



## ZAZEN: ZEN BUDDHIST WAY TO THE STATE OF NO-MINDEDNESS

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### ABSTRACT

Zen Buddhism is an offshoot of Mahayana Buddhism and a way of life with the primary focus on direct experience instead of rational creeds and revered scriptures. The most important Zen practice is Zazen or sitting meditation in which the focus is given on one's posture and breathing and gradually the practitioner can identify three distinct stages: the stage of concentration, the stage of meditation and the stage of absorption. As the practitioner repeats this process over a long period of time, he or she will come to experience a state in which no-thing appears. Zen uses the phrase 'No-mindedness' to designate this state. It is the state of mind has no conscious activities and not delimited by ideas, desires and images. There is neither a superimposition of ideas nor a psychological projection. It is a practical transcendence from the everyday mind, without departing from the everydayness of the world.

**KEYWORDS :** Zen, Zen Buddhism, Zazen, No-mindedness

### INTRODUCTION

Zen Buddhism, emerged as a distinctive school of Mahayana Buddhism include various sources of Mahayana thought focus entirely on the mindful practice of meditation. Zen is derived from a transliteration of the Chinese word 'Chan' means sitting meditation and Zen Buddhists are also called as meditation Buddhists. 'Zazen' or seated meditation is considered as the heart of Zen Buddhism. Zen meditation methods are aimed at two things; first there is calming, then concentration. Zen meditation practice gradually reduces our wandering thoughts until we experience the state of no-mind and an individual to become a Zen person by awakening to the fundamental reality in the everyday human life world. It is a technique which gradually taken into the state of absolute stillness or the state of no-mindedness, the state of harmony, or supreme confluence of subject and object. It is an essential teaching of Zen that the door of insight is open to all. The essence of Zen is attempting to understand the meaning of life directly.

### PRACTICE OF ZAZEN

Zen Buddhism developed from interaction between Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism with its entire focus on the mindful practice of meditation. During the practice of Zazen, practitioners usually assume a sitting position like the lotus or half-lotus and the awareness is directed towards one's posture and breathing. The amount of time each practitioner spends in Zazen varies. Zen training emphasizes daily life practice along with intensive periods of meditation. Practicing with others is an integral part of the Zen practice. In explaining Zen Buddhism it is used as Zen is a way of life and that aspect of this life are a life of humility; a life of labor; a life service; a life of prayer and gratitude; and a life of meditation. Zen meditation is three step processes which recommend that its practitioner follow these steps. All these steps are listed below in order.

#### Step I - The adjustment of the body

In the practice of Zen meditation, the adjustment of the body means mind seated meditation postures. The correct posture is more important in meditation practices and one of the reasons why correct posture is so emphasized because it powerfully influences both our mind-stand and our energy. There are two postures which Zen recognizes: the lotus posture and the half lotus posture. A long Zen tradition takes them to be effective for stilling the mind and dissolving various psychological complexes and psychosomatic disorders. However, if a lay practitioner cannot at first assume these postures, they cannot be substituted initially by sitting on a chair with the spine straight, as it can bring about a similar effect. The adjustment of the body is necessary for the practitioner in order to experience the practical benefits of doing meditation.

#### Step II - The adjustment of breathing

The benefits of Zen meditation are closely tied to the practice of breathing. Generally speaking Zen does not recommend any

complicated, strenuous breathing exercises. Zen's breathing exercise is called 'observation of breath count'. In this exercise the practitioner counts an in-coming breath and an out-going breath, before counting the breath, the practitioner breath in through the nostrils and breath out through the mouth a couple of times. Then one starts counting breaths, but this time breathing in through the nostrils and breathing out through the nostrils. The breath count is performed while performing an abdominal breathing: one brings in air all the way down to the lower abdomen, and breaths out from there. This exercise has the effect of infusing one's mind-body with fresh life energy and expelling a negative toxic energy out of the practitioner's system. For this reason, it must be done in a place where there is ample ventilation. A key to performing breathing exercises successfully is just to observe the in-coming and out-going breath.

Though these are simple instructions, it is difficult to execute because the mind tends to become distracted. Present concerns, worries, fears and past memory often surface. Zen calls them 'wandering thoughts', which refers to any mental object that prevents the practitioner from concentration. If one wants to make progress in meditation, this is one of the first things that the practitioner must learn to overcome. When we turn to the psychophysiological meaning of the breathing exercise, ordinarily, we breathe sixteen to seventeen times per minute, which we do unconsciously or involuntarily. This is because under ordinary circumstances, breathing is controlled by automatic nervous system. The automatic nervous system is so called because it functions independently of our will. Zen breathing is a shift from unconscious, involuntarily breathing to conscious voluntary breathing. Breath count trains the unconscious mind and the involuntary activity of the nerves that control the function of the various vital organs. Here, we find a reason why Zen recommends abdominal breathing. In the upper part of the abdominal cavity, parasympathetic nerves are bundled up, and the abdominal breathing exercise stimulates this bundle. As it does so, parasympathetic nerves function to still the mind. This point is significant in learning to control emotion. Ordinarily, we are told to control our emotion by exercising our will. The problem with this method is that a lot of psychic energy is required to suppress one's deeper emotions. Consequently, one may end up exploding in various ways, ranging from personal fits to violent social crimes. There is a strong correlation between the pattern and the rhythm of breathing and a person's emotional state, or more generally, state of mind. Zen breathing has a way of naturally heightening the positive correlation between the activity of the automatic nervous system and emotion.

#### Step III - The adjustment of the mind

Once, the bodily posture and the breathing are adjusted, the practitioner next learns to adjust the mind. This means that the practitioner consciously moves to enter a state of meditation. Zen

tries to accomplish this by the immobile bodily posture and the breathing exercise. The process of breathing consists of three stages. In an initial stage, the practitioner can hear the audible sound of the in-coming and out-going breaths. This is rough and 'gross' breathing. This is followed by the second stage in which one can feel the pathway of the in-coming and out-going breaths. Breathing at this point becomes 'subtle' in that there will no longer be audible sound of the breaths but simply a stream of life energy. In the third stage there is no more feeling of the in-coming and out-going breaths. When this occurs, the practitioner sink into a deeper meditational state. In the process of deepening meditation, one can identify three distinct stages: the stage of concentration, the stage of meditation, and the stage of absorption. In the stage of concentration, the dualistic relationship established between the practitioner and the lower abdomen that is the focus of concentration. This dualistic relationship is broken gradually as the practitioner moves into the stage of meditation. When the practitioner enters into the realm of absorption, the dualistic framing of the mind will be removed. There will be no separation or distancing between an object of the mind and the activity of the mind itself. As the practitioner repeats this process over a long period of time, he or she will come to experience a state in which nothing appears. Zen uses the phrase "no-mind" to designate this state.

### THE STATE OF NO-MINDEDNESS

Mushin', the core of Zen Buddhism, which literally means the mind without mind and it is commonly called the state of no-mindedness. No-mind does not mean a mindless state. Nor does it mean that there is no mind. It means that there is no conscious activity of the mind. In other words, no-mind is free mind that is not limited by ideas, desires and images. No-mind is a state of mind in which there is neither a superimposition of ideas nor a psychological projection. It is practical transcendence from the everyday mind, without departing from the everydayness of the world. In this state of mind, the mind is not fixed on or occupied by any thought or emotion and is thus connected to the cosmos. The no-mindedness refers to an empty mind in the sense that distraction, preoccupations, fears, worries are absent. It is empty in the sense that it is unbiased, free and adaptable. This state can occur through constant training of the body and mind and to achieve this state of no-mindedness, the mind must be free from any conscious thought, free from anger, hesitations. The state of no-mindedness cannot be grasped with the intellect; it must be experienced. It is the state when what we observe and what we are becomes one. The watcher and the watched become the same.

### CONCLUSION

The emergence of Zen Buddhism is one of the strongest things that have happened in the history of consciousness. Zen Buddhism is not a theory, an idea or peace of knowledge. It is not a belief, dogma, or religion, but rather, it is practical experience. Zazen is the core of Zen Buddhism without it there is no Zen. Zen meditation is the method of just sitting still and empty and it is only related to the concentration on the posture, breathing and state of mind. Zazen is difficult, because it is not hard to sit in the cross legged position or to attain enlightenment but it is hard to keep our mind pure and our practice pure in its fundamental sense Zen meditation is an experience of living from moment to moment, in the here and now. Here, meditation is an attitude of spiritual awakening, which when practiced, can become the source from which all the action of daily life flow- eating, sleeping breathing, walking, working, talking, thinking and so on. Zen's method of meditative practice is concrete ways to the state of no-mindedness. No- mindedness is not a state in which one loses one's mental capacities. It is an abiding state of consciousness in which every aspect of life is experienced. Through the practice of meditation Zen put forth Zen philosophy of mind which shows a dynamic approach re-create or reconstructs human life.

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