

ZEN NOTES



Rinzai Reed

The Master said to everyone:

Brothers, Buddha-dharma requires no effort; there is nothing further for you to do. You yourself as you are--that is the Buddha-Dharma! I stand or I sit; I dress myself; I eat; I defecate and I urinate; I sleep when I am tired. The ignoramus derides me; the wise man understands. Someone long ago said: "Those who devise ways and means to obtain anything outside this are stubborn idiots."

SOKEI-AN SAYS

When Master Rinzai tells his disciples that Buddha-dharma requires no effort he is speaking about the famous principle of Buddhism--purposelessness. You cannot use Buddhism for any purpose. Of course this is said of those like Rinzai whose understanding was like the Buddha's, but for students whose attainment has not reached such a high level, Buddhism is a wonderful device with which to govern everyday life. Rinzai is speaking from his understanding and his view of Buddhism.

From the viewpoint of Shintoism, you are not living, you are not doing anything. If you think you are living, you are doing something--you profane the power of God. This is also "purposelessness."

In Christianity, "You cannot change the color of your eyes" is the same thing. A pupil of Confucius expressed it, "Pulling them won't lengthen your fingernails."

In Shintoism there are eight million gods and goddesses--all the elements are gods and goddesses; the whole substance of the universe is the body of God. The body of the human being is the shrine of these deities; a city is a place of congregation of gods and goddesses. We cannot see them but

they see us.

A Shinto priest told this story. "One day a pine tree in the garden was drying up and beginning to die. The gardener saw this and dug all around the tree and put fertilizer near the roots. Later he heard the tree talking to another tree, 'Well, somehow I feel pepped up and that I will live for a while more.'" The other tree answered, "My, it is wonderful that we have some strength left in us at our age of a thousand years!" The trees did not know of the gardener as we do not know of the invisible beings guarding us from outside our bodies and giving us thoughts of encouragement. We think such thoughts are coming from inside, but it is not so. The Shinto theory is not so different from other religious teachings.

The whole faith of Buddhism is in the one word--purposelessness. We think we are making ourselves strong, pursuing desire or handling one particular thing tenaciously, but this too is purposeless if we understand the law of the universe that all one does is not one's own work.

Day by day I feel that I am making contact with more people, finding right words to express what I mean. Two such words are distilled and extracted.

We distill alcohol from sugar, extract the perfume from a flower. Animal nature is extracted from the plant; the nature of man is extracted from the animal; the nature of deva is extracted from man. Deva is a purified sentient being.

Our mothers were sewing, cooking, nursing babies, serving their husbands. Each woman did all these things by herself; now these functions are abstracted in the life of a modern woman: food is prepared in a restaurant, the hospital cares for the babies, and so forth, and this will advance further in future. Doctors are becoming specialized: their particular functions are being individualized, distilled. In Buddhism, we could speak of man being deva-lized: once a sentient being in minor development containing male and female in one body, like an amoeba--this body too will be individualized into details in future.

Man thinks all individual powers of nature can be abstracted and controlled; Buddhists think that all particular functions individualize as devas and that these powers control all lesser beings as man controls the vegetable kingdom, the elements, and animals.

Man can be controlled by extracted thoughts, as faith in a religious teaching is controlled by it. This teaching was not made by the human being--it came into his mind and controls him. This is the Buddhist view. Those who believe in Sovietism are changed by it; a muse enters the head of a girl and she becomes a wonderful musician. In this way, elemental thoughts not belonging to the human come into him and control him. The Buddhist monk does not mind preaching to a small

number of people, for he is preaching to the devas--not attaching to the forms of a few human beings, his words will spread all over the world.

If we think of these thoughts coming and going as individual devas, it is as a bird that comes into a forest.

Some great power pushes. If an individual understands, he does not struggle, but those who do not understand must be saved by devices. The Buddha said, "For narrow alleys, you use the goat-cart; you cannot use the great white ox-cart. The deer-cart is used by the Bodhisattva: to save someone lying on the ground, he lies beside him; if someone is drowning, the Bodhisattva enters the water. Buddha's Dharma is the great white ox cart--it is motionless, not going, not saving.

The Buddha said, "It is not necessary to proclaim Nirvana; there is no Nirvana, no sentient being to be saved." That is said from the Buddha's understanding. From that standpoint, Rinzai said "The Buddha-dharma requires no effort."

There is nothing further for you to do. You yourself as you are--that is the Buddha-dharma! You must not misunderstand this. There is nothing further for a bird to do, nothing further for a cat to do. A bird flies in the sky--that is its natural condition. If fastened in a cage, this is not the perfect condition of the bird. When a cat dances, that is not its perfect condition. If any notion bewitches you to keep yourself apart in a mountain, it is not perfect Buddhism. Be as you are, nothing more. This is Rinzai's own standpoint.

I stand or I sit; I dress myself; I eat; I defecate and urinate; I sleep when I am tired. Daily life.

in contrast to the self. Thus I think that even in Christianity it is wrong to try to understand what God is. But we have been raised and educated to understand objects, so we feel that we should understand. We may understand this fact, that we are within God, but this doesn't mean that we have discarded the idea that God is contrasted to our selves. Because of this consciousness which recognized God outside ourselves, in a crisis we ask for outside help, proving that we are still unable to discard this thing called God and this thing called "I"; we are still in this kind of consciousness. We still have the tendency to hold self and God in our consciousness due to our education and custom, but we must try to discard this consciousness which recognizes self and God in order to have a correct understanding of God.

The consciousness which doesn't require recognition of self is the consciousness which doesn't require recognition of God. This type of intellectual function is the function of SUNYATA or MU.

Today's talk began with something terribly difficult to understand, but I think it is a good talk and like it very much. Since going any further might entangle your understanding, I won't continue today.

Very frequently Americans come to learn Zen and tell me that Zen is nothingness. Others come who say that Zen is voidness. But these people consider nothingness or voidness as an object and therefore will never come to an understanding of Zen. These people state that they are with God or are controlled by God's influence, but that is still the belief that God is

an object. The understanding that we are within God is the understanding of our conscious intellect. But the consciousness that realizes that we are within God like a baby in its mother's arms does not arise in our conscious intellect. There are many Christians who advocate that we are within God, but in conversing with them I find that they lack the feeling of being in the arms of their mother so they don't have the security of being with God. For a baby feels this security from the actual experience of being in its mother's arms for a long time; it is the same with God, we can't get the emotional security without the actual experience.

When we are hungry or thirsty, we can eat food or drink water and feel a form of satisfaction or feel at ease in our minds. However, we get hungry or thirsty again. It is only a temporary relief. This is altogether different from our attitude towards religion. When you have truly delved into religion and freed yourself, it is different from the other type of temporary relief. Such mental training by direct experience cannot compare with the offering of prayers in Christianity.

Unless there is actual knowledge and actual experience of being a baby held by its mother, all security will be a crippled security. We must train ourselves to have a balance of intellect, emotion, and will. In Christianity the religious intellect is acquired through the repetition of prayer; in Buddhism it is emphasized that knowledge is experience. First comes the theory, then you have to manifest it. Without performance your knowledge is dead knowledge. I don't know much about

Christianity, but I think that without prayer there would not be Christianity.

Now, when the knowledge is the act we have a polished will power. Because the religious followers of today lack will power they become neurotic, mentally unbalanced. When we have acquired a strong will then we are freed from all bindings, even from God. This is really clear and clean will power.

Now we will come to a conclusion. I always repeat that you are with God and that there is not an instant when you are without God. The fact that we are with God means that we are manifesting the will of God, we are representing God. So, if you cannot manifest yourself as the representative of the will of God, you are not an established Zen student. You may think you are manifesting the will of God when you are driving. Then you wonder, just where is this God? At such a time you are not representing God's will. Now you can begin to understand the reason for Zen practice. When you can manifest God's will in yourself then you don't need to believe in God. When God is out of your mind then you are really with God, but when you think about God you become separated. Only when God is not in your mind are you with God. So, when you pray to ask God's help, you are recognizing the existence of God and you are no longer with God. God has become an object. For this reason, it is false piety to show people how hard you can pray to God. Prayer which professes that you are one with God and which is thankful for this existence is real prayer, and when you are thus united with God, you are free from God.

For example, let us assume that you have burdened yourself with a loan

and must pay back a million yen. Let's suppose that this payment is due on the fifth of next month. You feel that something must be done and wish that someone would lend you this one million yen so that you could repay your debt in time. Our minds are filled with various worries of this type. If someone appears on the scene and offers to give you one million yen to repay that loan, you may think, --Ah, my Buddha or my God has appeared-- and feel completely relaxed. You may think that this good luck has occurred because you believed in your Buddha or your God and thus strengthen your faith. However, true religious thought has nothing to do with this type of thinking.

If you could not raise the one million yen by the fifth of next month, you would have to tell the person from whom you had borrowed the money to take you to court, that this would ruin your reputation or social status, to please take your home or property, and so forth, because you are not able to repay the one million yen loan. This is an altogether different situation from the one I had mentioned earlier when someone comes along and offers to repay the loan.

Let us take another example, that by accident you have run over someone with an automobile. You are indicted and charged with manslaughter and it is proved that you were under the influence of liquor. If you receive the death sentence, you would try very desperately to tell the lawyer that no matter how much it cost he should try to free you from the death penalty. If the sentence were passed and you were scheduled to die on September tenth, how would you feel? What kind

of mind would you have? No matter how much one practices Zen or prays, when one becomes very desperate, maybe nothing can be done. However, if one realizes that it was one's own fault for being under the influence of liquor then it is natural that one should pay with one's life for this accident. If one arrives at this frame of mind there is no fear of death.

Or for instance, if one's wife passes away, or one loses one's lover. One really suffers and would like to regain one's former status. If this continues, one will suffer some form of nervous breakdown.

If one truly understands the conscious effort involved, that activity of one's consciousness, then one should understand that to keep chasing after the affection one has lost, after things that are not real, will lead to some kind of nervous breakdown later on. If one truly realizes the type of consciousness in operation one can truly understand that consciousness.

If one can deny one's (conscious) mechanism of consciousness, one truly arrived at that particular stage that in Buddhism we call MU or KU and in Christianity the true manifestation of God's love. To clarify this point regarding the total denial of one's consciousness, at which stage a new consciousness arrives or occurs, in Buddhism we call this KU and in Zen we call it MU. This is a type of consciousness in which one really understands the "true love of God" of Christianity. In Christianity, the basis of religion would be God; in Buddhism, it is KU or emptiness, and in Zen MU or NO, total denial.

To go further into this subject, the world of God in Christianity, or

the world of emptiness in Buddhism, is a world in which there is no differentiation between subject and object. So, a Christian who has really understood the love of God can himself manifest anew the love of God.

A person who places God opposite himself, let us say in Christianity, to pursue that example, and tries to recognize himself, to place himself on the plane of existence, is creating a polarization. This is not the true form of adoration or understanding, nor the true religious spirit.

The total realization of God, in the case of Christianity or that type of religion, or the total understanding of MU or NO, total denial in Zen, becomes Zen practice. This is the type of training that we offer in Zen, it goes toward that goal. For religious thinking we must pursue a religious type of training. If unreligious thinking enters into one's mind, then one cannot practice Zen.

Today's talk may be boiled down to the fact that our daily livelihood is not an object in contrast to ourself and should be based on serious thoughts such as I have mentioned today.

Thank you very much.

April, 1969. Trans. M. Tsuchiya

BOOKS Recently, we received, with the compliments of the President of its publishers, the Rissho Kosei-kai, Nikkyo Niwano, 2-11-1 Wada, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166, a copy of an English translation of the *Myoho-enge-kyo*, the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law, Tokyo, 1971.

The Saddharma-Pundarika-Sutra, often referred to as the *Lotus Sutra*, is the most famous and popular of all

Mahayana scriptures. No complete English translation of any of its Chinese translations from the original Sanskrit has appeared.

The *Lotus Sutra* (I am quoting R.F. Sasaki's note, *Zen Dust*, p. 390) is the basic text for the Chinese T'ient'ai and Japanese Tendai Sects, and also for the Japanese Nichiren Sect, but the teachings of the scripture have had a profound influence upon all the Pure Land schools and Tibetan Buddhism as well.

This edition was prepared with the help of Dr. Wilhelm Schiffer, director of the International Institute for the Study of Religions, and Dr. Yoshiro Tamura, professor of Toyo University.

The first English translation, the *Preface* tells us, was made from Sanskrit recensions in 1884 by Dr. H. Kern of the Netherlands and published in *The Sacred Books of the East*. An English translation from the Chinese version of Kumarajiva (406 A.D.) was made under the title "The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law," by Mr. Bunno Kato in 1930 and revised by Dr. W.E. Soothill. The manuscript of this translation is kept in the library of Rissho University, Tokyo. (According to R.F. Sasaki, the published edition is a synopsis of the contents of the sutra chapter by chapter, interspersed with translated passages.) The English edition of the Lotus Sutra now published is a further revision of this translation made by Dr. Schiffer.

Until now there were no English translations of the *Muryogi-kyo* (the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings) as the "opening sutra" of the *Hoke-kyo* (the Lotus Sutra) and the *Kanfugen-gyo* (the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisat-

tva Universal-Virtue) as its "closing sutra." However, these two sutras are now being translated by Dr. Tamura and revised by Dr. Schiffer. After finishing the translation of these two sutras, it is planned to publish the English edition of the *Hokke-Sambu-kyo* (the Three Divisions of the Lotus Sutra) as a complete work.

The *Lotus* (from *Zen Dust* again) was presumably composed in North India around the beginning of the Christian era. It seems probable that additions were made to it later, notably (attention: Fem Lib) the story of the Dragon King's daughter who attains Buddhahood in the twinkling of an eye, though not before assuming a male body! R.F. Sasaki notes that this "is perhaps the first time that woman's capacity for Buddhahood is acknowledged, even in this grudging manner."

The radical doctrines proclaimed by the non-historical Great Eternal Buddha from the non-geographical Vulture Peak include the *Ekayana*, the "One Vehicle," the *Buddhayana*, which supersedes all previous expedient means. The buddhas appear in the world, accepting birth-and-death and teaching for limited periods of time, only for the salvation of beings. Actually, however, all are manifestations of the Eternal Buddha, and thus beyond all limitations of time and space. Likewise, every manifested world, every manifested existence, is a flower of the Eternal Lotus. Furthermore, faith in the Eternal Buddha is not only superior to any pious works or practices, but through such faith alone can all men attain Buddhahood and final Nirvana, a Nirvana which is beyond either eternal extinction or eternal existence.

M. Farkas

Lotus Sutra

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