Song of Liberation

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Master Yongjia's Song of Enlightenment is ancient in tone and lucid in spirit, with much to commend it. Venerable Hongde's annotations likewise contain distinctive insights. I have now fused them into one, adding some of my own views from time to time, and composed the Song of Liberation.

Joy after awakening—what is that joy like? Listen as I teach and sing the Song of Liberation. The ancients need not stand alone in their lofty song; why should I not take up a line and join in?

Originally there is no delusion, nor is there truth; the two dharmas are, from the start, empty of intrinsic nature. Without intrinsic nature or marks, and without attachment to emptiness—this is the Tathāgata's true reality.

See ultimate reality: all dharmas are empty. In an instant of sudden awakening, the myriad dharmas are the same. Once this radiance can no longer be concealed, one meets it face-to-face, utterly bare.

I speak decisively of the Buddha-mind seal, yet some refuse to believe it as it truly is. To grasp the root directly is to be finished then and there; those who pluck leaves and seek branches follow the gradual teaching.

How many times have we been born, how many times have we died? From ancient times until now, it has always been so. There are countless forms of gods' heads and ghosts' faces; returning to the root and source, there is not the slightest thing.

Study Exoteric Buddhism, cultivate Esoteric Buddhism: their expedient gates differ, but their return to the source is the same. Having traveled the path to nirvāṇa to its end, I have understood that birth and death are originally empty.

Walking is empty; sitting is empty. Speaking or silent, moving or still—nothing is not empty. Though a naked blade be held over one's head, it is like a sharp sword

cutting through the spring breeze.

Awaken at once to the wondrous source of mind; when the shell of ignorance shatters, the realization is the same. In dreams, the six realms are vividly present; upon awakening, all is empty: neither sages nor ordinary beings remain.

Afflictions are themselves bodhi. Wrongdoing and merit have no intrinsic nature—where can they be sought? Once freed from binding oneself without a rope, one strides about freely in great repose.

Do not chase after conditions; do not cling. Accord with conditions and your circumstances, accepting whatever food and drink come your way. Unchanging amid conditions, act without obstruction; at ease, follow your mind in great peace and joy.

Simply attain the root; do not worry about the branches. Wondrous functioning moves freely, alive and vibrant. With a snap of the fingers, the gate of nonduality is flung open; ascend the hall and enter directly into the Tathāgata's house.

Thorough in realization, fluent in exposition; the radiant sun hangs round and full in the clear sky. The hundred thousand samādhis and immeasurable meanings are found only within ordinary daily activity.

Awaken to the essence of mind: Buddhas and sentient beings are alike. Sentient and insentient beings breathe through the same nostril. There is no bondage, no liberation, no obstruction; when deluded, one obstructs oneself, and when awakened, one penetrates freely.

Without form or appearance, supremely numinous and wondrous—without direct realization, how could one know it? Seeing reflections in a mirror is not difficult, but how can one grasp the moon at the bottom of the water?

The lion's roar, the fearless teaching: hearing it, all the beasts are left tongue-tied. Mighty elephants flee in panic and lose their majesty; devas and dragons listen silently, giving rise to joy.

A lion cub is followed by all the other beasts; at three years old, it can already roar mightily. But if wild jackals pursue the Dharma King, a hundred thousand demons merely open their mouths in vain.

Who is without thought? Who is unborn? Do not mistake a mirror's reflection for what is real. If annihilation is taken as ultimate, how does this differ from the erroneous views of non-Buddhists?

A great person grasps the sword of wisdom: the edge of prajñā and the flame of vajra. It can not only shatter non-Buddhist ways of thinking, but also destroy the

views of deviant demons.

The Dharma thunder shakes; the Dharma drum resounds. The sea surges, and Mount Sumeru dances. Within the span of a hair's breadth, heaven and earth are settled; in the great trichiliocosm, with worlds like grains of sand, not an inch of land remains.

Let them slander; let them revile. Trying to burn the sky with fire only exhausts them. What I hear is merely wind in empty space—how could it obstruct profound great samādhi?

All sounds are ultimate reality; harsh words and kind speech are no different. Only when one does not distinguish enemies from friends on the basis of blame or praise does one accord with the impartial nature of the original mind.

Praise adds nothing; blame takes nothing away. A bird's tracks in the sky are written upon the clouds; the vast void drinks in light and dissolves separation, while echoes in a deep valley speak amid the evening mist.

Speaking when silent, silent when speaking: the great gate of giving stands open, without obstruction. If someone asks which school I belong to, I am a traveler of Mahāprajñā.

I once spoke of it; now I am too lazy to speak. Mountains, rivers, and the great earth are broad, long tongues. Whether right or wrong, people do not recognize it; whether moving against or with the current, even heaven cannot fathom it.

Ever walking alone, ever treading alone, grass sandals beneath my feet fierce as tigers. A step crushes the vajra ground to powder; without realizing it, I have trodden through the road by which I came.

A madman, a wordless sūtra, speaking freely and endlessly. The golden crow beneath the sea, the sun in the sky; the pupil in the eye, the person before one's eyes.

Awaken, and it is done; no effort is applied. Things and self both vanish, and mind and objects are empty. Lotus blossoms, branch after branch, support the night moon; osmanthus leaves, leaf after leaf, fan the fragrant breeze.

There are those who search the sūtras and treatises, seeking understanding all year without putting that understanding into practice. Discriminating among names and marks, how could they know rest? Counting sand after entering the sea merely wearies them in vain.

The Buddha once earnestly warned: counting another's treasures gives one no share. Those who have always stumbled and made no progress can scarcely avoid falling uselessly into the pit of words and letters.

They are foolish and dull, taking mirages for reality. Mistaking the finger for the moon, they exert themselves in vain; amid faculties, objects, and dharmas, they grope blindly.

Mind is the faculty; objects are the dust. The two are like traces upon a mirror. Only when the traces and grime are completely cleansed does the light appear; when both mind and objects vanish, true nature is revealed.

Wrong is not inherently wrong; right is not inherently right. Yet a hair's breadth of deviation leads a thousand miles astray. On the right path, the Dragon Girl instantly becomes a Buddha; on the wrong path, Sunakṣatra loses even his human state.

When one's spiritual disposition is deviant, understanding goes astray; one fails to comprehend the Tathāgata's original intent. The ascetic practices of the two vehicles are not ultimate; the bodies cultivated by non-Buddhists will ultimately decay.

Inconceivable is the power of liberation; lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges cannot bear it. Mahāprajñāpāramitā—profound prajñāpāramitā.

The perfect and sudden teaching makes no concessions to sentiment: turn about and tread down the city of nirvāṇa. From beyond the time of Bhīṣmagarjitasvara Buddha until today—such splendid grace cannot be captured in a painting!

The gate of skillful means opens well: lotuses growing in fire are never destroyed. Yongshi committed grave offenses, yet awakened to non-arising and has long since become a Buddha, free of obstruction.

Every place is an āraṇya, a secluded retreat: no bustle, no stillness, no entanglement. Serene in secluded dwelling within the unimpeded hall, one plays freely in the human world, truly untrammeled.

River moon shines, pine wind blows—where else is there any doing to seek? The myriad ages of past and present pass like a flash of lightning; the great trichiliocosm's ocean of worlds is but a single reed.

In a sandalwood grove there are no other trees; dense and secluded, it is where lions dwell. Alone one wanders through the quiet forest, while beasts and birds all depart afar.

Mind and objects are clear; illumination is without obstruction. Vast, lucid, and penetrating, it pervades the dharma realm. Amid the hidden and manifest profusion

of myriad forms, a single perfect luminosity has no inside or outside.

The sun may grow cold, the moon may grow hot, but how could erroneous views destroy the true teaching? Without sinews, the power of emptiness is incomparably great—how could a praying mantis block a cart's path?

Sing in accordance with reality; listen in accordance with reality. Before the mouth has even opened, the harmony is already complete. The Buddhas of the three times sing together in accord, endlessly, to the end of future time.

When the song ended, I could not help bursting into laughter. One who joined in shouted, "Are you not afraid that once you open your mouth, you will be unable to close it?" All of you, say: what, after all, is this madman's great laughter?