Dharma Radio
Buddhist Literature Into Songs
Rev. Heng Sure & Friends
This Dharma Radio album contains thirteen Buddhist stories, from the oldest, first sung 2,500 years ago, to the newest, written in 2018. Nine of them are translations, taken from Buddhist texts originally spoken in Sanskrit, Pali or Chinese into contemporary English.

I hope this album helps spread the Buddha’s teaching of liberation in language that connects with our hearts. Please reflect on the messages as you absorb the rhythms and melodies. - turn your radio on!

Dharma Radio
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1 Empty Cloud Wakes Up
Music: Rev. Heng Sure
Lyrics: Elder Master Xuyun’s Enlightenment Verse translated and adapted by Rev. Heng Sure

During a twelve-week Chan meditation session in 1896, late at night, a tea cup fell from a monk’s hand, and shattered on the floor. Instantly, the monk, Elder Master Xuyun (Empty Cloud), “lit up his mind and saw his inherent nature,” Buddhist jargon for the experience of spiritual enlightenment. He wrote these three stanzas to memorialize the event. One verse is “True Emptiness,” staring directly into the Void, where the Universe holds no sympathy; the other verse mirrors “Wonderful Existence,” full of compassion and life. The melody is an attempt to place this iconic experience in a Western musical setting.

杯子落地，響聲鈴鈴，
虚空粉碎也，狂心當下歇。

The cup hit the floor with a ringing sound,
That echoed in the air,
Empty space broke to bits,
And my mad mind stopped right there.

Burned my hand, shattered my cup,
Broken for good, my mind,
Like my family it’s lost, the people are gone,
Words are hard to find.

Spring is here, the flowers breathe,
Their fragrance to the sun;
Mountains, rivers, the earth itself,
Are just the Thus Come One.

Water and earth, wind and fire,
Roots digging deep, branches reaching higher,
North and South and East and West all beings are kin to me,
We’re all sitting in the shade of the family tree. (x2)

I’ve got earth in my feet, I’ve got oceans in my knees,
Seven generations live on inside of me,
My roots connect the universe, all beings are family,
We’re all sitting in the shade of the family tree. (x2)

What we do to our planet, we do to our home;
Planet Earth is our address, nobody lives alone.
Everyone’s a neighbor in our earth community,
We’re all sitting in the shade of the family tree. (x2)

Earth is home to all of us,
Share the crops don’t make a fuss,
Share the food grown in the ground,
There’s enough to go around.
Eat the burger, feed the cat,
One you savor, one you pet.
Pet the burger, eat the cat,
How you gonna keep it straight?

I’ve got brothers wearing fur, I’ve got sisters wearing fins,
Some with wings and some with tails, and some with rainbow skin,
I don’t eat my family come sit here right by me,
We’re all sitting in the shade of the family tree. (x2)

Now, the cook she calls it omelet but the chicken called it egg,
You may call it drumstick, but the turkey called it leg,
Every mother loves her children, live and let life be,
So we can sit beneath the shade of the family tree. (x2)

Come on and sit beneath the shade of the family tree.

2 Family Tree
Music and Lyrics: Rev. Heng Sure

In 1978 south of Gaviota Pass near Santa Barbara I saw a large tree giving peaceful shelter to natural enemies: deer and coyotes, rabbits and feral dogs, snakes and amphibians, all sought shelter together from the heat of the blistering sun during a prolonged drought. If predator and prey can establish a “Peaceable Kingdom” while sharing the shade of the same tree, surely humans can find a way to live in harmony with our brothers and sisters, whether we are wearing feathers or scales, fur, or skin.

杯子撲落地，響聲鈴鈴，
虚空粉碎也，狂心當下歇。

The cup hit the floor with a ringing sound,
That echoed in the air,
Empty space broke to bits,
And my mad mind stopped right there.

Burned my hand, shattered my cup,
Broken for good, my mind,
Like my family it’s lost, the people are gone,
Words are hard to find.

Spring is here, the flowers breathe,
Their fragrance to the sun;
Mountains, rivers, the earth itself,
Are just the Thus Come One.
Maitreya Bodhisattva has a popular appearance, the fat “laughing Buddha,” beloved by children, and found in shops in Chinatowns world-wide. In fact, the “hemp-bag monk” in tattered clothes got his rotund appearance not by over-eating but from his ability to endure any amount of abuse without getting angry. He symbolizes great patience and the capacity to take insults and disrespect without getting angry.

The Old Fool wears tattered clothes, fills his belly with tasteless food; Patches his robe to keep out the cold, and as things come, so they go, His belly’s big ‘cause he can hold, praise so hot and blame so cold, Splits his face in a smile so full, at the situations he finds laughable, The jewel of patience, it’s a pearl so rare.

If someone scolds the Old Fool, he simply agrees, If someone hits the Old Fool, he smiles and falls down on his knees, Spit in his face, he lets it dry - he’s not upset, and you save your energy, The jewel of patience, it’s a pearl so rare.

His belly’s big ‘cause he can hold, praise so hot and blame so cold, Splits his face in a smile so full, at the situations he finds laughable, The jewel of patience, it’s a pearl so rare.

Well now you’ve heard of his patience gongfu, Maitreya wants to share it with you, If you set this aside and go seeking the Dao - I’ve got to ask you, Who’s the old fool, anyhow?
The Mirror of the Mind
The mirror of the mind, is bright without a flaw,
Everything’s reflected, you can see it all.
All ten thousand things revealed, perfect, round and bright,
No inside, no outside, just brilliant pure light.

Goodbye to good and evil, goodbye to loss and gain,
In stillness and tranquility you never ask again;
Your wisdom mirror was coated thick,
Now it shines without a flaw:
There’s nothing you can’t see.

The mind is the root; dharmas are all dust.
Mind and dharmas both are like a mirror stained and cracked.
Polish out the stains and cracks, the mirror shines like new.
Forget both mind and dharmas, the nature now is true.

The Wish-fulfilling Pearl
This is the Mani Pearl, a treasure still unknown,
Look to the Tathagata but find it on your own.
It works in six uncanny ways, it’s here and now it’s gone,
A single round and perfect light, now it’s hidden, now it’s shown.

Once you get the root you can let the branch tips be;
Like a jeweled moon that shines in lapis lazuli.
Now that you have understood this wish-fulfilling gem;
The benefits to self and others truly never end.

The King among all dharmas: there’s nothing more sublime,
As every Tathagata together realized;
Hear my explanation of the wish-fulfilling jewel;
Everyone who picks it up in faith will know the truth.

Buddha-nature
Moon on the river shines, the night breeze stirs the pines;
In this clear eternal stillness, let things take their time.
Buddha-nature’s pearl; mind-ground sets its seal;
Mist and dew, cloud and fog, hide and now reveal.

Blame it, it’s not less; praise it, it’s not more;
Its body is like empty space it has no fence, no shore;
It’s never left this very place, it’s always holding still;
No matter how you try to see it friend, you never will.

You can’t get it, you can’t let it go.
Since there’s nothing there to get, why do you chase it so?
When silent, it’s still speaking, when speaking, always still;
The giving road is open and the Dharma’s flowing now.
Someone asked, “Hey Mister, this teaching, what’s it called?”
I said, “Power to the Mahaprajña Paramita.”
My tall fir trees touched the sky, Where eagles raised their young.
Timber wolves would serenade, When sundown’s song was sung;
Salmon swam home to their streams, Each year you’d find them there,
Redwoods like cathedrals, Every breath was like a prayer.
Turtle island lullaby, Song for the end of day.
To ease us into twilight, And send us on our way.
We are all related, On this planet that we share.
Have we learned any lessons? Small blue marble in the air.

You wasted all my topsoil, You fished my waters dry.
You clear cut my green trees, I can’t breathe and I can’t cry.
What about your children? How far can you see?
What we do to our neighbors, Becomes our destiny.

Turtle island lullaby, Song for the end of day. To ease us into twilight, And send us on our way. We are all related, On this planet that we share. Have we learned any lessons? Small blue marble in the air.

Goodnight to the salmon, Goodnight to the seals, Goodnight to the turtles, May your spirits be healed.
No one owns the fire, No one owns the air.
No one owns the water, The Earth’s a gift to share.
Life itself is sacred, May we all one day be healed.
May we find our great compassion, When our kinship is revealed.

Turtle island lullaby, Song for the end of day. To ease us into twilight, And send us on our way. We are all related, On this planet that we share. Have we learned any lessons? Small blue marble in the air.

My Dharma-friends, gather ‘round, And I’ll sing to you a song, About a Bodhisattva, Whose name is Super Strong.
With a burst of blazing light, He opened eyes asleep and blind, ‘Cause Super Strong’s gong fu Was the power of his mind.

Now Super Strong was awesome, But his heart was solid kind, “All suffering and disasters, I’ll end for all mankind.
Evil and injustice, I’ll find a way to fight.”
But all the Buddhas told him, “Don’t fight, return the light.”

Super Strong’s inside you, Cultivate with all your might, Pure thoughts continue; Don’t fight, return the light.
Throughout the Dharma Realm Great Strength proclaim, “Six senses gather back, Recite the Buddha’s name.”

Ain’t no better thing to do Than saving all mankind, Come to the Buddha City, Bowing with a single mind; The world is ripe and waiting Can’t you see that now’s the time? Come to the Buddha City, Bowing with a single mind.

So he gathered in his stealin’ eyes, His ears, and nose and tongue, Tamed his mind and body, And when all the work was done, A blinding blaze of light shot forth from toe to crown; ‘Cause he plugged into the source, Tried his best, and laid it down.

Super Strong’s inside you Cultivate with all your might, Pure thoughts continue; Don’t fight, return the light.
Throughout the Dharma Realm Great Strength proclaim, “Six senses gather back, Recite the Buddha’s name.”
She carries me...

7 She Carries Me
Music and Lyrics: Jennifer Berezan

This song was written by Canadian-American artist, songwriter and Berkeley neighbor, Jennifer Berezan. Of all the songs written about Guan Yin Bodhisattva, the Awakened Being of Great Compassion, this one touches more hearts than any other. I've sung it with audiences from Shanghai to Sydney, from Berkeley to Boston and no matter where, the scope of Guan Yin's vows seems to unlock the spirit of kindness in our hearts. Guan Yin wants to carry us to the other side of trouble, fears, affliction and pain.

Visit https://jenniferberezan.com for more information about this song and Jennifer Berezan's music.

She is a boat, she is a light,  
High on a hill, in the dark of night,  
She is a wave, she is the deep,  
She is the dark where the angels sleep,  
When all is still and peace abides,  
She carries me to the other side.

She carries me, she carries me,  
She carries me to the other side. (x2)

And though I walk through valleys deep,  
And shadows chase me in my sleep,  
On rocky cliffs I stand alone,  
I have no name, I have no home,  
With broken wings I long to fly,  
She carries me to the other side,  
She carries me... (x2)

A thousand arms, a thousand eyes,  
A thousand ears to hear my cries,  
She is the gate, she is the door,  
She leads me through and back once more,  
When day has dawned, when death is nigh,  
She carries me to the other side.

She carries me... (x2)
Huangmei was the patriarch,  
He held the robe and bowl,  
Passed on from Bodhidharma,  
Generations ago.  
He wanted to hand them on,  
He felt the time had come;  
He made a poetry contest,  
To try and find the one.

Everything’s a test, y’know,  
To see what you will do,  
Mistaking what’s before your eyes,  
You’ll have to start anew.

All the monks refused to write,  
They thought they all knew  
The winner of the slam would be  
A monk they called Shenxiu.  
Shenxiu was mighty nervous,  
He thought he might not win,  
He knew he hadn’t seen his mind,  
So here’s what he turned in:

The Fifth Chan Patriarch, Huangmei Hong Ren (601-674) wanted to pass on the Buddha’s robe and alms-bowl. Hoping to find a worthy successor, he staged a poetry contest to reveal the next Patriarch. Great Master Hu Neng, an illiterate young layman from the South of China won the contest with a poem that showed deeper wisdom than that of a senior monk. Master Hong Ren certified him and advised him to travel south to find a place to hide. Greedy monks would soon be in hot pursuit, of the robe and bowl. The Buddhist world of the Tang Dynasty was wild and wooly!

He said, "I heard there was a contest,  
I thought I’d have a go,  
If someone will help me write it down,  
I’ll tell you what I know."  
The body is no Bodhi tree,  
There ain’t no mirror stand bright,  
Basically there’s not one thing,  
Where could dust alight?

Patriarch erased the verse,  
And shook his head, “Oh no,”  
But then he tapped his staff three times,  
A kind of secret code.  
Deep in the night the young man  
Came to pay his respects,  
Huangmei said, “I was number five  
And now you’re number six.

You passed my test, you certified with  
Wisdom bright and true.”  
Huangmei said, “This robe and bowl  
I now bestow on you,  
Your new name will be Huineng,  
The one Able and Wise,  
They’re going to chase you,  
Travel south find a place and hide.”  
Everything’s a test, y’know,  
To see what you will do,  
Mistaking what’s before your eyes,  
You’ll have to start anew.

The body is a Bodhi tree,  
The mind a mirror stand bright,  
At all times wipe it clean,  
Let no dust alight.

Huangmei said, "That’s pretty good,  
I think that you will find,  
Whoever cultivates that way,  
Won’t fall far behind.”

Then quietly he told Shenxiu,  
“This verse just won’t do,  
I know you haven’t seen your mind,  
I can’t give the robe to you.”

Everything’s a test, y’know,  
To see what you will do,  
Mistaking what’s before your eyes,  
You’ll have to start anew.

Then out from the kitchen,  
Came a quiet young man,  
He had a drawl, he couldn’t read,  
A Southern barbarian.

Huangmei erased the verse,  
And shook his head, “Oh no,”  
But then he tapped his staff three times,  
A kind of secret code.  
Deep in the night the young man  
Came to pay his respects,  
Huangmei said, “I was number five  
And now you’re number six.

Emotional's a test, y'know,  
To see what you will do,  
Mistaking what’s before your eyes,  
You’ll have to start anew.
**9 Breathing In, Breathing Out**

Music: Rev. Heng Sure  
Lyrics: Adapted from _The Shurangama Sutra_ by Rev. Heng Sure

In the _Shurangama Sutra_, twenty-five Sages each tell Manjushri Bodhisattva their preferred method for reaching “Perfect Understanding”. Venerable Sundarananda gives advice on meditation through mindfulness of the breath.

Sundarananda tried to meditate,  
But he couldn't get it straight,  
So he asked the World Honored One,  
To teach him how to concentrate.

Breathing in, breathing out,  
Outside in, inside out,  
Buddha’s mind, big and bright,  
Watch your breath, and fill with light.

Breathing in, breathing out,  
Outside in, inside out,  
Buddha’s mind, big and bright,  
Watch your breath, and fill with light.

My mind was scattered, too many outflows,  
The Buddha pointed to the tip of my nose,  
Focus on the whiteness, patiently,  
Observe your breath how it comes and goes.

Breathing in, breathing out,  
Outside in, inside out,  
Buddha’s mind, big and bright,  
Watch your breath, and fill with light.

Breathing in, breathing out,  
Outside in, inside out,  
Buddha’s mind, big and bright,  
Watch your breath, and fill with light.

Watch your breath, you will find,  
At first like smoke, then it refines,  
The breath turns white, then an inner light,  
Lights the world, from your body and mind.
I was born poor, in a lowly family,
Father disappeared, there was little to eat.
My work was degrading,
I gathered withered flowers from the shrines,
Sold what I could and threw the rest away.

People found me disgusting,
And they despised me,
They just ignored me, or they looked away,
The pain of rejection,
Hurt as much as the hunger,
But I lowered my heart,
And I bowed every day.

Then I saw the Great Hero, entering the city,
The Greatly Awakened One, with his monks in line,
The most supreme of the Magadhanas,
Walking like a lotus, pure and refined.

I lost all fear, set down my pole and baskets,
I drew near, and I wanted to bow.
And then he, the conqueror of Mara,
Stopped the line,
He stood still, out of kindness, just for me.

After showing reverence
At the feet of the teacher,
I stood to one side, and I said these words,
"O Great Sage, supreme among all beings,
May I take refuge,
And leave home with you?"

The compassionate teacher,
Raised one hand in a blessing,
With a sound of kindness
For all the world, said,
"Come, monk!" That was my ordination,
I crossed over and my new life began.

Now I live alone, here in the mountains,
I never tire as I cultivate the Way,
Following my teacher’s words,
Just as he taught me,
With one mind, by night and by day.

As the sun went down, I entered samadhi,
I saw my past lives and got my heavenly eye,
Just before dawn,
I broke through the mass of darkness,
To the state of the deathless, I did certify.

The night was ending,
And the sun was returning,
Indra and Brahma paid their respects to me,
With their palms together,
Shining light the way gods do,
With eloquence they said these words to me,
"Homage to you, O thoroughbred of humans,
Homage to you, O human supreme,
Your afflictions have ended,
All your suffering is over,
You, dear sir, are worthy of offerings."

Upon seeing me venerated by the devas,
The teacher smiled and he proclaimed,
"Through austerity, celibacy,
Restraint and self-control,
He became a brahman,
He is a brahman supreme".
11 Praise The Buddha
Music: William Walker “Amazing Grace”
Lyrics: Traditional Buddhist verses translated and adapted by Rev. Heng Sure

This wonderful song is traditionally sung only on Buddha’s Birthday, during the full moon in May. I translated it and added three verses hoping to make it available to sing year-round.

Upon the earth, below the sky, the Buddha has no peer,
In Ten Directions everywhere, he is beyond compare.

He’s gone beyond duality, he’s never born again,
With wisdom bright he blesses me, he knows my joy and pain.

He walked the Noble Middle Way, with strength and purity,
In dark of night and light of day, his kindness touches me.

He’s not divine, but he’s awake, he’s neither come nor gone,
I find him in each blade of grass, he is the wisdom sun.

I’ve searched around this whole wide world, and now I can declare,
You’ll never find a wiser one, than Buddha anywhere.
You’ll never find a wiser one, than Buddha anywhere.
12 She Who Hears the Voices
Music: Le Livre Vermeil de Montserrat
Lyrics: David Rounds

In Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva, the Awakened Being of Great Compassion appears with a thousand eyes, a thousand ears and a thousand hands to rescue beings from suffering. Guan Shi Yin in Chinese means "One Who Hears the Voices/Sounds/Cries of Beings in the World." Guan Yin responds to those entreaties with whatever each being needs to resolve their troubles. David Rounds set these lyrics to a melody from a hymn to the Catholic Saint, the Blessed Virgin Mary, from a 14th century Catalan oratorio Le Livre Vermeil de Montserrat.

She who hears the voices of the world
Hears my voice.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who hears the cries of beings in prison
Hears my cries.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who calms the fears of soldiers in battle
Calms my fears.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who rescues beings from dangerous roads
Rescues me.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who hears the prayers of homeless people
Hears my prayers.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who grants the wish of childless couples
Grants my wish.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who soothes the terrors of the dying
Soothes my fears.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who knows the joy of peace and friendship
Knows my joy.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who hears when beings call her name
Hears my name.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva

She who hears the voices of the world
Hears my song.
Namo Guan Yin Bodhisattva.

13 Wish to Repay
Music and Lyrics: Rev. Heng Sure

I researched the question, “what do enlightened people do after they wake up?” The answer, inspired by gratitude; they look for their parents, to return their abundant kindness. The stories of enlightened men and women make it clear that once you wake up you feel deep gratitude and a wish to repay.

People ask me, “What did you get from your meditation? Are you enlightened, have you ended your frustration?” The wise men and women who woke up, all those I reviewed, Say the highest state is a wish to repay, a heart of gratitude.

Thank you to the universe, thank you to the earth and sky, I may not repay my parents’ kindness, but every day I try.

How many years did I waste, waiting for my prize? For my ship to finally come in? For my payoff to arrive? But joy comes not from getting, but from giving it all away, Sages say “Once you wake up you feel a wish to repay.”

Thank you to the universe, thank you to the earth and sky, I may not repay my parents’ kindness, but every day I try. I may not repay my teacher’s kindness, but every day I try. I may not repay the planet’s kindness, but every day I try. I may not repay my parents’ kindness, but every day I try.
Rev. Heng Sure

Music
Rev. Heng Sure - guitar, banjo, vocals
Jody Stecher - mandolin, banjo, guitar, vocals
Paul Hostetter - bass, harmonica
Suzy Thompson - fiddle, accordion, vocals
Eric Thompson - mandolin, guitar
Robin Petrie - hammered dulcimer, vocals
Fabrizio Alberico - guitar, banjo, washtub, vocals
Jin Wei Shi, Liam Cochrane, Allegra Thompson - vocals on “Praise the Buddha”

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Rev. Heng Sure