

## **The Song of Zen**

*Zen Master Kyong Ho*

Suddenly, I realize that everything is but a dream;  
Countless heroic leaders now all in their graves,  
Words of honour without any use  
For how can death ever be escaped?  
Ah, this body is but a single dewdrop hanging on a blade of grass,  
A flame fluttering in the wind.

The words of Buddha, the great teacher of the Three Realms,  
Are thus transmitted through the Eighty Thousand Sutras:  
Upon seeing our true mind, become Buddha.  
Cutting off the cycle of samsara  
Each of us are able to dwell in the land beyond life and death  
Functioning in non-action.  
If you cannot attain this right now as a human being,  
Chances are bleaker than ever, so make haste!

There are many ways to attain one's true self,  
But in short, here it is:  
When sitting, standing, seeing, hearing,  
Dressed, eating or in conversation  
At any place, any time, what is this that brightly perceives?

The body is a corpse, all thoughts originally empty.  
My true face, already Buddha:  
Seeing, hearing,  
Sitting or lying down,  
Sleeping or working,

Within the blink of an eye, coming and going  
Ten thousand miles and back in an instant.  
This mind, in all its mysterious functioning  
What is its form?

Questioning and still questioning,  
Like a cat stalking a mouse,  
Like a starving beggar searching for food,  
Like a thirsty wanderer seeking only water,  
Like an old widow awaiting her only lost son,  
Without eating or sleeping—  
Never letting go,  
Looking deeply into this One Question  
For 10,000 years nonstop.

Then Great Enlightenment is right before you.

Attaining enlightenment at once,  
Finding that Buddha is already within,  
Isn't this already Amitabul and Shakyamuni?  
Neither young nor old,  
Big nor small,  
One's own true light from within  
Is the whole universe.....

Heaven and hell are both originally empty.  
Life, death and rebirth never existed.  
Find an enlightened teacher, get *inka*  
And do away with any doubt once and for all.  
Not touching any worldly concerns,  
Cutting off all attachments,  
Be an empty vessel floating along  
Saving all beings that appear before you.  
What better virtue is there than this to repay Buddha?

Keep precepts steadfast and heaven grants merit.  
Make a great vow, always study the Buddhadharma.  
Have mind of Great Compassion  
Never making distinction between the poor, sick or homeless.  
When the five skandas appear, recognize them as empty like foam bubbles.  
With any outside appearances, perceive them as a dream,  
Not following like or dislike  
Looking deeply into mind, empty as space.  
Not moved by the eight winds or five desires  
Use this mind like a great big mountain.

Wasting day after day with idle talk,  
Letting so many years go by, how is practicing possible now?  
Upon great suffering at the moment of death, how pointless is regret then?  
When limbs are torn off, the skull crushed and all organs ripped out,  
At that moment in total darkness and utter suffering  
Who could have imagined such a fate?  
Hell and animal rebirth are truly unfathomable.  
Having wasted eons of chances and now too old,  
Getting a human body again is not easy

The Person of the Way who practices Zen diligently  
Lives long and chooses life and death accordingly,  
Able to change this mysterious form as often as the grains of sand by the sea.  
Always using happiness or sadness as needed,  
Regardless, let us practice diligently now with all our attention.

Any day now, death appears  
Just as it does for the reluctant cow,  
Hooves dragging towards the slaughterhouse.  
The practitioner of old did not lose even a single moment to rest;  
How idly I have wasted!  
The practitioner of old stabbed himself with an awl to stay awake;  
How idly I have wasted!  
The practitioner of old, down on all fours and crying at sunset,  
Lamented another day lost;  
How idly I have wasted!  
Having attained not a single thing,  
This fleeting mind evaporates like a whiff of spirit;  
Ah, how truly sad it is!

Ignoring reproaches,  
Heedless to warnings,  
Carelessly passing by, how can this clouded mind be led?  
Following useless desires and provoking anger for no reason,  
Raising discrimination daily,  
My wisdom is laughable; whom can I blame?  
Like a moth flying to the flame unknowingly rushes to death,  
Without practicing to attain one's mind, keeping precepts avails no merit at all.  
Ah, how pitiful!

Study these words closely and practice diligently.  
Trust this song deeply.  
Place it open at your desk and read it from time to time.  
To say all I wish to say, even the oceans are not enough  
To wet the ink needed to write all the words.  
I stop now, so please attend to this earnestly,  
For I will speak again when the stone god has a baby.

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