

Dark Zen Meditation

A Buddhist Meditation Manual

Zenmar

The Zennist

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Introduction

The general aim of this manual is to give the spiritual adept a no non-sense, bare bones, approach to accomplishing Dark Zen Meditation [hereafter, DZM]. No doubt this manual will have to be read several times because the subject matter is alien to modern thought. For our world is now almost hopelessly sunk into the gloomy light of materialism. For this reason, the spiritual world is new territory for our modern culture, which is used to grasping at physical things. It follows, therefore, that to understand DZM a certain amount of intuitive work will be required on the part of the reader to bring about the accomplishments and rewards of the practice. To accomplish DZM is not easy.

But it can be done and has been successfully done by others.

For a long time, something has been missing in today's conventional Buddhist meditation, which is practiced throughout many Buddhist centers in the world. All too often, a beginner's experience with meditation or even that of a veteran meditator will turn out to be uneventful in terms of producing a genuine spiritual awakening. Moreover, if meditation is for the sake of getting in touch with the essence of Buddhism, why then has its modern form been nothing less than a disappointment for many? Of its benefit, there is little that can be praised except to say that while meditation is being practiced, it produces a calming effect. Even with this benefit, meditation often proves to be a tedious exercise of just learning how to sit still. This is often the case with the Zen practice of the

sesshin which can be a formal sitting marathon taking place over many days. There are, of course, side benefits to learning how just to sit still. One can learn patience, for example. But, by and large, this kind of meditation doesn't succeed in pushing back the veil of primordial ignorance. It might be argued that it even perpetuates ignorance because no real advance is made which goes beyond ignorance.

What else is meditation for except as a means by which to catch a glimpse of the higher world and further develop a connection with it? It is mentioned in the oldest Buddhist canon that Moggallana, a chief disciple of the Buddha, was said to meditate that he might get into touch with other worlds, to be able to report the fate of those who were once on earth. Surely, this is no ordinary accomplishment.

In other parts of the canon, it is said that during meditation, the adept has a clear observation of his perception being different from his physical body, such that while his perception seems enveloped by the physical body, it is actually *disembodied*. Other references in the canon state that during meditation the adept creates a spiritual body apart from the physical body, although not without sensory faculties. These references in the canon are not to be taken lightly, nor are they meant to be passed off as superstition or mumbo jumbo.

In what might be characterized as the highest meditation, the adept regards his corporeal body and mental life to be transitory. He then, it is said, turns his mind from them to the undying realm which, by implication, is not transitory.

To reiterate, while many practitioners these days have tried some form of meditation, the fruits won are usually lackluster if not a total disappointment. This is especially the case with Zen Buddhist zazen practice whose adherents believe that zazen was the meditational practice of the Buddha. But a closer examination of zazen's history reveals that it was developed during the Sung Dynasty (960–1279) in China. It is therefore questionable as to whether or not zazen was the actual meditation of the Buddha.

Regarding the Buddha's own meditation, he sat under the Assatha Tree. This of course is symbolic and is to be taken mythologically. Sitting under the Assatha Tree, the Buddha was actually accessing the undying spiritual light by which all living creatures are animated. In other words, he was not following his breath or just sitting, which

appears to be the chief goals of zazen. His meditation accessed something deep and profound which was beyond the breath and in fact, beyond the reach of mortal consciousness. The reader should understand that the Buddha's meditation was far from ordinary. It was not about just sitting the way many modern Zennists believe, but coming into contact with a most divine light, if we may call it that.

This author has found the missing meditation practice of the Buddha. It is also the meditation practice of the Zen masters of old. We believe that not only is DZM the authentic meditation the Buddha taught to all of his followers, but we have now verified it, which will be evident throughout this manual. But first it is important to stress that the best proof of the efficacy of DZM lies within the adept's own capacity to reap the fruits of DZM,

thus putting his life in accord with the Buddha's true teaching, winning liberation from the bonds of samsara. The author believes that the accomplishment of DZM will be so profound for the reader as to banish all doubts that DZM is not the meditation the Buddha originally taught.

Turning now to the underlying principle of DZM, which will be covered throughout the manual, this principle is simple and straightforward. The Buddha had no reason to make the principle of his meditation difficult to grasp for anyone with a pure heart and unsullied vision. If one has an open mind which is not encumbered by various kinds of prejudices, the door to undying spiritual light will open through the practice of DZM. Perhaps the only difficulty or complication in understanding the Buddha's meditative principle comes as a result of over thinking.

Simply stated, the underlying principle of DZM consists in remembering and yoking with the spiritual light which animates our physical body and foremost, animates the body's breathing. This spiritual light is not to be regarded as a byproduct of the body, but instead is to be understood as completely *anterior* to the whole of the body itself. Adding to this, we can say that this spiritual light is the source of our very life without which we would be dead. Moreover, this light is undying which means that as we come to access it more and more by DZM, we will no longer fear our death and what follows afterwards. This is to say, we shall have gained eternal life by meditating on this spiritual light.

After the initial accomplishment of DZM there is put before us a new way of understanding Buddhism that makes its huge canon easy to understand. Buddhism then stops being a

religion consisting of various beliefs and ethical practices. It is recognized that Buddhism provides the actual means to realizing complete spiritual fulfillment that this spiritual light offers, which quenches all possible desire.

As a personal accomplishment, DZM culminates in our complete emancipation from the bewitching power of phenomena, thus setting our spirit free of its former bondage to things—most notably, the physical body which is a constant source of suffering. With this new revelation that DZM brings us, we can see that our former state of being was completely blind to the spiritual light's free and natural power. We come to understand that we were never in actual bondage. It was all like a dream. Put into other words, we know our true body is one of undying spiritual light rather than mere flesh.

Upon practicing and engaging with the fruit of DZM, the previous constraints imposed by ignorance over time, dissolve in this light. Life becomes richer as a result—its old sting subsiding. We can now accept our biological suffering while, at the same time, realize that the undying spiritual light which animates our body is the beginning of a new body to which we are to be joining.

The Slogans of Dark Zen

*Directly pointing to the Buddhist light
Seeing the ultimate ground of existence
Thus realizing Buddhahood,
This is the dark transmission outside
Of scriptural interpretation.*

The Foundational Teaching

Before we attempt to take up the actual practice of DZM, it is first necessary to have a rudimentary grasp of the Buddha's foundational teaching. Let's begin by saying that it is important to understand that Buddhism does not impose any creed upon its followers. There is nothing in which to blindly believe.

In one sense, Buddhism is very pragmatic. The outcome reveals the truth. For ultimately, what the Buddha teaches can be spiritually witnessed and spiritually verified by each of us.

The core of the teaching of Buddhism is centered around helping us access the living

spirit which animates all of us. For purposes of simplification we shall refer to this animating spirit as the *Buddhic light* since it is this light which the Buddha witnessed.

Following this, the ethical side of Buddhism is straightforward. It is about making it possible for us to comprehend the Buddhic light. If we become distracted by the ways of the world and especially by our passions, it is not possible to spiritually witness the Buddhic light. If we get caught up in the web of materialism trying to acquire and possess wealth, we cannot access the Buddhic light. In a word, the ethic of Buddhism is really about keeping spiritual hygiene. We endeavor to stay away from conduct which dulls and inhibits our ability to meditate successfully. Otherwise, we won't be able to distinguish our breathing from the breather who is detached from the body; although it may seem to be otherwise.

The ethical side of Buddhism is, therefore, limited to a specific accomplishment. If our conduct doesn't bring us to the Buddhic light, we need to alter it until it does. An ethic which is behavior based can't be of much benefit for accessing the Buddhic light. When the few access the Buddhic light, if only briefly, then commences the real path—a path in the sense of expanding the initial acquaintance with the Buddhic light.

We may ask, “How do we tell we have had a genuine cognition of this light?” Indeed, this is part of the foundational teaching as well. If we practice meditation, we need to have some idea when we have acquired the Buddhic light rather than accessing something imaginary. *When our acquaintance with the Buddhic light is made, it doesn't abandon us.* This is one important indication of access in addition to the fact that accessing the Buddhic light is

virtually self-verifying. In most other forms of meditation, experiences gained, over time, eventually fade. Being subjective experiences, we are never sure of their authenticity. These acquisitions are not fulfilling. They fall short of the mark. Since the acquired experience relies on form and technique, the outcome is not any greater than the sum of form and technique.

With the Buddha's meditation, form and technique are almost incidental. The goal is to reach the treasure trove of light which is beyond form and technique. Once the treasure is found, nothing more in the way of technique is required. After we gain access to the Buddhist light, by the intuition of being prior to our breathing, we then come to a new understanding of meditation. It is not necessary to sit, for example, since the Buddhist light is ever present within us,

although at times more faintly than other times. No matter what we do, so long as we cherish it, it remains.

Although in the beginning it might seem that the Buddha's ideas about meditation are subjective and sometimes inscrutable, nevertheless, the Buddha intends that anybody might see and verify the truth for themselves which he discovered under the mysterious Assatha Tree. Ultimately, the Buddhist light, which is the foundation of Buddhism, can still be found within each of us. Moreover, this undying light is real—more real than this temporal body which we prize and hold dear.

Specifically, what does all this mean in a nutshell? It means that the Buddha's foundational teaching is about revealing the principle of undying animation which governs

and moves our body. The ethical practice is about maintaining spiritual hygiene so that we might acquire the undying Buddhist light. It is of great importance because it can alleviate our suffering. The *Avatansaka Scripture* says:

“The pure light is not shone in vain. Any who meet it, the pure light will cause to dissolve heavy barriers.”

Another aspect of the foundational teaching is to think of the Buddhist light to be an intelligible light which has the ability to help anyone who realizes it and cherishes it. It alone can lift the heavy barriers of suffering which plagues the human condition. More to the point, the Buddhist light acts as our protective refuge.

Part of the history of the foundational teaching understands the Buddha to be called the *light-*

bringer. He was also called the *light-maker*.

With regard to what he found, there is no higher. With finding this light as our goal, the path to the location of the Buddhist light is what DZM makes possible.

The path to the goal is varied. It can either be a direct path or a confusing path going in many directions—even in circles. The directness of the path depends, largely, upon our openness and our lack of confusion. The directness also depends on our spiritual attitude with respect to the effects of our previous karma. The Buddha said this present body of ours is old karma. At this point, it needs to be mentioned that old karma, the physical body of our birth with which we are presently connected, is a powerful adversary and cannot easily be set aside if one is to successfully accomplish meditation. Whether or not we find the

Buddhic light largely depends, therefore, on how we view our present physical body, and how we handle the many delusions karmically associated with it. If we can successfully voyage through the body's afflictions, especially the powerful urge to follow the conditioned world of which the body is heir, our confusion and ignorance will proportionally diminish. The Buddha's meditation can then be successfully accomplished. If, on the other hand, we are easily affected and seduced by worldly afflictions and urges of the body, meditation will not be accomplished. Therefore, we must always have a dispassionate attitude towards our body if we are to overcome old karma. Karma, it should be underscored, can only be escaped when we witness the Buddhic light. Short of this, we are doomed to unending rebirth. For the idea of rebirth is based upon willing what we believe will bring us true

fulfillment; whether or not what we will is adequate with the way things truly are. The truth that the Buddha discovered is that only access to the Buddhist light will give us complete fulfillment which we so desperately seek by hoping to end our thirst. Our search for fulfillment can be imagined as a line which, going out, either perfectly comes back to itself in the form of a ring or misses itself. Short of coming back to itself, there is only frustration and error. This error is samsara in which countless beings undergo various degrees of suffering.

The foundation of DZM practice

In setting the foundation for DZM practice, the Buddha wishes us to understand that what we are in terms of our body is really an artificial construction. Our body is devoid of our true nature in the same way a house is devoid of the builder who made it—although it did have a builder. This is not to suggest there is no true reality for us. Indeed, there is. However, what is real is not this body and its emotional world of reactions and pains; even though we cling to our body in the strong belief that some part of it is our true nature.

According to the Buddha, our present condition shows no evidence of being real. In fact, if we closely examine our body it becomes evident that its entire psycho-physical

existence is one of impermanence, pain, and a false sense of self. This physical body stands in proxy for who we truly are which is light-like and is called *Dharmakaya*. The self who is identified with the physical body is not actually who we are, because as the Buddha pointed out, if it were the true self it would not suffer. This individual self which we believe to be actual is really just the awareness of the temporal body which is subject to disease, old age, and death. Our awareness is never free of what it beholds. In fact, awareness can only behold coarse sensory phenomena, including suffering. Figuratively speaking, our present condition is like being trapped inside of a robot, not remembering our birth into it. But our true self is not this robot although it sees everything through the robot body. Rather, our true self is made of undying, spiritual light which we have forgotten and cannot detect with our robot senses. Living inside this

robot, over time, we have come to over identify with it, believing more and more that it is who we really are. All we are really doing is transferring and superimposing our true spiritual nature onto the robot body so that it appears to be real. As a result, we come to lose the sense of our true nature which is now bound up with the awareness of robot individuality!

Clearly, our first duty must be to break the spell the robot has cast upon us and secondly, to locate our true undying nature. This involves seeing the Buddhic light which animates the robot, distinguishing it from the robot body. The practice for doing this is meditation. Meditation is always, therefore, a way of telling our true nature from the false, artificial being.

By the practice of meditation, we first begin to learn to stop following the thoughts and emotions that arise from the body which we erroneously believe harbors the true self. Such a belief is always misleading us. It will never bring us to everlasting peace and Nirvana.

Finally, we should note that without using DZM, meditation will just consist of facing our body from which we have been led to believe there is no escape. Indeed, some teachers believe this is the method of meditation. The student learns to accept their death.

We also have a refuge from this unwholesome way of existing because what we truly are, namely, the true self, has never been actually reborn into this body. This might explain why the Buddha, before the death of his physical body said the following:

“Therefore, Ananda, stay as those who have the self as light, as those who have this refuge of self, as those who have no other refuge; as those who have the foundation as light, as those who have the refuge of this foundation, as those who have no other refuge.”

While we have come to identify with almost an infinite succession of painful bodily existences, we have never actually been reborn into any one of these perplexing existences because fundamentally, we are potentially identical with the unborn light that animates our body. Our rebirth into countless bodies, some god-like and some less than so, only appears to be this way because we are inverted. This means that we are turned to look towards the corrupt, changing world of phenomena, as perceived through the body, instead of beholding *the light* which is changeless and undying; which is before the body—this being our true nature.

It is the intent of DZM, as a result of this inversion, to restore our true anterior position, to bring us out of our confinement in this present body. Practice will, therefore, consist in learning to turn away from the phenomenal world by repeatedly turning to the Buddhist light so as to follow this light upwards. This will enlarge our contact with it so that we increasingly merge into this Buddhist light as a result. Only by this path, which is started by DZM, can we overcome suffering. There is no other means.

To explain the phenomenal world, it is that which we see before us through our sensory organs, which is subsequently interpreted by us. In relationship to the spiritual light of the Buddha, this light is always prior to phenomena and the work of human interpretation. If we attempt to use our sensory powers to perceive the spiritual light,

this light will remain inconceivable. It is uncreated, despite the fact that without it we could not draw in a single breath.

For our entire existence, it has never occurred to us that by *turning around*, we can engage with the light of the Buddha. This light animates our physical body so that we can partake in its power and see the undying nature of this light as the Buddha witnessed it. Many of us, however, choose to follow the ways of the world becoming more entangled in it because we believe it is the true world. The majority are like a thirsty person chasing after mirages hoping to quench his thirst. This is the meaning behind the idea of samsara in which we repeatedly become conscious of new bodily births and subsequent deaths owing to our thirst for phenomena.

To engage with the light of the Buddha, and subsequently enlarge it, DZM uses the breath as a meditation subject (including even koans and other subjects when necessary). By utilizing the breath as the subject of meditation, the adept does not follow his breathing and, subsequently, does not follow his body. This is key and what sets DZM apart from other forms of meditation which use the body, in some form, as a meditation object. DZM demands that the adept envisage *being mentally prior to the breathing cycle*, so as to distinguish that which animates the breathing process from breathing itself.

DZM is yoking with that which breathes us; which is our intrinsic, true nature or self.

Why is this so crucial? It is because, as we touched on earlier, the body is an artificial construction and lacks genuine permanence which authentic selfhood offers. If we wish to

escape the body's destruction, caused by our over sympathy with it, we must learn to identify with our true nature which is undying. More specifically, we have to identify with the Buddhic light which is not of the mortal body which is, instead, thoroughly before it. This light is most realized and distinguished from the physical body by the practice of trying to *be before the in and out breath*. This is an important method, because breathing is, to a degree, subject to our control which belongs to the will or *citta* (often translated as 'mind' or 'will').

From a Buddhist perspective, since we are fundamentally the will, we can engage with the undefiled part of will rather than the defiled part associated with breathing. So, we have the opportunity to discover how to be actually *before the breath* rather than being always mentally after it. By doing so we reach our

pure will which is naturally liberated and independent of the body. This is really the meaning of liberation.

The beginning

Any spiritual practice should begin from within—not from without as if it were a behavior. More specifically, the spiritual life begins in the deepest recesses of our being. It stands between the physical body and the Buddhist light. Even much deeper than our personality, which seems always drawn to the sensory world, our inner being has the capacity to differentiate between the physical world and the spiritual world. This is the way to the Buddha's magnificent spiritual light. This is to say, our inner being knows that the true world is not anything that is material or sensible. In addition, it knows that all phenomena are empty of true reality. Lastly, our inner being understands that falling into sympathy with sensuous things which make

up the material world, can lead to repeated births of suffering. It is the inner being who is the meditating one who will seek the Buddhist light and converge with it and thereby attain liberation. It is not the physical body which is always subject to destruction which seeks the Buddhist light. There is not a single thing in the body which will survive its destruction. Why then, utilize the body as a vehicle of deliverance? Why spend so much time in useless physical exercises such as perfecting sitting with legs crossed in the belief that doing such will make one a Buddha? Contrary to such bad reasoning, it says the following in the glorious *Avatansaka Scripture*:

"If physical activities were proper religious practices, then such practices would consist of walking, standing, sitting, lying down, using the senses to look around in all directions."

If we are to engage successfully with the right Buddhist meditation practice we must give up the belief that meditation is for the sake of the body, such as making it calm. Going to the Buddhic light is our refuge, not our physical body. In fact, there is nothing comprising our body which can be taken as a worthwhile refuge. All proper refuges are transcendent—never mundane like the physical body.

Let us now read the following excerpt from the *Itivuttaka-Atthakatha* of the Buddhist canon and ponder its meaning.

“By anapanassati is meant: recollection turned towards [breathing’s] source, the goal of recollection is to thoroughly eclipse in-breathing-out-breathing.”

The overall goal of breath meditation (i.e., *anapanassati*) is to conquer the sensory body by recollecting that which is prior to its workings and to its sufferings, both mental and physical. In the case of the previous passage, to be more specific, we surpass the sensory body by recollecting the very source of our breathing, hopefully to thoroughly eclipse the breath which is tied to the body.

Said in another way, when we are thoroughly before our breath, both the in and out breath, we have attained the goal of meditation. This exercise, we need to emphasize, is not about following the breath or finding the midpoint between the breaths. Nowhere, in a single verse, in the entire Buddhist canon does the Buddha tell his students to follow the breath. Buddhists and non-Buddhists who engage in so-called “breath following” are following other than an original Buddhist meditation practice.

In the *Majjhima-Nikaya*, the Buddha tells us in clearest words that breath is tied up with the physical body.

“In-and-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That's why in-and-out breaths are bodily functions.”

As a form of meditation, how can following bodily functions truly benefit us? It yokes us further to the frail body. It is not sound advice to follow the breath as a form of meditation.

It is sound advice to mentally seek out the source of the breath and fully come to be before the breath and the body joining with a measure of the Buddhist light which is transcendent. This is in fact, what is being suggested in this particular passage:

“Having sat cross-legged and straightened his body, having brought forth the thoroughly anterior remembrance, just remembering [it] he breaths in, remembering [it], he breaths out.”

In the beginning stages of DZM the precise sense of being thoroughly anterior to the breath is mixed with the physical sensation of breathing itself, which we are habitually conditioned to following. This is confusing and needs to be cleared up. A sharp and clear distinction needs to be made between the breath, itself, and the state which is thoroughly anterior to the entirety of breathing—being the source of the breath. To do this, we can use the image of a bellows. We know that the bellows is clearly distinct from *the anterior power* which works the bellows, this being our hands. At the same time, the power that moves the bellows does not originate from within the bellows but, instead,

originates outside of it. Likewise, there is a clear distinction between the source which activates our breathing, and the breathing, itself.

Presented in another way, the thoroughly anterior is reflected on the mirror of the nerves, in a manner of speaking. This is where the breathing begins. What we sense is not the source of breathing. Thus, the sensational reflection I sense as breathing is not thoroughly antecedent. The breath is not myself, for I am anterior to breathing. The breather is beyond the body. At this point I must remember my true former abode which is prior to breathing.

In practicing this way, the adept will eventually come to yoke with the source which is prior to all modes of breathing, including the very body itself. Then, by repeatedly

recollecting the source, the adept will advance to the undying light of the Buddha, sensing it more and more, thus relinquishing the habit of possessing the body and each of its functions. Eventually, the adept will achieve liberation from samsara which is disembodiment (Nirvana).

It is important to remember that the thoroughly anterior is like an invisible current of energy leading us back to our undying homeland. In the past, we were so blind as to be unable to realize that the breather is neither the breath nor the body. The breather, we could say, is undying which can be characterized as an energizing power.

For the beginner attempting to accomplish DZM the greatest difficulty is letting go of the in breath and the out breath as if these were the only two possible states. Some try to

overcome this difficulty by focusing on some point between the in breath and the out breath. But this point is imaginary. It doesn't access the prime mover of breathing.

That we are able to sense the in breath and the out breath and not be either one should tell us that there is something beyond the breath with which we are connected, although we are at a loss to fully actualize it. Thus, when we are mindful of the in breath and the out breath we are so in virtue of not being either breath. When our mindfulness is directed to what is thoroughly anterior to breathing itself, it is possible and highly likely that we will sense the Buddhic light.

It is expected that anyone beginning DZM will become frustrated in trying to accomplish the practice. But basically the difficulty is that the adept stubbornly clings to the belief that

he begins with breath and ends with it. He cannot accept that he is not the breath or that he initiates the breath from beyond the sphere of the corporeal body. Indeed, bad habits run deep. But eventually right practice pays off if one looks for the anterior source of their breathing while continuing to naturally breathe.

Sooner or later, one meets with a unique experience as if a magnetic-like current suddenly entered them.

Posture

While many Buddhists focus on assuming an upright posture, sitting on a special meditation cushion with their legs crossed in either a full lotus or a half-lotus yogic posture, it is important to stress that being prior to one's breathing is the real goal of the practice. If sitting alone were sufficient to win enlightenment we would experience the bliss of liberation every time we sat down!

Nevertheless, posture does indirectly affect the adept's attention (especially with beginners) and the adept's ability to sustain a connection with the goal. Only a few words of advice will be necessary on the subject of posture.

When the spinal column is properly aligned we feel much better. For example, try standing

for a long time hunched over. It is painful. Naturally, it feels better to be standing straight. Thus, how we align ourselves is very important. We must be at ease if we wish to attune to being thoroughly antecedent. When the neck is in proper alignment it insures that all the air that needs to be expired is expired. When the tongue is placed against the roof of the mouth and the eyes are properly focused the inner physical body's organs are nourished with vitality. In sum, when the posture is correct the body is in better harmony with our mind.

But our mind still needs further training. Our inner vision needs to be converted from a coarse vision, looking towards the outer world of sensory objects, to a subtle vision, that can see the invisible world of spirit that is before the entire body.

Crossed-leg meditation, which is a posture, mainly serves to intensify and enrich the body's nervous system, but it does not satisfy the mind's spiritual need for growth nor the body's need for proper blood circulation which if not maintained can lead to such problems as blood clots. To remedy this, crossed-leg meditation requires the strong antidote of hard physical practice consisting of a great deal of physical exercise such as walking, the oldest practice of Zen Buddhism.

Another word of caution, Zen Buddhism has never stressed crossed-leg meditation as a means of enlightenment. This is clear from the many sayings of the Zen masters of old who understood Zen to be about wisdom which differentiates the Buddhic light from the corporeal world comprising our body together with its sensations. When cross-legged sitting becomes the main thrust of Buddhism, as is

the case in some Zen Buddhist schools, meditation becomes in the word of one Zen master, “ghost sitting” in which the adept tries to imitate a sitting corpse. This is roughly equivalent to the Jain practice of “abandoning the body” in which the Jain adept sits motionless. What is ignored is the light which animates the physical body and its physiological functions. The entire goal of meditation is to access this light, which we call the Buddhist light. Attending to the body or abandoning it are the two gross errors of meditation the Buddha rejected until he found the true Middle Way—the medium of the Buddhist light.

Access

One who is successful at making access to the source of their breath, which is prior to the in and out breath, may first experience a faint magnetic-like current in either the head region or in the chest region around the area of the sternum. These are two critical points of contact which are more sensitive to the Buddhist light than are other parts of the body. The head and chest are equally nourished by this light. This magnetic-feeling, in addition, can be increased as we do DZM many times. It needs to be stressed that once access is made the amount of time spent accessing the Buddhist light is critical. For the number of times eventually leads to a qualitative change in the light's ability to enter into communion with the adept. The more substantial the

presence of the light, the more wisdom is acquired.

Wisdom, in this sense, is the ability to discern between the Buddhic light and the phenomenal body which is immersed in samsara. Some adepts have reported ecstatic enjoyment upon access which is felt to be fully blissful. What seems unquestionably universal in accessing the Buddhic light through DZM is the surprise upon recognizing that this incoming light was there all the time, except that we forgot to turn to it—turning, instead, to the spiritless world of phenomena.

Next, it is important to visualize this contact as being just the beginning and not the end. The inception of the Buddhic light is like a tender green sprout from an acorn which still needs time to mature before it becomes an oak tree. Continuing with the practice of DZM is

therefore very important. Once the light is firmly established, the Buddhist light does not depart, even in physical or mental pain. This fact is the “seal of authenticity” that one has successfully accomplished the most important part of DZM, which is its inception.

With access it is easy to understand what suffering really means including its root cause, its cessation, and the path leading to the subjugation of suffering. First of all, suffering is always to be viewed in the context of *myself in relation to the body* into which I am thrown, which poisons me with the Three Poisons of stupefaction, malice, and sensuous desire. It makes it almost impossible for anyone to understand the Buddha’s sublime teachings. Suffering constantly arises because we are attached to corporeal forms thereby losing our connection with the Buddhist light. This also means that we lack the capacity to see the

non-suffering Buddhist light which ever lies outside the reach of the corporeal. If, on the other hand, we gain access to the Buddhist light, then a path is opened for us by which to escape from the corporeal labyrinth of suffering and subsequent rebirth into still more states of suffering.

After Access

After access, as we sense the current of Buddhist light streaming into our body, we know that it will be correcting our former errors. Reason tells us that we are in harmony whereas before we were not in harmony. Previously, we were living a one-sided life by adhering to the body, as it were, renouncing our very life giving spirit. With access, we are now aware of the spirit which quickens the breath and the body. We sense we are now a part of this spirit. We can freely choose to enter into communion with it, reaching, in a manner of speaking, the undying other shore where all suffering comes to an end.

After access, the old inclinations to adhere to the body are gradually overcome, but not without struggle. For the adept is still under the rule of many old, powerful habits which have been responsible for past errors. Much of the Buddha's teaching is intended for those who have gained access, but who still need to hold their former ways in check so as to avoid a loss of connection with the Buddhist light. This can happen when, again, one strongly craves rejoinment with sensory phenomena.

One can think of post-access as entering a small river which goes to the Land of Nirvana. Eventually, if one continues following this small river, it turns into a larger river. Gradually this river grows more swift and powerful, carrying our vessel to the Land of Nirvana and deliverance. But while entry is a momentous occasion, the Three Poisons of stupefaction, malice, and sensuous desire are

still operative from which all manner of deceptions arise. To be sure, during the journey our vessel can hit a sandbar or crash on some hidden rocks. Ironically, the Buddha's Way is said to go against the stream. But this stream is the force of habit which leads to repeated suffering. It is not the stream which leads to the undying Land of Nirvana. Our human nature is so disposed that without repeated practice we shall inevitably sink back into our old ways. Thus, getting in the habit of turning to the Buddhist light is of greatest importance.

Further study is also very important. It helps to reinforce and strengthen our faith in the practice. To study what the Buddha taught acts like a standard to insure that we are making forward progress and not just spinning our wheels in the thick mud of the Three Poisons and our own personal opinions.

The profane who deprecate the Buddha's words telling the sincere adept not to study the Buddha's scriptures are just those people who have never witnessed the Buddhist light during their meditations. Because they have not witnessed the light, out of jealousy, they wish those who have entered the sacred stream to Nirvana, called Aryans, to not study Buddha's words. For his words speak of how to increase communion with the Buddhist light. Ironically, profane persons stand guard over the sacred doors of the Buddha's library, in a manner of speaking, not only keeping others away, but keeping themselves away as well. Such people are cruel and truly blind. They assign a higher value to rituals and formal practices because their minds are turned to the poisons of carnal desire adorning their flesh with bright colored robes, worthless religious items, and outward pious shows of meditation. However, their outward

behavior belies a spirit which is in despair. It cruelly contends against the living Buddhist light, not even allowing those yearning for it to commune with it. It is very important to stress this point: *bad ideas set us against the Buddhist light*, restricting access and serving to maintain a deluded and potentially evil state of mind, always running from itself.

It is advised that practitioners of DZM study philosophy to learn how to dismiss corrupting ideas which can disrupt the mind. It is also advised that practitioners of DZM be alert to the modern tendency to distrust religion. We should note that the claims of the religious world should be considered innocent until proven guilty. In addition, science can only deal with the visible world—not the world of spirit.

From the Buddha's lofty perspective, our recollection of this anterior spirit is a beginner's insight—but a very important and vital one. It still needs to be deepened lest the body's old cravings and fears takeover again. Otherwise, the body tends to horrify us over time, shrinking access to our true nature and especially our capacity to commune and assimilate into the Buddhist light. It is very important to spend more of our time pursuing the beautiful teachings of the Buddha which will help us ascend, becoming more of the universal Buddhist light.

Further implications

After repeated access to DZM has been attained, over time just thinking about it will induce the meditation. With this, one should appreciate it to be their true teacher. This teacher illuminates the inner recesses of their being, removing the garments of ignorance acquired during the descent of consciousness into the body after carnal conception.

By no means has one completed the journey to the other shore with DZM. However, access guarantees that one knowing the Buddhist light will be born into higher worlds to fully appreciate its majesty and profundity. We should never forget that the human reception of it is small as compared to what it might be.

DZM can be applied to virtually all actions when it is grasped that the Buddhic light is anterior to all human bodily activities. The Buddhist practice of prostrations, chanting of mantras, and Zen koans are included because they are exclusively based on being prior to the body, the voice, and the mental concept. For example, all the bizarre actions recorded in koans are not so bizarre when we understand that these Zen sages are demonstrating the effecting power of the Buddhic light which is thoroughly antecedent to various gestures and enunciations.

Equally, DZM extends to our daily life. It can be applied by those defending our country, giving them courage, as they have accessed the undying. It can be applied by the peacemakers protecting their hearts from the cruel behavior of unspiritual people who crave oppression and warmongering. One can apply

it to cooking and eating to insure health. It can be especially applied to helping push back disease. For what heals us is not the dead flesh or pills but the living light which enables our body to move, function, and thrive. In a manner of speaking, the Buddhist light first nourishes the physiological body. This body makes up, for example, the heart function, the kidney function, the liver function, and many other such functions which transcend the gross anatomical body. The range of application of DZM is astonishing.

When we are thoroughly anterior to the breath, in proportion does one experience exquisite bliss. In some cases, the bliss is so overwhelming that the body seems to be left behind. Rapture and ecstasy are not, therefore, uncommon to achieve. But more, one begins to understand the Buddha's teachings in a more profound way. No longer

does Buddhism seem negative. In fact, Buddhism is the most life promoting religion on the face of the earth. It has no creed except that we should turn to the Buddhist light and follow it up in order to live in such a way that we will not be reborn into lightless worlds, suffering needlessly.

Because the Buddha is called the light-bringer and especially the light-maker, this does not mean that Buddhism is the only religion which has knowledge of the light. Nor does one have to exclusively be a Buddhist to experience the Buddhist light. Virtually, all religions teach the doctrine of the Buddhist light if we look deep enough into their canons. What is essential to grasp is that Buddhism teaches all religions how to access their divine principle. We might even call Buddhism a generic religion!

Instructions for advanced students

For advanced students who have accessed the Buddhist light the path remains long before they reach full illumination. The reason why is that the habitual tendency to attach to phenomena is great. As a consequence, it will take a long time to overcome the seductive pull of phenomena. In many instances advanced students will be tested. Like the Buddha when he sat under the Bodhi-tree, who fought the army of Mara the Evil One, the advanced student will confront real evil for the first time. If not managed well, this confrontation can be a cause to abandon communion with the Buddhist light. At this stage great faith is required. In the *Avatansaka Scripture* it says, regarding faith:

*Faith is the source of the Way,
And the mother of all benefit.
It causes all the roots of goodness to wax;
It extinguishes all doubts.
It reveals the Peerless Way,
And makes it to increase.*

According to the ancients, faith is a vital, substantial connection with the Buddhist light which amounts to a kind of proof. By faith we can determine if we have true knowledge or not, for faith is superior to knowledge as its test of truth. In other words, we can decide what is true or false only by faith.

To deepen faith, the advanced student must implicitly trust the words of the Buddhas and those words well spoken by the holy sages who have accessed the depth of the light. Indeed, as the Buddha said, “*Words well spoken are the words of the Buddha.*” If we think about the words of the wise their illumination will

come to be near to us serving to bring us benefit. As a result, our faith will be even more strengthened. Conversely, if we continually think about the ways of the world, trusting in it, we shall never fully awaken because we shall be close to those who are bound to samsara—who have no wish to become liberated from its chains. Faith, alone can keep open the once closed doors of the corporeal prison, letting in more spiritual light.

For the advanced student, a new vision of Buddhism eventually emerges as his faith deepens. He comes to see that true Buddhism is about the *will* which we earlier said was the Sanskrit word, *citta*; which is often translated as ‘mind’ by scholars. This is a very important concept for the advanced student to grasp. The Buddhist light can be thought to be like pure will.

As the Buddha beheld the world, he saw that its substance, the will, is blindly striving to find fulfillment for itself. In this respect, each of us is a part of that will attempting to achieve some measure of fulfillment.

Incidentally, this is our common goodness because we all seek fulfillment and relief from the oppression of dissatisfaction. If there is any evil, if we may call it that, it is that we don't believe in complete fulfillment. Instead, we seek imperfect fulfillment. As a consequence, we endure endless suffering.

By being immersed in the Buddhist light, the advanced student sees, as the Buddha did, that the will has constructed many forms of possible fulfillment. For each constructed thing there was a previous willing to achieve fulfillment. But the Buddha found that all *will constructions*, namely, phenomena, will never lead to actual fulfillment. All is doomed to

impermanence, suffering, and non-actuality. The will attaching to its creations only reaps unhappiness in the long run. When we attach to phenomena, we participate in the doom of a phenomenon. In his great wisdom the Buddha understood that when will gives up its thirst for its own creations—no longer believing that they can give it fulfillment, it finally turns to itself and reaches true fulfillment. In other words, only when the will exhausts its possible constructions of fulfillment does it finally realize that it must seek itself. This is the liberation of will of which the Buddha speaks about many times in scripture. This is the goal of all meditation. In final meditation, the will converges with itself and only itself which in Sanskrit is called, *samadhi* and *sambodhi*. This is a mystical event beyond calculative reason. The ordinary mind cannot comprehend it.

Perhaps no philosopher before the Buddha ever thought of this in such a clear and concise way as the Buddha. The Buddha was the first great religious genius to have seen and understood that the world is a manifestation of will seeking and thirsting for fulfillment. He saw that all phenomena are actually attempts of the will to come to rest in true, deepest satisfaction. But since each thing is inadequate when compared with the will itself, the will never comes to complete fulfillment. This is what the Buddha calls samsara in which will is trying to find fulfillment by pursuing its phenomena. Of course, it never finds satisfaction by taking this path. At best it finds temporary satisfaction.

From this we can also see that Nirvana is the will which is coming nearer and nearer to itself, as it were, unbinding itself from its

former constructions which it believed were fulfilling. The will in Nirvana is always experiencing higher and higher grades of fulfillment as it comes nearer to itself.

As a rule advanced students should limit their interactions with people who have not accessed the Buddhist light, who in fact, belittle it. These people are called the profane or in Sanskrit, *prithagjana*. Such people believe they can comment on the Buddha's philosophy without having first gained access to the Buddhist light. This is like a sick man reproving a healthy man, even trying to prove that he is actually sick! These people are unable to see that their thoughts and emotions are will-produced. Wishing a certain kind of fulfillment which is incomplete, they reap the consequences of anger, disappointment, frustration, and depression. They will never grasp the Buddha's teaching.

There is no point in discussing spiritual matters with them.

The advanced student recognizes that a Buddha's will has come into self-identification with itself. The great will of the Buddha has converged with itself, in awakening, finding everlasting fulfillment. His will no longer thirsts for its idealizations as if fulfillment could be found in constructed things and various states of mind. The Buddha's will has also become cool. Like a cooled fire, the will of the Buddha yearns for no more fuel. Nothing more is desired because the Buddha has all that could possibly be. Indeed, this is the meaning of fulfillment.

Over many years, the amount of Buddhist light entering the advanced student gradually increases as they continue with their practice of DZM. One day the advanced student

realizes they are more light than flesh. Their meditation has progressively allowed more of the Buddhist light to enter their vessel of samsara and liberate their being from the wrong belief that they are the corporeal body. With this, the Buddha's teaching becomes even clearer than before.

For those who have not accessed the Buddhist light by DZM no progress is possible. In the *Patisambhidamagga Scripture*, along these lines, the Buddha says:

“The efficient cause of the in and out breath is the unbound singular will. One who is ignorant of this state shall not progress.”

This is why it is so important for beginners to accomplish DZM and for advanced students to muster great faith which will serve to further their progress towards Buddhahood.

Epilogue

DZM has proven to be a new star in an otherwise starless sky of contemporary Buddhist meditation. Success with DZM paves the way for a kind of independent study and practice where a teacher or a guru becomes less necessary if not entirely unneeded in some cases. Following this up, one can say that the worth of any teacher is whether or not they help the serious student discover the Buddhist light. Short of this the role of a teacher is questionable. While some believe that the role of a teacher is to be a therapist for the student, helping the student cope with their psychosocial problems, they are mistaken. Normalizing people to cope with their everyday problems is best left to

psychologists and other trained health care professionals. It is important to recognize that when the body is permitted to adjust to a peaceful environment, the mind becomes likewise peaceful and open. Its former barriers are dropped so that by the practice of DZM the Buddhist light has a better chance to enter.

If the student can't get over the first hurdle by directly accessing the Buddhist light by means of DZM, there can be no real progress made on the Aryan path of Buddhism. In this respect, the role of Dark Zen as an institution must be devoted to helping those who are serious enough to want to access the Buddhist light. They must believe that DZM is effective; which will ultimately lead to the Buddha refuge. But this can only be done by stressing self-reliance. In this regard, Dark Zen is nothing more than a source for self-reliant students

who clearly believe that the Buddhist light is in them and can be brought forth.

Appendix: What is Dark Zen?

According to Zen master Jingjue: “The great enlightenment is dark and mysterious, wordless and unspeakable.” In this sense, the Buddha’s enlightenment is mystical. Dark Zen, therefore, teaches the direct contemplation of the Buddha’s great enlightenment which to ordinary beings seems dark and mysterious.

Above this darkness, however, there is a superessential light. Dark Zen calls this light the “Buddhic light”. The intention of Dark Zen is to teach the worthy how to access the Buddhic light and how to participate with it.

Other schools of Zen Buddhism do not

explicitly teach access to the Buddhist light. In fact, much of modern Zen's literature mentions nothing about the fact that the Buddha is the maker and bringer of divine light. Neither do they mention that this light's nature is pure will which is undying.

Since the Buddhist light is not mentioned how can Zen traditions be anymore than ceremonial at best? It is fair to say that modern Zen is perhaps nothing more than the art of sitting on a pillow trying to be like a corpse. But imitating a corpse is not the message of Dark Zen.

Despite its somber sound, Dark Zen is really very positive. The path of Dark Zen leads to eternal life—not eternal death. The way to achieve eternal life is not by serving an animated corpse which we know as our physical body. One achieves eternal life by

accessing the living spirit which animates the body. Specifically, this is done by using the breath. One merges with the breather who preexists the breath and the corporeal body.

Those who do not believe this can never comprehend the Buddha's great enlightenment. They have elected to follow the course of perishing things, like their body. By attaching to the body and its breathing they are born and perish countless times. They are followers of samsara. Samsara is the endless repetition of birth and its death. In this condition, the will is in a state of abysmal ignorance and suffering.

For those who believe in the possibility of eternal life, which the Buddha discovered, Dark Zen provides them a means of meditation that makes access to the Buddhist light possible. Accessing the Buddhist light, no

more will they suffer rebirth into lower forms of being.

About the institution of Dark Zen, it promotes the theory that great sages of the past retreated from the secular ways of the world as a means of preserving their spiritual integrity. They then looked within to find their true nature. What they found was that the will was impure which is the animation principle of their existence. After seeing a moment of the will's purity, which is transcendent, they then went on to amplify it calling this practice.

The institution of Dark Zen believes that teachers can serve a valuable function. They might be called "external integrity" to insure that one's practice does not contradict the Buddha's words. By the same token, teachers are limited. They are not a substitute for one's internal integrity. Teachers have no capacity

to awaken another. How much of the barrier to enlightenment is removed in order to see the Buddhist light depends solely upon the student.

The overall mission of Dark Zen is to preserve the mystical tradition of Zen Buddhism against the encroachment of secularism. Dark Zen understands that secularism promotes worldly values as distinguished from spiritual ones. Such worldly values corrupt the heart and make it impervious to the Buddhist light. Dark Zen recognizes that much of Buddhism and Zen Buddhism has been over influenced by secular values.

Dark Zen is non-denominational in the sense the Buddha recognized the true goal of religion is to access the universal spiritual light which is free of suffering. With this comes the end of the terror of rebirth into endless states of

suffering. In this regard, Dark Zen is the friend of all religions which teach the ultimate path of light. For it is by accessing this divine light and returning to its power that all suffering is finally put to an end. If there is another means, it is imaginary.

The institution of Dark Zen seeks to promote a Renaissance in all light-based religions. In addition, it wants to provide the means to revitalize these religions by teaching the most efficient way to access the Buddhist light which literally means, “the light which is awakened to itself”.

The institution of Dark Zen realizes that world peace begins with the shedding of fundamentalist religions which are literal in interpretation and worldly in practice. For the purpose religion is to transcend this world reaching its true source. While some

fundamentalist religions may call this light “God” they would rather seek God than the light. This attitude leads to an overall destabilization of the principle of religion, itself.

Glossary of terms

Aryan (Sanskrit): One who has attained an initial realization of the Buddhist light.

Assatha Tree (Pali): Tree of fore breath i.e., the Bodhi-tree. More specifically, the tree under which the Buddha sat before he became a Buddha. *Assatha* includes the ideas of restoration, revival, and courage.

Bodhi-tree: See Assatha Tree.

Buddhic light: The Buddha is called “the light maker” and the “light bringer”. The goal of Dark Zen Meditation [DZM] is to experience this light. In Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddhist light maybe called, *Bodhicitta*.

Citta: The ultimate substance of all things. Some translate *citta* as mind. However, in many respects, it is closer to the English and German notion of *will*. The German

philosopher Schelling (1775–1854) wrote: “The will is primary Being and to it alone are applicable all its predicates: groundlessness, eternity, independence of time, self-assertion.”

Dharmakaya (Sanskrit): The pure radiant nature of will (see *citta*) in so far as it is the basis or foundation of all things. It is the actual body of a Buddha.

Guru (Sanskrit): A teacher of spiritually profound wisdom.

Jain: A practitioner of the religion of Jainism. Jainism is an Indian religion founded in the 5th century BC by Mahavira who was a prince like the Buddha. In fact, their lives were very similar. Jainism understands that the soul is in bondage owing to influxes of subtle matter. The cause for this is leading a corrupt life of harming. The soul is not only in bondage becoming weighed down by matter, but it continues to be reborn accumulating even more matter which is the cause of its

suffering. To be free of suffering means to refuse to allow further matter to enter the soul by annihilating present matter using severe ascetic methods. As a result of asceticism, the soul ascends to the apex of the universe, being free of material accumulations. This is liberation for the Jain.

Karma (Sanskrit): Individual willing, in so far as it is not whole. By continuing to will individuality, (being a part of the whole rather than the whole), one receives justice in proportion as they negate the whole in order to maintain their individuality. The more they negate the whole, the more adverse is the result of their karma.

Karma, Old: The human body that we inhabit which is the result of previous individual willing.

Koan (Japanese): A problematic case or example of an enlightened person doing or saying something to a non-enlightened person

that seems paradoxical. The koan exercise was mainly developed during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279). The koan is instructive in helping serious Zen Buddhist practitioners awaken to the subtlety of the Buddha's enlightenment, directly experiencing an aspect of it.

Mantra (Sanskrit): A will-empowered mystic formula.

Mara the Evil One: The personification of death and, in general, the ruler of all of worldly existence.

Mind: See citta.

Nirvana (Sanskrit): The freeing of the will from its attachment to the body so that the will eventually becomes free of the body.

Other shore: See Nirvana.

Prithagjana (Sanskrit): A person who has no experience of the Buddhist light. Often translated as "ordinary person".

Prostration: In some orders of Buddhism

kowtowing is a legitimate form of Buddhist practice.

Psycho-physical: The temporal body comprising the corporeal, sensation, conceiving, experiencing, and perceiving. The Buddha understood the *psycho-physical* to be synonymous with suffering in which there is no Buddhist light. Also, it is considered to be an attribute which is empty of substance.

Rebirth: The rejoining of the spiritual to non-spiritual dimensions (i.e., created things). In the case of human beings, their will seeks out and attaches to lower forms of being which are doomed to endless suffering and death. Since the substance of all is will, it can either come into self-identity with itself and know everlasting joy, or it can attach to its creations which are subordinate to it, thus casting itself into samsara.

Samadhi (Sanskrit): To fully enter into self-identity with the Buddhist light.

Sambodhi (Sanskrit): In the widest sense, the perfect attainment or comprehension of uncreated will. It is the highest accomplishment of the Buddhist light.

Samsara (Sanskrit): The transmigration of will which has not come into perfect self-identity with itself. Instead, it follows its phenomena. Each being, as will, is a totality of willed-out states of being aiming towards fulfillment but instead finding suffering.

When as will-beings we find the pure will, samsara ends. This is otherwise called, the Buddhist light.

Sesshin (Japanese): Literally, the gathering of the will. For those who have access to the Buddhist light, it is period of intense mindfulness, making oneself accessible to the light. Presently, it refers to the marathon practice of sitting for hours or even days and weeks.

Three Poisons: The three make the person

incapable of soundly connecting with the Buddhist light. They are “stupefaction”, “malice”, and “concupiscence”. In each of the three, they serve to block out the Buddhist light. Here the body is predominate; nothing else.

Unborn: This term refers to the increate nature of the pure will.

Will: See citta.

Zen Buddhism: A school of contemplative Buddhism which originated in China eventually finding its way into other Asian countries such as Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.