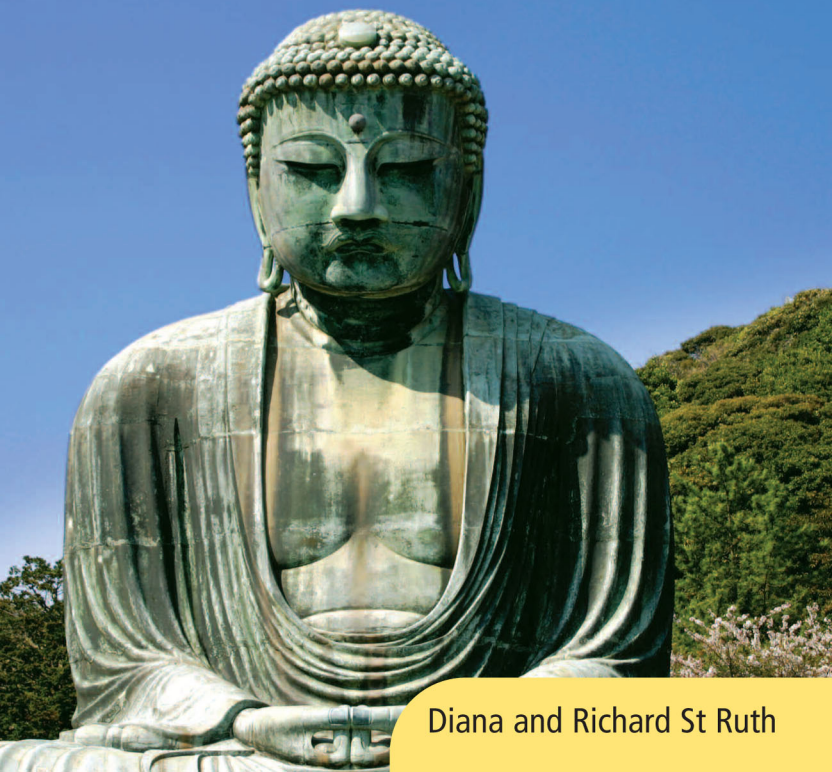


Simple Guides » Religion

# ZEN BUDDHISM



Diana and Richard St Ruth

## ZEN BUDDHISM

Zen (in Chinese, Ch'an) is the form of Buddhism which the great teacher Bodhidharma brought to China from India in the late fifth century. Today it is practised mainly in Japan and Korea,. Based upon the understanding that each of us has the potential for complete awakening, Zen is in fact a coalition of practical ways of stilling the mind in order to attain self-knowledge.

Because the realization of the true nature of reality, including one's own, is not an intellectual pursuit but an experienced truth, Zen teachers transmit the truth (*dharma*) from mind to mind or heart to heart without the use of words, using different techniques to break through the limitations of the logical mind.

This engaging book explains the essence of Zen in simple terms.. It traces its development and looks at its unique methods of teaching, such as meditation, koans – startling paradoxes that stop the intellect – the use of texts, ceremonies, poetry, and the martial arts. It describes life in monasteries and in the everyday world. Because Zen is rooted in Reality, its practitioners often experience a delightful sense of wonder in the commonplace. This democratic and liberating philosophy does not require us to give up our own traditions, but rather helps us to deepen our understanding of them, and continues to inspire growing numbers of followers in the West.

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·K·U·P·E·R·A·R·D·

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*Daruma*

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🕒 View of the Daisen-in stone garden at Daitokuji Temple in Kyoto, Japan

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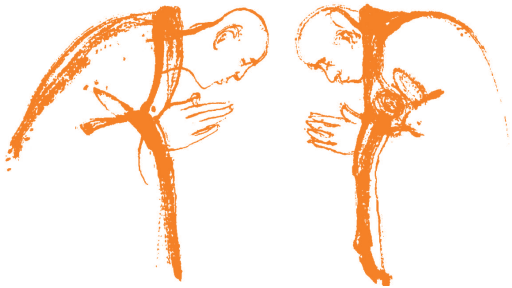


© The face of the Buddha in contemplation, Kamakura, Japan.  
Photo: Michael Cooper

**One day, while teaching** his followers in India, the Buddha held up a flower. A disciple smiled in response. This was a heart-to-heart transmission – a teaching beyond words and letters. Later, this kind of approach was used extensively in China, Korea and Japan, and became known as Zen.

Vast numbers of Buddhist texts have accumulated over the centuries. Everything that can be explained about the Buddha's teaching has been defined in innumerable ways. Yet from the Zen perspective, nothing at all has been explained, the true teaching being a personal experience beyond words. To a person who has never tasted chocolate, the description is meaningless. Just one piece of it, however, will instantly reveal its flavour. That is how Zen is. The Zen teachings and all the descriptions are mere fingers pointing to the moon. It is important to look at the moon and not the finger, the spirit of Zen and not the form.

Bodhidharma, the great Indian monk, defined Zen as follows:



☺ *Zen monks greeting each other*

A special transmission outside the scriptures;  
No dependence upon words and letters;  
Direct pointing at the mind;  
Seeing into one's nature and the attainment  
of Buddhahood [awakening].

It is hoped that these few pages will introduce the spirit of Zen, edify, and put into perspective the terms and ideas which have begun to enter into the Western world in recent years.

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