

ZEN.....

.....when you become aware that something is missing...

.....as we walk, eat, wash ourselves and sit...

we are aware that we are walking, aware that we are eating,
aware that we are washing ourselves, aware that we are sitting
when so many are not aware when they walk, eat, wash themselves and sit...
we walk, eat, wash and sit with mindfulness....

.....when spontaneity, irreverence, rebelliousness, freedom are valued...

.....when simple meditation brings a deep intimacy with what you see and hear...
acquiring a new insight (*satori*) into the deep essence of things...an intuitive
looking into the depth of reality beyond what our intellect and logical
understanding can grasp...

.....when you discover you are free now, that there is no chain or obstacle holding you
down, that your real task is to get rid of all illusions about reality that paralyze you so
you become aware of the reality that is both inside you and outside you...

.....when story-riddles (called koans) startle you into discovering who you really are...

.....when practicing awareness over a long time
frees you from being stuck in any one viewpoint...

.....when you discover by nature how interconnected you are
with all things, rendering you resilient and compassionate...

.....is built upon a discipline of

1. regular meditation
2. a strong relationship between a teacher and a student
3. practicing with a community (*sangha*)

.....zen meditation (*zazen*) involves

-choosing comfortable, loose clothing

-choosing one of 7 basic positions

*full lotus = right foot on left thigh and left foot on right thigh

*half lotus = right foot on left thigh and left foot on floor

*Burmese = bend both legs in front but not crossed

*Seiza = kneeling with legs apart, sitting back on your heels

*The Horse = kneeling with legs apart,

sit back on your pillow with it on end under your buttocks

*with a Seiza (wooden) bench = sit back on the bench with your legs together
and your feet inside the legs of the bench

*with a chair = sitting far enough forward so your back does not slouch into
the back of the chair

-placing your hand in the *cosmic mudra* = your active hand palm up cradles
your passive hand, with your thumbs touching...

-head with your ears aligned with your shoulders, chin slightly down, spine
straight and jaw relaxed...

- eyes looking down toward the floor about 3 feet from you with focus softened so you are not really looking at anything
- tongue against the roof of your mouth where your teeth and gums meet
- watch your breathing, counting *one* with inbreath and *two* with outbreath, then *three* with inbreath and *four* with outbreath and so on up to ten, then repeat
- practice without judging your practice = treat yourself gently. When your mind wanders, treat it like a toddler who's wandered into a road, bringing it gently back to safety. Treat distractions like bath water which you calmly let go down the drain
- Basically try zazen by yourself once in the morning and once each evening, and sit with a sangha once a week for an hour, and sit with them for a full day once a month, and aim for a week-long sesshin (retreat) once a year.
- after you've developed a stable meditation practice, your teacher may introduce a koan for your reflection. The koan will challenge you to let go of logic, of preconceived ideas and rational explanations so your consciousness grows to the point of experiencing both the unity and the diversity of the universe. Koans are meant to unlock the mind so that your ideas of Buddhism, zen practice itself, and enlightenment are exploded so that we see these are right here and now and present in our lives already. The result is a deeper insight into who we are, what reality is and how we are connected to everything.
- After a strong discipline of meditation is established, counting breaths and studying koans are left behind, you and your teacher may decide it is time for you to enter deeper into silent sitting, called *shikantaza*, the purest form of zazen.
- Walking meditation (*kinhin*) is often used to stretch the muscles after a period of sitting and is done by a whole group of meditators walking in a circle.
- Retreats are often interspersed with Dharma talks by the teacher as well as periods of simple work for the opportunity to use your deep meditative mindfulness during work.
- All of these techniques are means of achieving an absolute stillness and through this to reach a deep joy and wisdom when your body and mind fall away, leaving the real you.