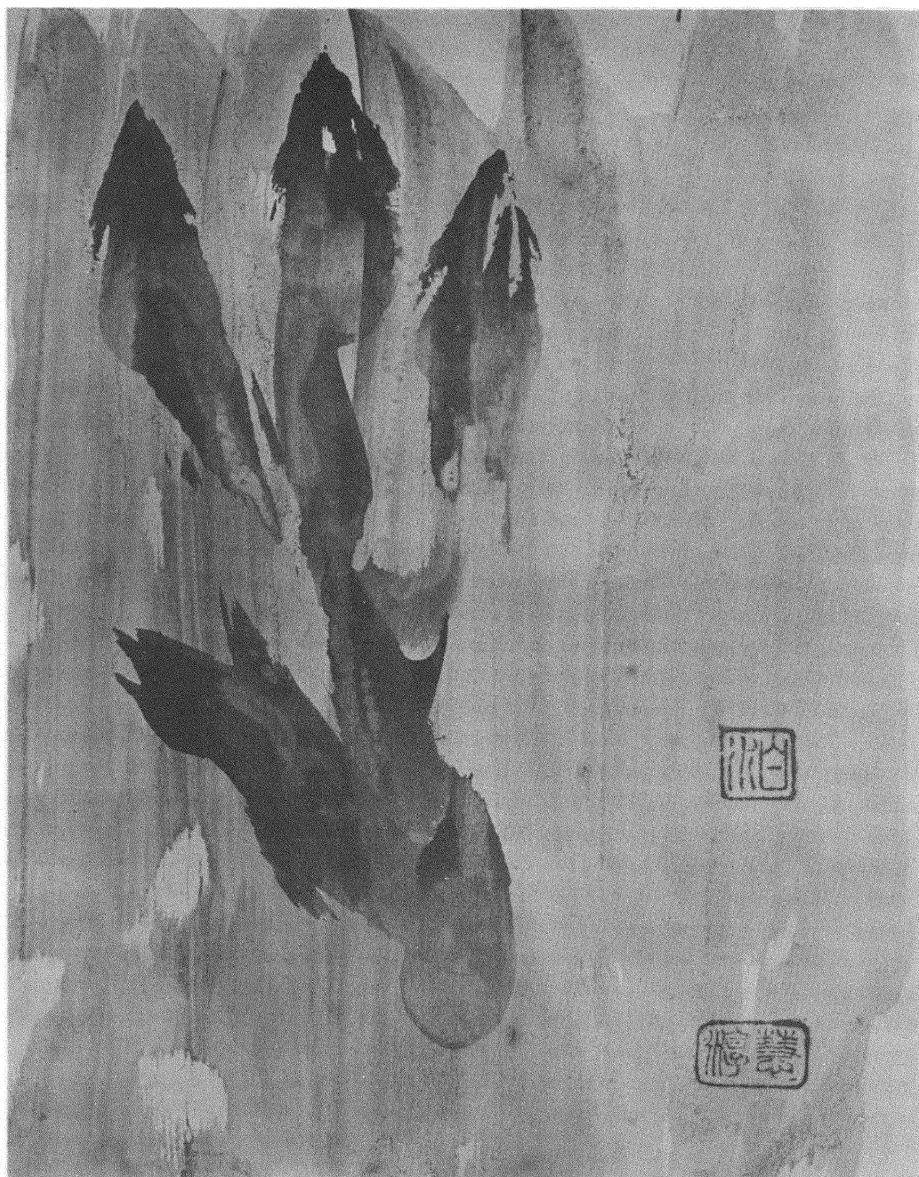


# ZEN notes



# Rinzai Reed

*Brothers, when the Dharma is condensed into what I comprehend, it is no different from Shakya's. Is there anything you lack that you need to perform all your present functions? The light of your sixfold divine way has never ceased to shine. Once you have understood, you need seek no further. Good brothers, the three worlds are like a house afire, no place to stay. The demon of death, the hand of mutability, does not, for one moment, discriminate between rich and poor, old and young.*

SOKEI-AN SAYS Rinzai emphasizes the Buddha in oneself, that is, the personal Buddha. When you realize the Buddha nature in yourself, you are Buddha. Therefore it is not necessary to seek Buddha outside.

We have heard of modern students of Buddhism who try to recompose the Buddha's own Buddhism, the teaching that came from the Buddha's golden lips. Students of today imagine that the Buddha's Buddhism might be described somewhere in the sutras, abhidharma, or vinaya (the three baskets). Of course his words can be searched out through comparative study of the records in various languages, but there is a shortcut to know what the Buddha really taught. Instead of looking through the sutras for it, you can look for it in your own soul. The Buddha found his religion in his own soul. We are the same human being as he. If we dig down deep into our own hearts, we will find the same religion as the Buddha found in his. This is the particular point that Rinzai emphasizes.

Here Rinzai is comparing his Understanding with the Buddha's. "There is no difference," he says. From this point of view, he does not refer to

the Buddha as Lokanatha or Tathagata, but as Shakya, a man of the same rank as his own.

Rinzai especially studied the *Avatamsaka-sutra* (*Kegon*), the greatest Buddhist sutra, which embraces almost all the religions of the world--religion based upon wisdom, upon love, upon willpower, upon all the elements we human beings have. (We cannot make religions from elements we do not have such as the psychology of the tiger or monkey.) Human faith is always based on the intrinsic elements of the human being.

In the *Avatamsaka-sutra* a little novice visits the representatives of the various viewpoints, one by one. In all, fifty-three different views are allegorized and dramatized in the visits to ascetics, monks in caves, teachers in cities, and even a beautiful woman of the world before he comes in the end to Maitreya, the god of love.

Rinzai was a very devoted student of the *Kegon* school (which had five or six monasteries where the monks studied this sutra) so his teaching shows its influence, but finally he gave up studying Buddhism from the sutras and tried to find out the truth from his own soul as the Buddha did

under the Bodhi tree.

When he said, "*Having condensed the Dharma into what I comprehend, it is no different from Shakyas's*," he pointed out that if you meditate upon your own soul and open your eye to Reality, the vital point will be no different from Shakyas's. It is not necessary to call it Buddhism.

*Is there anything you lack that you need to perform all your present functions?* A table has legs, a snake has none. If a snake had legs, they would be a nuisance to him. We have everything we need to perform our daily functions. More would be a nuisance.

*The light of your six-fold divine way has never ceased to shine.* The six-fold elemental power in the universe is meant. To perceive, we human beings have a six-fold function. If ours were an eight-fold universal existence, we would have an eight-fold function.

With our six senses, we observe different universes. We sense color and form with the eyes, sound with the ears, odor with the nose, taste with the tongue, touch with the skin, Dharma with the consciousness, and that is all. Can you imagine anything that is not observable with one of these senses? If we had different eyes, maybe we would see something that is not color or form, but it is impossible for us to imagine it.

The root of the five senses is this consciousness. To this consciousness, the whole universe is One--Dharma. The philosophers call it noumenon--Reality. Of course this is a metaphysical conception. This (holding up a box) is phenomenon, but if we hide it away and say "box", this is not

phenomenon, but a conception.

The five senses create the physical base but do not function as perception; there is another function called perception. So altogether there are six senses. These days scientists are trying to find more, but so far they have not been successful.

*Is there anything you lack that you need to perform all your present functions?* According to the Buddha's teaching, all the intrinsic functions of the human body are very important. He taught us about the three diseases: ignorance, passion, and anger. To cure these three sicknesses, we need not seek remedies outside. For ignorance, the remedy is to educate ourselves, to open the inner eye with which we can see the Reality of the universe. At seventeen or eighteen we open a doubtful eye: Why do we live, where do we come from, where do we go? What is our relation to father and mother? Were we here before? After death is there nothing? We peer into books or go to a teacher. We are like animals searching for water. For everyone it is the same. If we have no such period of seeking to understand these great questions I should say that we are sleeping.

This questioning comes to every young man's eye even before he opens it to his own sex. Sex, like a flower, will come later but first a leaf appears--it is this questioning of everything. This is wisdom curing ignorance.

We have the power of controlling. It is not necessary to take a vow to keep the commandments--all commandment is written in us.

We have tranquillity with which to cure anger.

There are the four inversions: wrong observation of the universe, thinking it is eternal; thinking life is a joy; believing in ego; thinking this existence of desire is pure. The Buddha pointed out that all our conceptions about the world are inverted. To cure these, we practice the four stages of meditation. These four stages are written within you, ascending to the opening of the universal eye.

The Buddha's Dharma is written in your own heart, so to understand Buddhism it is not necessary to search outside--all is within.

*The light of your six-fold divine way has never ceased to shine. Once you have Understood, you need seek no further.*

*Good brothers, the three worlds are like a house afire, no place to stay.* The three worlds is the most famous theory of Buddhism. The three worlds are kamadhatu, the world of desire, rupadhatu, the world of form, and arupa-dhatu, the world of non-form.

The Buddha's Buddhism is comprised in these three viewpoints.

In the world of desire, kamadhatu, we are pursuing something from morning to evening. Our viewpoint is not right. We have to separate our view from our desire, look at everything with a cool mind, as an artist looking at a field observes the green grass and the blue sky, while a farmer, looking at the same field, observes it with desire.

When you look at a beautiful goddess carved in marble, from the view of rupadhatu, it is just beauty you see. Standing upon the elemental stage, there is no dust, no marble, nothing to be observed by the five senses.

Perhaps you cannot conceive of that stage, but it exists; you cannot deny the noumenal stage. In this stage we see by our wisdom; in arupa-dhatu one observation is the truth. In the stage of rupa-dhatu, we discriminate between beautiful and ugly.

Rinzai said: "The three worlds are like a house afire." If, in meditation, you attach to rupa or to arupa--you are still in kama-dhatu. Do not be deceived by theory!

In arupa-dhatu, all is pure existence--no pure or impure--all life is real manifestation; you have no right to say good or bad. To *live*, you must know this existence of non-seeming. It is necessary once in your life to separate from the phenomenal and come upon the noumenal understanding. The stage between, rupa-dhatu, has to be practiced too.

*No place to stay:* Well, where shall I go? The four inverted views are four fires and there are eight agonies. The Buddha said we must give up all theories and conceptions, and observe the universe from our own heart. This is emancipation from names and conceptions.

In the sanzen room, if you understand the real existence of the universe, you can take the Himalaya Mountains out of the incense-box, pass through the keyhole, and so forth.

*For one moment:* In one moment there are nine ksanas and in one ksana the sentient being reincarnates nine hundred times. We think we are living now. We think we are not dead, but in one ksana we repeat life-and-death nine hundred times, and that ksana is not different from our fifty years and nine hundred lives are not different from one ksana.

# the zen

THE BEGGAR

*Thus I have heard:* The Buddhist sutras always begin with these words, in Sanskrit *evam maya srutam*. Once Bhagavant was sojourning in the Jetavana Anathapindikarama in Shravasti. Wearing the robe and holding the bowl, Lokanatha entered the city of Shravasti early one morning and asked for alms.

Asking for alms, begging food from door to door, was an ordinary custom of the India of that day. Today professors in universities receive a salary from the city or the state; but in those days scholars gave their teaching on street corners. Children of good families followed them from corner to corner, listening.

In the India of those days the old father who gave his fortune to his son and married him to a bride left his home and strayed away, begging his food from door to door, never returning home. Of course many young men renounced their homes and joined these mendicants, not for idleness but for instruction, as young men today go to school, not helping their fathers' business until they are completely educated.

This custom still exists in India. When Japanese monks go there, even though they are foreigners, they too beg. When Hindus and Chinese come to Japan, they do the same. In America, you can see Catholic nuns going from door to door begging in offices. It is the same tradition.

*Wearing the robe:* The robe is the one worn since the Buddha's day until now, with a few details developed in China.

*Holding the bowl, Lokanatha:* Loka means "world"; natha means "revered." Here the meaning is: "Buddha is the only one to be revered in the world."

*Early one morning and asked for alms:* Monks get up about half-past five in the morning, sweep the gardens where they are sojourning, wash their faces and then recite the sutras on the Buddha's teachings. Then they put on their robes, covering the backs of their hands and legs with cloth. Bare-foot, one by one, they go out from the temple into the city. Ten monks go to the central street; ten go to side-streets; they divide and stand before the doors of lay-families, begging for food in silence. When the lay-people give the monk food, he spreads his *ni-shidana* upon the ground, seats himself upon it, and, without making any sound, eats the food. Then he asks for water to wash the bowl. Fastening the bowl to his front, he returns to the temple and washes his hands and feet before beginning his daily practice.

In the Buddha's time, every fifteenth day, on full moon night, all the monks gathered together in one place surrounding the master and confessed. Something like this custom still prevails in the Orient.

*He saw a strange Brahman of a ripe old age begging food from door to door, holding a bowl and leaning on a staff.* A strange Brahman: The Brahmins who were living in a particular city, village or town were not called "strange Brahmins." A "strange Brahmin" is a stranger to that particular place, not necessarily a queer or grotesque Brahmin, but a stranger to the place. "Look at that Brahmin! Who is he? Where did he come from? We don't know him."

The Brahman is the highest caste in India. Priests are high caste. Kings are in the second caste. The Buddha was born the son of a king. So his position was slightly lower than that of a Brahman who, even though he begged food from door to door, was the aristocrat of that period.

*Of a ripe old age:* His back was bent like a bow, his whiskers were white, he was leaning on his staff.

*Seeing the Buddha in the distance, the Brahman thought:* "Holding a bowl and carrying a staff, Sramana Gautama is begging food from door to door just as I am." He renounced the world to become a monk; he is begging food from door to door; he left his country, left his father who was a king, to become a mendicant. I heard that a long time ago. Now I see him.

Of course the Buddha was not alone; he was always attended by ten or fifteen monks. Although the exact period of his meeting this Brahman is not known, from the sound of this gatha we think he was not very old. He left home at thirty years of age; he attained the highest enlightenment at thirty-six. He first went to Shravasti at about fifty and died at eighty. As he went to Shravasti many times, the exact date of this sutra is not fixed by the fact that it was at this place.

Then I am also a Bhikshu. Homeless mendicants were called Sramanas. Bhikshu means "beggar." But this Bhikshu is different from a mere beggar who begs food from door to door. India was the country of beggars and still is, but these "beggars" are different from those who are beggars just because they don't want to work or are idlers.

The Buddha realized the Brahman's mind. *Knowing what thought the Brahman was cherishing, the Buddha recited the following gatha:* In another translation of the Samyukta Agama it is written that the Brahman said to the Buddha, "You are not different from me. You call yourself a Bhikshu, why cannot I call myself a Bhikshu?"

Those ancient attitudes of accosting people were very beautiful. Those who met on the street did not immediately get into furious argument, but recited a poem, not muttering, but reciting in a formal way. Sometimes we meet a teacher whom we worship, though we have had no opportunity to confront him. When we encounter him by chance, it is too precious an opportunity to lose to talk to him, so we address him. In such a case, we speak to him in a poetic way, making a poem. Then he answers in a poem also. Of course these poems must be spontaneously made; so one must receive training to make poems spontaneously. We cannot steal a poem at such a moment. If the master thought the student had used someone else's poem, he would be furious. It must be the person's own poem, even if it is poor; I wish that fashion could be preserved. The monks haven't a cent in their pockets, are always starving, but never regret spending the time practicing the making of poems spontaneously. Men must have some time to enjoy themselves, and not think about making money all the time.

*You cannot call yourself a Bhikshu merely because of your begging alms.* I avoided trying to put these lines into the form of poetry. I am a foreigner and I have not sufficient knowledge of English to write poetry. It

is your work, when you re-translate my translation into your mother-tongue, to put it into beautiful rhythm. In Chinese this is not a poem, it is merely metrical.

*How can you call yourself a Bhikshu while you are living after the fashion of the folk who are in the home?* The home-dwellers and the homeless monks have a different attitude toward life. Their principles of life are different. Monks do not believe in the struggle of life--killing, stealing, telling lies to each other and trying to be superior to their brothers and sisters. Monks abandon that life and go away from home. His mother, his sister may pursue him: "Oh, my dear child, you will be starved to death immediately! Carry this bread with you, carry this dry rice with you! I shall always worry about you. You are different from your elder brother. You are always thinking about what this world is about. I don't blame you. Go away and think deeply and try to understand all the mystery of life. If no one gives you any food what will you do?" The son says, "I will starve."

The monk is not a mere beggar. He must have a philosophy. These days there are monks who have no philosophy. They are really beggars. The monk must know the Reality of the Universe, Nature and Man. To attain that knowledge he left home. Partaking of daily life he would not succeed in penetrating to that knowledge, the mysterious secret of the world. Therefore he left home. Lay-folk cannot penetrate to the mysteries of the world.

*How can you call yourself a Bhikshu while you are living after the fashion of the folk who are in the home?* "Well, I have a chauffeur." "I need food and

my wife is with child." "I must build a house...." "My husband wishes a big office in the State Department!"

*Only he who has disengaged himself from accumulating either merit or fault.* This is very important, but I have no time to explain. In one word, monks do not care about accumulating either good or bad. Queer, isn't it? You understand "Don't accumulate bad karma" but you will be puzzled to understand "Don't accumulate karma either good or bad." There is a reason. Someday I shall explain.

*Who has practiced right conduct:* What is right conduct? Can you practice your conduct disengaging yourself from accumulating either merit or fault? Very hard to understand what is right conduct. I am very thirsty, but I don't want to drink water. This isn't right conduct. I am very thirsty, therefore I drink water, not only one glass, but four or five glasses; not only water but a little ginger-ale, and little pieces of ice, and some gin. We don't call this right conduct. Right conduct is that when you are thirsty you drink water.

*And has no fear of any kind in his mind.* Hard, isn't it? The Buddha says before the multitude that he has attained the highest wisdom and he feels no fear saying this. If you were to go to Columbus Circle and get on a soap-box and cry out: "Now look at me!" and someone would say: "Oh, yeah!" you would feel fear immediately.

The Buddha said, "I have experienced the state of Nirvana." No one could say a word against him and he felt no fear. Among the multitude the Buddha said: "My conduct is perfect." And he felt no uneasy conscience; his conscience gave him not the slightest

pang. Can you imagine yourself going to the synagogue or church, standing at the altar, beating your breast and saying, "Sisters, brothers, ladies and gentlemen, my conduct is perfect?" I think not.

*May call himself a Bhikshu.* To attain this fearlessness you must penetrate the law of the universe, nature and man. Then you know you are right, and whatever criticism anyone may give you, you know he is wrong. It is very hard to attain this knowledge.

**PRAJNA** Among the ranks of consciousness, prajna is the highest. With it, you can see Nirvana.

Isn't it strange that you cannot see Nirvana with this eye consciousness or this ear consciousness, with thoughts, philosophy or logic? Nor can you see Nirvana with feeling or belief or dream, or with sleeping alaya consciousness; it can be seen only with awaking prajna consciousness. When you really find prajna, your study of Buddhism is over.

Man innately possesses that nature as ivy innately possesses the nature to stretch its tendrils toward the light. But most men do not care about their awakening. They are busy pursuing money, women, or something. Perhaps they have never heard that they could awaken. Even if they have some question in their minds, they do not know what it is nor what to do. If you are honest, you cannot do something you do not understand.

Buddhism can give you the knowledge

of what this is. Christianity is a religion that always tells you what to do--"Do this, do that--save your neighbor, change a bad situation into a good one." Christians never stop doing--with them it is always do, do, do. The Buddhist takes a different attitude. "What is this gong?" he asks. What is this self? What is this heaven? If you understand what this is, then you will understand what to do. A stranger comes to New York and wants to go somewhere on Lexington Avenue. So he buys a map and there is a summary of New York: there is Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue, Park Avenue, and Lexington--Ah!--he knows and goes there. It is not necessary to ask what to do. Know what this is and what to do comes to mind naturally. Men are very careless about knowing--sometimes they do not care to know. They are so muffled with delusion that they do not realize the Wisdom of awakening that is within them.

If you come to a Zen temple and give away that speaking mind, sit in profound SILENCE--suddenly on a sharp pinpoint--you will find the whole universe within yourself.

All other teachings, all those explanations, just give you more words, more to think about and to explain.

The Zen master takes a different attitude. Zen strips you of everything: all preconceived notions, all words, all that you have studied. Then you find yourself. Suddenly, you realize--"Ah, this is IT!" You don't take a dramatic attitude--just a quiet "Ah, this is IT!" But you need guidance from one who has experienced it. For this you really need a teacher, to receive what has been handed down from generation to generation.

*zen notes*

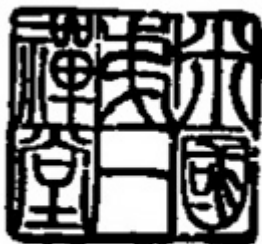
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