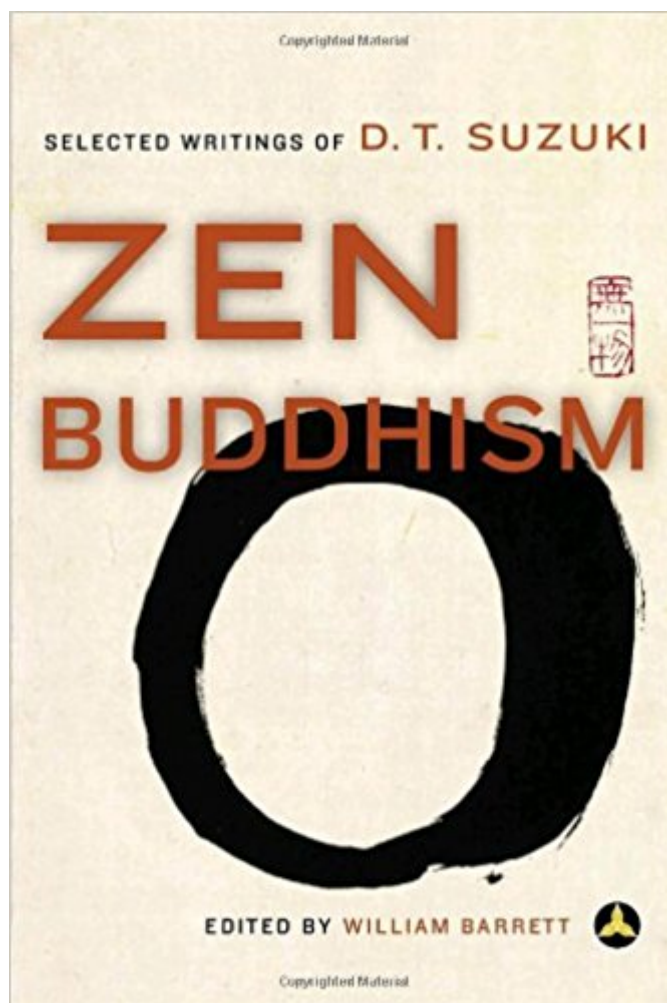


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# Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings Of D. T. Suzuki



## Synopsis

No other figure in history has played a bigger part in opening the West to Buddhism than the eminent Zen author, D.T. Suzuki, and in this reissue of his best work readers are given the very heart of Zen teaching. *Zen Buddhism*, which sold more than 125,000 as an Anchor paperback after its publication in 1956, includes a basic historical background as well as a thorough overview of the techniques for Zen practice. Concepts and terminology such as satori, zazen, and koans, as well as the various elements of this philosophy are all given clear explanations. But while Suzuki takes nothing for granted in the reader's understanding of the fundamentals, he does not give a merely rudimentary overview. Each of the essays included here, particularly those on the unconscious mind and the relation of Zen to Western philosophy, go far beyond other sources for their penetrating insights and timeless wisdom. What is most important about D.T. Suzuki's work, however--and what comes across so powerfully in these selections--is his unparalleled ability to communicate the experiential aspect of Zen. The intensity here with which Zen philosophy comes to life is without parallel in the canon of Buddhist literature. Suzuki stands apart from all teachers before or since because of his exceptional ability to eloquently capture in words the seemingly inexpressible essence of Zen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This was the first book I ever read on Zen, and it remains, in my mind, one of the best. D.T Suzuki is thorough and imaginative, linking the principles of Zen to the culture and history of Japan, as well as

to Western philosophy. Suzuki has a well-deserved reputation as the 20th century's foremost authority on Japanese Zen. While perhaps more of a scholar's book than a practitioner's book, this selection of essays from Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture* do a wonderful job of conveying the spirit and rich history of Japanese Zen, and its roots in Chinese Ch'an. Faced with a complex topic that by its very nature does not lend itself to written accounts, Suzuki manages to neither over-analyze the topic nor sidestep the issues by refusing comment. The essays selected give a good taste of the complex spectrum of Zen, and its many cultural and historical manifestations, without swamping the reader with material. A fine and complex work by a well-respected figure of the Zen tradition.

DT Suzuki is one of the most influential writers/philosophers on Zen and Buddhist teachings in the western world. Whether they agree with all of his positions or not, nobody in the western Zen community would deny the importance of Suzuki's role on bringing Zen to awareness in the West. William Barrett has done an extraordinary job in compiling and introducing Dr. Suzuki's writings in this book, which is a veritable horn of plenty when it comes to the classic teachings of Zen Buddhism. Barrett's introduction alone (around 100 pages) is massive treatise on the core teachings of Zen. A great read for all! Zen students that have not yet tackled the massive corpus of D.T. Suzuki's writings would be well advised to start with this superb collection which presents the essential teachings of Zen, and the heart of Suzuki's message in a wonderful format for all.

I will receive flak for writing this review, but as a warning to those seeking practical instruction on meditation, breathing and a concise teaching of the core principles, you will not find it here. This is not a bad book, if you are looking for an in depth analytical look into Zen's history, but be warned you must come into it with already some knowledge of names and terms. Suzuki never explains these and it is assumed you should already know them. As one of the first to bring these teachings to the West, this is to be expected and as such will seem quite dated. For those looking for a way to apply the teachings of Buddhism and Zen to their lives, I recommend instead *Zen Beginner's Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki, as well as books by Alan Watts (*The Way of Zen*) and Thich Naht Hanh (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*). I am a Westerner and quite frankly I do not care about the dogma and terms spoken in another tongue, this does not apply to me in my life in any practical manner. It is not the word or term that matters, or rote memorization of koans.

Over the years I have read Suzuki's *Essays* (all 3 volumes) his *Manual and Introduction*, etc. Lately

I have been re-reading Selected Writings as a shortcut to the best of his essays (William Barrett's foreword is thoughtful, encouraging and amazing). What can I say, but deep gassho to Daisetz Teitaro, Joseph Campbell, Reginald Horace, Nyogen Senzaki...and Soen Nakagawa. After re-reading D.T.'s Selected Writings recently, another insight hit me re: Huineng's (the 6th Patriarch) "awaken the mind without fixing it anywhere". Once you crack the meaning of these words, enlightenment is sure to find you, no matter what 'baggage' you are carrying or perchance hiding behind! "Awaken the mind without fixing it anywhere." This is awesome (in a very positive way), such as when the monk (I forget his name) goes to visit the 6th Patriarch himself to verify what he has learned from another master and Huineng generously confirms, "what he has told you is correct, simply keep your mind as free as space and yet do not entertain or grasp any thought of space or emptiness." (these are not direct quotes, I don't have the book in front of me). There is no clearer way to put it in words than that. And that's it! Is this all there is to the essence of "seeing into your own nature?" Now, I have been reading and re-reading these incredible texts for many years, and with this new insight, what have I attained? Absolutely nothing...yet how refreshing, how wonderful, how free, how immense this moment is, endless, every breath is, inexpressively beautiful...is this enlightenment? I don't know, but I can honestly tell you, I no longer harbour any negative thoughts or feelings about anything anymore...now you add your attention/time/effort and see where you can go...

One of my doctor's suggested that I look into understanding the practice of ZEN Meditation in healing from Cancer. And because I knew very little on this subject, my boyfriend suggested that I order this book, it was just the one that I need to give me an overview on the subject. I truly have a better understanding on the subject because of this book. I would encourage anyone who is interested in getting a better understanding and greater benefit from their yoga, tai chi, meditation practice to read this book. A must have for your library.

This was the first book I ever read on Zen, 35 years ago. You can tell a lot about a book by it's first sentence: "Zen in its essence is the art of seeing into the nature of one's own being, and it points the way from bondage to freedom." What a powerful statement! Suzuki is a lion of Zen. Thirty-five years later I'm finally taking tiny steps on the path of my own spiritual journey, and I find this book to be a worthy companion. I'm happy that I've rediscovered it.

Suzuki is considered to be the foremost authority on Zen Buddhism. Suzuki brought Zen thought to

America. The best of D.T. Suzuki is included here. I've read quite a bit on the subject and I believe Suzuki has the best grasp of Zen. The reading is difficult, but so is the topic. I highly recommend this book if you really want to get deep into Zen. Another slightly easier book to understand, 'Living Zen' by Robert Linssen uses Suzuki's material quite extensively.

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