

Zazen Wasan (Song of Zazen)

Translated by Roshi Philip Kapleau

From the beginning
all beings are Buddha.
Like water and ice,
without water no ice,
outside us no Buddhas.

How near the truth
yet how far we seek,
like one in water crying "I thirst!"
Like a child of rich birth
wandering poor on this earth,
we endlessly circle the six worlds.

The cause of our sorrow
is ego delusion.
From dark path to dark path
we've wandered in darkness-
how can we be free from the
wheel of saṃsāra?
The gateway to freedom is
zazen samādhi-
beyond exaltation,
beyond all our praises,
the pure Mahāyāna.

Upholding the precepts,
repentance, and giving,
the countless good deeds,
and the way of right living
all come from zazen.

Thus one true samādhi
extinguishes evils;
it purifies karma,
dissolving obstructions.

Then where are the dark paths
to lead us astray?
The pure lotus land is not far away.

Hearing this truth,
heart humble and grateful,
to praise and embrace it,
to practice its wisdom,
brings unending blessings,
brings mountains of merit.

And when we turn inward
and prove our True-nature
that True-self is no-self,
our own Self is no-self
we go beyond ego
and past clever words.

Then the gate to the oneness
of cause-and-effect
is thrown open.
Not two and not three,
straight ahead runs the Way.

Our form now being no-form,
in going and returning
we never leave home.
Our thought now being no-thought,
our dancing and songs
are the voice of the Dharma.

How vast is the heaven
of boundless samādhi!
How bright and transparent
the moonlight of wisdom!

What is there outside us,
what is there we lack?
Nirvāṇa is openly shown to our eyes.
This earth where we stand
is the pure lotus land,
and this very body--
the body of Buddha.