

The Song of Liberation

心密初祖大愚法師

By Dayu Acharya

Master Yongjia's "Song of Enlightenment" has an ancient tune and a delightful spirit, and it has plenty to offer. Master Hongde's commentary also has its unique point of view. However, now let me melt both in one pot, blending in my own perspective, and make the "Song of Liberation".

The joy of enlightenment, how is it? Listen to my singing the "Song of Liberation".

Not letting the style of ancient masters prevail, I shall now weave words and sing along.

No falsehood, and no truth, this duality is in fact empty of essence.

Without essence, without form, neither dwelling in nothingness, the true-nature of Buddha as it is.

Perceiving the true-nature, all dharma cease, one is instantly awakened to the dharma's root.

Once the scenery no longer hides, it manifests vividly in your face.

Absolute truth, the seal of the Tathagata, but some would not truthfully believe.

Who comes to the root is enlightened in an instant, those fiddling with branches and leaves belong to gradual school.

Countless times of birth, countless times of death, aeons after aeons so it is.

Sometimes with god's head, sometimes with ghost's face, returning to the root the diverse manifestations vanish.

Following exoteric schools,¹ or practicing tantric methods,² ways vary but they reach the same root.
After traversing all paths to nirvana, I realize that birth and death do not inherently exist.

Walking is empty, sitting is empty, so are speaking, working and staying tranquil.
Even a shining blade striking my head, it is like a sharp sword slashing spring breeze.

Sudden awakening, reaching the omnipotent root, instantly cracks the shell of ignorance.

The six realms³ are doubtless in dreams, but enlightenment vacates the idea of sinner and saint.

The nature of affliction, it is the same as bodhi,⁴ where can one find virtue and sin?

Breaking free from the ropeless self-bondage, I hop and promenade in great peace.

No fixation, no clinging, follow the flow of life and fulfill the destiny.

Changeless and flowing free, it is the ultimate liberty and tranquility.

Returning to the root, fretting not about branches, marvelous functions exhibit freely and vibrantly.

Meeting the non-duality⁵ in a split second, I march straightly into the Tathagata's home.

Mastery of Chan, fluency in dharma, the radiant Sun is shining in the clear sky.

Unfathomable samadhi and endless meanings, they exhibit themselves in daily routines.

Awakened to the root, common to Buddha and all beings, the sentient and non-sentient share the same nostril.

¹ exoteric Buddhism

² tantric Buddhism

³ The six realms of existence: gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hell denizens.

⁴ Buddha nature, the source of enlightenment.

⁵ Buddha nature bears no dualistic concepts such as good or bad, sinner or saint, observation or observer, action or actor, etc.

No bondage no barrier, and no liberation, delusions hinder but enlightenment dissolves all.

Without a form, yet marvelously potent, how can one understand without direct experience?

Images in the mirror is easy to see, but catching the moon in the water will never succeed.

Valiant words, like a lion's roar, other beasts heard and all dropped tongues in shock.

In fears mighty elephants scattered, but a divine dragon listens with serenity and joy.

Lion's cub, whom the multitudes follow, it can make thunderous roars at three years old.

Like jackals faking the lion king, hundred-thousands of wizards talk in vain.

Who without birth, who without thought, reflection in a mirror is never real.

But if taking nihilism as ultimate truth, one echoes the heretics who bear deluded views.

A gallant man, holds the sword of wisdom, the sharp edge of prajna glowing with diamond flame.

Strikes down not only heretical beliefs, he cuts through also the wizards' fallacies.

Booming the dharma thunder, beating the dharma drum, the sea surges and the Sumeru⁶ dances.

The universe sets in the tip of a hair, the whole galaxy of worlds have not an inch of land.

May some slander, may some derogate, those who torch the sky gain only weariness.

Like a wind passing by my ears, how could it ever disturb the profound samadhi?

Each and every sound, preaching the absolute truth, slander or praise makes no difference.

Slander or praise, enmity or affinity, there is no such things in the mind of equanimity.

Praise would not add, slander would not reduce. A bird flying across the sky leaves no trace.

Daylight recedes into the expanse of universe, dark valley echoes the last chimney smoke.

⁶ Mount Sumeru

Silence in talking, talking in silence, the door of majestic offering⁷ opens without hinderance.

About my dharma origin should one ask, I am a visitor from Maha Prajna Paramita.⁸

Spoke often in the past, now I prefer silence, mountains and rivers have broad long tongues.⁹

Doing right or wrong people cannot see, going along or against gods cannot predict.

Often walk alone, often step in solitude, straw sandals on the feet look like a tiger scowl.

Kicking toes shattered the Avici jail,¹⁰ stomping feet unwittingly broke the treaded road.¹¹

A mad man, keeping a wordless scripture, expounds it till tongue drops but reaches no end.

The golden raven¹² is the radiant Sun, and the lad in my sight stands right in my front.

The wakening of enlightenment, no work is relevant, myself and surroundings break into emptiness.

Arrays of flowering lotus hold up the moonlight, osmanthus scent wafts through the night breeze.

Plenty of others, scouting the scriptures, seek understanding year after year without practice.

Grasp words and phrases with no end, much like wading in the sea and counting the grains of sand.

At the time of Buddha, the Honored One advised: it is fruitless to count the treasure of others.

Road always bumpy and journey full of peril, falling into a text pit is often inevitable.

It is foolishness, it is ignorance, people foraging a mirage for substance.

⁷ dharma teaching

⁸ the Perfection of Wisdom

⁹ Mountains and rivers speak incessantly.

¹⁰ Avici hell-the hell of incessant suffering

¹¹ a path to enlightenment

¹² In some Chinese legends, golden raven refers to the Sun.

Grasp futilely a finger pointing at the moon, scouring blindly the realm of sense and phenomenon.

Mind being a sense, phenomenon being the dust, both are like marks on a mirror face.

Marks cleaned and mirror shines, our true nature stands when mind and phenomena dissipate.

Is it, or is it not? A hairbreadth difference can cause a thousand-mile miss.

It is, naga king's girl transformed instantly to a Buddha;¹³ it is not, monk Sunaksatra lost human form.¹⁴

Deluded mind, false understanding, it does not reach the Tathagata's true meaning.

Hinayana's ascetic path is incomplete, the heretics' body toning ends in putrefaction.

Beyond imagination, the power of liberation, can't be carried even by an infinite land mass.

The maha prajna paramita, it is the profound wisdom of transcendence.

The supreme and awakening teaching, with no regard to worldly feelings, it turns around and stomps on the nirvana witterings.

Wei-Yin¹⁵ appearing lively today, what a wonderful scene that can be depicted by no paintings.

The door of expedient dharma, being deftly opened, a lotus blooming in fire can not be burned.

Monk Courageous Offering, who had broken the fundamental precepts,¹⁶

once awakened to the birth-less,¹⁷ he walked the path to buddha-hood with no impedance.

¹³ According to a story in Lotus Sutra Chapter 12 *Devadatta*, naga king Sagara's 8-year old daughter transforms instantly to a Buddha.

¹⁴ According to Nirvana Sutra Chapter 40 *On Bodhisattva Kasyapa*, Bhiksu Sunaksatra dropped to hell due to false understanding of enlightenment.

¹⁵ Bhīṣma-garjitasvara-rāja buddha, regarded as the first known buddha. See Lotus Sutra Chapter 20 *Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta*. But buddha nature is a universal and timeless existence. Also see footnote 17.

¹⁶ According to the sutra “佛说净业障经” (English translation unknown), numerous kalpas in the past, Monk Courageous Offering broke the precepts on adultery and killing. After deep repentance and long cultivation, he reached enlightenment and became a buddha.

¹⁷ Buddha nature has no beginning and no ending. It is thus birth-less.

Here and there, all apt for retreat, disturbance or serenity makes no difference.

Relish the solitude in a roofless palace, traverse the the bustling world with ease.

The moon rippling in the river, the wind passing by pine trees, what else do I need to seek?

The infinite past and future is a flash of lightening, three thousand galaxies sit in a single reed.

The forest of sandalwood, mixed with no other trees, it is thick and deep that only lions live.

I stroll quietly through in solitude, beasts and birds hiding far away.

The luminous mind, gleams with no obstruction, encompassing the vast expanse of dharma realms.

Reflecting all and myriads of phenomena, it is a shining pearl without inside or outside.

The sun could cool, the moon could burn, fallacies can never blight the absolute truth.

The muscleless emptiness has insurmountable strength, how could a mantis fend a running wheel off?

Singing as it is, hearing as it is, my song is completed even before opening mouth.

Buddhas of the three times¹⁸ resound in harmony, for all eternity boundless and endless.

I can't help bursting into laughter after singing the Song of Liberation. Listeners may question: "Aren't you afraid of not being able to close your mouth?" Readers please comment: what is this mad man really laughing about?

¹⁸ past, present and future