

Satori (悟り ?) (悟 Chinese wù ; Korean 오) is a Japanese Buddhist term for enlightenment. The word literally means "understanding". Satori translates into a flash of sudden awareness, or individual Enlightenment. Satori is as well an intuitive experience. It is sometimes loosely used interchangeably with Kensho, but Kensho refers to the first perception of the Buddha-Nature or True-Nature, sometimes referred to as "awakening". Distinct from kensho, which is not a permanent state of enlightenment but a clear glimpse of the true nature of existence, satori is used to refer to a "deep" or lasting state of enlightenment. It is therefore customary to use the word satori, rather than kensho, when referring to the enlightened states of the Buddha and the Patriarchs.

According to D. T. Suzuki, "Satori is the *raison d'être* of Zen, without which Zen is no Zen. Therefore every contrivance concept in Zen. Whether it comes to you suddenly seemingly out of nowhere as found in the Enlightenment process called [Aparka Marg](#), or after an undetermined passage of time centered around years of intense study and meditation as with the female Zen adept [Chiyono](#), or after forty unrelenting years as with the Buddha's brother [Ananda](#), there can be no Zen without that which has come to be called Satori. As long as there is Satori, then Zen will continue to exist in the world.

Satori roughly translates into individual Enlightenment, or a flash of sudden awareness. Satori is as well an intuitive experience. The feeling of Satori is that of infinite space. A brief experience of Enlightenment is sometimes called [Kensho](#). Semantically, Kensho and Satori have virtually the same meaning and are often used interchangeably. In describing the Enlightenment of the Patriarchs, however, it is customary to use the word Satori rather than Kensho, the term Satori implying a deeper experience. The *level* of Enlightenment reached by the Buddha and others of similar ilk is referred to as [Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi](#).

There are, as seen in the above, more than one "level" of Self-realization. Most levels, except perhaps Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, have been blanketed with what has become now a more general term, "Satori," Satori having fallen into the day-to-day lexicon exemplified in a variety of sources from the [The Eight Jhana States](#), to [The Five Degrees of Tozan](#), to the [Five Varieties of Zen](#).

It was not always that way. If you scroll down to the Satori discription by D.T. Suzuki, below, you will gain a much greater insight into the original meaning of Satori. There is an enormous difference between say something like a rather