



# Glossary of Practice-Related Zen Buddhism Terms

- bodhichitta:** The aspiration of a practitioner for enlightenment and Buddhahood.
- bodhisattva:** A practitioner who defers his/her own enlightenment to benefit the liberation of all beings.
- Buddha:** One who is enlightened or awakened to the true nature of existence; any being.
- dana:** The voluntary giving of material, energy or wisdom to others; one of the key virtues or perfections.
- dharma:** The phenomena of the tao or the way or the law of karma; the teachings.
- dokusan:** The personal interview between the roshi and the student; literally means *to go alone*.
- dojo:** The training space for zen practice, rituals and ceremonies.
- gassho:** Hand position in which the palms are pressed together and held vertically.
- ino:** The individual responsible for leading the chants within a session of sitting meditation.
- jikijitsu:** The individual responsible for keeping the time for sitting meditation.
- jiisha:** The individual functioning as an attendant to the roshi, often to facilitate dokusan.
- Kanzeon:** The bodhisattva who incarnates compassion and perceives the sounds of the world.
- karma:** The law of cause and effect whereby actions have foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences.
- kensho:** An experience of seeing into one's essential nature, also referred to as *satori*.
- kinhin:** Walking meditation usually practiced as a group between periods of zazen sittings.
- koan:** A theme given in a teaching context or as an object of meditation pointing to realization.
- kyosaku:** A flat, narrow stick carried by the monitor during zazen.
- mu:** Often the first koan given to a Zen student, literally means *no* or *does not have*.
- mudra:** Hand position used in seated meditation.
- nirvana:** Wisdom expressed in phenomena realized as oneness, stillness and exhaustion of desires.
- paramita:** The perfection of practice, or guides to conduct.
- prajna paramita:** The perfection of wisdom.
- Rinzai:** A Japanese sect of Zen Buddhism.
- roshi:** A term of endearment for an old zen teacher; now used as the title of a confirmed Zen teacher.
- samadhi:** Non-dualistic state of consciousness in which mind and body have dropped away.
- samsara:** Aspects of the world expressed as differentiation, change, becoming, impermanence or desire.
- sangha:** The aggregate community of practitioners that includes all beings.
- satori:** An experience of seeing into one's essential nature, also referred to as *kensho*.
- sesshin:** A retreat of intense zazen practice; literally means *to inspect* or *touch the heart-mind*.
- shoken:** The first personal interview between the roshi and a student; literally means *seeing one another*.
- skandhas:** The things perceived and levels of perception that compound the layered elements of being.
- Soto:** A Japanese sect of Zen Buddhism.
- sutra:** Teaching discourses of the Buddhist canon, most often presented as words of the historic Buddha.
- tanto:** The individual acting as attendant to facilitate practice within the dojo.
- Tathagatha:** A term referring to the Buddha to indicate the *one who thus comes* or *one who thus goes*.
- teisho:** The dharma talk given by the roshi.
- Three Treasures:** The fundamental refuge for practice comprised of Buddha, dharma and the sangha.
- transmission:** Traditional procedure within a lineage to acknowledge and permit a roshi to teach.
- zafu:** A small round cushion used as a seat in zazen.
- zabuton:** A large rectangular flat pad placed under the zafu that cushions the knees while sitting.
- zazen:** Zen sitting meditation.
- zazenkai:** A day-long period of intense zazen practice, usually held monthly; also referred to as *zenkai*.
- Zen:** The harmony of empty oneness and the world of particulars realized in meditation.
- zendo:** The hall for zazen practice, also referred to as the *dojo*.