

On the *Record of Rinzai*

PART TWO

HISAMATSU SHIN'ICHI

THERE'S NOTHING SPECIAL IN THE BUDDHA DHARMA

Since the fall sesshin, I have been lecturing on the *Record of Rinzai*. Today I want to take up the "Record of Pilgrimages" section of the text. To understand Rinzai and his record, we need to grasp what motivated him to begin his study of Zen, and what kind of satori he attained.

At first, Rinzai studied Buddhist scriptures, especially the Buddhist precepts. After a while, he realized that this approach to Buddhism was inadequate. He wanted above all to penetrate its fundamental truth so he went to Ōbaku to begin his study of Zen. As one of the assembly of monks under Ōbaku, he practiced zazen for three years with "pure and direct behavior." In Rinzai's third year there, the head monk said to him, "You've just been sitting. Why don't you enter Ōbaku's chamber and question him?" Heeding this advice, Rinzai decided to go and have an interview with the Master.

But, Rinzai didn't know what, or how, to ask. When I say he had no idea how to question Ōbaku, I don't simply mean he was ignorant of the kind of question he should have asked. He had practiced for three years in total earnestness, but he was filled with doubt. It was not ordinary doubt, but irresolvable doubt, so intense he couldn't even come up with a question.

* This is the second installment of a series of talks by Hisamatsu Shin'ichi begun at the fall sesshin of the FAS Society in September 1962. The original text of these talks is found in the *Collected Works of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi*, Volume VI, *Kyōroku-shō* (Risōsha, 1973), pp. 205–21. The translators have used Ruth Fuller Sasaki (tr.), *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto: Institute for Zen Studies, 1975), pp. 50–52, and 56; portions have been adapted.

Rinzai told the head monk he couldn't figure out what he should ask, so the head monk told him to ask what the Buddha Dharma [i.e., the awakened way of being] is all about. Provided with this means of inquiry, Rinzai went to Ōbaku's chamber. Before he could finish asking his question, though, Ōbaku struck him. Encouraged by the head monk, Rinzai went and questioned Ōbaku a total of three times, and was struck each time.

Why did Ōbaku strike him? It seems that Rinzai was struck for no reason. The blows indicate, however, that Rinzai wasn't acting in accordance with the awakened way of being. As the Zen Master Tokusan once said, "Thirty blows if you can speak, thirty blows if you can't." When we realize the awakened way of being, there's no problem at all; if we haven't realized it, we are dealt thirty blows of the staff whether we open our mouths or not.

Each of Ōbaku's blows is the single-blow which immediately rejects all verbal or physical acts of those who have not realized awakening. That single-blow is both one blow and a million blows. It is the blow of absolute negation which strikes once and strikes all. Zen speaks of the intuition beyond birth-and-death that is realized upon the blow of the staff. With the single-blow, there is life in the midst of death; we secure new life in absolute death. So, Ōbaku wasn't dealing a blow to reprimand Rinzai or to negate one thing: his blow negates *everything*, and thereby brings about the absolute affirmation in which the total negation of all things is their total affirmation. Of course, that single-blow transcends our normal understanding. It cuts off speech and destroys the activity of the mind; it is beyond the four schemes of thought and the hundred negations.

Rinzai wasn't able to awaken upon that life-in-death blow. Since he couldn't open up satori after three years with Ōbaku, he came to the conclusion that the time was not yet right for him, and decided to take leave of Ōbaku. He told the head monk that his karma must not yet be ripe, for he couldn't understand why Ōbaku had struck him. The head monk expected much of Rinzai in the future, so when he heard this, he went and asked a special favor of Ōbaku. He then told Rinzai to go and pay his respects to Ōbaku, and to ask where he should go. When Rinzai did so, Ōbaku told him to go straight to a master named Daigu in Kōan. Following Ōbaku's instructions, Rinzai set off.

Upon his arrival, Rinzai was asked by Daigu where he had come from,

and he replied he had come from Ōbaku's place. Asked what Ōbaku had said, Rinzai answered, "Three times I asked about the Buddha Dharma, and three times I was struck. I don't know why I was struck, though." Rinzai's statement here is very crucial; he in effect said, "Ōbaku struck me three times, but I don't know whether it was for some fault of mine. Was I in the wrong or not?" Now that might sound like an ordinary question, but for Rinzai it expressed the utmost possible doubt. He wasn't asking whether he had been scolded for some particular reason. Rather, that question expressed his fundamental doubt as to whether he had acted against satori, and if so, whether that was why he still hadn't attained it.

In response to Rinzai's question, Daigu said, "Ōbaku is such a grandmother that he utterly exhausted himself with your troubles." He meant that there was no greater kindness than Ōbaku's. Ōbaku's blows can give life in the midst of death; he delivers the single-blow that can awaken others. His kindness, then, isn't verbal, as when one explains things with words. It is incomparable kindness and Rinzai abused it by showing up at Daigu's and asking whether he had been at fault or not. Upon hearing Daigu's words, Rinzai attained Great Awakening.

Ōbaku's blows have nothing to do with being, or not being, at fault. They are such blows as to awaken us to our True Self that negates everything and affirms them all. When Rinzai finally realized this, Ōbaku's blows came alive in him and restored him to life. I don't mean that Rinzai simply understood why he was struck—he himself became the very blows. Each single-blow was none other than Ōbaku himself, and in receiving it, Rinzai became one with him; Rinzai became Ōbaku, and Ōbaku became Rinzai. This identity attests to the fact that Rinzai had attained Great Awakening. The single-blow is the Self which cuts off speech and destroys all mental activity, the Self which gives rise to the Dynamic Functioning that emancipates us from all things and brings us to life in them. The realization of that Self is Great Awakening.

When he achieved that awakening, Rinzai said to Daigu, "There really isn't much to Ōbaku's Buddha Dharma." He was in effect saying, "I had often wondered about the truth Ōbaku had awakened to. I had made it out to be something mysterious, something obscure and hard to realize. But, what?! So it's only this!" We can see here that Rinzai had brought about a superb realization. When we awaken, we, too, realize there's nothing special or extraordinary about the awakened way of being of

people like Ōbaku. It is said that the True Dharma is in no way mysterious. Contrary to what people might think, *not* to awaken is strange, and when we do in fact awaken, we realize there's nothing mysterious involved. Our being awakened is most ordinary and matter of fact. Such ordinariness is the True Self. An awakened person finds it rather strange that he had ever been deluded, for to him Awakening is ordinary and natural.

There is no distinction between awakening and not awakening. As the Sixth Patriarch said, "Originally, not-a-single-thing, so where is the dust to cling?" It is odd to complain about our passions, delusions, or inability to *really* do zazen and penetrate deep enough; what is truly natural and self-evident is that we neither awaken, nor do not awaken.

Rinzai reached the point where he could say that there wasn't much to Ōbaku's Buddha Dharma. His statement is clearly different—or even opposite—from what he had been saying until then. He meant that there are neither passions nor delusions, awakening nor not awakening. Everything exists just as it is; the calm and constant Mind is the Way. Rinzai wondered why he had ever been deluded, for that seemed quite strange to him. Only upon his awakening could Rinzai have solved such problems of theodicy as, "If reality is originally pure and free from discriminations, why does it give birth to mountains, rivers, and the earth?" or "Assuming God is the Creator, why are there evil people?" Rinzai faces no problems—to him, all this is ordinary and matter of fact. Originally everything is pure and free from discrimination, so why do mountains, rivers, and the earth suddenly appear? This question is its own answer.¹ So rather than saying there isn't much to *Obaku's* Buddha Dharma, Rinzai might just as well have said that "There isn't much to the Buddha Dharma—that is quite ordinary." A new Rinzai, unrecognizable at first glance, has emerged in his awakening.

Rinzai gives rise to the functioning of the single-blow when he says that there is nothing special in Ōbaku's Dharma. With his words, he dealt one blow, or thirty blows, to Ōbaku's Buddha Dharma. Indeed, those words would never have been uttered if it hadn't been for the blow that gives life in the midst of death.

Daigu then grabbed Rinzai and cried out, "You bed-wetting little demon!" The demon is Rinzai, who had the audacity to show up one min-

¹ When Rōya Ekaku was asked the preceding question by a monk, the response he gave was the very question (*Shōyōroku*).

ute to ask whether he had done something wrong and then turn around in the next and say that there wasn't much to Ōbaku's Buddha Dharma. Daigu prodded Rinzai: "What kind of truth do you see? Right now, speak! Speak!" He pressed Rinzai for a response, in effect saying, "You talked big, but now try to say something about the ultimate point!"

By realizing Ōbaku's blows in himself, Rinzai had changed from the initial Rinzai. Even if he wasn't approached in any way or didn't move a finger, his answer was already out before he was questioned. His being there was, in itself, proof of his awakening. When pressed by Daigu, he immediately jabbed him three times in the ribs—he gave rise to Dynamic Functioning by answering Daigu's question with the blow that cuts off words and destroys all mental activity.

Being the great master he was, Daigu immediately shoved away Rinzai, whom he had grasped. That shove is highly significant, for it indicates he had accepted Rinzai's response, and acknowledged him as an awakened man of Zen, rather than simply released his hold. Daigu's Zen functioning is expressed in that shove. With their jabs and shoves hammered together, the two men have become the most intimate of friends.

"Your teacher is Ōbaku," continued Daigu, "so it's none of my business." He told Rinzai that he had better go back and study under Ōbaku. Ōbaku was the one who had struck Rinzai, and his blows had now borne fruit. In saying that it was none of his business, Daigu had praised Rinzai's ability and esteemed Ōbaku's treatment of Rinzai.

Rinzai left Daigu and returned to Ōbaku. When Ōbaku saw him coming, he shouted out, "Here's that guy again! Coming and going, coming and going—when will it end?!" Rinzai retorted, "It's all due to your grandmotherly kindness!" Ōbaku had struck Rinzai out of kindness, and that kindness had borne fruit. Rinzai made a customary greeting and took his place beside Ōbaku, but the Rinzai who stood there was no longer he who had asked about the nature of the Buddha Dharma. What stood there was the true Rinzai, with the presence of a ten-thousand-foot cliff.

Curious as to what had happened at Daigu's place, Ōbaku asked Rinzai where he had been. Rinzai told him that he had gone to Daigu as instructed, and when next asked what Daigu had said, proceeded to give a vivid account of what had happened. Hearing that account, Ōbaku exclaimed, "I'll wait for that rascal to show up, and when he does, I'll give him a good taste of my staff!"

Without a moment's delay, Rinzai retorted, "Why say you'll wait!

Eat it *now!*" and gave Ōbaku a stinging slap across the face. With that immediate response, Rinzai's awakened activity revealed itself. By realizing Ōbaku's functioning, in himself, Rinzai became Daigu and struck Ōbaku.

Ōbaku cried out, "You lunatic! Coming back here and stroking the tiger's whiskers!" Rinzai shouted back, "*Kaah!*" With that vivid functioning, Rinzai was acknowledged on the spot by Ōbaku, who then said to another monk nearby, "Attendant, get this lunatic out of here. Take him to the meditation hall." To Ōbaku, it was worth sending Rinzai to Daigu.

The awakened activity between Ōbaku, Rinzai, and Daigu is splendidly set forth in this section of the *Record*. For the rest of his life, Rinzai made use of the True Self, the Original Face, he awakened to at that time.

With the head monk's guidance, Rinzai had brought the ultimate question before the Master. For us as well, the one question we pose, and its answer, must be ultimate. Only from the question beyond all questions can there emerge the answer beyond all answers.

AFTER REALIZING THE GREAT MASS OF AWAKENING

Rinzai went and questioned Ōbaku three times, only to be struck each time. Unable to awaken to Ōbaku's blows, he went to Daigu as instructed. It was there that he suddenly changed and awakened to the Rinzai who is the True Person of Zen.

Under Daigu, Rinzai acquired the extraordinary discernment which enabled him to say that "there isn't much to Ōbaku's Buddha Dharma." He achieved satori, the new life that follows the One Great Death. Awakening to the Formless Self, he realized its free and unhindered functioning.

Rinzai jabbed Daigu and slapped Ōbaku—this is his Dynamic Functioning, the great vitality and life of the Formless Self. Emptiness, without falling into the "pit of empty tranquillity," expresses itself through Rinzai as totally unrestricted functioning. The True Person giving free play to that functioning is the source of Rinzai's teaching. Since long ago, encountering his way of awakening others has been characterized as hearing the "deafening thunder of the five grave sins," and his Zen style has earned him the name "General Rinzai." This reputation stems, of course, from the marvellous functioning of his Great Awakening.

That functioning appears throughout the events related in the *Record of Rinzai*: yelling "Kaah!" and dealing blows, Rinzai's Zen mind gives rise to Dynamic Functioning. Only because his mind functions vigorously to awaken others, can we speak of Rinzai as a man of Great Awakening. That mind is none other than his True Self, and it must be our True Self as well. Its functioning comes forth from the sudden awakening in which our deluded self changes all at once into the True Self; we undergo the conversion of the self.

After experiencing that conversion, Rinzai stayed with Ōbaku for a while and, to refine his awakened way of life, began the practice that follows satori. After satori, the awakened Self functions at all times and in all places. Encountering people and things in the world around us, the True Person brings itself into action in a wide range of situations. At certain times it awakens the unawakened, and at others it mutually negotiates the Way with those who have already awakened. Fundamentally, it was this activity which created the *Record of Rinzai*. Rinzai's awakened way of being revealed itself in Dynamic Functioning, and the recounting of this constitutes his *Record*.

Rinzai's school of Zen developed into "koan Zen." The practitioner first opens up satori by means of an old-case koan. After that, he continues practice with many other koans, which are reckoned at seventeen hundred but not necessarily fixed at that number. Through those later prescribed koans, he refines and polishes his awakening. The initial koan is referred to as the passage through the first barrier, and it is regarded as necessary for seeing into one's Original Nature (*kenshō*). Satori is opened up when one passes through the first koan, and one passes through the koan when satori opens up. In other words, to pass through the koan and to open up satori must be one and the same act. It is not right if the passing through of the koan takes place without the opening up of satori. It also falls short of the genuine practice of koan Zen if one does not pass the koan while he opens up satori. Usually though, satori is thought of as opening up because one passes through the koan. This false view of satori is prevalent in present-day koan Zen—it is abuse of koan Zen. Again, the opening up of satori and the passing through of the koan must be a single act.

Nowadays, Jōshū's *Mu* koan or Hakuin's Sound of One Hand is usually taken up in practice as the first barrier, the outer gate, through which one first enters Zen and sees into his Original Nature. The practitioner, by passing through the koan, must become Rinzai's True Person without Rank, the Self as the "Mind-dharma without form, pervading the ten directions." If he doesn't, that passage will be simply a lifeless occurrence, nothing more.

In Rinzai's time, it wasn't by means of koans as found in present-day koan Zen that people saw into their Original Nature. They opened up satori through a variety of opportunities. As there were no fixed koans by which satori was uniformly achieved, neither were there special koans for the practice following satori. People practiced at all times and in all places—in each and every situation. The moment of satori was rather internal in those days, and arising from within oneself, it was concrete and spontaneous. Since the formulation of koan Zen, though, that spontaneity has all but disappeared. The practitioner now receives koans from the master and applies himself to them. Regrettably, in this sort of practice the moment of satori does not emerge quite spontaneously from within.

In a certain sense, though, a koan received from another can be internalized as something spontaneous by our entering so deeply into koan samadhi that the koan becomes a part of us. To arrive at koan samadhi is essential. The koan becomes the Great Doubting Mass. In Great Doubt

there is no koan apart from the self and no self apart from the koan. A million doubts become one doubt; they come together as one all-encompassing doubt. That total doubt contains all particular ones, but it isn't just a matter of our doubting the koans as objects of investigation. The doubter and the doubted must be one; otherwise our work with koans never becomes true practice.

The Great Doubting Mass is discussed in the *Mumonkan*. As Great Doubt deepens, there ceases to be any koan outside the self or any self apart from the koan. The mass of Doubt suddenly crumbles and turns into Great Awakening, the Great Mass of Satori. In that change, the koan becomes a true koan, an "official letter of passage" with which one can pass freely through the border checkpoint. The true koan is a satori with objective validity, and, like a public certificate, is never something one alone considers authentic.

The first koan we pass through is ordinarily called the first barrier. Only later, after passing through other prescribed koans, do we complete our investigation of the Great Matter. In koan Zen, to complete that investigation is to finish studying all of Zen. Only then is our practice brought to a conclusion.

So, there is satori of the first barrier and further practice after that. The passage through the first barrier is called *kenshō*, and the practice following that satori is termed "post-satori" practice. *Kenshō* is the Awakening in which we penetrate the Self and awaken to it. It clarifies Fundamental Wisdom and the Wisdom of Equality. The practice following satori lies in clarifying the Wisdom of Discrimination, which is not ordinary discriminative knowledge, but rather the Self's functioning in the field of discrimination. And this is done through grappling with prescribed koans. Such is the present state of practice in koan Zen.

In Rinzai's time, though, this wasn't the case. At all times and in all places men of Zen refined and expressed their awakened state of satori. To put it differently, the awakened state of satori manifests itself in every situation. The central concern was how it manifests itself on this occasion, how it functions in this situation. So, essentially, being the functioning of Fundamental Wisdom, practice is not something leading there. It is the true, awakened way of being of Zen. The functioning of satori is true action, true practice, and in it Zen's life is established.

Rinzai tells us that the True Person is the "master of all situations." True wisdom is always the master, the subject, and never is it other-

wise. People sometimes speak of the loss of subjectivity or humanity, but the True Person is never lost. Losing something happens to that which is based on such discriminations as being and nonbeing or birth and death. Rinzai's True Person, however, is the pure Self without form. It is beyond all such discriminations as birth and death, appearance and disappearance, being and non-being, good and evil, affirmation and negation, and purity and defilement, so nothing is ever lost. Freed from all discriminations, the True Person is now revealing itself in all its grandeur. Neither lacking nor in excess, it fills all places, and that is why we hear such expressions as "master of all situations" and "without form, pervading the ten directions." Since the True Person has no fixed form, it is stable, and is grounded in absolute security from which it can never stumble. In Rinzai's *Record*, this point is clearly expressed through the living words and actions related.

Rinzai pursued further practice after he opened up satori, and when he completed it, he was certified by his master. Ōbaku certified him because he recognized the maturation and purity of his satori. In the "Record of Pilgrimages" section of the *Record*, it is related as an important event. This section, however, begins as follows:

Rinzai returned to Mt. Ōbaku in the middle of the summer. Seeing Ōbaku reading a sutra, he said, "I always thought you were a *man*. Now I see you're just a black-bean-eating old monk." [p. 56]

Rinzai went away and showed up again in the middle of summer. He arrived during the *ango*, which is when a sesshin is held. In traditional Zen, ninety-day *ango* retreats take place twice a year, once in the summer (the rain *ango*) and once in the winter (the snow *ango*). The monks stay on the mountain and practice intensively without going on any pilgrimages. Monks must participate in an *ango* from beginning to end. Coming or going in the middle is forbidden. In returning to Mt. Ōbaku part way through the summer retreat—around the first of June—Rinzai committed an infraction of the rules. We must ask ourselves why he did such a thing. Originally, he was very particular about precepts; he observed them to the letter and was said to be pure and direct in his behavior. Nevertheless, he violated the precepts by showing up late and thereby breaking the rules of the summer *ango*.

When Rinzai arrived, he saw Ōbaku reading a sutra. He told him he

had always considered him a Zen master of supreme ability, but now realized he was just a "black-bean-eating old monk." Rinzai in effect said that he now knew Ōbaku for what he really was—a baldheaded fellow who just sat around "eating beans," that is, reading the words written in sutras. What did Rinzai really mean by that?

As you know, since long ago, the "motto" of Zen has been the expression, "Self-dependently transmitted apart from the scriptural teachings, not dependent on words or letters." From the Zen perspective, scriptures are nothing but scraps of paper for wiping up filth. To Rinzai, a Zen master is the Buddha-mind at the root-source of sutras. The Buddha-mind is independent of the words and letters of the scriptures, and it is transmitted apart from them. Since a Zen master is that very Mind, Rinzai never expected to find Ōbaku reading a sutra. He is basically saying to Ōbaku, "What sort of man are you, anyway? It seems I didn't see you for what you really were."

What Rinzai says to Ōbaku reflects a discernment independent of words and transmitted apart from sutras. Vividly present is the Rinzai that has gone beyond scriptures and returned to their source. He is a practitioner who has penetrated to the core of Zen.

There's a problem, though. Rinzai discovers Ōbaku reading a sutra. Their encounter falls within the scope of practice. Rinzai calls that sutra-reading Ōbaku a "black-bean-eating old monk," but what about this? Is that an acceptable way of encountering Ōbaku? This is the central problem of that episode. From the Zen perspective, Rinzai's statement is not mistaken; yet even so, Ōbaku doesn't accept it. Why doesn't he? Their encounter is the deliberation of the Way that can only occur between two awakened people. Moreover, Ōbaku has already acknowledged Rinzai as one who has attained Great Awakening, so what is it in Rinzai that he cannot accept? We must consider this important problem, but I'd like to leave it for my next talk.

TRANSLATED BY TOKIWA GISHIN
AND CHRISTOPHER A. IVES