

Sweet Things

BY ZEN MASTER SEUNG SAHN

From a talk at Providence Zen Center on May 6, 1993

Every person in this world already has everything ... everything! However, very few people understand that; they don't understand this "everything." That means they don't understand their true self. Understanding your true self means everything is yours. So, each one of us has an original job—our human being's job—to understand that. Practicing people understand what is the correct way. Money, sex, fame, food, and sleep are part of desire mind; very important. But what is most important? When you get old then you will understand. I am sixty-six. When you get to be my age, desire disappears: sex mind disappears, fame mind disappears, sleep mind also disappears. All desires disappear. When that happens to you, what will you do? Many people say that a human being's job is to get money, sex, etc. But that is only human being's body job — an outside job. What is your inside job? Human being's inside job is to attain your true self and save all beings. If you understand that, then this whole world can be yours. That is the Buddha's teaching.

If you attain your true self then you become completely independent. In fact, a completely independent mind is your true self. Everything is created by mind alone. Zen means—Buddhism means—not dependent on Buddha, not dependent on God, not dependent on anything. That's a very important point. Why?

This world is always changing, changing, changing; and these days it's doing it very rapidly. Today many religious leaders are saying that the end of our world, even our earth, is near. Whenever the world is in rapid transition many new religious leaders appear. Many times their style is: "The end is near! You must believe me! If you don't believe in me you will have a big problem and a lot of suffering. If you believe in me, then I will save you and you will be very happy: your business, your life, your family, everything will be OK." Any religion can produce this kind of master, even Buddhism.

Zen does not use this type of speech. You must attain your true self, then attain everything. That's Zen. But, people don't like Zen practice; they only like candy. They don't like the clear water of Zen; they like sweet things. Many people only want a good taste: "Ohhh, wonderful! I've had a very good experience! I must follow this master." But, this type of master — this type of religion — steals your mind. Outside is a great master and wonderful feeling. But inside is a demon. If your mind is not clear you won't understand this demon. Then this demon will catch you and you'll go straight to hell. So, be careful!

This article copyright © 2008 Kwan Um School of Zen