Foreword

Since Buddhism began in India about twenty-five centuries ago with the Buddha Shākyamuni, it has undergone development in a number of countries, each of which has contributed the influence of its particular culture. Buddhism as a whole, however, can be regarded as having two different aspects: one is "true awareness," which is Buddha's own religious experience, at the core of his teaching; the other is composed of Buddha's teachings themselves, over a forty-nine year period of his life. Needless to say, these two aspects cannot be separated, for they are united in the personality of Buddha.

The history of Buddhism has nevertheless produced a number of sects and schools which arose out of an emphasis upon one or another of the Buddhist scriptures. Typically, the Zen sect of Buddhism has maintained that the existence of sects and the dependence upon scripture separate man from the essence of Buddhism — that is, true awareness. Zen Buddhism finds its own special significance in bringing man back to the center of the Buddhism that is Buddha's religious experience, while at the same time holding all of Buddha's teachings in respect, as being the expression of that original experience.

Today, another approach to Zen in the Orient regards Zen as the source of all possible religious thought, as pointing to the existence of true being beyond all dualism. In this sense, Zen is seen as the ground out of which all religious thought is freely combined and given its inner vitality. When one views Zen in this light, one may have Confucian Zen or Christian Zen. Of course, while such a position is possible from a Zen standpoint, one might expect criticism from other points of view. At any rate,

Zen sees its uniqueness in its efforts to transcend denominational distinctions. This is perhaps the principal reason for the sympathetic understanding of Zen shown by Japanese intellectuals, who feel that Zen has a special significance in helping man to create a higher culture.

To turn now to the history of Zen Buddhism: it originated in China in A.D. 520, when Bodhidharma (called Daruma in Japan), the twenty-ninth Patriarch of Mahāyāna Buddhism, came to China from India, and declared the importance of true awareness, as distinguished from merely studying or lecturing about Buddhist scriptures. Zen Buddhism (in Chinese, Ch'an) developed under the influence of the practical Chinese mind. For about seven hundred years, during the T'ang and Sung dynasties, Chinese Zen Buddhism enjoyed a period of brilliance. In the thirteenth century great Zen masters — both Chinese and Japanese — brought it to Japan, where it flourished in a new cultural climate.

Japanese Zen Buddhism, over the course of its development, produced two characteristically different currents. One is the Sōtō sect, which teaches the oneness of zazen* practice and satori awareness; the other is the Rinzai sect, which emphasizes satori experience through the hard discipline of kōan exercise. Among the various schools of Rinzai Zen, only that of Hakuin Zenji† (1685-1768) survives today. Zen Master Hakuin established the so-called kōan method (Kanna Zen) to bring the student to the great experience of satori awareness, and was also instrumental in regulating monastic life in its present form. At the same time, Hakuin showed his great compassion toward the

* Words appearing in color on first use may be found in the Glossary.

† Japanese personal names are given in Western order; that is, with surnames last. (The apparent exception is Hakuin Zenji: Zenji is not a name but a title that customarily follows the surname.)

common people through his preaching, his Zen paintings, and especially his writing, which was readily intelligible to the ordinary reader—unusual for Buddhist works of that period.

This traditional Hakuin Zen school was first introduced to the United States by Zen Master Sōen Shaku, Abbot of Engakuji in Kamakura, when he lectured on Zen Buddhism at the International Congress of World Religions, held in Chicago in 1893. Shortly thereafter, the young D.T. Suzuki was sent to America by his own Zen Master, Sōen Shaku. Suzuki devoted his long life to the introduction of Oriental thought, primarily Zen Buddhism, to the West, drawing upon his deep wisdom of Zen experience and his vast knowledge of philosophy. The principal motivation of my several visits to the United States has been to follow that precious devotion of D.T. Suzuki.

It seems to me, from my impressions of these last ten years, that the West's interest in Zen is moving from mere curiosity to a more sincere understanding, from an intellectual approach to a practical one. It is unquestionably difficult, however, to transplant into an entirely different environment a religion or philosophy evolved over a long period in a country with its own distinctive culture and traditions. The problems of language alone are immense.

In this sense, therefore, the present volume, with its illustrations revealing the severe discipline of Zen training touched with a warm and gracious humor, may prove especially significant, by providing Western readers with a realistic introduction to Zen monastic life. The Reverend Eshin Nishimura, who comments upon each drawing, is a former monk of my monastery. Because of his firsthand knowledge of the West combined with his personal experience of Zen, he is one of the few persons qualified to interpret Zen monastic training adequately. Since his comments

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have been written with a Western audience in mind, I hope that this book will start the reader on the direct path to satori awareness.

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