

I want to introduce you to Marian Mountain, author of this book. I have followed Marian's zen career since the early 1960s when she first began to practice meditation under the guidance of the late Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. Marian never considered zen just as a principle or philosophy of life. Her enthusiastic zen spirit, which was motivated by a strong desire to free herself and others from suffering, expressed itself in all aspects of her daily living.

The explanation of zen in this book is as clear as spring water that oozes from the depths of mountains. It is sure to satisfy anyone who is interested in improving the quality of human life. When I read this book, it reminded me of a zen story about a famous zen master called Joshu:

One day, when he was practicing zen in the monastery under his master, Nansen, Joshu shut the kitchen door and stirred up the fire until volumes of smoke filled the room. Then Joshu shouted, "Fire! Fire! Put it out!" When all the monks and the zen master hurried to the kitchen to help put out the fire, Joshu refused to open the door. Instead he said nonchalantly, "If anyone can give me a word that will turn my delusion into enlightenment, I will open the door." Everyone was speechless. Except Nansen who silently handed Joshu a key through the kitchen window. With this key Joshu opened the door.

In this story Joshu and his master show us, by dramatic means, the whole problem of human suffering—what causes it and how to escape from it. Most people act just like Joshu. They close the door and stir up the fire. They close their minds and stir up their desires. On the surface they may appear to be enjoying their lives, but inside they are suffering from the delusions that fill their minds.

Many people are attracted to zen because they think it may help them get rid of their suffering. They expect to have their delusion turned into enlightenment just by hearing some enlightening words from a zen master. But at the same time they stubbornly refuse to open their minds. What can a zen master do when he encounters such people? It is impossible to help them by any kind of philosophical, psychological, ethical, or logical discussion. To help them a zen master must be able to take advantage of any opportunity to throw a key quickly into their minds.

Zen masters use vivid methods to save people from their delusions. Sometimes they shout at their students; sometimes they give them blows. Why is this kind of lively activity so very important in zen? Because it is the real living way to throw a key to someone who is suffering.

This book is like a key to throw into your mind. This key can open your mind. But only if you *use* it. It depends on you, whether you choose to use this key to free yourself, or not. So after you finish reading this book, I encourage you to follow the suggestions in it. Then you will be able to experience for yourself the satisfaction of living your own life in the vivid reality of the zen environment.

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