

ZEN KEYS



A Zen Monk Examines The Vietnamese Tradition

Thich Nhat Hanh

Introduction by Philip Kapleau



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THE PUBLICATION in English of Thich¹ Nhat Hanh's *Zen Keys* has particular significance for Americans. For not only is his work the first precise statement of Vietnamese Buddhism to come to us—we who have such a deep and tragic karmic connection with Vietnam—but also Thich Nhat Hanh is not an average Buddhist. He is a Zen monk, trained and developed in a Zen monastery, a man who has realized the wisdom and compassion which are the fruits of Buddhist practice. In the last fifteen years Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the leading spokesmen of the Vietnamese Buddhist peace movement, has taken himself into the market place, into the twentieth-century hell of war-ravaged Vietnam, and brought an “engaged” Buddhism into the mainstream of life of the Vietnamese masses. In the face of threats of persecution, imprisonment, and even death, he has repeatedly spoken out, urging his countrymen to avoid hatred and acrimony and insisting that the real enemy is not man but the grenades of greed, anger, and delusion in the human heart. Those Americans who believe Buddhism is a world-denying cult of inner illumination and its practice of meditation a navel-

¹ “Thich” is not, as many suppose, the Vietnamese equivalent of “Venerable,” an appellation of Buddhist monks that roughly corresponds to “Reverend,” but is the shortened form of “Thich-Ca,” the Vietnamese for Shakyas, which is the abbreviation of Shakyamuni, the name by which the Buddha is known in Asia. It is a family name that monks assume upon ordination, replacing their own.