

NAMU DAI BOSA

A TRANSMISSION
OF ZEN BUDDHISM
TO AMERICA

BY

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Edited,

with an Introduction by

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Ryutaku Ji to our Zendo to contribute to the authenticity of its atmosphere. Then we will be ready to have a country Zendo." Nevertheless, several Sangha members informally got together and began searching for country property. One place was in Scranton, Pennsylvania, a forty-two-acre tract with a beautiful waterfall. However, it did not work out. Evidently the Dharma time was not yet ready. The Zen Buddhist saying goes: "If you want to know the essence of Buddha-Dharma, first of all you should know the readiness of time."

The days and months passed quietly. The atmosphere of the Zendo increased in intensity and the daily Zazen meetings were always crowded. People had to be turned away at the door. Finding a larger place, hopefully in our own building, seemed more and more urgent.

One autumn afternoon in 1967, I was visited by a gentleman whom I had met several times before. During our conversation, he made a proposal which dramatically affected the future of the New York Zendo. Expressing his interest in helping us expand and stabilize our Zendo, he said that he and his wife wished to make a large contribution. He added, "Please don't mention our names."

Suddenly the pattern of our life had changed. Now a "firm, permanent Zendo in the city" seemed possible. We began to look for a place. First we thought of a brownstone house, but brownstones are usually located in residential areas. Zoning regulations prohibit an institution such as The Zen Studies Society, Inc., from operating in those areas. Also, a brownstone, being constructed primarily for living quarters, would not provide the space we needed for a Zendo. We gave up that idea and began searching for a loft. Here the problem was not space, but location. Most lofts are in noisy business and industrial areas. We gave up that idea too. After seeing many buildings, we came to the conclusion that the only solution would be to find a carriage house. The plan was to buy and renovate such a building, but even though my friend's contribution had been very generous, we knew that it might not be enough.

Nevertheless, we went to look at about five carriage houses in Manhattan. None was the right size or in the right location. Then,

on December 24, 1967, we had an appointment at 3 P.M. with a real estate broker to see a carriage house on East 67th Street, between Second and Third avenues. As soon as we saw it, we felt, "This is it!" This was a wonderful Christmas surprise—but the price was a surprise as well: it was almost twice as much as we had. This carriage house was available; it was structurally sound and located in one of the best areas of Manhattan Island. When we found out that other organizations were interested in it too, we became very apprehensive. In January 1968, we decided to apply for a mortgage from a bank. It was approved and we were now in a position to purchase the building, although we did not have enough money for the necessary renovations. I was ignorant about such financial matters.

For a while I didn't know what to do. Sangha members and Dharma friends contributed what they could, but there wasn't nearly enough. Deeply troubled, I asked myself, "Why is such a huge amount of money needed?"—"To complete the new Zendo."—"Why should the new Zendo be completed?"—"Because then more people can do Zazen, in a more ideal atmosphere." And then I realized that what we now needed to do was not to search for money, but to concentrate on this fundamental matter, Zazen practice.

I sat and sat and asked the Sangha to sit more and more. It was around that time that I read a book called *Miracles of Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*, compiled by Hakuin Zenji. I was like a man in the ocean, exhausted and not knowing in which direction to swim, seeking even a single stick to hold on to and not knowing where to find that stick. One answer was just to continue to swim. When I read this book, I felt as though I had found the stick. In those days I was in Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo samadhi—"Cho Nen Kanzeon, Bo Nen Kanzeon" ("Every morning, always with Kanzeon; every evening, always with Kanzeon"). Not asking for anything—not praying—I chanted constantly; that was all.

One day I got a telephone call from the couple whose generosity had made the purchase of the building possible. They said, "We understand that you have had to borrow a lot of money from a bank, and that you are in trouble. Please don't worry. We'll take care of it."

POSTSCRIPT

On the Way to Dai Bosatsu I met many travelers. Some taught me how to get there. Some gave me lodging, some guidance. For all those people, for their support, help and inspiration, I have nothing but sincere gratitude. I cannot write the details of all these encounters—however, there is one person who, from the beginning of my New York life, walked with me as closely as my shadow on that rough road, all the way to Dai Bosatsu: Aiho Yasuko Shimano, my wife and my assistant. Without her the Way would surely have been much more difficult.

I should also like to mention my dear friends Lotte Weisz, Ruth Lilienthal and Sylvan Busch, and all the other pioneering students who faithfully stood by me through the intricacies of my American life.

I am deeply indebted to William H. Johnstone, chairman of the Building Committee of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Without his wholehearted devotion and brilliant financial management, the establishment of Dai Bosatsu Zendo would have taken much longer.

For their deep concern and friendship, as well as for their professional excellence, my sincere appreciation goes to Jack Clareman, our lawyer; Davis Hamerstrom, our architect; Takehiko Takebe, our design consultant; and Orville "Spike" Hansen, our construction foreman. Even though they do not practice Zazen, they are Dharma-protecting Bodhisattvas, as are Bowman and Rita Owen, who have lived just outside the gates of Dai Bosatsu Zendo for over seventy years, as if waiting all along for us to come.

Needless to say, without Soyen Shaku's visits to America, D. T. Suzuki's enormous effort, Nyogen Senzaki's half-century-long struggle, Soen Roshi's wisdom, Yasutani Roshi's tireless teaching, and our anonymous donors' great generosity, Dai Bosatsu Zendo would never have been born. But these distinguished people could not by

themselves have made this birth possible. The greatest significance of International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo Ji is that it has been established through the combined effort and ceaseless concern of all known and unknown teachers and students, brothers and sisters. I put my palms together and bow to all of my beloved Sangha and Dharma friends, especially to the resident students of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo Ji, who have helped me to keep going at the most critical times. The transmission of the Dharma was very much aided by their dedication.

Finally, this book could not have come about without the great care of George Zournas and Louis and Sherry Nordstrom. As there are no words adequate to express my gratitude, I should like to offer a verse from *The Hekigan Roku, The Blue Rock Collection*:

Overwhelming the evening clouds
Gathering in one great mass.
Endlessly arising the distant mountains
Blue heaped upon blue.

Eido Tai Shimano
International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo Ji
July 4, 1975