

The Life And Teachings Of Zen Master Bankei (1622-1693)




Zen Buddhism has produced numerous influential masters throughout history, each leaving a lasting impact on the spiritual landscape. One such master is Zen Master Bankei Yōtaku, who lived from 1622 to 1693. His teachings and spiritual insights continue to inspire and guide practitioners today. In this article, we will explore the life, teachings, and legacy of Zen Master Bankei.

The Early Years

Bankei was born in 1622 in the Higo province of Japan. From a young age, he displayed a keen interest in spiritual matters and sought guidance from local

monks. Bankei's natural inclination towards Zen Buddhism became evident when he entered a Zen temple at the age of eleven, where he embarked on a rigorous training journey.

 Unborn: The
Life and
Teachings of
Zen Master
Bankei, 1622-
1693

Unborn: The Life and Teachings of Zen Master

Bankei, 1622-1693 by Bankei (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 998 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
X-Ray : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 200 pages



Throughout his adolescence, Bankei studied under various Zen masters, deepening his understanding of meditation and enlightenment. His dedicated practice and unwavering commitment paved the way for his eventual recognition as an accomplished Zen master.

The Awakening

After years of intense training and meditation, Bankei experienced a profound spiritual awakening at the age of twenty-six. This awakening, known as kenshō in Zen terminology, sparked a significant shift in his perception of reality.

During his awakening, Bankei realized the fundamental principle of Zen - the innate Buddha-nature within each being. He understood that enlightenment is not

something to be attained but rather a realization of one's true nature, unobstructed by delusions and attachments.



The Unconventional Teaching Style

Bankei's teachings stood out for their unique and unconventional approach. Unlike traditional Zen masters who emphasized seated meditation, Bankei advocated for a more inclusive approach to spiritual practice.

He believed that enlightenment is accessible to all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or meditation experience. Bankei often held public talks, reinvigorating the practice of Zen for the everyday person. He seamlessly integrated Zen teachings into everyday activities such as cooking, cleaning, and even parenthood.

The Essence of Bankei's Teachings

At the core of Bankei's teachings lies the concept of "Unborn Mind." He encouraged practitioners to recognize the preciousness of the present moment

and embrace their inherent Buddha-nature without relying heavily on rituals or external practices.

Bankei emphasized direct experience over intellectual understanding, often stating, "Unborn, undying, and imperishable: Not stained by birth and death, is your own fundamental mind." He encouraged individuals to trust in their true nature and abandon the egoic self, leading to liberation from suffering.


Legacy and Influence

Bankei's teachings resonated with many individuals, attracting a broad range of followers, including monks, samurais, and ordinary citizens. His legacy and influence spread beyond the borders of Japan, inspiring people from various cultures and backgrounds.

Today, Zen practitioners continue to draw inspiration from Bankei's teachings. His emphasis on the accessibility of enlightenment and the recognition of one's inherent Buddha-nature has paved the way for a more inclusive and compassionate approach to spirituality.

The life and teachings of Zen Master Bankei have undeniably left a profound impact on the Zen Buddhist tradition. His unique perspective, emphasis on the present moment, and innate Buddha-nature resonate with practitioners seeking spiritual awakening and liberation.

Bankei's teachings serve as a reminder that enlightenment is not a distant goal to be achieved but a realization of our own innate nature. Through his unconventional approach, Bankei continues to inspire individuals worldwide to embrace their authentic selves and live fully in the present moment.

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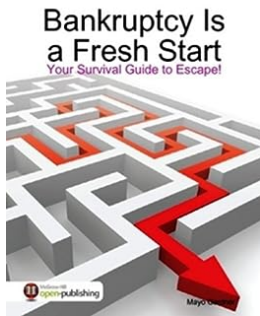


In 1633, at age eleven, Bankei Yotaku was banished from his family's home because of his consuming engagement with the Confucian texts that all schoolboys were required to copy and recite. Using a hut in the nearby hills, he wrote the word Shugyo-an, or "practice hermitage," on a plank of wood, propped it up beside the entrance, and settled down to devote himself to his own clarification of "bright virtue."

He finally turned to Zen and, after fourteen years of incredible hardship, achieved a decisive enlightenment, whereupon the Rinzai priest traveled unceasingly to the temples and monasteries of Japan, sharing what he'd learned.

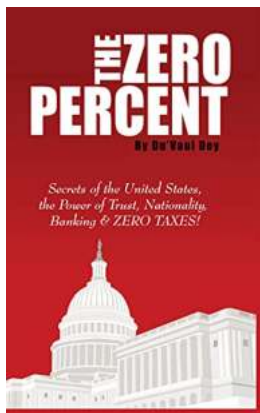
"What I teach in these talks of mine is the Unborn Buddha-mind of illuminative wisdom, nothing else. Everyone is endowed with this Buddha-mind, only they don't know it." Casting aside the traditional aristocratic style of his contemporaries, he offered his teachings in the common language of the people. His style recalls the genius and simplicity of the great Chinese Zen masters of the T'ang dynasty.

This revised and expanded edition contains many talks and dialogues not included in the original 1984 volume.



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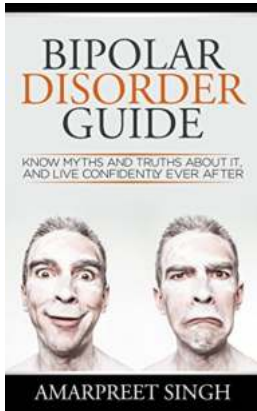
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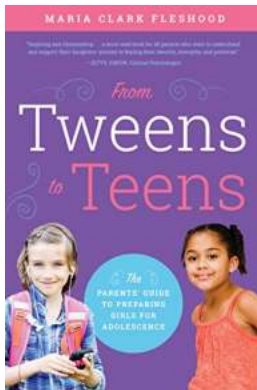
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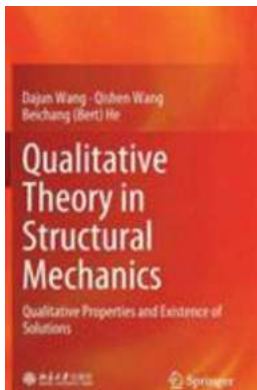
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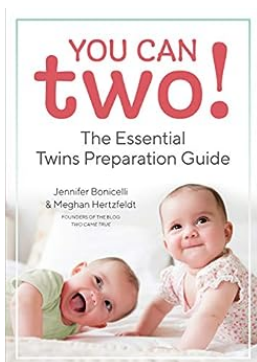
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