

## Zen and Buddhism

- I. Introduction: On the Value of Words
  - A. Now I have come to talk to you about Zen, but Zen does not believe in many words
  - B. A Zen saying goes: "The truth itself is beyond description, but it is by words that the truth is manifested. Let us forget the words when we gain the truth itself."
  - C. Again, in Zen literature, we find many examples of a teacher who points to a tree or is merely silent when a disciple asks him a philosophic question about the meaning of the universe or the nature of man.
  - D. So, before I begin talking, let us experience the art of not talking, the art of sitting, zazen, or meditation.
- II. 5 minute Meditation
  - A. Be aware that your mind is chattering to you, saying many useless things to you
  - B. Silence your mind - pay attention to your breathing, listen only to your body.
  - C. Discussion: How did it feel to sit quietly? What sort of things did you hear?
- III. Why Zen Buddhism is Significant to Me
  - A. My husband and I left America on a kind of religious quest - who are we, how should we live?
    - B. Zen means many things to many people
      1. Orthodox - Japanese; ritual, hierarchy; describe zendo and o'seshin
      2. Beat - a movement among American beatniks of the fifties, where Zen was construed to mean anything goes, bad is good, ugly is beautiful, all is one
      3. For me, Zen is a way of life following neither extreme, concerned not so much with outward manifestations, but with maintaining a certain attitude.
    - C. Zen answers Buddha's fundamental insight: Man is in bondage, how can he be freed?
      1. To what is man in bondage? He is in bondage to pain and suffering, to the fear of death, to the craving for stability, to material possessions, to his need for security, to his fear of separateness
      2. Buddhism seeks to free man by dissolving his attachment to ego; teaching him acceptance of change through experiencing the oneness of the world in all its forms
    - D. On a more specific level, Zen challenges the American value system
      1. to me, it provides an alternative to a way of life. I often find chaotic, degenerate, and corrupt
- IV. Brief History of Zen Buddhism
  - A. Buddhism originated around 500 B.C. with the person of Gotama, the Buddha, the Enlightened One
  - B. Buddha was born into a Hindu family of Brahmins, studied Hinduism, and became a priest
  - C. Around the age of 29, he went into retirement, leaving wife and family.
  - D. Six years of struggle; life of ascetic
  - E. Enlightenment under Bodhi tree

## F. Doctrines

1. 12-fold chain of causation leads to suffering
2. By following the 8-fold path can break a link
  - a. most important doctrines right-mindedness
  - b. right concentration

G. Over the centuries, Buddhism flourished, divided into many sects, spread over much of Asia

H. In the process, it became institutionalized - acquired scriptures (sutras), holy images, rituals, conventions

I. 520 A.D. Brought the meditative school to China

J. 700 A.D. Ch'an (Zen) established as a separate school

K. Specific features of Ch'an

1. Traditional aspects of Buddhism regarded with hostility
2. Ch'an hostile to metaphysical speculation; intent on abolishing reasoning as way to salvation; direct insight prized rather than subtle logic; truth always stated as concretely as possible; salvation found in ordinary things of daily life
3. Enlightenment not the gradual accumulation of merit, but a sudden act of recognition (satori)

L. 1200 A.D. Brought Ch'an to Japan. Its simplicity and straightforward heroism appealed to the military class (samurai). Zen discipline helped them overcome fear of death.

Far-reaching influence of Zen on Japanese culture.

## V. The Spirit of Zen

A. A reaction against intellect and dogma; beyond thinking to direct experience

B. Worldview: Non-duality and Unity

1. Accept mutual necessity of opposites
2. See beyond the dualities of good and evil
3. This doesn't mean ignore possibility of social change, but to see it as a relatively limited sphere

C. Satori - Seeing Into One's Own Nature

1. Buddha Nature

a. importance of self-consciousness

b. importance of objectivity from self

c. ability to reflect the world without judgment

2. Self-Control and Spontaneity

a. Control means the idea of discipline; a perpetual unity of will and action; control of self and senses leads to tranquillity

b. Spontaneity - discipline allows you to discover true naturalness, as opposed to impulsive self-indulgence

True naturalness always harmonious with the universe

D. Non-attachment and Nonstriving

1. Non-attachment is not detachment, but an acceptance of the transience of all things

2. Be able to relinquish possessions, even people

3. Non-striving - don't be attached to the fruits of your labor

4. Baghavadgita: "Concentrate on action, never on its fruits; be indifferent to success or failure;"

E. Simplicity

1. Few possessions, simple meals

2. Doing only one thing at a time

## F. Living in the Moment

1. modern man has no consciousness of present
2. Lives either in a nostalgic past or hopeful future
3. Living in the moment means to be fully involved in an ongoing present, having your life exist only in the Now

## G. Attitude Toward Nature

1. Man is not alien from nature, either conqueror or conquered, as in the West, but a part of Nature
2. The self is explained through nature
3. Haiku and Western poetry

Basho: When I look carefully  
 I see the nozuna blooming  
 by the hedge!

! = feeling of admiration, praise sorrow

Tennyson: Flower in the crannied wall  
 I pluck you out of the crannies  
 Hold you here root and all, in my hand.  
 Little flower... but if I could understand  
 What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
 I should know what God and man is.

4. Discussion: Compare and contrast