

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."

C. Again, in Zen literature, we find many examples of a teacher who points to a tree for its merely silent, when a disciple asks this a philosophical 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 senseless 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 some, 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 of the religion

C. Around the age of 29, he went into retirement, leaving wife and family.

D. Six years of struggle; little of ascetic life

E. Enlightenment under Bodhi tree