

ZEN notes



Rinzai Reed

It is difficult for students to have faith in this, so they busy themselves with things outside. They may get to something, but it is only words. They fail to grasp the vital point of the Buddha's teaching.

Noble Zen students, do not be mistaken! Unless you come to it in this life, you will transmigrate through the three worlds, during kalpas of time and innumerable lives. Clinging to circumstances, you will be born in the bosom of an ass or a cow.

SOKEI-AN SAYS In Rinzai's time, there was an artist in China who painted horses marvelously. Zen Master Shu said to him: "You will be born in the bosom of a horse. Your face already resembles a horse and your manner also." The painter changed his subject--to Avalokiteshvara.

At the same time, there was a poet who made wonderful poems, sort of erotic love songs. These poems were so bewitching that they influenced people to take up the romantic life. Zen Master Shu said to him: "You must stop making such enchanting love-songs." The poet answered, "So you think I also will be born in the bosom of a horse?" The Master said, "You will be born in the mind of a flea."

Of course the "cow" or "ass" mentioned by Rinzai is not an actual place but the mind of man.

We transmigrate through the six labyrinthine ways, that is, the way of inferno, the demoniac, the way of hungry spirits, of angry spirits, of animals, of men, and of devas. We go along according to the circumstances with which we are stitched together, for if we are not free from the outside,

not emancipated from attachment, we get carried away with our circumstances just as a small boat is carried along with the waves and broken on the rocks.

I am always repeating that the outside is not really existing, that our desire comes from ignorance, attachment to circumstances. Ordinarily, we are just carried along, but if we know this is phenomena, if we have proved the stage of non-existence, we can be free from these surroundings. When what ropes us to phenomena is cut, we are freed from bondage. Whatever we wish to "take" is our own choice, to attach or not to attach is our own choice. In this way, we are not carried by karma; we are the masters of karma, not its slaves. This is the emancipation taught by the Buddha.

Unless you come to it in this life: Come to what? Meet what? Meet the vital point--that Buddha in yourself.

A Zen master every morning called to himself, "Master!" and answered himself, "Yes."

One of his disciples had been with him for ten years. When the Master called "Master," one morning, he an-

swered "Yes." The Master said, "But you are my disciple" and hit him with his stick. The disciple grasped the stick and pushed the Master back, making him drop from his chair. It looks wild, but the truth of the universe must be handled vividly.

Unless you come to it in this life you will transmigrate through the three worlds, through kalpas of time and innumerable lives. Carried along by the karma you made in the past, you will make karma in your own mind, not outside. With it you will go through the three stages of existence: kama-dhatu, the world of desire, rupadhatu, the world of form, and arupadhatu, the world of non-form.

If you attain the highest understanding, if you destroy the stage of arupadhatu, and attain the stage above this notion of nothingness, you can come into any stage as you wish. In arupadhatu, you think that you are in the non-seeming stage, but this is big ego, and you will still receive karma. Arupadhatu is not the highest stage.

There is a koan: The tea-dipper goes into burning water and into icy water, but feels no pain because it has no soul (no ego). In this koan you have to prove *why* the dipper has no soul (the dipper is yourself). The tea-dipper does not go through the three stages, is never born in the bosom of anything.

Rinzai pointed out that "It is hard for the student to have faith in this," for it means that one must prove the Buddha in one's self. Everyone listening to the lecture is the Buddha, but not all students can believe it. They are seeking the truth externally, in books, in others' teachings, in superstitions. These are noth-

ing but words, ideas, notions. When the words change, their conceptions change with them. This is not Real Understanding: this is not the vital point of Buddhism.

The vital point of the Buddha's teaching is the Middle Way.

A Brahmin came to the Buddha and said, "Without speaking, without remaining silent, please express your attainment."

This question is something like a two-fold door, isn't it?"

The Buddha answered by keeping himself in QUIETUDE. That was all, but it was as if he broke open the two-fold doors with his feet--Bang!--crushing the two-fold doors and throwing them away.

This moment of QUIETUDE has great significance. The Buddha did not fall into silence, nor into speaking, neither into the negative nor the positive.

Bodhidharma's vital point is: "Without using words, I point out the soul of man directly--it is not necessary to talk about it."

There is a koan: The Second Patriarch came to see Bodhidharma and said, "My soul is not yet relaxed--please make my soul relax."

Bodhidharma said, "Where is your soul? Show it to me--quick, quick!"

This shows Bodhidharma's vital point.

Ma-tsu said, "Mind is Buddha." Later he said, "It is neither mind nor Buddha." He kicked down both doors, threw everything away. He shows us fathomless Nirvana directly; it is as though we break through the blue and see the sky above the blue.

The belief in transmigration was in existence before the time of the Buddha. He took this hypothesis into

Buddhism and used it as a tool to make one wake up from illusion and come to Real Understanding. Knowing the real point of Buddhism, the Buddha never believed the hypothesis of transmigration.

If you do not grasp the Buddha's point, you are transmigrating every moment. You never find yourself, never come back to yourself. In Buddhism, you do not try to be wise. Buddhism is not a theory to make you wise; it is a religion which makes you very plain and pure. A Zen master once said, "To become wise is easy, but to become an idiot is hard." Confucius said, "The great man looks like an idiot. I have met wise men but they are not so great as the idiot." Of course a common, garden variety idiot is nothing. The soul of a great idiot must look something like a huge stone top. A top made of wood is not great enough to be compared to the heart of an idiot--it is not a great enough symbol for it.

The soul of Bodhidharma is like an iron ox. This is a famous koan--you have to realize why. These higher koans are always pointing to fathomless Nirvana. As Ma-tsu said: "It is neither mind nor Buddha." It is difficult for students to realize this.

MUMONKAN 24 AS VARIOUSLY TRANSLATED

SENZAKI A monk asked Futetsu: "Without speaking, without silence, how can you express the truth?"

BLYTH A monk asked Futetsu: "Both speech and silence transgress, how can we not do so?"

MIURA AND SASAKI: A monk once said to Futetsu Osho: "Speech and silence tend toward separation (from IT) or concealment (of IT). How shall we proceed so as not to violate IT?"

MA-TSU TAO-I (Baso Doitsu) 709-788

He was the disciple of the Sixth Patriarch's disciple. "His appearance was remarkable. He strode along like an ox and looked about him like a tiger." He was the first to roar the "Katsu!", later made famous by Rin-zai. He strongly opposed purely passive meditation and emphasized the enlightenment that can express itself in walking or standing, sitting or lying.

The *Mumonkan* koan collection includes his two famous answers regarding Buddha and the mind:

This very mind, this is Buddha. (30)

Neither mind nor Buddha. (33)

In the *Keitoku dento roku*, Bk. VI, he is quoted:

There is no Buddha other than mind,

There is no mind other than Buddha;

Do not embrace good,

Do not spurn evil;

As for the two extremes, purity and defilement,

When you depend upon neither

You come to know the emptiness of the nature of sin;

You cannot catch the moments of mind

Because there is no self-nature.

Therefore the Three Realms are only mind;

The universe and all existences in it

Bear the seal of One Dharma.

From *The Development of Chinese Zen* by Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J., and R.F. Sasaki

THE FOUR INVERTED VIEWS

SOKEI-AN SAYS--There are many systems of Buddhism that are contrivances to enter it. If you want to climb Mount Shasta, Mount Rainier, or Mount Baker, you must take a guide. The systems of Buddhism also are guides; following them, you can enter Buddhism. Some think that the terms themselves are Buddhism. This is like thinking that mountain guides are the mountain. I hope you will not make such a mistake. If you think studying the terms of Buddhism is Buddhism itself, you are as foolish as if you think the mountain guide is the mountain, or, if you enter a restaurant, look at the menu, and say you enjoyed the dinner even though you ate nothing.

The main causes of the delusion of the ordinary man are said to be four, referred to as the four inverted views. The Buddha stressed that this inversion must be corrected.

- 1 Mutability, changeableness (as opposed to changelessness, *anitya*).

- 2 Tranquillity or comfort that provides ease, relief (*sukha*).

- 3 Purity or pureness.

- 4 Separate ego (*atma*, as against egolessness, *anatman*).

These four terms are explained in many different ways.

- 1 Everyone tries to attain something that is unchangeable even though all is change.

- 2 Everyone tries to find comfort while all is agony.

- 3 Everyone tries to find purity in a world where no such quality exists.

- 4 Everyone believes "Here is my own particular, separate soul," while all souls are united.

The ordinary man cannot help struggling; these four inversions make it clear that it is his thinking that causes the trouble.

- 1 You wish that your father and mother might live forever; you wish that you might keep your possessions forever; you wish that you yourself might live forever--while the fact is that you are dying every moment.

In the Buddha's time, the ordinary man believed the earth to be unchanging, existing forever, but the earth is like a cloud in the sky. If man could live ten thousand years, he would see that the surface of the earth is always shifting; the mountain, once the sea, becomes the desert. No one today believes the earth to be unchanging. All is transient. We must realize this or suffer needlessly. "Yes," you say, "Today my face is smooth as velvet, tomorrow it will be like tree-brush, but I do not suffer because I know everything is transitory." Yet, as the Buddha said, "All sentient beings strive to attain eternity in this mutability." Why?

- 2 Life is agony. In agony, all try to find comfort. In summer, we go to the state of Maine; in winter we go to Florida. We move back and forth all year long trying to make ourselves comfortable.

Though our lives are busy, we are always frantically seeking tranquillity. "Well, in my old age I will have time to become calm and to read all the philosophies."

A long time ago I met the wife of the manager of the Hotel Astor. She showed me books of profound philosophy written in French and German. "As soon as I find time," she told me, "I'm going to read all these

books." My friend, Mr. Miya, met her when she was sixty; she was still too busy to find a moment for study.

Someone says he wants to become a monk, but first he must study religion. It is as though someone who wanted to mount a horse first began a study of the horse and continued it his whole life. Another saves money to make his old age easy, but cannot enjoy himself.

It is true that our world is busy and restless, that all is agony. The Buddha said clearly, "Life is agony." We know this, but we cannot decide that it is so.

The "struggle for existence" is strictly a Western idea. When I was a child in the Orient, I did not realize there was such a thing as the "struggle for existence." When one is striving, of course life is agony. I have this body--there is scarcely a day something isn't wrong with it somewhere: today it's a headache, tomorrow I have a stomachache. Look at the world! Throughout history all cry "Peace, peace!" but there is no peace. Human history is nothing but fighting. We had better accept it that life is agony.

In this agony, a man tries to find tranquillity--"Oh, there is no rest in the city; I will go to the mountains." Once there, he runs to find a telephone so he can keep in contact with his business. One man went to the hot springs with a telephone in each hand.

In Japan, you can go to a mountain temple for a rest. But there, at five-thirty in the morning, all the monks begin to chant the sutras; the gong strikes--it's not quiet at all! You leave the temple, go to a cave--water

drips, drips, drips--you can't stand it. Where is quietude?

Once I went to the Mohave Desert. It was really quiet there, but it was so quiet that I could hear my heart thumping. I was quite astonished at its noisiness in that silence.

The Buddha said, "In noise, find quiet!"

The idea that you can find quiet in some place is an inverted view. Now you decide, "No matter how noisy it is, I will be tranquil. I will find tranquillity here in the city." And you attach to this *idea*. But when the organ-grinder comes, you can't stand it and have to throw him money to go away. This kind of tranquillity is just an idea. We also have the idea that mutability is here, eternity there.

Even in the last extremity, there is a struggle. "My soul is eternal," one cries. "There is no death." He is still struggling with this idea when the great surge of death comes to wash him away from the surface of the earth.

The Buddha did not condemn the ordinary man's inverted idea, but blamed his attitude toward it. When the time comes, one must drop the idea.

But we add to our agony. "This is my last penny; I am hungry, but I must hold on to my last penny. Twenty years ago, I decided to keep this last penny, so I won't ever be penniless."

When I came to America, my teacher gave me ten dollars in gold, saying: "This is for an emergency. Use it only at the last moment." I said "Thank you very much" and used it when I first arrived. The last moment came very quickly!

3 The third inverted view of the

ordinary man concerns purity. Purity is an idea. "All is impure, disgusting. I will go to the mountaintop, become a monk and associate with no one." But there the monks are fighting, too, because they are jealous of one another. "I'll stay away from women, I won't even look at their faces," he vows. It is his mind that is impure. He does not understand real purity.

4 The fourth inverted view is the idea of the separate ego. "I must be president." To become president, he must struggle. A son says "Let me do it, father." But father replies, "No, son, I must do that myself. Only I can do it." The father must run the whole show by himself. The world is relative, but the ordinary man clings to his I-ness.

These are the four inverted views of the unenlightened person.

There is another group of four inverted views held by shravakas and pratyeka-buddhas, who, though they may have attained enlightenment, still hold inverted views. This is an important point. We call someone who has attained Reality enlightened, but he may still hold the false view of mutability. Because of this, even though he has attained Reality, he lives in fear and dares not manifest himself in the world.

When you pass the first koan, "Before father and mother, who were you?" you attain Reality. You realize Nirvana, but you may still think that all is mutable and therefore valueless. If you realize that life is eternal, that *this* is Reality, why disvalue this life? The one who holds this view wants to stay in that monotonous oneness aspect forever because his en-

lightenment is not yet complete. "When the candle-flame is blown out, where does it go?" He answers, "Darkness is its own original aspect." This view is erroneous. Darkness! He thinks that monotonous oneness is the true aspect, that phenomena is a wrong aspect. This is the first inverted view of the pratyeka-buddha, who has no courage to affirm this phenomenal existence.

"The tea-dipper goes from freezing hell to the boiling hot hell, but it has no soul and therefore feels no pain." If you stick to oneness, you think the Real does not exist in this world; you think Reality exists only in *that* world. This is not the true view.

In the koan, "Stop the gong of the faraway temple," you take eternal silence as the Real and forget that the eternal gong, from beginning to end, is vibrating through the universe, gong-ong-ong. You do not hear it, so you think that silence is the Real. When you observe another koan, "Stop the sailing-boat on the faraway sea," you become still, thinking stillness is essential existence. That is your notion. The universal sailboat always moves, though you do not see this. When one attains true Reality, one realizes that stillness is just an idea, and so is a wrong view. This is the second inverted view of the pratyeka-buddha.

You think that you have to run away from this agony, but if you really attain Nirvana, really understand the Dharmakaya, where is the agony? The body aches. Where is the pain? In the last moment, in the pang of death, where is the agony? You cannot find it if you have really attained Nirvana. Flowing from that Nirvana, where are

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the impurities of this life? There are the waves of the natural current of course. You must understand its law, then let your life flow with the current.

In Buddhism, there is no ego, but when you attain Nirvana, *that* is the ego. We say: "This is not *I*, but Buddha." Of course we do not mean Shakya-muni Buddha.

Up to this point, the enlightened one's attainment is idea, theory. He must grasp this bunch of notions and throw it away. Then he can really attain true Nirvana.

From the Buddha's real view, both the ordinary man and the "holy man" may have inverted views.

When you take sanzen, if you answer from the inverted view, the teacher will never agree with your answer. The Buddha gave this teaching in order to destroy the ordinary man's notions and to give him an idea of what Buddhism is. To attain real Nirvana, one must first destroy the false view. If you come to the teacher, sit there and say, "There is nothing to say; there is no answer," this negative attitude is still an idea, still the holding of an hypothesis, so the teacher will never accept such an answer to a koan. To enter Nirvana is not so easy. To correct an inverted view is easy, but to throw away this *idea* of immutability, tranquillity, purity, and non-ego is difficult. When you give up the second group of inverted views, you really attain.

FIRST KOAN I entered the monastery in my twentieth year, and was given a koan by my teacher Shaku Sokatsu, a disciple of Shaku Soyen, in February.

My first koan was: "Before father and mother, what were you?"

I struggled hard, gave an answer every morning, but my teacher rang me out.

At last, I had no more to say. Then my teacher said: "Before father and mother, there was no word. *Show me that word!* I could not answer.

Near the monastery, there was a lake (Shinobazu) which took about one hour to talk around. On one freezing night, I went around and around until the break of dawn. I was going around for the third time, I think, when I paused, exhausted and absent-minded. Suddenly my heart whispered, "This SILENCE is your answer--enter the SILENCE!"

I stood still, fearing to think--then I annihilated all words--and stepped into the SILENCE!

Sitting before my teacher--he said: "Penetrate that SILENCE!"--and rang the bell. But I knew that he had recognized my SILENCE and accepted my answer!" As a man digs and finds wet sand."

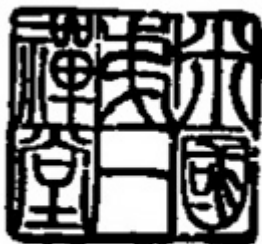
SOOTHILL SAYS Shravaka means a disciple, a hearer, the lowest degree of saintship. Pratyeka-buddha is one who lives in seclusion and obtains emancipation for himself alone. This is the second degree of saintship.

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