The Sayings of Master Rinzai (A Selection)

TRANS: D.T. Suzuki

Those of you who wish to discipline themselves in the Buddha's Dharma must seek true understanding. When this understanding is attained you will not be defiled by birth and death. Whether walking or standing still, you will be your own master. Even when you are not trying to achieve something extraordinary, it will come to you all by itself.

O Followers of the Way, from olden times each of my predecessors had his own way of training his disciples. As to my way of leading people: all that they need is not to be deluded by others. (Be independent) and go on your way whenever you desire: have no hesitancy.

Do you know where the disease lies which keeps you learners from reaching (true understanding? It lies where you have no faith in your Self. When faith in your Self is lacking you find yourself hurried by others in every possible way. At every encounter you are no longer your master: you are driven about by others this way or that.

All that is required is all at once to cease leaving your Self in search of something external. When this is done you will find your Self no different from the Buddha or the patriarch.

Do you want to know who the Buddha or patriarch is? He is no other than the one who is, at this moment, right in front of me, listening to my talk on the Dharma. You have no faith in him and therefore you are in quest of someone else somewhere outside. And what will you find? Nothing but words and names, however excellent. You will never reach the moving spirit in the Buddha or patriarch. Make no mistake.

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An ancient doctor says that the body is dependent on its meaning, and the ground is describable by its substance. Being so, we know that Dharma-body and Dharma-ground are reflections of the (original) light. O Venerable Sirs, let us take hold of this person who handles these reflections. For he is the source of all the Buddhas and the house of truth-seekers everywhere. The body made up of the four elements does not understand how to discourse or how to listen to a discourse. Nor do the liver, the stomach, the kidneys, the bowels. Nor does the vacuity of space. That which is most unmistakably perceivable right before your eyes, though without form, yet absolutely identifiable -- this is what understands the discourse and listens to it.

When this is thoroughly seen into, there is no difference between yourselves and the old masters. Only let not your insight be interrupted through all the periods of time, and you will be at peace with whatever situation you come into. When wrong imaginations are stirred, the insight is no more immediate; when thoughts are changeable, the essence is no more the same. For this reason, we transmigrate in the triple world and suffer varieties of pain. As I view the matter in my way, deep indeed is (Reality), and there is none who is not destined for emancipation.

O Followers of the Way, Mind has no form and penetrates every corner of the universe. In the eye it sees, in the ear it hears, in the nose it smells, in the mouth it talks, in the hand it seizes, in the leg it runs. The source is just one illuminating essence, which divides itself into six functioning units. Let all interfering thoughts depart from Mind, and you experience emancipation wherever you go. What do you think is my idea of talking to you like this? I simply wish to see you stop wandering after external objects, for it is because of this hankering that the old masters play tricks on you.

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Followers of the Way, when you come to view things as I do, you are able to sit over the heads of the Enjoyment- and Transformation-Buddhas; the Bodhisattvas who have successfully mounted the scale of ten stages look like hirelings; those who have attained the stage of full enlightenment resemble prisoners in chains; the Arhats and Pratyeka-Buddhas are cesspools; Bodhi and Nirvana are a stake to which donkeys are fastened. Why so? Because. O Followers of the Way, you have not yet attained the view whereby all kalpas are reduced to Emptiness. When this is not realized, there are all such hindrances. It is not so with the true man who has insight into Reality. He gives himself up to all manner of situations in which he finds himself in obedience to his past karma. He appears in whatever garments re ready for him to put on. As it is desired of him either to move or to sit quietly, he moves or sits. He has not a thought of running after Buddhahood. He is free from such pinings. Why is it so with him? Says an ancient sage, "When the Buddha is sought after, he is the cause of transmigration."

O Venerable Sirs, time is not to be wasted. Do not commit yourselves to a grave mistake by convulsively looking around your neighborhood and not within yourselves. You make mistakes by truing to master Zen, to master the Way, to learn words and phrases, to seek for Buddhas and Fathers and good friends. There is just one parenthood for you, and outside of it what do you wish to acquire? Just look within yourselves. The Buddha tells us the story of Yajnadatta. Thinking he had lost his head, he wildly ran after it; but when he found that he had never lost it, he became a peaceful man. O Followers of the Way, be just yourselves, stop your hysterical antics. There are some old baldheaded fools who know not good from bad. They recognize all kinds of things, they see spirits, they see ghosts, they look this way and that way, they like fair weather, they like rainy weather. If they go on like this, they are sure one day to appear before the King of Death, who will ask them to pay up their debts by swallowing red-hot iron balls. Sons and daughters of good families become possessed of this uncanny fox-spirit and go wildly astray even against their original sanity. Poor blind followers! Some day they will have to pay up their board.

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