

Five Wisdoms and Zen Buddhism

There is no practice that has the potential for profundity as just sitting, zazen. We can come back to sitting again and again as a trustworthy way to work with ourselves. Yet, after we have experienced a profound emptiness, we have to come back into the world. But what skills have we acquired to be in the market place?

The Vajrayana or tantric Buddhist tradition is all about who we are and how we are in the world. The five wisdoms work directly with our physical body, our emotions, and our deeply engrained concepts. They work with what we think, feel, say and do in relationship to people, places and situations. We have all five – spaciousness, clarity, richness, passion and activity--but are also all unique in our way of mixing them, creating a myriad of possibilities. We are both predictable and surprising to ourselves and others and can be quiet different in different situations.

The practice of the five wisdoms energies is to take five different postures with colored glasses. The combination of the posture and the color intensifies certain patterns of energy within us that can either be discomforting or make us feel vital. Each energy is neutral and teeters on a razor's edge of confusion and sanity. Through practice, we begin to align with our sanity. By knowing ourselves deeply, we actually can choose our sanity, our wisdom.

The spaciousness of mind cultivated in sitting helps to ventilate the intensified energy states. *Maitri*, a Sanskrit word meaning unconditional loving kindness, is the key or catalyst in this alchemical process of turning our neurosis into wisdom. With maitri we have a fundamental change in energy. We experience maitri as a sense of relaxation, warmth and spaciousness.

In doing the postures over a period of time, we come into our wisdom body. We see the inseparability of sanity and confusion. Whereas by taking the upright posture of just sitting we express our aspiration to come into pure awareness, in taking these postures we begin to see that there are many ways of being aware and being in the world.

Irini Rockwell

December 2008

Irini is the author of "The Five Wisdom Energies, a Buddhist way of understanding personalities, emotions and relationships"

Published in Dharma Thoughts, Clouds in Water Zen Center