

ZEN NOTES



Rinzai Reed

My discourse on the Dharma of Buddha differs from that of anyone else under the sun. If Manjushri or Samanta-bhadra were to appear, manifesting themselves in my presence to ask me of the Dharma of Buddha, the moment they opened their mouths, said, "I wish to ask you a question..." I would have understood the falseness of their attainment in Dharma.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

The Buddhism of Rinzai is different from that of other Buddhists of his time. He established one of the five different Zen schools. Among these, Rinzai's school has the particular characteristic of being swift and sure--whenever he says a word, it indicates the real point of understanding. He, as a Zen master, did not speak much philosophy. The other Buddhists will differentiate subjective from objective, outer phenomena from inner phenomena (phenomena from noumena). In this way, they classified all existence, finally coming to a conclusion and giving it names such as God, Buddha, universal consciousness, and so forth. Rinzai did not care to name anything: "What is this?" "This is that." What is the universe? Where are you? What is consciousness? Can't you prove your own? Very simple. If anyone asks a Zen master, "What is silence?" he gives no answer--he is the answer. The others will say that silence has profound meanings--that if you penetrate into Buddhism, you will enter Nirvana. The Zen method puts you into it--take it and use it! Do not put a name to it--this is fundamental.

The Buddha's Buddhism was the same sort of religion. When some Brahman

asked him the question, "Are you eternal or mutable?" the Buddha's answer was silence. But this silence is speaking louder than thunder, so loud the human being cannot hear it.

All names are symbols of conception--the keynote of our conception. Names have nothing to do with Reality--calling this glass of water phenomena or noumena has nothing to do with it. In the Avatamsaka Sutra, it is the famous doctrine of the six relative states of the concept--of course all concepts are relative--if it is absolute you cannot speak of it. The fish in the sea do not know the taste of salt because salt taste is absolute to the fish--he does not know pure water. I have seen some fish in a hot spring--the hot water is not hot to them because it is absolute--not relative; they cannot conceive of "hot." If there were no color but red in the universe--no beings could conceive "red." If there were nothing in space--no sun, moon, earth, clouds--the beings existing in that space could not conceive of space; to that consciousness, space is absolute.

Oneness exists relating to many; monism exists relating to pluralism. Logically, the theory of monism is wrong because they insist on the oneness that is proved only by the many.

When monism has to affirm the many-- it is no longer monism. So, in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the Buddhists of that time differentiated six relative states of consciousness and all six are nothing but names.

1. State of "wholeness," "absolute." We can have this concept because there are the many in it.

2. Similarity relative to differentiation. We say the consciousness of all beings is homogeneous--the same but differentiated. There is a group therefore. We can conceive individually many fruits on one tree. Individuality is not absolute as a concept but relates to similarity.

3. Decadence relating to completion; something is growing and will be completed, then decay. All past civilizations at some period became complete and then fell into decadence.

4. Annihilation--wiped out of the state of phenomena and reduced to eternal substance, the whole, where there is nothing of different form or character. All is the same. (The others were not recorded)

Nothing can stand absolutely alone. All is relative. If you deny pluralism, you must deny monism and dualism; if you affirm one, you must affirm all. So none of these views are logical.

In philosophy, consciousness cannot prove anything, nor can it prove the absolute. This is the point of the Zen school: in this school there is no name for anything--just take it and use it!

But you cannot bend the elbow in all directions, going against nature. This "take it and use it" must be understood or it is dangerous. If you understand, you are emancipated from a

useless puzzle. The law of the temporal is in names, but the law of the sacred has no names: it is written in our breasts. And, though it is not written in any terms, we know it.

Samantabhadra was a Bodhisattva and Manjushri is the symbol of fundamental wisdom. These names are used as personified doctrines. All sentient beings have fundamental wisdom, not knowledge or intellect or information, but the wisdom that everything has innately. It is wisdom in the absolute, not relative, stage. So when the kalpa fire reduces all to nothingness, this is not pure nothingness. It is energy itself, not manifested but waiting for manifestation. In Buddhism, that stage is not pure materialism like the atom. In Buddhism, every atom has consciousness, being--even the dust has consciousness. Look at the dust in a sun-ray--dancing, gliding--a microcosm of the great universe moving in perfect harmony--no speck jostles the others.

Manjushri is absolute consciousness. Samantabhadra is the consciousness in each existence, the same consciousness. Rinzi uses Manjushri and Samantabhadra as substantives for the student. Any wise monk who understands would be called a Manjushri or a Samantabhadra. In answering Rinzi's question: "How do you manifest your consciousness without uttering a word?" such a one understands that stage of Samantabhadra, Sambhogakaya. If you say no word, you cannot demonstrate that simultaneous consciousness, for you are in the absolute; if you say a word, you are in the stage of variegated consciousness--how can you manifest to Rinzi? Such states

(cont'd on page 6)

JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS

HANDS Taped April 14, 1970, at Vancouver Zen Centre, 139 Water St., Vancouver 3, B.C., Canada. R: is Roshi; T: is translator; Q: is questioner; comment is in parenthesis.

Q: When we are new, just starting to sit, should we be consciously trying to keep ourselves in (the correct) posture?

T: ***

R: ***

T: Yes, it is the most necessary thing to keep yourself in the right (posture).

Q: But do we have to think about it? I mean, do we have to think of the hands and the feet and--ah-- falling over and all that?

T: ***

R: ***

T: Yes, if you are not in the right posture it means you have to try to keep yourself in the right posture.

R: ***

T: In a week you can make the right posture.

R: ***

T: And so, if you are in the right posture, then you can forget about keeping posture.

Q: When the Roshi isn't here we keep (the Zen Centre) open, and new students come in, and they don't have koans. Is there anything we can tell them--to pay attention to their posture, or to their breathing, or what?

T: ***

R: ***

T: Yes, if new students come in, then you just teach them how to do the posture, and counting their breath.

R: *** (Puts his hands together as in

zazen posture, except that his thumbs lay along his fingers.)

T: This is flower bud.



(Roshi calls Gisela to come to the front and sit in his chair with her hands in flower bud position. Then he calls two students up and has each one take her arms near the elbows and try to pull her hands apart. They don't succeed.)***

T: The flower bud doesn't open.

R: *** (Roshi then sits down with his hands in the same position, and has the students try to pull his hands apart as with Gisela. He is talking in Japanese while they're grunting and groaning and straining. Again they don't succeed.) *** (laughter)

T: The bud opens now, so they come apart when he pulls.

(Roshi then puts his hands in flower bud position, then moves his thumbs upward, then pulls his hands apart.)



R: ***

T: Then the flower becomes big, and you put the thumbs at place of--ahh--bellybutton.

R: *** (moves thumbs up and back 'til they touch his stomach)

T: This flower doesn't come apart now. It becomes strong.

R: ***

T: And so, the first thing is the bud, then it opens a little bit. And when it opens, this is the other

side of yourself.

R: ***

T: And then it comes toward you.

R: ***

T: So you meditate and think that you are, yourself, the flower.

R: ***

T: So you are yourself (the) flower, and (the) flower is yourself...

R: ***

T: So you keep this flower in (your) bellybutton. You are having it there.

R: ***

T: If you keep this down (moves thumbs part-way back to closed flower bud position, then it becomes sleeping, and it means that you are thinking--thinking of an object.

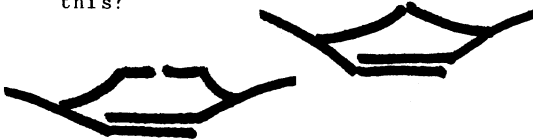
R: ***

T: But you should think this flower--this flower as yourself. This flower is becoming yourself. And start to think that it folds upwards.

R: ***

T: So to new people you should teach them this thing, and also, tell them that you are yourself illuminating like a flower.

Q. Are the thumbs like this, or like this?



R: (demonstrates)



R: ***

T: You should have your hands deep together.

(Roshi, demonstrating, puts his hands together so that the fingertips of his right hand are touching the back of his left hand just beyond the base knuckles of his left fingers.)

T: Much deeper.

R: ***

T: This left thumb lies over on the right thumb. (Puts hands in closed flower bud position again. The left thumbtip lies on top of the right thumbtip.)

R: ***

T: Then they open.

R: ***

T: Bringing the thumbs toward you...

R: ***

T: Some people--in pictures, some people do zazen like this. (Puts hands in open flower bud position, except that the direction of the fingers of one hand cuts across the direction of the fingers of the other hand.)

R: ***

T: This kind of thing is no good. It should be *parallel*. (The lines of the fingers of one hand should be parallel with the lines of the fingers of the other hand.)

R: ***

T: If you are sleepy, then you can become yourself as a bud, so you can put your fingers like this. (Roshi and translator put their hands in a loosely closed flower bud position, and Roshi droops his head down as if sleeping.)

R: ***

T: The flower bud is sleeping, but it is not dead.

R: ***

T: So if you are sleepy and you do meditation, it shouldn't be a dead meditation. It should be a meditating alive--it is merely sleepy.

...(short section of tape unclear)
 T: ...you push a little bit over with the right thumb; you push a little bit on the left thumb. (The thumbs push against each other slightly.)
 R: ***
 T: Are there any other questions?
 Q: Should your thumbs be against your stomach?
 T: ***
 R: ***
 T: Yes.

RINZAI RECORD--cont'd

of realization cannot be expressed in terms, and if you try to demonstrate, you will lose that stage. Rinzai is saying, "If Manjushri and Samanthabhadra never say a word, I ask you this question: In that stage is there any question to ask?" And Rinzai knows-- "Ha--I will pierce his attainment--" If a student came to Rinzai saying, "I understand absolute consciousness," Rinzai would shout, "HAAAA!" It was as if a small tower made by an ant is suddenly crushed by a thunderbolt.

"I would have understood the falseness of their attainment in Dharma." If asked what is absolute consciousness, what would Rinzai say?

Religion of all kinds is to attain something fundamental. You cannot invent anything. We cannot use this for personal ends, but we can safely sit upon it.

There is nothing utilitarian in Oriental religion, but it brings us the real ground of our life. Without it we cannot live.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

TERMS OF THE DHARMA

There is a very short sutra which is just a collection of Buddhistic terms. It is very easy to translate, and I will translate this from beginning to end in three years. I hope you will make notes of my lectures.

This sutra of the collection of the terms of the Dharma mentioned by Buddha is translated by an Indian monk who came into China in a quite early stage of the Chinese Buddhistic period. He translated this sutra by the command of the Emperor of China. There are three kinds of these abridged terminology collections, but this is the shortest. It has the complete collection of Buddhist terms, and I think for beginners it is good enough. The other terms of Buddhism will be mentioned by me when I speak of Mahayana Buddhism.

I bow to all the Buddhas, to all the teachers of Devas, to all those who have complete wisdom. I have abridgingly gathered the terms of the Dharma that were mentioned by the numberless Buddhas of the boundless world. First I bow to the Three Treasures which are called Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. What are the Three Vehicles? They are Mahayana (Bodhisattvayana), Pratyeka-Buddhayana and Shrakayana.

This much for this evening. I shall give a little explanation for this. *I bow to* is *namo*. In Buddhism it always means *I bow in obeisance to Buddha*. *Namo* is one of the important words in Buddhism. It is the same as *namu* in our Japanese chanting of the Three Refuges.

Buddha is a very important term. *Buddha* means *awakened*. So all 'awakened ones' are Buddha. *Bodha* means *to know*. *Bodhi* means *knowing*. Buddha is

an awakened one or a knowing one--one who has "attained complete wisdom," awakened from elemental sleep. Every sentient life is called Buddha. From Buddha's standpoint we are not awakened any more than a tree. Trees have consciousness, but they do not know we are looking at them. So, to Buddha, looking at us--we are like trees, un-awakened.

To all the teachers of Devas. Deva is pure being. He has attained pureness beyond worldly desires. So-called Devas are "pure being"--neither male nor female, they are a-sexual. Devas are living in our body; our thoughts beyond sex are Devas. Our consciousness in eye and ear is Deva and there are many grades of Deva stages. The lowest stages of Deva are purified sexual functions--the functions themselves. The function of the womb, the function of genesis, and so forth, are pure abstracted functions which have nothing to do with human beings or beasts. From such a viewpoint your sex is also a Deva of the lowest heaven.

Touch belongs to the physical body; taste and smell also belong to the physical body. But these eyes and ears--to see and to hear--are of the higher consciousness. Then consciousness is also in thoughts and in all those transcendental conceptions--Dhyana--Zen. Thought, the function of thinking, is Deva.

Buddhas are the teachers of Devas, so: *to all the teachers of Devas* (also human beings), *to all those who have complete wisdom.* Whole wisdom--(sarvajnana). Don't think this is big wisdom; it is small, like a seed. But it comprises all wisdom in it. One who has this is a Buddha. *I have abridgingly gathered the terms of the dharma*

which were mentioned by the numberless Buddhas in the boundless world. Not only the Buddha, but the, *numberless Buddhas.* Literally it means Shakyamuni Buddha, but it is said this way to emphasize.

Then we come to the main terms of tonight. *First I bow to the Three Treasures (Tri-ratna) which are called Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.* Dharma is the teachings or law, and Sangha is the community of monks. This is the trinity of Buddhism. *What are the Three Vehicles?* They are called vehicles because they are to carry you from delusion to enlightenment. In the Sad-dharma Pundarika, the Lotus Sutra, there are three vehicles spoken of: the elephant vehicle, the ox vehicle, and the deer vehicle. *They are Mahayana (Bodhisattvayana), Pratyekabuddhaya, and Shravakayana* (that is, monks who understand and are enlightened by listening to the Buddha's sermon.)

Shravakayana means listening--those who listen to Buddha. Pratyekabuddhaya means "relating to nobody." *Prat* is *relation* and *eka* is one, so it means *relating to himself and to nobody else.* Some English translator translated this "Buddha who is always alone." This translation is not good. Pratyekabud-dhayana is Buddha; it means knower, who has enlightened himself by his own effort, just as we do. We do not listen to anyone; we pass each koan by our own effort. I hope you will do so--please do not talk about it... It is like a baby who cannot stand up--his mother holds his hand and then lets go and he falls flat on the floor. For the first few years, your teacher performs the mother's part. Later you must stand alone. Mahayana is the vehicle for bodhisattvas--but there is a

deeper meaning than this.

Shravakayana is called Hinayanism, observing the 250 commandments, meditating and annihilating all thoughts and desires and attaining Nirvana. Everyone should take that stage first. This is routine Buddhism. We do it on a cushion, but ancient Buddhists did it as their daily life. They throw away house and wife and children and cut off all desire and eat food once a day and speak no word and think nothing and annihilate all mind stuff, then come to original consciousness and annihilate it and attain Nirvana. But this is not all of Buddhism, it is only a part. To annihilate all you have is the point best known and applauded by Westerners, but the mental part is more important. If to annihilate consciousness is Buddhism, why don't you jump off the corner of a cliff and commit suicide and attain Nirvana at once? Don't be foolish. Why should we annihilate consciousness and mind stuff? Because we try to find the truly natural function of our consciousness. If you wear a glove you cannot see your palm. If you work hard and the skin grows thick, you cannot see the grain of your skin. Mind is like this when it works too hard; it cannot see the grain of consciousness. You must observe natural feeling, natural reaction and attain the law of nature. One who attains the law of nature is a Pratyeka Buddha, and one who annihilates mind stuff is a Shravaka. Bodhisattvas are different--they do not spend so much laundry work on consciousness. Shravakas do the laundry work. The Bodhisattva knows actual nature... He will find out that consciousness is originally pure, so he attains sudden enlightenment.

The way of taking Sanzen is Bodhisattvayana. The shovel in the hand coarsens the palm but the hand knows there is fine grain under the thickness. The consciousness may be engaged in whatsoever practice yet the deeps of consciousness *knows*.

There is another practice of Shravakayana; to observe the Four Noble Truths (agony, cause of agony, annihilation of agony, and way to annihilate agony). Pratyekabuddhayana observes the Twelve Consciousnesses, the Twelve Causes, observes that in autumn trees shed leaves and in spring open flowers--and all functions of the body and all activities of the mind. Bodhisattvas practice the Six Paramitas. To attain Buddhahood, Shravakayana, Pratyekabuddhayana, and Bodhisattvayana are the three Yanas and are all Buddhism. I will remark that in the West Buddhism has been introduced, but Western scholars speak only of Shravakayana and nothing else, so they only know one third of Buddhism. Some scholars of today realize that there is this incomplete information.

Reconstructed by Wm.H. McPheters

BOOKS *recently added to our library*
ZEN BUDDHISM, The Japan Times Photo Book, compiled and published by The Japan Times, Ltd. 5-4, Shibaura 4-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106, Japan, 1970, \$7.50. Life of Zen monks--architecture and gardening of Zen temples--Zen paintings and calligraphy--Dogen and his teaching--essays on the spirit of Zen by Sogen Asahina, of Engaku-ji (Rinzai) and Joko Kawaguchi of Ehiji (Soto)--on the Fine Arts of Zen by Naoji Takeuchi, Curator, Tokyo National Museum. Very attractive, good examples of Zen posture.
M. Farkas

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY

BY The First Zen Institute of America, Inc.
113 East 30th Street, New York, N. Y. 10016

Vol. XVIII, No. 6, June, 1971
Mary Farkas, Editor
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