



## Women Empowerment Through Principles And Practices of Ch'an And Zen

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ABSTRACT

Women Empowerment is the process of enabling women to think and perform skillfully in an autonomous way. Deep understanding of the principles of Ch'an and Zen through their meditative practices helps women attain greater extrinsic control through one's intrinsic capacity with the help of realization of her true nature. This helps her to gain greater self-confidence and an internal transformation of consciousness that enables her to overcome all external barriers to access her success and satisfaction. Women empowerment can be achieved by practising meditations of Ch'an and Zen which will bring about positive changes in physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and as well as spiritual level of women hood.

KEYWORDS

Women empowerment, Ch'an and Zen meditation, Self-realization, Social importance.

### Introduction:

Women play a significant role in social development of a country. Marginalizing power of women becomes social importance. Women are successfully making their mark in various fields with the dedication and commitment. So, empowerment and autonomy of women and their improvement in social, economic and political, status are highly essential for the achievement of sustainable development.

**Introducing various meditative techniques' of Ch'an and Zen strengthens the innate ability of women by way of acquiring right knowledge, inner power through meditative experience. This prepares them to create a positive environment in which she can make her decisions and choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. By practising various techniques of Ch'an and Zen, she acquire the power of right thinking to act freely in order to fulfill her potential as full as equal members of society.**

Women Empowerment is mainly a psychological sense of personal control. Thus, Women Empowerment means developing a sense of self-worth, a believing in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life in accordance with social influence. Women empowerment through the application of principles' and meditative practices of Ch'an and Zen become essential for bright future of the family, society and country.

### Literature Review:

Both Ch'an and Zen are deeply rooted in Indian Dhyana Buddhism which was evolved from the inner quest of Siddhartha Gautama to end the suffering of all sentient beings. Through meditative practices, he attained enlightenment by gaining wisdom to solve suffering of sentient beings and called as 'Gautama Buddha'. So, meditation becomes soul practice of all sects of Buddhism to eradicate the sufferings of sentient beings. In his first sermon, Gautama Buddha preached the Four Noble Truth for peaceful living.

### The Four Noble Truth are :

1. There is suffering.
2. Suffering has a cause; craving.
3. If craving ceases, suffering ceases.
4. There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering."<sup>1</sup>

Meditation is the heart of Ch'an and Zen Buddhism. Ch'an and Zen are called as voiceless traditions as they are not depend on words or concepts and are directly pointing towards one's own mind to attain no-mind state.

### Ch'an Buddhism:

The Ch'an is sect of Indian Dhyana Buddhism introduced in China by an Indian monk Bodhidharma. From India, Bodhidharma brought dhyana meditation teachings to China in about 475 A.D. He became first Patriarch there, the beginning of the Chinese Ch'an lineage started with first Patriarch Bodhidharma. Ch'an is subtle, inexplicable wisdom with no dependence on words. It is special transmission of meditative spiritual practice outside scriptures. All Ch'an patriarch sought wisdom through direct meditative experience.

### Zen Buddhism:

Zen Buddhism is the meditational sect of Buddhism introduced to Japan from China. It connotes a state of consciousness beyond description. Meditation is the core practice of Zen. In this type of meditation, the object of meditation is present-mindedness; this helps to reach a level of awareness, to know about one's own nature.

### Meditative practices of Ch'an and Zen:

#### Mindfulness Meditation:

Mindfulness meditation is the practice of intentionally focusing on the present moment; non-judgmentally paying attention to the sensations, thoughts, and emotions that arise. The aim of this practice is to inculcate awareness within oneself and around us.

Women can inculcate the habit of practising mindfulness meditation in her daily activities like eating, walking, and talking. Then meditation becomes other part of her routine life. The goal of this meditation is to develop the mind through three basic stages;

First, to collect the scattered and confused mind and to focus it to a concentrated mind with few thoughts.

Next to purify and further concentrate this simple mind into a highly unified one pointed mind.

Finally; to pass from the unified one pointed mind to no-mind.

#### Anapanasati (mindfulness of breathing):

Anapanasati is the meditative way of close attention to the movement of one's breath. When she breathes in, be aware that she is breathing in, and how she feels. When she breath out, be aware she is breathing out. During length of meditation practice, constantly redirecting her attention to the breath. Or she can move on to be paying attention to the sensations, thoughts and feelings that arise.

**" Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.**

## Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is a wonderful moment.<sup>2</sup>

During this meditative breathing one should aware of what is going on within oneself, our mind will get distracted along with sounds, sensations, and thoughts. Whenever that happens, gently recognize that you have been distracted, and bring the attention back to the breathing. This meditation brings about the integration of body, breath and mind. It leads to harmonizing as well as progressive calming of body, breath, and mind. Then, they become completely interused as though they are one. Anapana Sati meditation improves her circulation of the blood and the vital energy known as "gi", so, rejuvenates women's nervous and circulatory system. So, this meditation helps her in good physical and mental well-being.

### Shikantaza ("just sitting"):

**In this mediation, the practitioner does not use any specific object of meditation; rather, she remains in the present moment, aware of and observing what passes through her mind and around her, without dwelling on anything in particular. It's a type of effortless presence meditation. Sitting meditation is the best way to settle a scattered mind and cultivate meditative concentration. Through this meditation, women can improve her awareness and alertness in her activities. In this state of awareness, the conditioned reflexes, and the patterned behavior will begin to disappear and she will be left with the feeling of freedom. The main purpose of Zen meditation is unifying the mind and taking it to one point so that it no longer wander freely.**

Buddha says, when a person turns inwards, when your consciousness turns inwards and looks into your own being, nothing found.

...no perception of self takes place, no perception of a being takes place, no perception of soul takes place, no perception of a person takes place. These four things are immediately dissolved.<sup>3</sup>

The practice of Shikantaza meditation helps women to realize her own true nature, resolving her dualistic view of body and spirit. This affords her peace from the cycle of binge and purge. Zen meditative practice helps her to cut through one's ego-building attachment. Due to multi-tasked activities, women are all struggled with clouded minds and busy-ness of thoughts. With practice of Zen meditation they can regain their mental clarity. Meditation is the effective way of enhancing women's quality of life by rejuvenating her physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual level.

### ANALYSIS:

- Many positive effects of Ch'an and Zen meditations on women are listed below:
- Women's memory power is boosted by practice meditation.
- It helps women in the management of stress and tension effectively without getting victimized by the problems of her life.
- It makes women always keep the in good mood and keep away from mood swing.
- Meditation helps women to handle extreme pressure with calm and serene mind.
- Meditation improves women in her focus and helps her to perform all her activities skillfully.
- Meditation greatly helps in all psychosomatic problems and reduces the symptoms of neurotic problems, anxiety, and depression.
- Meditation improves the quality of immune response and helps women to remain physically healthy.
- Meditation improves women's mental alertness.
- Meditation reduces the impact of physical and emotional pain.
- Meditation improves women's powers of empathy that

results in self-acceptance and building rapport with others in the society.

- Meditation leads women towards spiritual path.

All Ch'an and Zen meditations are the best course of action is non-action. Just observing the thoughts and feelings welling up within the mind without trying to stop them will help quiet the mind. So, through meditation, women gain clarity about life.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Ch'an and Zen meditations bring about awareness in the present moment. It also keeps us away from preoccupied thoughts, feelings and perceptions of our past experiences. Ch'an meditation brings about clarity, emotional positivity and a calm seeing of the true nature of the things. The practices of Ch'an and Zen meditations in the morning and in evening are necessary to be centered in oneself. It gives an opportunity to unplug and refocus. It establishes openness in oneself. When more energy is poured out from a clear and focused mind, women are able to achieve greater responsibilities with more diligence. Women are being more conscious about their health, education, career, job and responsibilities towards family, society and country. They are taking part in every field of our country. Women empowerment through meditative practices of Ch'an and Zen is the better option for an empowerment of human existence.

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