

Zen and the way of the sword: arming the samurai psyche

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Winston L. King is a known Buddhist writer who has mainly presented the different issues of Buddhism in a well versed manner that it could be assessed as a major practice of discipline that could be applied to different activities in the society today. In this particular reading, Buddhism has been noted to assist in the process of using meditation as a matter of increasing concentration among samurai practitioners to make their activity a more efficient and applicable practice of defense and art. About the Book

As mentioned earlier, the book further discusses the major issues that relate Zen meditation to the practices of Samurai. More than just the relation of Zen to Samurai practice, the book further notes the needed thought that provokes the possibilities of making the Zen meditation as a major source of discipline among different practices of martial arts and self defense among several enthusiasts of the said practice. Content and Summary Zen is a sect of Buddhism that emphasizes religious meditation.

It was a belief introduced in China in 520 by Bodhidharma. It has mainly two branches both concentrating on meditation practices on different aspects. One is the za-zen which is plain meditation while the koan is a meditation problem with no logical solution. Other forms of meditation, which were not discussed in this part of the discussion, could well be described as simple forms of medical advancement to deal with stress. But still, many others rooted out from religious beliefs and practices such as the Yoga and the Zen practice.

Still regarding meditation, a Neurologist, James H. Austin M. D. talks about the Zen meditation and its relation to the brain. For him it is more than just a

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religious practice. Zen, according to him has a reasonable biological explanation behind all the practices it promotes. As he has written in his book, he shows that chemical messengers (hormones) are affected by the sensory input, also he points out how the brain is wired and how are its parts like the Thalamus acts as a sensory gate.

It also includes the fact that the olfactory system bypasses the thalamus and acts directly on the mid-brain and affects the chemical signals. With regards to these details, Austin makes it clear how the Zen meditation practice works for a person as it directly involves how the brain along with its parts and functions help in making the Zen practice a successful one. Reaction and Critique It is through this reading that the Zen practice is noted as a major source of discipline for individuals practicing the art of self defense.

Although it could be noted that the author prepared a much effective way in presenting the said meditation in more positive view, he at least forgot, or might as well said overlooked the fact that there are certain spiritual elements of the people practicing the said meditation that might be affected by the belief that Zen practice itself suggests. Moreover, being a Buddhist himself, King may have better presented his claims and explanations about the Zen practice in a more general perspective that could assist in making the procedures of discipline much applicable for all other groups of people.

Considerably, the manner by which samurai practitioners apply Zen in their way of living could also be used by other non-samurai individuals who are simply wanting to have an idea of how the meditation actually works. This way, the book would not only be able to cater to samurai enthusiasts but

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also to other people who are simply wanting to know something about the Zen meditation. Undeniably though, the book of King could be considered a fine read for those who are wanting to appreciate the benefits of personal discipline through the different approaches of meditation.