

**THE SONG THAT ATTESTS  
TO THE WAY.**

*Translated from the Chinese of  
Great Master Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh  
(J. Yōka Genkaku).*

Good sir, have you not yet caught sight of the one who  
has broken off his pursuit of knowledge, seeks no  
goals and now leisurely walks the Way?  
He does not try to exclude from his mind foolish or  
deluded thoughts nor does he hunt after Truth  
For the real nature of his ignorance is none other than  
Buddha Nature  
And his illusory, ever-changing body, empty of any  
permanent self, is none other than the Dharma  
Body.

Once we have realized what the Dharma Body is, not  
a single thing exists that we can call 'our own'  
For our original Self-nature is this Buddha of Ultimate  
Reality.  
Our five skandhas are as floating clouds, vainly coming  
and going,  
And the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion  
are as water bubbles which emerge and disappear  
to no purpose.

Once we have awakened to That Which Is Real,  
'persons' and 'things' no longer exist  
And, in a second, the karma that has been dragging  
us through the incessant torments of avichi hells  
dissolves into thin air  
But, were we then to deceive any sentient being with  
false words and claims,  
We would incur having our tongues ripped out in  
aeons of future lives as uncountable as dust grains  
in the universe.

Upon our sudden awakening to the meditation of a  
Tathagata  
Our myriad practices of the six paramitas are perfected  
within that essential state.  
Whilst we are within that dream called life, the six  
realms of existence are all too clear;  
After awakening, the great universe of universes is  
completely empty of any substantiality.

Therein are no defilements or blessings, loss or gain,  
For, within our Original Nature, serene and free of  
defiling passions, there is no need to raise ques-  
tions or search for anything  
And, as the mirror of mind which is covered with the  
dust of age-old ignorance has not yet been wiped  
clear,  
Now is the day to be scrupulous in our cleansing of it.

Who is beyond thought? Who beyond birth?  
If truly there is the Unborn, then there is not anything  
that is not born of It.

Summon up your mechanical man, the one with the  
wooden head, and ask him  
How soon in his search for Buddhahood he will attain  
his goal through his kind of efforts.

Let the four elements go free; do not grasp after them.  
Acting from within your serene and defilement-free  
Nature take what you need of food and drink  
For all your actions lack any permanence, are empty  
of any substantiality  
And are nothing but the great, perfect, enlightened  
understanding of the Tathagata.

Certainty bespeaks the true monk;  
Those who are given to disagreeing display signs of  
emotional commitments.  
The direct severing of the roots of karma is what a  
Buddha attests to with His seal;  
If you just pick at the leaves or search for the branches,  
I cannot help you.

The whereabouts of the Mani-pearl is beyond the ken  
of ordinary people  
But you can find It for yourself within the Tathagata's  
Treasure House which is within your own being.  
Its wondrous spiritual functioning through your six  
senses will be both empty and not empty  
And the halo of light of Its manifestation will take  
forms and be beyond form.

Purify your five types of vision associated with  
the physical, spiritual, Wisdom-, Dharma- and

Buddha-eye and attain the five powers from your  
faith, zeal, mindfulness, meditation and wise dis-  
cernment which destroy all hindrances,  
But it is only after you have attested to It for yourself  
that you will truly know how unfathomable It is;  
When looking at shapes in a mirror it is not difficult  
to see what they are  
But, if you grasp at the moon in the water, how will  
you succeed in taking hold of it?

Always acting on his own, always walking on his own,  
The one who has realized It roams, as his predecessors  
did, the pathway to nirvana;  
His tune is an ancient one, his spirit pure, his tempera-  
ment naturally elevated;  
Gaunt of countenance, sturdy of bone, he does not turn  
back to give others a second look.

The penniless disciple of Shakyamuni is a pauper, so  
say the mouths of many,  
But the truth is that he is materially poor but not desti-  
tute in the Way.  
His poverty appears as a body always draped in ragged  
robes  
But the priceless Jewel of the Way is stored within the  
Treasure House of his heart.

This rare and priceless Treasure is inexhaustible in Its  
functions  
And never miserly is he in using It to benefit all beings  
in response to the occasion

For within his Essential Nature the threefold Buddha  
body and the four forms of Buddha wisdom have  
been perfected  
Whilst the eight forms of liberation and the six won-  
drous spiritual abilities are the seal that attests to  
his training.

The disciple high along the Way, with a single burst,  
understands all  
Whereas one who is still middling or below hears  
much and has many misgivings,  
But such a one need only discard the grimy robes he  
wears within his heart  
For of what use is it to look outside yourself and boast  
of your devotion and diligence?

In attending to the slanders of others, tolerate the  
wrongs they do you:  
In their attempt to put the very heavens to the torch,  
they vainly burn themselves out.  
When I hear what such say, it is just as though I were  
sipping the Sweet Dew;  
All melts away and I suddenly enter the Inconceivable.

If you regard the ill speech of others as a source of  
merit and virtue,  
They will indeed become your good friends.  
When you feel the teeth of backbiting, if you do not  
give in to fault-finding, hatred or partiality,  
How better can you give rise to the power of the  
Unborn's compassion and forbearance?

Thoroughly understand the Principle for which we  
train as well as what It has given voice to  
And both your meditation and wise discernment will  
be perfectly clear without your becoming mired  
down in 'emptiness'.

Not only have I now, on my own, succeeded in apprehending It  
But the Buddhas as uncountable as sand grains are,  
in essence, the same.

Speak with the fearlessness of a roaring lion  
And all the beasts, upon hearing it, will be boggled out  
of their minds;

The elephant, fragrant with springtime passions, may  
lose his dignity and composure as he thunders  
about like a restless surf

But the devas and nagas, tranquilly listening, will  
beget joy and delight.

Travelling the broad rivers and seas, fording the mountain  
streams,

I sought out teachers, inquired about the Way and  
challenged the understanding of Masters,

But, ever since I found the pathway of Hui-neng,  
I have thoroughly understood that the issue of birth  
and death is not necessarily involved with such  
activities.

Meditating whilst active as well as meditating whilst  
sitting,

Whether speaking or silent, moving about or inactive,  
my Self-nature is quiet and tranquil.

Should I happen to encounter those with swords or  
daggers, It will continue ever-peaceful  
Or, were I to be poisoned by some drug, again It will  
remain at Its ease.

In a former life our Master Shakyamuni attended on  
His twenty-fourth predecessor, Dipankara Buddha,  
Then, after many kalpas, He trained Himself as the  
holy ascetic who patiently experienced mutilation  
in order to convert King Kali.

How many rounds of birth, how many rounds of death  
He passed through!

His births and deaths were unbounded whilst He re-  
mained uncertain when they would end

Until He Himself suddenly awoke to fully know the  
Unborn

For, in the midst of all the struggles and rebuffs of  
life, what are momentary grief and pleasure?

Entering deep into the mountains to abide in a forest,  
As isolated and remote as the mountain peaks, under  
some tall pine tree I have taken my place,

Strolling about or tranquilly sitting with my family  
of rustic monks.

Silent in our solitude, we peacefully dwell together  
through the rainy season, truly solitary and un-  
attached.

Once you have fully and completely awakened, there  
is no striving after things

For none of the things of worldly purpose and common  
value is the same as this.

Thus, with an eye on your condition in life, to practise  
charity in order to beget celestial blessings and  
auspicious fortune

Is no different than shooting an arrow into the heavens  
For, once its potential power is spent, your arrow  
merely falls back to earth

And what you will receive in future lives will not be  
what you desire.

What resemblance does this kind of behaviour bear  
to that gate to Reality which is the breaking free  
from entanglement with the every-day world's  
sense of worth?

Once you have crossed over that threshold, straight-  
way you enter the Tathagata's realm.

Therefore, simply get to the root of the matter, do not  
worry yourself over the new shoots that branch  
out atop the tree.

It is just as the clearest porcelain holding within itself  
the Precious Moon.

I now understand what the so-called Wish-granting  
Jewel is:

It is our seeking spiritual benefits for ourselves that  
we might spiritually benefit others without sur-  
cease.

Within the river the luminous moon floats, among the  
branches of the pine the wind blows softly,

Throughout the long night the dark sky is clear—what  
is there that needs to be done?

The Precepts, the Buddha Nature's pearls, are im-  
bedded upon the very ground of my heart,  
Frost and dew, clouds and mist, are the raiment of my  
Original Self.

Coaxing dragons into one's begging bowl, pacifying  
quarrelsome tigers with one's travelling staff

Whose jangling metal rings clearly resound  
Are not mere conventional metaphors for dutifully  
conforming to the Precepts

But are the very leaning on the Tathagata's precious  
staff and the walking in His traces.

It is not a matter of seeking Truth or cutting off false  
views,

Just fully understand that dualities are void of mean-  
ingfulness and have no reality of their own.

To be beyond form is to be beyond emptiness and  
beyond being not empty;

This is precisely what the genuine form of a Tathagata  
is.

His Original Nature is as a mirror bright, a looking-  
glass without obstructing blemishes,

Its vastness and clarity permeate realms as numerous  
as the Ganges River sands.

The whole universe and all that it contains are but  
silhouettes reflected within It.

The halo of light of Its manifestation has no duality  
of outside and within.

Vacant-headed notions of emptiness which deny  
causality

Bring about calamities as dire as a raging conflagration or a rampaging flood.

Rejecting that anything exists whilst clutching on to emptiness is a sickness and a fever  
And is no better than avoiding drowning by throwing oneself onto a fire.

If someone tries to discard his deluded mind in order to snatch at the True Principle,  
His mind, given over to the duality of grasping and abandoning, will become a clever and deceiving cheat.

The novice who has not yet comprehended this needs to train;

When he has deeply perfected himself, he will recognise this thief which he was wont to take for his True Child.

The loss of the Dharma's wealth and the destruction of merits and virtues

Invariably come about through the wilful and conscious indulgence of the discriminatory mind,

Therefore the gate to meditation is the complete dropping off of discriminatory thoughts

Whereby you will suddenly awaken to the ability to know and see for yourself the Unborn.

The one of great zeal holds within his hands the sword of wise discrimination;

This weapon of wisdom is the very flame that springs forth from the indestructible Jewel.

Not only does it utterly smash the mind-sets of those outside the Way

It also has, for ever so long, discouraged the boldness of those demons who reside in heavens.

He sets the thunder of the Teaching to vibrating, strikes the drum of the Dharma,

Displays to all the clouds of benevolence and showers upon them the Sweet Dew

For, wherever this lordly naga-elephant treads, countless ones are benefited

And all those of the five different temperaments who ride within the three vehicles are roused to awakening.

The milk-enrichening herb in the snowy Himalayas, which grows where none other will,

Produces a ghee as pure as the Buddha Truth which I continually offer up,

For the One Nature completely and perfectly permeates the natures of all,

The One Dharma wholly embodies all dharmas,

The One Moon manifests Itself everywhere in all drops of water,

The moons reflected in all drops of water are but the One Moon.

The Dharma Bodies of all Buddhas penetrate my Self-nature,

My Self-nature, being the same as Theirs, is united with the Tathagata's.

Any single stage of Bodhisattvahood encompasses all stages

And involves no particular form or way of thinking or special practice.

Within the time of a finger snap, it has completely perfected eighty thousand Dharma gates;

In but a moment the three immeasurably long periods in a Bodhisattva's progress to Buddhahood are eradicated.

All calculations and logical propositions as well as arguments against making calculations and logical propositions,

What connection do they have with my spiritual awakening?

That is not something which can be ruined by slander or improved by praise,

Its nature resembles empty space in its being unbounded by any bank or shore,

It never departs from any place, remaining constantly clear.

Though you may search for it in me, know, good sir, it is beyond sight.

It cannot be grabbed onto nor can it be removed.

Only within the Unattainable is it to be realized.

When I am silent it speaks, when I speak it is silent;

The great gate of its charity is open wide, nothing bars the way.

When people ask me what the Principle is that I expound,

I respond that it is the power of Mahaprajna, the Great Wisdom,

But, whether they say yea or nay, it is beyond their ken  
For, whether they resist it or walk in compliance with it, it is even beyond heaven to fathom.

For too many kalpas have I trained myself in it  
For this to be some idle boast or attempt at deception or delusion.

By hoisting up the standard of Buddha Truth in order to establish the Principle for which we train  
Hui-neng did what Buddha decreed and ever so brilliantly.

The first to Transmit the Lamp was Mahakashyapa,  
Then, through twenty-eight generations in India, it was kept burning in memory

Until the Dharma flowed east and entered this land.

Bodhidharma was our First Ancestor

And for six generations the Kesa has been Transmitted as people have heard.

Those who will later realize the Way, who can count how many there will be?

Truth needs no establishing and fallacy is fundamentally void

So, when the duality of existence and non-existence is altogether banished, then even non-emptiness is a vain term.

The twenty gates to Emptiness are, from the start, non-attachment;

The nature of all Tathagatas is one and their substance is the same.

The mind is a sense organ, dharmas are its objects;  
Both are just as dark smudges upon a mirror.  
Once such dirt spots are completely removed, its light,  
for the first time, is fully revealed.  
When both mind and dharmas are forgotten about,  
one's Nature is the Truth.

Alas, in these grievous degenerate days of the Dharma  
the world has fallen on evil times.

The auspicious spiritual fortunes of sentient beings  
fade and people grow difficult to bring into har-  
mony or to train.

The saintly ones of the past are long gone and per-  
verted views have become deeply ingrained.

When Mara's minions grow strong as the Dharma is  
weakened, many are the fears and dangers that arise  
For, when they hear talk about the Tathagata's gate of  
sudden enlightenment

They want only to destroy and do away with it as they  
might pulverize a tile.

That which acts is the wilful mind, that which receives  
the calamities of these actions is one's own body;  
No need to seek the cause outside yourself and blame  
others.

If you would avoid incurring unrelenting, hellish  
karma,  
Do not malign the Tathagata's Wheel of the True  
Teaching.

In a sandalwood forest no other species of tree is to be  
found.

Submerged deep in this dense wood, that disciple of  
the Master, the lion, abides.

Quiet, peaceful, he roams on his own where he would.  
Timorous beasts and flighty birds all keep their distance  
But the lion's cubs follow after him in a pride.

Even at three, how they can roar!

Were jackals or wild foxes to skulk after this Dharma  
King

For the rest of their lives, they would stare at this un-  
canny figure dumb-founded, their mouths agape.

The Teaching of perfect and sudden enlightenment has  
nothing to do with conventional worldly thought;  
Where doubts and uncertainty remain, straightway  
arguments will arise.

But I, a mountain monk, do not say this to flatter my  
own ego;

I fear lest your manner of training land you in duality's  
pit of nihilism versus eternalism.

Wrong is not always wrong and right is not always  
right;

A hair's breadth of difference and you miss it by a  
thousand miles.

If right, then the naga-dragon's daughter becomes  
Buddha in an instant;

If wrong, then the learned monk Shurakshatra, whilst  
still alive, falls into a hell.

From a very early age I took to accumulating knowl-  
edge



And was always brashly inserting myself into discussions on the Scriptures and commentaries;  
 I was unrelenting in making distinctions over terms and their meanings  
 As though diving into the sea to calculate the grains of sand therein and vexing myself thereby to no purpose.

To remove such suffering, the Tathagata offered me severe rebukes,  
 For what profit is there in counting the jewels and treasures of others?  
 Deflated by this, I awoke to the futility of these pursuits  
 And then, for many years, just as vainly played out the role of wanderer upon the winds, guest of the dusty road.

When someone's seed Nature becomes perverted and he explains things with erroneous information  
 He will fail to penetrate to the Tathagata's principle of complete and sudden enlightenment.  
 However diligently pursued, the course of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas—those who listen but do not heed and those who listen only for their own sakes—is not that of the heart bent on the Way;  
 Non-Buddhists who are quick and bright still lack true spiritual wisdom and discernment  
 Whilst those who are muddled or silly, as well as those who are small-minded or foolish,  
 Believe that the showing of an empty fist or the pointing of a finger upwards is what produces a true explanation

And, taking the finger for the moon, toil on in vain efforts to understand  
 Whilst fabricating wondrous absurdities from the things they find in their sense fields.

Not seeing a single dharma; *this* is the Tathagata.  
 Such is the one who is called an Avalokita, one who regards things just as they are.  
 With this understanding, karmic obstructions are seen to be, from the first, empty of any substantiality  
 But, when not yet understood, earlier karmic debts must be repaid.

If someone is unable to stomach the royal feast even though famished,  
 How can he be cured of his sickness even though he meets the Lord of Physicians Himself?  
 However, doing meditation whilst in the realm of sensuous desires will engender the power to become aware  
 So that, within the fire of your training, the indestructible lotus will be born.  
 Pradhanashura Bodhisattva offended against the Great Precepts yet, when he awoke to the Unborn,  
 He instantly realized Buddhahood and still exists in another realm.

Even though a disciple of the Master speaks fearlessly as a roaring lion,  
 Alas, the foolish and confused, obdurate and as insensitive as leather,

Only understand that offending against Precepts hinders realization of enlightenment,  
They do not see how a Tathagata opens up the mysteries.

Long ago there were two monks, one who acted contrary to the Precept on licentiousness and the other on killing.

The Vinaya Master Upali, whose brightness was as limited as that of a glow-worm, could only add the fetters of defilement and guilt to them

Whereas the lay disciple Vimalakirti, the Mahasattva, forthwith dissolved their doubts

Just as a blazing sun melts frost and snow.

The abilities of one who is liberated go beyond comprehension;

Their wondrous functions, numberless as the sands, are also limitless.

Such a person would not fail to offer the four essentials of clothing, food, bedding and medicine

To say nothing of dispersing ten thousand ounces of gold where needed.

To have one's body crushed and bones reduced to powder is not sufficient to repay him,

For one verse, clearly explained, surpasses ten million merely mouthed.

He is a lord amidst the Dharma deserving of highest respect,

And Tathagatas, as numberless as the sands of the Ganges, are alike in their attesting to what he has attained.

Now, comprehending what this Wish-granting Jewel is, I know that those who have accepted It in true faith are all in accord with It.

Such a one clearly sees that not a single thing substantially exists,

That there are neither ordinary people nor Buddhas, That the great thousandfold universes, containing worlds as numerous as the grains of sand, are as bubbles within the ocean

And that all saints and sages are as lightning sweeping across the sky.

Even if an iron wheel were sent spinning above his head,

The perfect brilliance of his meditation and wisdom would never be lost.

The sun can grow cold, the moon can turn hot, But the host of Mara's demons cannot destroy the true speech of such a one.

Like a lofty elephant drawing a carriage slowly along the road,

What praying mantis can stop his turning of the Wheel?

The lordly elephant does not wander about in the rabbit's trails;

One of great awakening does not adhere to petty formalisms.

Do not malign the blue heavens as you peer at them through a slender, hollow reed.


Since you may not yet have comprehended, I have now, for your sake, good sir, given you here my parting words as a key.

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