

REMEMBER ZEN

AWAKEN THE BUDDHA-NATURE WITHIN

Sheldon Moore



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Remember Zen: Awaken the Buddha-nature Within

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For all sentient beings who wish to awaken



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INTRODUCTION

WHY ZEN?

This book of the great way is not about extremes. It simply attempts to use the Zen way of life to offer an accessible path for the spirit in these modern times of confusion, appearance, and overconsumption. Had I written this book many years ago, it would have had some anger in it and far too many pages. The first time I read the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha at the age of twenty-three, the Dharma instantly took hold of me. I am now writing a book on human spirituality and the plight of the environment for one simple reason — there has never been another time in history when humanity's excessive consumption has had such a disastrous impact on the global environment and society in general.

It would have been easier to sit on the side of a mountain and watch the grapevines grow in the stillness, but Mother Earth is crying and the screams of society are not that far away. There is a greater spirit or Buddha-nature within every human being, and it is time for more people to reconnect with it again. This inner nature is timeless and arrives many months before birth. It is our grasping minds spinning out of control with desire that keep this inner nature hidden. Every human

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being is capable of achieving so much more when governed by the Buddha-nature or spirit and not just the mind. If more people reached a higher level of awareness, the chances of a more content and peaceful existence with all living things is possible.

Enlightenment happens when a person attains a higher state of consciousness that is no longer separate from other things, but part of the cosmic whole. We all have a greater potential within, but most fail to realize this. The spirit is often overshadowed by the busy mind, and many never connect with it fully. A perpetual state of bliss is only experienced when one reaches a higher level of consciousness. For the average person, enlightenment seems impossible. Who has the time to follow the same path as a monk? It can sometimes take decades to reach the state of enlightenment, and monks in the past spent many years sitting in rigid positions meditating or chanting mantras. Some aspects of original Zen practice would very likely frustrate the average person of today. Most of us are not prepared to sit on wood planks for years in a monastery meditating and maintaining a perfect posture. In some old schools, if you lost focus or fell asleep, you got a good whack from the Zen master's stick.

The great way does not need to be so difficult if the approach changes; there could be more optimum methods for humans of today. This book explores those methods and the role lunar eclipses can play in spiritual transformation. It also examines why so many ancient cultures built devices to accurately predict when cosmic alignments would occur. It is difficult for the average working person with a family to follow most of the Buddhist practices that were traditionally required to attain enlightenment. In the West, people need a slightly different form of meditation to slow the busy mind down because they are racing in all kinds of directions. Our rapid-paced lives of excess and appearance have allowed our minds to bring much clutter along with us on the spiritual journey through life. It is hard for the mind to let go of all its preferences and attachments, making it that much harder to experience enlightenment. The first thing to do is to rid the mind of desires and impure thoughts. All the false aspects related to human ego

come from the mind, so right thinking changes many things.

Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism that developed across Northern Asia between the fifth and eighth centuries CE. It has many similarities with Tibetan Buddhism but it also incorporated Taoist principles. The Taoist way of simplicity and stillness expressed in nature are all part of experiencing non-attachment and emptiness in Zen. Ultimately, one just needs to learn to let the mind rest freely and all will be revealed. Zen incorporates many common Buddhist themes, but it attempted to speed up the process a little by pointing directly to the soul of humanity. It does not rely on the excessive use of scriptures or too many rituals, so the experience is more about living in awareness. The seeker just needs to look within to reveal the Buddha-nature in a more natural way.

Scriptures and the development of wisdom can help build a person's foundation of being, but it is our actions, words, and thoughts in daily life that really count. The mind creates the false sense of self with all its pride, arrogance, and delusions. We often spend too much time fighting with the mind. Controlling the mind with the mind is a paradox, so the simplicity and naturalness of Zen can offer modern humans a different path to liberation. Trying to act like a stone Buddha is also not the path. Nothing is ever realized if the mind is not thinking straight. We still need to work and contribute to society and our families, so a better balance between a spiritual existence and practical life must be found.

A Zen mind is one that can rest freely without further thought. It no longer grasps after material things or forms other ego-related opinions. If the mind is chasing after worldly things it becomes harder to live the great way. Zen is a kind of stillness that is not of mind nor of no-mind. Think of Zen as a living flower that must emit its own fragrance to be experienced. The stillness and simplicity of Zen can be described with just a few words or a beautiful work of art. One must be natural without trying to be holy, and that is why connecting to nature with clear awareness is the best form of meditation. When one

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reaches a point of stillness in the mind and lives in truth, the gates of enlightenment are near.

THE STATE WE ARE IN

When we look at today's world, we can see some good, but there is far too much poverty, corruption, and moral decay. And when we consider all the crimes, wars, and general lack of wisdom that exists, it becomes obvious humanity has a long way to go spiritually. It is hard to see beauty in our filthy cities. As well, the principles of sharing and kindness are becoming more remote in each generation. Human beings will never change their ways of thinking and end their excessive lifestyles until more of us individually change from within and truly become spiritual beings. We must all learn to end our attachments and let go of the unnecessary.

Humanity is constantly warned about global warming and other environmental problems, but for the most part we just go on living the same way. We watch our societies and nations weaken from within and then wonder why life is speeding up and is out of control. Society has collectively created this race for power and material things. It will require individual change and responsibility to reverse the disastrous effects of living self-serving lives. Just imagine how much easier life would be if humans lived in truth and stopped chasing after so many things. The constant need for material things requires resources and energy from the earth to create them. The human desire for more things is the main cause of global pollution and environmental destruction.

The average person is so busy chasing after things and basically surviving, they completely miss what has been taking place for centuries and is right before their eyes. Our inability to see past our own selfish needs has allowed a constant stream of corrupt regimes, rulers, financiers, and corporations to control the world for millennia. These individuals and groups have played on people's desires and fears and then enslaved them with invisible prisons of debt and taxation. Many

of the old monarchs of Europe and religious institutions used currency and fear to control the masses. Money and fear have always been the primary ways of obtaining and maintaining power over others. This repressive philosophy was then exported abroad when the new world was invaded.

Today our group desire for material excess is so great we have collectively accepted a form of enslavement through debt creation and corporate globalism. It is now time for massive change because the old way has failed everyone and harmed Mother Earth. We are the generation that will leave the children of the future debts they can never repay, as well as a poisoned earth that may never recover. As a conscious people we need to do better than this. Future generations also need clean air and decent water to drink. Do you want your children or grandchildren reading about how complacent and self-serving this generation really was? Now is the time for everyone to wake up and change.

THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW

With the world population fast approaching seven billion people, humanity is still divided by religions, borders, wealth, culture, ideology, and race. Wars continue to rage on while the division between the rich and poor widens. In the West we have many material things, but far too many people are living miserable lives because their minds are never fulfilled for long. Happiness is typically only short-term and most never experience real bliss. We often spend our entire lives servicing debts for things we do not really need. The immediate concern for all of humanity should be to individually lift our level of consciousness and take the necessary steps to come together as a people.

Global unity and a new golden age of enlightenment are meaningless if our current house of worship (Mother Earth) is on fire. If we fail to respect Mother Earth and continue to destroy her ecosystems and biodiversity, we will miss the real opportunity for spiritual advancement on this glorious planet. Scientists all over the globe have reached

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a consensus that extreme levels of global pollution are affecting weather patterns and oxygen levels. Sometimes our lives can become so busy we fail to see the real plight of our earth and society. When we are disconnected from each other and Mother Earth it is only a matter of time before chaos and collapse occurs.

The scars of human activity are visible all over this earth. Each day giant boreal forests in the north and huge rainforests in the tropics are destroyed for wood production and agricultural purposes. Each day we thirst for more and more material things that require natural resources and create vast amounts of pollution to manufacture them. Then as soon as we obtain the next great thing, we quickly become bored and want something new again. Each hour, towns and cities dump partially-treated sewage into rivers, lakes, and oceans. Every second, coal power stations, heavy industry, and automobiles choke our cities with toxic air pollution, while we march on like lemmings for the most part and ignore what is really happening.

Saving our environment will require profound changes in how we live. We all must take giant steps forward spiritually in order to have any real hope of reversing the effects of our greed and ignorance. We have already destroyed too many animal and plant species on this planet. We must start making positive changes at every level within societies, corporations, and governments. All faiths must come together and face this problem before it reaches a point of no return. Making distinctions between faiths now is only going to separate us more, when this truly is the time for global unity.

The endless cycle of chasing and wanting will continue until we develop minds that are wise and still. The human mind can actually reach a point of physical suffering when desires, expectations, and the need for power are not obtained. When we live this way, we are living a mind-body existence only, and the Buddha-nature or spirit within is not properly acknowledged. Advertisers and corporations appeal to this lower mind in humans so they can sell more products. This causes the damaging cycle of overconsumption to never end. The earth does not have enough resources or the capacity to sustain all the desires of

over six billion people wanting things they really don't need.

A person who cultivates wisdom and operates from a place of total compassion and loving kindness will be gentle to others, live in accord with nature, and pollute less. A person who chases appearance, power, and lives a life of excess will lie, scheme, cheat, and stop at nothing to fulfill their desires. The majority of rampant consumerism takes place in the West and among the wealthy in the East, but it is expanding rapidly throughout the developing world. We must change together now, or Mother Earth will force us to take a new direction at some point. When we operate from a higher level of awareness, our communities and governments will also change for the better.

The world needs to follow sustainable economic policies that drastically reduce the release of greenhouse gases and all other forms of environmental pollution. It does not mean we have to abandon all things, it just means we have to consume less and respect Mother Earth more. Until more people gain control of their minds and truly live in spirit again, the massive lifestyle changes required to save the environment and society will probably never occur. Most environmental issues are directly related to personal consumption and that is something every human being on this planet can work towards reducing. We all need to live more simplistic lives again and end this meaningless existence based on materialism and image.

As long as we are chasing appearances, wealth, fame, and power, we will likely never reach a higher state of awareness or enlightenment. A wise person does not need to covet material objects or impress others. Almost every world government is wrongly influenced by powerful corporations and that also needs to change. When people change from within, governments and corporations will become more ethical again. Many governments fear a more sustainable approach to consumption and that sudden environmental policy changes would create a future without industry, or one with too many obstacles for real progress, but this is just not the case. Future growth opportunities will come from doing things the right way.

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AWAKENING THE BUDDHA-NATURE WITHIN

Zen Buddhism has an amazing ability to point directly at one's spirit or Buddha-nature. Gaining awareness forces one to wake up to the present world. Living in an illusory world will not allow anyone to advance spiritually or respect the sacredness of Mother Earth. Only the wisdom of the spirit will reveal the illusory outside world for what it really is. The Buddha-nature within is the golden light that resides in all humans. It does not matter if you call it spirit, soul, Buddha-nature, or original nature, as these are just labels describing the same thing. Zen cultivates the ability to awaken this inner nature, or at least set the conditions for a sudden enlightenment to occur.

The spirit or Buddha-nature is connected to all that is in the universe. All the luminaries and life forms in the universe make up the cosmic consciousness of one. This universal light is within every person, but most of us are so busy chasing our tails we never allow it to shine forth. This inner light is what connects us to all other living things. When more people reconnect with this true nature again the world will start to change for the better. Everyone has the potential to reach a higher state of consciousness. Being spiritual means nothing if you fail to actively take the steps necessary to walk a higher path and ultimately reach the state of enlightenment.

We only need to live a life of love, compassion, beauty, and simplicity in order to follow the great way. Many people often say they are spiritual, but are they truly walking the higher path? People often offer love with conditions when unconditional love must be freely given to all. It is impossible to live in simplicity when you chase appearances and desire too many things in life. To truly become the spiritual being you were meant to be requires a new way of life, and it involves living by the Dharma or some other higher code of conduct. No one will ever acknowledge their Buddha-nature if they are caught up in the manufactured affairs of the world.

In a perfect world that lives in natural harmony with the earth and all other living things, the Zen experience is simple. Its essence must

be experienced and felt, not intellectualized or debated. It can help one reach enlightenment, but it does not require conversion or blind obedience. The practitioner of the Zen way typically follows the traditional teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Everyone must build his or her foundation of being. Zen practice places emphasis on continual awareness. As you begin to take each step with a higher level of awareness your spirit will slowly become the driving force of your being.

ZEN FOR TODAY

A modern interpretation of Zen may appeal to the West in this time of great extremes. Zen has some great methods on how to help the hurried mind slow down and eventually rest in stillness. Zen can help anyone make positive changes to their life. Only a mind at rest will allow the Buddha-nature or spirit to take up its proper position and become the main driving force of our being. This original nature is in every human being and is the universal spark of light from all that is. It is fundamentally pure like the early Ch'an masters taught.

Remember Zen condenses the teachings of several great teachers into four seeds or steps to help others attain enlightenment with fewer obstacles. It is not intended to subtract from the words of the spiritual giants like Shakyamuni Buddha, Jesus Christ, Krishna, Tilopa, Lao Tzu, and Hui Neng. It humbly attempts to find an optimum level of Zen for the modern world. It was initially going to solely be about Zen Buddhism, but a total lunar eclipse changed some of that direction. Many of the central themes in Eastern wisdom, like letting go of the mind, living in the moment, and dropping the ego, are merely conditions required so enlightenment can present itself. They mean nothing until you incorporate them into your way of life. The choice to walk a higher path will always be an individual one.

Remember Zen also discusses the key issues that cause spiritual decline in individuals, societies, and governments. The causes of the world's problems have not changed, so the teachings of Zen are still

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relevant today. The book also shares some ancient Hindu, Christian, and Tibetan wisdom. Many great prophets and avatars have thrown spears of awareness at humanity in the past, but in some cases time has allowed a little dust to collect on their teachings. The book concludes by offering suggestions on how human beings can take positive steps forward together, so we can get back on track and create a better world for our children.

Most religions, new and old, have something important to offer humanity. They all point to a divine source or oneness in some way. A new golden age could become a reality if we collectively put our thoughts and efforts behind creating it. Love, kindness, and compassion vibrate at a higher frequency than anger, fear, and hate. Some day enlightenment will become a universal reality for all those with loving hearts. Enlightenment is a gift attainable by anyone, but you have to cultivate it first by living a more virtuous life and having the ability to bring the mind to rest naturally. For those ready to reach a higher state of consciousness, the time to remember Zen could be now!