

SATORI. It happened again today - it doesn't happen often; there was no indication it was coming - there never is; it was not a special occasion - I did nothing to bring it on. I was lying in bed, my eyes were closed - one of those half-alert moments between sleeping and waking. Then the world retreated. I was not thinking of anything; I was beyond space & time; beyond my individuality, my ego. Instead of thoughts, instead of me, there was an all-encompassing consciousness of one-ness and eternity; an eternal moment of bliss and peace that lasted seconds.

悟 り

sa-to-ri

... means 'understanding' in Japanese Buddhism. In the Zen Buddhist tradition, satori is a flash of sudden awareness - a moment of enlightenment, and a realisation of the true nature of existence.

In Zen one must prepare oneself for satori with meditation and clear the mind of attachments to the world. Satori is attained through personal experience; it is deemed a first step toward nirvana.

I first wrote this piece in 2006. At the time I had had these experiences a couple of times. Since then they have become a more frequent occurrence; often while walking or sitting near the ocean etc.

When lying awake last night (at about 3:00am; I sometimes work at that time, or meditate) I had an experience of being utterly disconnected from my life.

Nothing was important, not my work, not my living circumstances, not my possessions. All that normally occupies my mind had dissolved into nothingness.

Instead I became aware of a vast space, as vast as our universe and all other universes. I was also aware of all time, the past, the present and the future.

The state lasted only a second or two, but the awareness consumed me entirely. My consciousness was heightened to the point of no limit; the clarity was absolute.

I am able to rationalize the occurrence afterwards. As I reflect on the state I had experienced I can use the awareness of a reality beyond the tangible as guidance for my undertakings in my daily life.

This experience of universal consciousness lies at the heart of my spirituality. It is this awareness that forms the basis of my belief system; it gives me strength in times of pain, uncertainty and doubt.

Virginia Woolf (1882 - 1941) wrote in Moments of Being about experiencing a heightened awareness of being, with "the deeply hidden and inarticulate desire for something beyond the daily life".

*see also MEDITATION 2, 3, SPIRITUALITY
and WHY MEDITATE*