

ZEN MEDITATION – THE ESSENCE OF ZEN DISCIPLINE

Zen Meditation

Transcendence means a free world, where you identify yourself with the reality now and here, getting yourself out of the capsule of intelligence and emotion. It is a pure and monistic world, an extreme of simplicity. This is what we call "Zen."

Zen meditation is the practice of Zen. It is an independent world transcendent of everything. What is important is to simply devote yourself to the Zen discipline and destroy the root of your persistent ego.

Usually we perceive through conceptualization the things passing by, even in a very short period of time, say one millionth of a second. This way, you can never realize the true living reality. You will lose yourself. This is what we call a "reversed vision."

Zen meditation should be done to get rid of this habit of "reversed vision," to become conscious of the truth of nature, and to relieve yourself from your own ego, in other words, to live in truth.

Transcendence means to identify yourself with the reality, to devote yourself purely to the reality, to forget yourself, and to transcendence existence, getting out of time and space. This is what I mean by "transcendence of self."

It is an experience of emptiness (sunyata). It is to be what you are, to be what the universe is ("isness" of a thing). It is absolute. It is a salvation. We call this great state of mind "satori" (emancipation). This is an experience of transcendence.

This is the spirit and resurrection of Buddha himself. The time when you practice Zen meditation is a universe of Zen. This is transcendence.

Zen meditation consists in the concentration of yourself on now and here, the absolute instance, the emancipation of yourself from the past, and the realization of the genuine "now."

Now is always now. Now is transcendent even of Zen meditation. No time cannot be now. Now is the eternal and absolute now. It is the whole universe. Everyone can be so while staying what he/she is.

This great truth is the Buddhist law (buppo). The way to salvation is called "butsudo" (Buddhist way). And this great realization is called "satori" (emancipation).

Then, how can you get rid of your habit of mind?

It is by resisting your old habit that you can rid yourself of idealistic habit of conceptualization and scattered speculation. You must make an effort to prevent yourself from considering various things, and to concentrate on, and go deeply into, the root of concepts and speculation.

Zen meditation begins with the dedication of your all energy to doing this, and with the throwing of yourself into an instant before your brain starts to function. It is an effort to constantly cut off your habit of mind which tends to appear at any moment. The most effective way to free yourself of such a habit is to reduce your pace of action to one tenth what it is, and ever to divert your attention from this, slowly but clearly, without using any conceptualization. This is opposed to scattered speculation. Therefore, the harder you try this, the earlier you can get rid of your habit and the more clearly you can understand your own behavior.

The Essence of Zen Discipline

There are some essential points in any discipline. It is desirable that everyone should attain his/her purpose as quickly, surely and easily as possible. In order to be conscious of "now" and emancipate yourself, you should return to the instant "now" without thinking about scattered things. For this, you should only carry on your effort to cut off all worldly thoughts and return home to the instant. You should avoid anything that may hinder your effort, and make your effort as dense as you can. The essential points of Zen discipline are as follows:

(1) Emancipation means the acquisition of Buddha's spirit and the experience of the Buddhist law. You should sincerely hope for purity and happiness, correct human errors, and realize a great love. For this, you must give up any greed, swear to gods and Buddha to achieve your great aspiration to follow the way to the truth. You must respect and love the founders of Zen Buddhism and find the right teacher for you.

(2) Once you have found the right teacher, you should not criticize from a narrow point of view, but devote yourself wholly to the Zen practice under the leadership of the teacher. For you can reach the world of unitary absolute entity. If you should doubt your teacher, you would fall a victim to disbelief and divert yourself from the right discipline. Look at the teaching, not at trivial things about him.

(3) The way to emancipation is not a game of endurance. Giving first priority to

endurance and thinking light of the instant is a waste of time. If your legs and foot hurt, you may try to prevent them from hurting. If you are too hungry to make any effort, you may eat something. Even if you try not to fall asleep with a dim consciousness, you cannot get rid of various worldly thoughts. You cannot rid yourself of your thinking habit without concentrating clearly on the present instant and giving up scattered speculation. If you are too sleepy to concentrate, you should sleep just long enough to give up worldly thoughts and concentrate on "now."

(4) Just return to the instant "now" by reasonably abandoning scattered speculation and worldly thoughts. Try to keep yourself from feeling sleepy. Try not to be particular about anything, and not to be too nervous. It is ideal to put your body and mind in a state of flow.

(5) One of the methods of doing this is to twist your body right and left every time you breathe. When you breathe, you are likely to divert from concentration and think about worldly matters even for a moment. It will take time to learn this. Meanwhile, you tend to be idle and think about various trivial things even if you are engaged in the meditation on the surface. This is also a waste of time. By twisting your body unconditionally, you can give up any worldly thought, keep yourself from feeling asleep, and put your body in a good flow.

(6) Keep doing the above. Just concentrate on your present breathing. Concentration should be complete enough to forget yourself. You will soon get rid of scattered speculation and worldly thoughts. Then, there will be no major reason to twist your body, but you had better keep doing this unconditionally, since it is most effective in preventing idleness and concentrating on just one thing to twist your body. Basically speaking, you can overcome the egoistic habit through concentration.

(7) Then, you will feel monotonous before long and grasp what you are doing. You can simply walk and simply have a meal. You can see things as you see, without any conceptualization. You can hear as you hear. You can distinguish sensitive stimulation such as seeing, hearing, learning, and perceiving, from the world of idea, which is the function of the mind. Then, you will reach a state of mind without any concept, without any conscious thinking. A unitary world of peace and equality will appear before you. The more concentrated you are on the present moment, the more peaceful, comfortable and confident you feel. But this is not yet the world of emancipation, namely nirvana.

(8) Once you have reached here, all you have to do is continue to the last. The genuine discipline is concerned simply with the present moment, the instant, and the destiny. You already have nothing to think about. You can move, but there is no change. Anything to be thought of will disappear. Nothing is there. There is not even the discipline itself. Only emptiness (sunyata) remains. Still, you do not understand what the emptiness really is and how you will be emancipated. You are still halfway to the great emancipation.

(9) There will be a time when you will be mature enough to enter no-ego (muga in Japanese). Then you will be awoken by the destiny from the outside to learn that your state of mind has been emptiness. Non-ego itself teaches us the world of non-ego. This is the experience of emptiness. This is nirvana. This is the genuine "now" devoid of any connection with the past and, therefore, with your persistence. Just because now is "now," everything slips out of it. This is Buddha's world. He said, "Both sentient and nonsentient beings can concurrently attain Buddhahood. Even mountains, rivers, grass and trees can all enter nirvana." Unless this great awareness comes to you, you are not emancipated. The great awareness of the great reality is the evidence and power of emancipation.

(10) Then, you are entering into a post-emancipation stage. The fact you are emancipated then turns into a great confidence and power, which in turn will get in your way. This is not an ignorance (maya) at all, but you are short of the genuine non-ego since you still have a belief that you are absolutely right. The continuing non-ego means the realization of "All is vanity and emptiness is everything." There is no truth, and every truth in the great truth of the universe. You can understand that there can be a truth of ignorance, but you will really understand even the truth of errors only when you have broken the framework and entered into the genuine great emancipation. The truth is in genuine emptiness. Here, you will reach the same stage with the great founder of Buddhism, Gautama, who realized that "Holy am I alone throughout heaven and earth." Then you will be engaged in the enlightenment and salvation of the world.