



# Zazen

Zazen (Jap.) sitting meditation in Zen Buddhism

Vipasyana builds on the concentration developed in shamatha and the flavour of shamatha is present in vipasyana. Thus, Zazen brings together both shamatha and vipasyana.

## **Extract from Chapter 18, “Ch’an and Zen Buddhism,” *Discovering Buddhism* by Dominique Side**

Zazen, sitting meditation, is nothing more than just dropping body and mind. This means that meditation is dropping our awareness of body and our awareness of mind, and just sitting, just acting, in that bare, present moment.

By simply reading books on the subject it is impossible to understand or experience any situation in the present moment; that is why the Buddha taught the importance of meditation practice. By relying upon zazen, we can come to experience reality itself.

Sitting meditation is called zazen. The sitting posture is important, with legs crossed in lotus position, the back very straight and the hands resting one upon the other in the lap. Zazen is practised with the eyes open because the material world of the senses is not rejected. Soto monks will often sit in a simple meditation hall in rows with their backs to each other, staring at the blank wall. They practice concentration on the breathing and observation of thoughts similar to the methods of shamatha and vipasyana already described. The aim is simply to sit mindfully. Meditation is not seen as a method to reach a goal, it is the goal itself: meditation is the expression of buddha nature.

There is a cartoon that illustrates this. An older monk and a younger monk are meditating together and the younger one says, “Well, I’ve been doing this for five years now. What’s next?” The older monk replies, “What do you mean ‘what’s next’? This is it!”

