not be blind to superstition; you must open your eye to see the real source of Buddhism, which has real flesh, a beautiful form, and a shining body. Today in China, Buddhism is a form with no soul in it. The other extreme, of which Rinzai spoke, has soul but no body; pointing to the soul of man, it forgets the beauty of the body. Rinzai used a short dagger pointing directly into the heart--very sharp.

Why do I say this? Do you grasp the meaning of my words? Brothers, because you cannot keep your minds from wandering, you are trapped in the same useless devices resorted to by men in the past. The ancient Buddhists used wonderful methods--commandments, meditation, alms-begging--many devices to carry you into the real understanding of Buddhism. I give you a koan: sitting in your chair, can you stand upon the Himalaya Mountains, pass through the keyhole, and so forth. Can you hide yourself in the wall, walk on the surface of the water? You cannot answer because you are trapped in the meaning of the words. The koan is a device to free you from devices, to train you to see through the words and get the meaning behind them so that you are not trapped by words. I do not think my meaning is different from that of

Christians who really penetrate their words and find the real meaning of phrases such as "pass over the surface of the water." These point to real existence, the reality of the universe beyond the phenomena. But when I say "beyond," you probably think "sky"--and so forth. What can I say? Do not be bothered by the shades of meaning in words. As Rinzai said, "Do not be trapped in the useless devices to which the men of the past had recourse."

Brothers, you must make the head of the Trikaya Buddha your seat of meditation. An expression is used here that is very difficult to translate. To "sit upon the head of the Buddha" is to sit upon the seat of meditation, to sit upon the universe, to realize the Buddha in oneself. He is Buddha--there is none other in the universe.

The bodhisattva who is satisfied with the tenth stage of enlightenment is like someone who leaves his own home and becomes a hanger-on in an alien land. The bodhisattva has exterminated ego and embodied himself in the universal body. Mere man has a separated soul and lives in blind desire. But when he opens his eye, he realizes there is no separated soul. There is only one soul--a tree of soul--and you are one branch of the tree; you perform your own function, but you are not separate. When you realize that soul is universal, then your body is also universal--you are a bodhisattva. The bodhisattva who is contented with the ten stages of enlightenment observes both phenomena and noumena as conceptions. This is not like the arhat who keeps himself in a corner of annihilation, separated. The highest bodhisattva knows Reality

in both phenomena and noumena. The arhat thinks phenomena is not existing, so he hides in the "nothingness" of noumena. This is not true annihilation, but still the annihilation of conception.

Nevertheless, according to Rinzai, if anyone conceives that these ten stages are really existing (such stages exist hypothetically as a mode of thinking to bring one to enlightenment), he has not attained to Reality but is still in a hypothetical cloud. If he thinks, "I am a bodhisattva or a Buddha, or a plain man, he is not living in his own light. In such a case, he is merely a "hanger-on," not standing on his own feet.

The bodhisattva whose attainment is equal to the Buddha's and the bodhisattva whose attainment qualifies him to be a Buddha are like criminals in cages. There are two kinds of bodhisattvas: the one whose understanding is co-equal with the Buddha's but not the Buddha himself, and the one whose understanding is the Buddha's. The first type has enlightened himself and attained the understanding co-equal with that of the Buddha. He has gone against the stream and come to Buddha-nature. He has ceased to desire and made many efforts to come to this.

The second type of bodhisattva from that point turns himself into every one's heart. Having attained Buddhahood, he comes back to promulgate his own understanding. Then he will go away and return no more. According to Rinzai, neither of these are truly emancipated; the truly enlightened one is himself, not Buddha or the same as Buddha.

Rinzai uses a poisonous tongue in

criticizing those who are satisfied with hypothetical Buddhism.

The arhat and the pratyeka-buddha are like the filth in drains. Bodhi and nirvana are like hitching-posts for mules and asses. The arhat has attained the annihilation of agony and the cause of agony. He has annihilated desire, but not superstition; therefore his is not complete annihilation. The pratyeka-buddha has enlightened himself, but he is like the dry leaves in autumn. He has passed the twelve stages of cause and result, has attained the truth of the universe, lives alone and understands, but he cannot teach.

To Rinzai, bodhi (knowledge), the goal of Nirvana reached with the great knowledge and theory of Buddhism, the system built by the Buddha--all are like hitching-posts for mules and asses! You cannot move as long as you are hitched to any hypothetical Buddhism.

Brothers, it is because for countless kalpas they failed to attain the full realization of Emptiness. These are barriers that impede progress in attaining enlightenment. Kalpas means endless time. In Rinzai's view, if you attain full annihilation, one moment equals a million years. You must realize this, or the definition of the system and theory of Buddhism stays in your brain and you are never free--you have to attain throughout all the kalpas. *Akasha* means the Emptiness of the whole universe, even oneness is not existing--that is entire annihilation. Yet in it is the seed of the universe, which will be created again from that akasha. These are barriers because you have not attained full annihilation.

THE BUDDHA'S PERSONALITY

People often ask me about the principles of the different sects of Buddhism. To make an answer is not so easy. To explain the principles we must look into the historical development of the personality of the Buddha, for these sects are largely derived from varying ideas about the nature of Buddha.

In the historical Buddha's own time the followers saw him as a saint, the Shakya *muni* (sage). Shakya is the name of his tribe. Gautama was his family name. The title "Buddha" is somewhat similar to titles given in Catholicism to a hierarch, a pope.

Before the Shakyamuni Buddha, there are supposed to have been others. We usually count these as seven, of which the most familiar are Kashyapa and Kanakamuni Buddha.

Once when Shakyamuni Buddha was in the street, it is told that he heard a peasant girl singing a love song. The Buddha told his disciples to listen to her song. "It is the teaching of Kashyapa Buddha still lingering in the peoples' mind." The Kashyapa tribe came from the West to India, so the teaching described as Kashyapa's probably originated somewhere westward from India, perhaps in Egypt or Babylon. We cannot trace it.

Kanakamuni precedes Kashyapa Buddha. (Isn't it interesting that races of the Pacific are called "kanaka"?) We have heard many times that there was a continent submerged in the Pacific Ocean. Perhaps Kanaka was the Buddha of that continent. But this is merely my supposition.

Shakyamuni was thought of as the Buddha of our period. In the next

period the Buddha was to be Maitreya. The Maitreya tribe of India of the Buddha's time was white-skinned, with golden hair, blue eyes, and big noses, according to a description in a sutra, while the Shakya tribe belonged to a yellow race that had come from Tibet into India before the Aryans came. Dwight Goddard says that the Maitreya Buddha predicted in the sutras was Jesus Christ. According to this view, Maitreya has already come, but we do not accept this idea. Perhaps Dr. Goddard arrived at his view by applying the description of Maitreya in the sutra to Jesus. You must remember that the monks of the Buddha's time were not purely Indian, but of many different origins, from tribes of Egypt, Assyria, Arabia, and so forth.

Now we come to the conception of Buddha as the one to attain Buddhahood, one who penetrates through the law of the universe, the perfect person in whom willpower, wisdom and emotion are in perfect balance. Buddha in Sanskrit is "one who knows perfect Wisdom." This Buddha was a human being who attained God's Wisdom. Today Hindus call Buddha an incarnation of Vishnu or Brahma.

Shakyamuni Buddha did not say, "I am the incarnation of a previous god." In the teachings he is described as having been many different beings. His soul had been in many forms, through many years of training. He was a human being, though he was more than an ordinary human being. He did not receive his "Bodhi" from some god as an apple dropped from a tree, but having survived a struggle through many incarnations until finally he attained Buddhahood. Stories of his previous incarnations are told in the sutras. The Buddha of

Candle Light (a very primitive idea-- it means universal sun) was coming to the place where the Buddha was a poor novice. Everyone ran toward the great Buddha of Candle Light offering flowers. Shakyamuni (the poor novice) could not approach him because he had nothing to offer. A princess sympathized with him and gave him a flower. He approached the Buddha of Candle Light, knelt down and spread his hair on the wet ground and begged the Buddha to pass on walking on his hair. The Buddha looked at the novice and said: "You will be a Buddha in the future." This is a legend, but many sects of Buddhism still conceive the Buddha as this kind of personality.

The Zen Sect regards Shakyamuni as a teacher, a man who attained Buddhahood.

After the Buddha's death, the legends surrounding him slowly changed his personality. He became a God. About three hundred years after the Buddha's death, Buddhists brought the idea of God into their faith. Avalokiteshvara was originally a local god of Southern India, some say brought from Greece-- perhaps Apollo, Eros, or Aphrodite. It seems to be Apollo. The Buddhists took this god and gave it the personality of Buddha. It pardons all sin. It gives you sanction for your deeds, no matter what you may have done.

The monk in the Buddha's time cast off worldly life and abandoned his attachment. He lived in solitude, eating just once a day, never sleeping twice under the same roof, even tree, lest he attach to it. He tried to penetrate to the Infinite. As a religion, this way was very primitive. Not many men could be saved by such a method, while for women it was impossible.

Thanks to Avalokiteshvara, the idea developed that you could lead any kind of life and still penetrate to the infinite, for Avalokiteshvara's thousand hands reaching everywhere, each holding an instrument, would give you freedom.

Avalokiteshvara is always shown with a man's body but woman's breasts and woman's face. This womanliness of Avalokiteshvara is the symbol of love to the Buddhist. Any small thing is guarded and cared for by the nature of woman, so kindness, love, is portrayed by the woman's side of Avalokiteshvara. Avalokiteshvara worship was transformed and carried into the personality of the Buddha. He began to be worshiped as Avalokiteshvara. It was said now that he did not attain Buddhahood on this earth but a million kalpas ago. No matter what he passed through, his soul was always Buddha. To attain Buddhahood he temporarily took the body of Prince Gautama to show men how to attain.

There are three great sutras that describe this type of Buddha. One is the Lotus Sutra. Another is the Avatamsaka (the name means adorned--with flowers, beautiful words, poetry). The third is the Nirvana Sutra, which was taught by Mahakashyapa to his disciples.

Today the Tendai School emphasizes this type of Buddhism. Shakyamuni Buddha attained Buddhahood in the remote past. The Tendai School is like Zen but much more philosophical. The Shingon School carried this idea of Buddha into Vairochana, the central sun of the Universe, the ideal sun. He becomes the central god of the Universe, the center of the mandala.

The Amitabha (boundless light) sect,

Jodo in Japan today, has almost exactly the idea of the Christian God. Shingon and Jodo came out of this idea of the personality of Buddha. To them Shakyamuni was too small. There must be a pure Buddha who never became a human being, but remains always invisible behind the human being, always there, omnipresent. So the Jodo and Shingon Schools do not pay homage to Shakyamuni, the man. Their central image is Amitabha Daibutsu, the God of the Sun, Vairochana. They became independent of Shakyamuni. Their image is not a human being at all but God. This is a quite familiar development of the human mind. Amitabha worship started about five hundred years after the Buddha's death. According to the Amitabha theory you can penetrate to the Ultimate in one moment. If your wisdom, faith, penetrates, this is religion. So every moment is religion. In any moment, anywhere, whatever you do, you are free, emancipated. I like this religion. It is really the highest development of religion. Every moment is religion. There is just one word--penetrate. If you have such faith, salvation really comes. Jodo Shinshu finally said: though you are an idiot, salvation is possible; though you have no faith, though you are a criminal, salvation resides in you. No wonder this is the most popular religion to the Japanese today. The Japanese are more practical, the Chinese more philosophical.

Reconstructed by Frances Reiter

For more detailed information on the sutras and sects, an excellent source is *ZEN DUST*, by *Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki*.

ABANDONMENT When we are asked by any one what we are practicing, the answer is: How to give up. First, we give up the world; second, we give up our notions; third, we give up ourselves.

When the student has given up "the world" he usually begins to study the sutras and creates Buddhistic notions. The Zen master must help him abandon all notions and awaken a real attitude. In the third stage, he must give up himself in order to serve the human world. There are not many Buddhists who reach this stage. If everyone did there would be no trouble in daily life. I shall illustrate these stages with an allegory.

The bamboo grows from a shoot day by day until it reaches a height of ten or fifteen feet. Its foliage is deep green and shining. It is beautiful. This stage is like that of the one who has abandoned worldly life and come into Buddhistic life. His knowledge, his philosophy are like the foliage of the bamboo.

In the second stage, to see the bamboo itself, we cut off all those small leaves, all the foliage, and leave only one long straight bamboo. The cutting is Zen study. In the third stage, the bamboo is cut from its root. What then?

A woman will use the bamboo as a laundry pole to dry her baby's diapers. A boatman will use it to propel his boat. Someone will make a flute of it, or a basket or chopsticks.

Many students are glad to be a beautiful bamboo in full leaf, but how many like the idea of being a laundry pole, or a chopstick? To abandon the notion of yourself is very hard, for everyone clings to his ego, his root. Such a bamboo cannot be used; we can only keep it in the garden.

zen notes

KARMA--What is karma? Karma is really action for a purpose:we act to attain something or do something.The suggested meaning in early Buddhism,however,is that "purposeful action" is for some ulterior motive.You are eating food,for instance,and you need to eat. But you eat more than you need and you become ill,thus receiving the result caused by eating too much. It is like not going to bed at night, then being fatigued and unable to work the next day. Or if,when you are walking on the street,you hit someone and get knocked down, your being knocked down is the result of "karma." Not knowing the law of nature, the law of sentient beings, you have created,or received "karma."

Buddhism enlarged upon this idea which developed into the theory of creative law. Perhaps the Buddha had some such idea,but it does not appear in the early sutras. In them, "purposefully" implies an ulterior motive. The result of karmic action may be received in this world,or in the next.

The idea of samsara makes an entirely different point. When a person dies,it is the end of individuality, not of life.An air bubble comes up from the pond. For a time it keeps its shape,stays a little while reflecting the trees,then disappears.If you watch for a while,you will see that many come up in exactly the same place as those that came before,reflecting all,then bursting and disappearing. All return,all will be annihilated. Though the universe is destroyed,original nature is eternal. From Emptiness,the body of power is created;this power creates vibration; vibration creates heat and motion; after the destruction of the universe,

the solar system,the lower sentient beings,plants,animals,and man return exactly as before.It may be a million years later,but in infinity this is just a moment,like the thoughts in the mind that come and go. In deep meditation,you can experience that there is a thread of light that comes and goes in a repeated rhythm. You can feel it in yourself,and you feel it is in the universe as it is in you. This essential element keeps all seeds. Nothing is destroyed. Simply, this is the theory of samsara.

Reincarnation is not only of the body,but of the thoughts. My thoughts came from my teacher,and now they are transmitted to you. With these thoughts, I act one way,you another. There are three karmas of the body,four of the lips,three of the mind. "Do not kill," the Buddha told his disciples. "Do not steal,do not commit adultery." These three karmas belong to the body.

To kill for sport is a pastime in America,as it was in ancient days in Japan. The samurai,wishing to test a new sword,would hide in some dark corner of the street, waiting for someone to approach Perhaps it was an old mother going to arrange her daughter's marriage. "Ha-a-a-!" He killed her. "How wonderful this sword is!" Today,too,when someone kills an enemy,he laughs.

Do not take what is not permitted, not given you. When you see something beautiful and "attach" to it,that is stealing.Attachment is stealing.Nothing really belongs to any particular person. When the time comes,all goes with the body,which also does not belong to you. (*The notes of Sokei-an's lecture end here. See also ZN XVII/7 and IV/8 for more on Karma.*)

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Vol. XVII, No. 9, Sep. 1970
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