
Transcripts of the Oral Commentary
by
Geshe Tenzin Tenphel
on:

The Heart Sutra

by Buddha Shakyamuni

&

*Commentary on the Heart Sutra,
Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning*

by Tendar Lharampa

for the FPMT Basic Program at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa
November - December 2005

Translation of the oral commentary from Tibetan into English by Gavin Kilty
Transcribed and lightly edited by Joan Nicell

Translation of *Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning* by Donald S. Lopez
Slight editing changes were made and outlines added by Joan Nicell

The *Heart Sutra* translation for this commentary is based on the citations that occur in
Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning, while missing parts were added by Joan Nicell
based on the translation of the *Heart Sutra* by Ven. George Churinoff.

© Geshe Tenzin Tenphel and Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa
December 2005

All rights reserved

No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system or technologies now known or later developed, without permission in writing from Geshe Tenzin Tenphel and Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa

*Commentary on the Heart Sutra,
Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning*

© Donald S. Lopez
All rights reserved

Extracted with permission by the FPMT Education Department from
The Heart Sutra Explained
(Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1990)

Reproduced for use in the FPMT Basic Program at Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa
with permission from Donald S. Lopez
Slight editing changes made and outlines added by Joan Nicell
(indicated in the footnotes), November 2005

With permission for use in FPMT Basic Programs from Donald S. Lopez

HEART SUTRA

Monday afternoon, 21 November 2005

The main topic of the *Heart Sutra* is emptiness. The word “heart” or essence” (*snying po*) in the title indicates that this sutra contains the essence of all the Mother Sutras, such as the *One Hundred Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* and so forth.

We have great fortune just to be able to hear the word “emptiness” because due to not realizing emptiness we circle in cyclic existence, whereas by realizing emptiness we become free from cyclic existence. The realization of emptiness also enables us to free others from cyclic existence. When we talk about emptiness we are not talking about the emptiness of something outside ourselves, rather we are talking about the emptiness or suchness of the mind itself. This is very important to understand.

As it is usually done before beginning to explain a text, I should have begun with explaining the motivation. Obviously I am not very skilled in teaching! However, it is very important to generate a good motivation before beginning an activity. Because this sutra is the essence of all the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and because these are Mahayana sutras, we should listen to teachings on the *Heart Sutra* with the motivation that is the wish to enact the welfare of others. Although it is important to generate a motivation wishing to benefit others, this is in fact not easy to do. To be able to help others, we first have to subdue or master ourselves. To do this, we need to generate compassion for ourselves. If we do not have compassion for ourselves, it will be difficult to develop compassion for others. If we cannot take care of ourselves, however can we take care of others? Taking care of ourselves does not mean neglecting others. It also does not mean knowing how to eat, drink, sleep, walk, and so forth. Rather taking care of ourselves means knowing how to speak, act, and think with respect to other people. This is very important.

While we do not want suffering, our mind, our very way of thinking, creates a lot of suffering for ourselves. Therefore, it is important to constantly check our mind. I try to do this myself, although I am not very good at it. However, just as I try, so too should you also try to do the same. It is really important to become the master of our mind, to gain control over our mind, because the creator or source of all suffering is the mind and, on the other hand, the destroyer of every suffering is also the mind. Therefore, because the mind is the creator of suffering and also the creator of liberation, we need to become the master of our own mind.

While there are many people who have control over their bodies, very few have real control over their minds. For this reason the majority of us experience suffering. No matter how much knowledge and how many qualities, skills, and so forth we gain, they will be of little use to us if we do not make use of them to control our mind. In other words, we must use our qualities and skills to tame our mind, otherwise there will be no difference between some who has qualities and someone who does not.

The purpose of gaining control over our mind is to turn it toward virtue and to turn it away from the afflictions. The more we can do that, the more our mind will become strong in virtue. The more we familiarize with virtue, the more the darkness of ignorance will be cleared away and the more we will understand the actual suchness or emptiness of the mind. The reason we cannot presently understand emptiness is that our

mind is veiled or covered by negativities. Due to this covering, we are unable to see emptiness. Therefore, the purpose of subduing the mind is to come closer to emptiness.

Among the two kinds of collections, the Perfection of Wisdom literature mainly teaches the collection of wisdom. It is said that it is very difficult to accumulate the collection of wisdom, the reason being that it depends on having the support of the collection of merit. In other words, without the support of the collection of merit, it is difficult to achieve the collection of wisdom. Yet the collection of wisdom has great benefit in that it liberates us from cyclic existence. Therefore, although it is hard to achieve, it is of great benefit.

We need to take care because if we study and read a lot but do not use the knowledge that we gain to train our mind, we can become like a leather pouch that is used to contain butter. Such a pouch is made rigid by the butter it contains, whereas butter usually acts to soften leather when rubbed into it. In other words, if we do not use our knowledge, our mind can become inflexible or like a disobedient child that is stubborn and resistant to change.

The *Commentary on the Heart Sutra, Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning* by Tendar Lharampa says:

Here, the explanation of the meaning of the *Heart Sutra* has two parts:

- 1 the general meaning and
- 2 the meaning of the parts.

The commentary on the *Heart Sutra* sets out the general meaning of the *Heart Sutra* and then explains the actual parts of the *Heart Sutra*.

Jewel Light says:

1 The general meaning

The speaker of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras is Shakyamuni. [There are a variety of assertions among the Buddhist philosophical schools] concerning the nature of his speech. The Vaibhashikas assert that it is a non-associated compositional factor (*viprayuktasamskara*), the composite of words, terms, and letters. The Sautrantikas assert that the nature of words, terms, and letters is external form. The Prasangikas, because they agree with the world, assert that [the word of the Buddha] is sound and matter. The Chittamatrins say that if the word [of the Buddha] and the treatises were real sound, then there would be no word [of the Buddha] or treatises in the continuum of a person who had **not** emitted them as speech. [That is, the words of the Buddha could not exist in the Buddha's mind before he spoke them or in the minds of his audience after he had spoken them.] Consequently, [according to the Chittamatrins,] all phenomena must be established in terms of the individual's mind.

The Perfection of Wisdom Sutras were spoken by Buddha Shakyamuni. With respect to defining a the speech or word of Buddha Shakyamuni, the Vaibhashikas say that it is a non-associated compositional factor, the Sautrantikas say that it is external form, the Prasangikas say that it is sound and matter, and the Chittamatrins say if it were real sound it could not exist in the mind of a sentient being unless it had been spoken by that person. This is because if words are not spoken, they are not sound.

The word of the Buddha is speech, sound, a treatise (shastra), a turning of the wheel of Dharma, and an expressive sound. Therefore, the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras should also be thought of as being all of these. A lot can be said about the meaning of “the word of the Buddha” (*bka'*), “treatise” (*bsten bcos*), and “sutra” (*mdo*) but we will not go into detail about this here. The Tibetan word *bka'* is actually an honorific word for the term “speech,” but it specifically refers to the word or speech of the Buddha. Although the word of the Buddha is also a treatise, whatever is a treatise is not necessarily the word of the Buddha. In fact there are many treatises that are not the word of the Buddha. A pure treatise is one in which the words are free from error. The syllable *bcos* means to transform, to change, and to make new. It refers to the mind of the disciple which is changed or made new. Is this commentary (holding up the text we are studying) a treatise? It is not because it is not sound. The word of the Buddha, a treatise, and a sutra are defined as sound or speech. When the sound has been written down on paper, it becomes a scripture and not a treatise.

STUDENT: When I listen to a recording of the recitation of the *Heart Sutra* on a CD do I receive the oral transmission of that text?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That is difficult to say. The speech of the Buddha is of three types: (1) speech that was actually spoken by him, literally that came from his mouth, (2) blessed speech, which are words that are spoken by others through the power of the blessings of the Buddha, for example, most of the *Heart Sutra*, and (3) speech by the power of truth of the mind of the Buddha, for example, the huge drum in the god realm that emits the sound of the teachings on the four seals (all compounded phenomena are impermanent, all contaminated phenomena are suffering, all phenomena are empty and selfless, and nirvana is peace). Perhaps a CD is similar to the beating of the great drum! Perhaps the oral transmission is received if the person who recited the *Heart Sutra* for the CD is someone special, but I am not sure that this is the case if just anyone at all recites it.

Jewel Light says:

The *Heart Sutra* says:

In the language of India: *Bhagavatiprajnaparamitahridaya*

In the language of Tibet: *bCom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po*

[In the English language: *The Heart of the Transcendent and Victorious Perfection of Wisdom*]

Jewel Light says:

2 Actual [sutra]

With respect to the second, the actual explanation, there are also two parts:

- 1 the meaning of the title and
- 2 the meaning of the text.

1 The meaning of the title

That which in the language of India is *Bhagavatiprajnaparamitahridaya*, when translated into Tibetan is *bCom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po* [and into English is *The Heart*

of the *Transcendent and Victorious Perfection of Wisdom*], and that is the title of the sutra. Regarding the purpose for stating the title, if a name were not given, there would be no way of finding out which sutra it was. Hence, the name is stated at the beginning. Regarding the word “heart,” for example, [the place] where all the consciousnesses that pervade the entire body gather is called the heart. In the same way, all the meanings of the vast, intermediate, and condensed Mother sutras are gathered here. Therefore, it is called the sutra of sutras or the heart of sutras. All of the intentions of the Transcendent Victor are gathered in this sutra.

The word *bcom ldan ‘das*, which is the translation of the Sanskrit word “bhagavan,” is an epithet for a buddha. *Chom* (*bcom*) means “to destroy,” *den* (*ldan*) means “to be endowed,” and *de* (*‘das*) means “to have gone beyond.” Hence, *chom* indicates that a buddha has destroyed all the afflictions, *den* that he is endowed with all good qualities, and *de* that he has gone beyond sorrow (that is, that he has passed into nirvana). The particle “*ma*” after *bcom ldan ‘das* makes it into a feminine word, this being the translation of the Sanskrit word “bhagavati,” which is the feminine of “bhagavan.” Of the two, method and wisdom, method is said to represent the male side and wisdom the female side. Also, because the perfection of wisdom gives birth or rise to all the buddhas of the three times, the perfection of wisdom is personified as a female. For this reason the title says *bcom ldan ‘das ma* or bhagavati.

The Sanskrit word “buddha” has been translated into Tibetan as *sang gye* (*sangs rgyas*), *sang* meaning having purified or awakened from, that is, having purified the afflictions, and *gye* meaning increase, that is, the increase of all good qualities. The afflictions are purified by the wisdom realizing emptiness, the mother, but it needs the support of method, the father, which has the function of increasing good qualities. This father and mother unite to produce a buddha. All the other virtuous activities of prostrating, circumambulating, and so forth are said to be their servants.

Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa in Tibetan and *prajnaparamita*, in Sanskrit are translated into English as “the perfection of wisdom.” Since the main subject matter of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra is the perfection of wisdom, this is a case of giving the name of the subject matter, the perfection of wisdom, to the sutras that explain it.

[*sNying po* in Tibetan and *hridaya* in Sanskrit are translated into English as “heart.”] “Bhagavati” refers to the suchness or emptiness of the mind and the wisdom directly realizing it. This is called “the essence” because everything taught by the Buddha is for the purpose of eliminating suffering and achieving liberation, and the very essence of these teachings is the realization of emptiness, in particular the realization of the suchness or emptiness of the mind.

Heart Sutra says:

This did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha together with a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas.

There is a lot to be said just about these few initial lines of the *Heart Sutra*.

Jewel Light says:

2 The meaning of the text

The discussion of the meaning of the text is in two parts:

- 1 a discussion of the prologue that produces the sutra and
- 2 a discussion of the actual sutra produced from that.

1 A discussion of the prologue that produces the sutra

With respect to the first, the *common prologue* is from “This did I hear at one time” to “great assembly of bodhisattvas.” The purpose of the prologue is to have the listeners understand that the compiler listened without adding anything or subtracting anything so that they can pay careful attention to him.

These words at the beginning of the *Heart Sutra* are the common prologue. They are not words that were actually spoken between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra. In other words, no one actually said: “This did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha together with a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas.” This prologue was added to the sutra because the Buddha himself gave the instruction that when the sutras were later written down that they were to mention the place, time, and entourage (the audience) at the very beginning.

The prologue sets out five perfections (*phun sum tshogs pa*): (1) the perfect Dharma, (2) the perfect teacher, (3) the perfect entourage, (4) the perfect place, and (5) the perfect time. When the Tibetan text says “This speech,” [not just “This” as it is translated into English,] it refers to the perfect Dharma. “Did I,” which is in the instrumental case, means that “I did something” and refers to the perfect teacher. Because “did I hear,” which means “I heard,, implies that there was a teacher who spoke, it refers to the perfect teacher. “Hear” refers to the perfect entourage, “at one time” refers to the perfect time, and “the Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha” refers to the perfect place.

The English translation of the sutra says “Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha,” whereas the Tibetan version just says “Rajagriha, Pile of Vultures Peak,” which is difficult to explain because Vultures Peak is the name for the top of a hill, whereas Rajagriha is a town located at the base of that hill. The actual top of the hill is very small, even smaller than this room. His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama also once remarked that since it was so small it was difficult to understand how all those monks and bodhisattvas abode there. However, perhaps by their magical powers they were able to abide in the space above.

STUDENT: Why does “I” refer to the perfect teacher? Is “I” not Ananda?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Saying “did I hear” indicates that there was someone else who spoke.

STUDENT: Does not the word “Bhagavan” itself refer to the perfect teacher?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That is not how it is explained in the text I have here. When the sutra says “The Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha together with a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas,” it is not that it does not teach the perfect teacher, but it *mainly* teaches the perfect place.

Jewel Light says:

The reason for saying both Rajagriha and Vulture Peak is for the sake of indicating the combination of the two places for laymen and those who have gone forth [from the world], with the former being the best among places in the afflicted class and the latter being the best of places among the pure class. With regard to Rajagriha [“the residence of the king”], there was a famous place in the city of Kushinagara that became uninhabitable due to being repeatedly burned down by non-humans. The king ordered that henceforth those whose homes burned down must build their homes in the charnel ground of Sitavana and remain there. At that time, by the power of karma, the king’s palace was the first to be lost in a fire. The king then went there and made his abode. That is how it got the name “Residence of the King”. This is explained in the *Shalistambhasutra*.

Why are both Rajagriha and Vulture Peak mentioned? Rajagriha, the Residence of the King, is the best of places for lay people and Vulture Peak is the best of places for the ordained. Therefore, in order to include both the lay and monastic community, both places are mentioned. Among birds, it is said that the vulture is the upasaka or lay vow-holder because it does not itself kill but only eats that which is already dead.

Before entering into the actual text, many things are explained in the commentary. I am still trying to find the right approach to teaching this particular commentary on the *Heart Sutra*.

Tuesday morning, 22 November 2005

To return to the prologue: “This did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha together with a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas.” As I said yesterday, according to one particular text, the word “at this time” sets out, among the five perfections, the perfect time. However, according to another commentary, the entire phrase “This did I hear at one time” sets out the perfect time; “the Bhagavan” sets out the perfect teacher; “on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha” sets out the perfect place, and “a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas” sets out the perfect entourage or audience. This is said to be the common prologue because it occurs at the beginning of other sutras and is therefore not exclusive to the *Heart Sutra*. On the other hand, “At that time the Transcendent Victor was absorbed in a samadhi on the categories of phenomena...” begins the prologue that is uncommon or exclusive to the *Heart Sutra*.

According to this way of commenting, there are six sections: (1) the perfect time, (2) the perfect place, (3) the perfect teacher, (4) the perfect entourage, (5) the exclusive prologue, and (6) the perfect teaching. The perfect teaching is the actual questions and answers that take place between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra.

Jewel Light says:

According to the master Haribhadra, “at one time” means that by the blessings of the Buddha, all the words of the sutra were heard by Ananda in one instant. He says in his *Abhisamayalamkaraloka*, “Because an ear consciousness to which the entire meaning of the sutra arose in one instant.” The master Bhavaviveka asserts that because the Perfection of Wisdom sutras are not within the sphere

of shravakas, their compiler is Vajrapani. Haribhadra asserts that although Ananda was not capable of doing so himself, he [compiled the sutras] through the blessing of the Buddha and, therefore, is the compiler of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. Although such things should be explained, an explanation would be too lengthy.

According to Haribhadra, “I” refers to Ananda who had attained the dharani or retention of remembering whatever he had heard. Thus, “at one time” indicates that Ananda heard the entire sutra in one single instant. However, Bhavaviveka says that this is not the case because Ananda was a hearer or shravaka, whereas the Mahayana scriptures are not within the sphere of activity or the objects of hearing of hearers. Therefore, according to Bhavaviveka, Ananda could not have heard this teaching. Haribhadra says that although Ananda was a hearer, he heard this sutra by the power of the blessing of the Buddha, memorized it, and recited it at the time of the first council. Ananda was Buddha Shakyamuni’s attendant, due to which he accompanied the Buddha wherever he went. In fact he requested the Buddha to not teach in his absence and the Buddha agreed to this request. The only time in which Ananda did not accompany the Buddha was when the Buddha went to teach in the land of the gods. However, in order to keep his promise to Ananda, the Buddha did not actually teach there but instead manifested White Umbrella Deity, who is similar in appearance to Thousand-Arm Avalokiteshvara, on his crown protrusion and gave teachings through her.

After the Buddha passed away, the monks gathered together and at that time reprimanded Ananda, who was not yet a foe-destroyer, for some mistakes he had made while serving the Buddha. For example, one time when Ananda was repairing the Buddha’s torn robe he had held the robe by his feet as he sewed it rather than holding it up to the gods for them to repair. Another time, when putting water into the Buddha’s begging bowl, he held it low while he scooped water into it rather than holding it up for the gods to fill. Also, although one of his daily tasks was to request the Buddha every evening to not pass into nirvana, one day he forgot whereupon Mara seized the opportunity and asked the Buddha to pass into nirvana, to which the Buddha agreed. When Ananda heard what had happened he was horrified but the Buddha said that it was too late to do anything as he had already agreed to pass into nirvana. However, he promised that the day of his passing away would be experienced as three days by the monks and only one day by Mara. Due to these faults, Ananda was sent away by the other disciples to meditate and develop regret for his mistakes. He did this and, by the force of his great regret, attained the state of a foe-destroyer. Later on, when the monks gathered for the first council, they found that they were missing some teachings and called upon Ananda, who had by then become a foe-destroyer, to recite by memory all the teachings that had been given by the Buddha. For this reason, without Ananda the Buddha’s teachings would have remained incomplete.

It is difficult to say who exactly Ananda was based on what is presented in the different Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. Thus, there remains a question about when Ananda was born and whether there might have been more than one Ananda. Some stories say that Ananda was Buddha Shakyamuni’s playmate as a child and later on was his main competitor in games and sports and so forth. Another account says that Ananda was born on the day when the Buddha attained enlightenment, which would have made it impossible for him to have been present at all the Buddha’s teachings as he would have been a mere child at the beginning. For this reason, Jamyang Zhepa says that the

Perfection of Wisdom Sutras were taught over a period of time and that while Ananda was not present at the earlier teachings, he was present at the later ones (see *Jewel Light* for this discussion).

The word “Bhagavan” in the prologue indicates the perfect teacher. Although Buddha Shakyamuni, the fourth buddha of this fortunate eon, like the previous buddhas, took the aspect of a supreme emanation body, he is said to be superior in kindness to all of them. This is because the other buddhas came when the lifespan of human beings was much, much longer (even tens of thousands of years) than it is now, the merit of these human beings was greater, and their suffering less, whereby they were much happier. Because Buddha Shakyamuni, on the other hand, had made a special prayer to be reborn at a time when the lifespan of human beings was just one hundred years, when suffering was great, and non-virtue very strong, he is considered to be kinder than the other buddhas.

As was mentioned before, Rajagriha and Vulture Peak are mentioned separately in the prologue because Rajagriha is the best place for the lay community and Vulture Peak is the best place for the ordained. “Rajagriha” means Residence of the King. It is said that at one point, when demons were burning down the homes in Kushinagara, the king ruled that those who had lost their homes should rebuild in the Sitavana charnel ground or cemetery. As it happened, the first house to be burned down after that order was the king’s palace, so he was the first to build a house there. Because of this, the place came to be called Rajagriha or Residence of the King.

Jewel Light says:

Regarding “monk,” the actuality of monkhood can be attained by any of the ten ways of receiving ordination; in this context, it refers to an arhat. As Shantideva says in the *Bodhicharyavatara* (IX.45ab):

Monkhood is the root of the teaching
But even monkhood is difficult.

The prologue to the *Heart Sutra* says “The Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha together with a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas.” Regarding the word “monks,” the commentary says that there are ten ways of receiving ordination. For example, there is self-arising ordination which is the case for the Buddha himself who naturally and spontaneously became ordained. There is also ordination by way of actualizing exalted wisdom as is the case for arya beings. Ordination is also attained by means of Buddha’s permission as well as by the power of going for refuge. Ordination is received in a central country in the presence of ten monks, whereas in a remote country it is received in the presence of five monks. There is also the “come here” ordination, in which ordination is received merely by the Buddha saying “Monk, come here.” This latter one was the most common way of receiving ordination at the time of the Buddha. Thus, initially there was no need to promise to abandon the four defeats of killing, stealing, sexual conduct, and lying, as it was enough for the Buddha to just say “Come here” in order for someone to become ordained. The four defeats arose later on when the monks became undisciplined and the Buddha began to specify what actions the monks had to

abandon. After that, the other prescribed formulations arose in dependence on various events that took place during the lifetime of the Buddha.

Thus, as the community of monks grew, the vows were gradually formulated. At the same time in order to take care of monks who had become ill and so forth, the Buddha set up a monastic hierarchy of abbot, masters, and so forth which gave the community more structure and assigned the monks a designated role. In addition, ordination, which had previously consisted in the Buddha saying “Come here,” became more formalized such that the presence of five monks was required. All this happened in order to make the monks responsible for helping each other.

STUDENT: As there were also female foe-destroyers and ordained woman at the time of the Buddha, perhaps “monk” is not the right word to use.

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: What is being explained here is the meaning of the word “monks” which occurs at the very beginning of the *Heart Sutra*.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The word “gelong” (*dge slong*), [usually translated into English as “fully-ordained monk,”] is literally translated as “one who seeks virtue,” that is, as “virtue-seeker” or “virtue-beggar,” however the more common understanding is that it refers to someone who lives by begging for alms. Getsul (*dge tshul*), [usually translated into English as “novice monk,”] is literally translated as “virtue-proper.” One explanation of the etymology is that a getsul is “one who practices virtue properly.” However, the real meaning, in which *ge* (*dge*) is interpreted to refer to *gelong*, is someone who serves fully-ordained monks properly.

Jewel Light says:

The “sangha” is a gathering of four or more monks; the etymology is that which has the aspiration not to be separated by demons from the Teacher Buddha, the teaching of the excellent doctrine, and friends who practice purity. Chandrakirti’s *Seventy Stanzas on Refuge* (*Trisharanasaptati*) says:

Because they cannot be separated
From the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha
By billions of demons,
It is clearly called “sangha.”

The word “sangha,” *gedun* (*dge ‘dun*) in Tibetan, usually refers to a gathering of four or more fully-ordained monks. However, any *arya* being, whether a layman, laywoman, monk, or nun, is sangha and the Sangha Jewel, in whom we take refuge.

Jewel Light says:

Regarding the word “great,” it is explained many times in the Indian commentaries that it means a large number.

The word “great” in “a great sangha of monks” just means a great many or a large number.

Jewel Light says:

“Bodhisattva” is explained many times in such texts as the *Vairochanabhisambodhi* and the *Sanchayagathaprajna-paramitasutra*. The simple etymology is that because they have purified all faults and accomplished all good qualities, they are *bodhi* and because they contemplate the welfare of all transmigrators and have annihilated demons, they are *sattva*.

The word “bodhisattva,” in “a great assembly of bodhisattvas,” is *jangchub sempa* (*byang chub sems dpa'*) in Tibetan. *Jang* (*byang*) means purified and in this context indicates one who has purified all faults. *Chub* (*chub*) means to acquire and in this context indicates one who has acquired all good qualities. *Sem* (*sems*) means to think and indicates someone who thinks about the welfare of others. *Pa* (*dpa'*) means brave or courageous and indicates someone who has defeated the demons or maras. (ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: The Tibetan word *sems dpa'* is not an exact translation of the Sanskrit word *sattva*). The word *pa* (*dpa'*), meaning hero or even warrior, usually refers to someone who fights and defeats an external enemy but here it refers to someone who defeats the inner enemy – the maras in his own and in others' minds.

Jewel Light says:

Or, because they have studied the two truths again and again and have arrived at the meaning of them, [they are called] *bodhi* and because they have endured hardship in contemplating the two truths again and again, [they are called] *sattva*.

Jang (*byang*) can also mean to think again and again, and in this context means to think again and again about the two truths. *Chub* (*chub*) in this context means to acquire an understanding of the meanings of the two truths. While the word *jang chub* (*byang chub*) is the normal word for bodhi or enlightenment, which is exclusively the domain of a buddha, in this explanation regarding the two truths it seems to also apply to arya bodhisattvas who have repeatedly thought about the two truths and acquired an understanding of them. Therefore, in order to understand this explanation in relation to a buddha, one would have to specify that it refers to someone who thinks about and understands the two truths *exactly as they are*. For this reason, this explanation of the word *jangchub* (*byang chub*) is not very comfortable. Hence, when you read and study texts, it is important to consider what is said as they are not always literally accurate. The *Jewel Light* is a short commentary due to which the meaning is contained in few words and can therefore be difficult to extract.

This explanation of the word bodhisattva or *jangchub sempa* is that it is someone who thinks again and again about the two truths without becoming bored or irritated. It is not like we who, hearing a similar teaching the next day, think “O, but I already heard that yesterday.” A bodhisattva, on the other hand, is someone who is able to think again and again about the two truths while enduring all the difficulties involved, due to which they are said to have a courageous mind. We too need to cultivate this kind of attitude. It is said that when something is important we should persevere in it or take care with respect to it or focus on it again and again. For example, with respect to the holy Dharma we need to think about it again and again. There is hearing, thinking, and meditation. We need to hear and study over and over again. We also need to think about what we have heard again and again. And we also need to meditate on that which we have heard again and

again. It is not enough to meditate today and then not meditate tomorrow. It is also not good to meditate on one subject today and then on another one tomorrow. Like this we will not gain anything and the only result will be that time will continue to pass.

Jewel Light says:

Regarding “great,” the *Sanchayagathaprajnaparamitasutra* says:

Those who abide in the supreme Mahayana of the Conqueror
[Have] great giving, great awareness, and great power.
They wear great armor and have tamed the deceiving demons.
Therefore, they are called Mahasattvas.

The word “great” occurs twice in the phrase “a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas.” The second “great” refers to those with great giving, great awareness, and great power, who abide in the Great Vehicle, wear great armor, and have tamed the deceptive maras.

Tuesday afternoon, 22 November 2005

The ten ways of receiving ordination are:

1. self-arising ordination, like the Buddha,
2. ordination by actualizing exalted wisdom,
3. ordination by the Buddha saying “Come here,”
4. ordination due to being accepted by the Buddha,
5. ordination by going for refuge to the Three Jewels,
6. ordination in the presence of five fully-ordained monks in a remote land,
7. ordination in the presence of ten fully-ordained monks in a central land,
8. ordination by means of sending a message,
9. ordination by means of answering the Buddha’s question as to whether one is weary of cyclic existence, and
10. ordination by accepting the higher qualities of the lama.

Nowadays there is mainly ordination in the presence of ten fully-ordained monks because the obstacles to the other ways of taking ordination have become greater and greater. However, there is still ordination by way of actualizing exalted wisdom when one becomes an arya being.

With respect to the meaning of the second “great,” when the *Sanchayagathaprajnaparamitasutra* says “great giving” it means that bodhisattvas give free from all miserliness without seeing themselves as being different from others. In other words, bodhisattvas have a mind of giving that gives indiscriminately to all sentient beings without any reservation whatsoever. “Great awareness” means that they have great strength of mind in that they are not like other people who become discouraged by even very slight difficulties. Bodhisattvas also have great power and abide in the supreme Great Vehicle of the Buddha. That they “wear great armor” means that, while armor is usually worn to protect the body from a physical attack, in this context it refers to the armor that protects

the mind. Bodhisattvas have also tamed the deceptive maras, in this case not the maras who are non-human beings but people who, like the maras, are deceptive.

Another explanation, which is not present in the *Jewel Light*, as to why bodhisattvas are said to be “great” is because they have a great mind, that is, a vast mind, that observes all sentient beings. They also have great conduct or practice because their conduct is conjoined with love, compassion, and the mind of enlightenment. They also have great merit because it is accumulated over three countless great eons. They also attain the great result because they attain the great enlightenment of buddhahood.

Jewel Light says:

“Together” (*sardham*) means behavior or activity and means concordant; in brief it means that the audience was of concordant activity. “Abide” has four meanings: abide in physical posture, abide in teaching the doctrine, abide in samadhi, and abide in correctly residing within. This is [a case of] abiding in a physical posture.

“Together” means that the monks and bodhisattvas have similar conduct or activity in the sense that they are all harmoniously focused on the word of the Buddha. Literally they abide in one method (*thabs cig*), but it means that they have a similar attitude or conduct.

The word “abide” or “dwell” (*bzhugs pa*) refers to the way in which the monks and bodhisattvas were physically abiding at the time. In this case they were sitting listening to the Dharma totally free of the three faults of a vessel. This word *bzhugs pa* can also mean to remain or to stay and is used in that sense when asking the lama to remain or live for a long time. In short, the monks and bodhisattvas were abiding with the single purpose of listening to the Dharma.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

At that time the Transcendent Victor was absorbed in a samadhi on the categories of phenomena called ‘perception of the profound.’ Also at the time, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara was observing the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and saw that those five aggregates also are empty of inherent existence.

Jewel Light says:

The *unique prologue* is, “At that time the Transcendent Victor was absorbed in a samadhi on the categories of phenomena called ‘perception of the profound.’ Also at the time, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara was contemplating the meaning of the profound perfection of wisdom and saw that those five aggregates also are empty of inherent existence.” The difference between the common and the unique prologue is that the common is shared with other sutras whereas the unique prologue is found in this sutra and not in others. “At that time” means at the time of teaching the doctrine when the roots of virtue of the audience had ripened. Regarding the “profound” of “perception of the profound,” it is that which is difficult to appear to the mind. For example, it is not difficult to perceive the reflection of sun or moon in a lake, but it is difficult for the limits of space to appear [on the surface of the lake]. In the same way, it is easy to perceive the conventional but it is difficult to perceive the ultimate. “Perception” means the wisdom that understands something so profound. The categories of phenomena are the

aggregates, constituents, sources, and so forth. “Also at that time” is a term of emphasis meaning at that very time at which the disciples’ continua were ripe.

“At that time” begins the unique or exclusive prologue, which ends with “empty of inherent existence.” The common prologue can be applied to all the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras whereas the uncommon or exclusive prologue is that which is specific to the *Heart Sutra*.

“At that time” refers to the particular time when the roots of virtue of the audience had fully ripened. The word “profound” (*zab mo*) indicates that something is difficult to understand or to fathom. “Perception” or “appearance” (*snang ba*) refers to the mind that perceives the profound. Thus, the profound appears because the mind is capable of perceiving it. The perception of the profound is the wisdom that, observing the categories of phenomena – the aggregates, constituents, sources, and so forth – perceives the profound. That exalted wisdom observing the profound is accompanied by a meditative stabilization or samadhi. Because meditative stabilization gives the wisdom power, it is very important. In short, the Buddha was absorbed in a meditative stabilization conjoined with the wisdom observing the categories of phenomena.

Many people aspire to generate calm abiding, a type of meditative stabilization, but calm abiding by itself it is not particularly special in that it only leads to rebirth in the higher realms. On the other hand, when calm abiding is conjoined with the wisdom realizing emptiness, the mind of enlightenment, or renunciation, it becomes very powerful.

With respect to “Also at that time” (*yang de’i tshe*), while the word *yang* usually means “also” in the sense of something together with something else, here it acts to emphasize that particular time. The first “at that time” was said to refer to the time when the roots of virtue of the audience had ripened, whereby the words “also at that time” emphasize that it is at that very time when their roots of virtue had ripened. Hence, “also” is not just the usual “also” that connects a previous phrase with later one.

Jewel Light says:

Regarding “the Superior Avalokiteshvara,” he who has risen far above the level of common beings has the power to free from suffering all sentient beings who can be seen by his eyes.

The epithets “the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva” were explained before in the context of explaining “bodhisattva” and “great” (*maha*). The word “superior” or *arya* (*phags pa*) in “the Superior Avalokiteshvara” means “one who has risen above,” that is, one who has risen above the level of an ordinary being. It can also be understood to mean “one who has gone beyond” the level of an ordinary being. It also means “one who is more exalted than” or superior to an ordinary being.

The name Avalokiteshvara is translated into Tibetan as Chenrezig Wangchug (*spyang ras gzigs dbang phyug*). *Chen* (*spyang*) is literally translated as “eyes” and *zig* (*gzigs*) means “to see,” therefore his name is said to indicate that he looks upon all suffering sentient beings with eyes of love and compassion. The additional syllable *re* (*ras*) is interpreted to mean without discrimination, therefore he looks upon them without discrimination. Wangchug (*dbang phyug*) means “rich in power,” meaning that not only does he look upon suffering

sentient beings with compassion but that he also possesses the power to liberate them from their suffering.

With respect to “the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara was observing the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom,” although the name “perfection of wisdom” is given to the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras because that it is their subject matter, here it refers to emptiness itself. [ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: “The perfection of wisdom” (*shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*) is more literally translated as “the wisdom gone beyond.”] It is so-called because by relying on the wisdom realizing emptiness one can cross over or go beyond (*pha rol tu phyin pa*) the great ocean of cyclic existence or go beyond the extremes of existence and peace to a non-abiding nirvana. The perfection of wisdom or the wisdom gone beyond is of four types:

1. textual perfection of wisdom,
2. path perfection of wisdom,
3. natural perfection of wisdom, and
4. resultant perfection of wisdom.

The textual perfection of wisdom is, for example, the *Heart Sutra* itself. The path perfection of wisdom is any path prior to the attainment of enlightenment that realizes emptiness. The natural perfection of wisdom is emptiness itself. The resultant perfection of wisdom is the omniscient mind directly realizing emptiness. However, there is some debate as to whether or not a path perfection of wisdom actually exists, that is, whether the perfection of wisdom exists on the Mahayana path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, and path of meditation. Some scholars say that there is a path perfection of wisdom and others say that there is not. If, when we are asked “What are the six perfections?”, we were to respond that the six perfections are generosity, morality, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom, this would not be correct as generosity and so forth also exist on the Hinayana path. Instead we should specifically say that they are the perfection of generosity, the perfection of morality, the perfection of patience, the perfection of effort, the perfection of concentration, and the perfection of wisdom. This is because if we do not say “perfection” they would also exist on the Hinayana path, whereas the six perfections are the very essence of the bodhisattva path.

Those who say that “gone beyond” (*pha rol tu phyin pa*) actually means gone beyond the two extremes of existence and peace, say that the perfections or gone beyonds only exist on the buddha ground. Therefore, the six perfections do not exist on the path. Those who assert this say that on the path there is the practice of the six perfections that leads to the final perfections which exist only when one has gone beyond the extremes of existence and peace. They say that since the practices of generosity, morality, and so forth on the Hinayana path do not lead to a state that is free from the extremes of existence and peace because they are directed at freedom from existence alone, they are not practices of the *perfection* of generosity (or the generosity gone beyond) and so forth because they do not lead to the resultant perfection or gone beyond. Hence, although the perfection of wisdom or the wisdom gone beyond is only found on the buddha ground, there is a practice of the perfection of wisdom on the path in which one becomes trained in wisdom. It is similar to the training in moving up and down through the various meditative stabilizations. However, that wisdom of the path is not the *perfection* of wisdom.

There are also scholars who say that the six perfections do exist on the path. They say that because the practice of the perfections is there, there is going beyond although there is not yet gone beyond. Because of this there can be said to be the perfections or gone beyonds on the path. This is something to think about. We say, for example, “Geshe-la has gone to India” when he is not yet there but is still on the airplane on his way to India. Similarly, the practices of generosity are going beyond but are not yet gone beyond. We will not discuss the six perfections in detail here because they will be discussed in great detail when we study the fourth chapter of the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* next year.

Jewel Light says:

The “practice of the profound” means the observation of emptiness. “Observing” it means contemplating it. The word “also” in the phrase “these five aggregates also” means that he saw not only the aggregates but also the sources and constituents to be empty of inherent existence. The *ba* prefix on *blta’o* was added by the scribe and is not correct.

The “practice of the profound” means to observe the profound, that is, emptiness. Here observing it or looking at it means contemplating it. The word “also” in the phrase “these five aggregates also” indicates that Avalokiteshvara was also observing the constituents and sources. There are twelve sources or entrances (*skye mched*) and eighteen constituents or spheres (*kham*s). The eighteen constituents are the six objects (form through phenomena), the six sense powers (the eye sense power through the mental sense power), and the six consciousnesses (the eye consciousness through the mental consciousness). The twelve sources are the six objects and the six sense powers. The six consciousnesses are also included in these twelve in that the eye source includes both the eye sense power and the eye consciousness and so forth.

STUDENT: Usually the six consciousnesses are said to be included in the twelfth source, the mental source.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Then what would the point be in making a division into twelve and a division into eighteen?

STUDENT: It is just another division that includes all phenomena.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That would be strange. The source that includes the objects of mind is the phenomena source. Therefore, if you say that all six consciousnesses are included in the mental source you would also have to say that all six objects are included in the phenomena source since the phenomena source is the object of the mental source.

STUDENT: In the *Treasury of Manifest Dharma* (*Abhidharmakosha*) it says that the twelve sources and eighteen constituents are both divisions of all phenomena while the five aggregates only include all compounded phenomena.

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: Each of the six sources that are powers include their respective consciousness.

STUDENT: The six consciousnesses are the mental source, they are the source of a consciousness.

Wednesday morning, 23 November 2005

STUDENT: Yesterday one student said that the six consciousnesses are included in the mental source and this is confirmed by *Treasury of Manifest Dharma* (v. 16-18) and the I Dalai Lama, Gedun Drub's commentary which say:

*Consciousnesses know individually.
They are also the mental sphere and
Are also asserted to be the seven constituents –
The six consciousnesses and mentality.* [1.16]

Consciousnesses know objects. Likewise, since eye consciousness knows form, through the mental consciousness knows phenomena, [the word] “individually” (v. 1.16a) is mentioned. *Those consciousnesses are also the mental sphere and are also asserted to be the seven constituents of mind because they are asserted to be the six consciousness constituents and the mental constituent.*

*Any consciousness that is the immediate past
Of the six is mentality.* [1.17ab]

There is no mental constituent that is a different substance from consciousness because *any consciousness that is the immediate past of the six consciousnesses is mentality.*

OBJECTION: It follows that the enumeration as eighteen constituents is not definite because there are either twelve or seventeen constituents since the mental constituent and the six consciousness constituents are mutually included one within the other.

RESPONSE:

*In order to thoroughly establish the support of the sixth,
The constituents are asserted to be eighteen.* [1.17cd]

There is no fault because, while the first five consciousnesses each have different supporting sense powers, the mental consciousness does not have that. Hence, *in order to thoroughly establish the support of the sixth, the mental, the constituents are asserted to be eighteen.*

QUESTION: The inclusion of all compounded phenomena in the five aggregates and all phenomena in the twelve spheres and eighteen constituents are indeed [cases of] inclusion in many [categories], but is there an inclusion of all phenomena by fewer [categories] than these?

*One aggregate, sphere,
And constituent include all
By way of their own entity
Because of not possessing things that are other.* [1.18]

There is because

- the form *aggregate* includes the ten material spheres and the ten material constituents,
- the mental *sphere* includes the consciousness aggregate and **the seven constituents that are mind**, and
- the phenomena *constituent* includes the feeling and discrimination aggregates which are concomitant, the compositional factors aggregate, and the phenomena sphere;

there being no phenomena other than these.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Yesterday I did not say anything about the consciousness aggregate being included in the mental source and the seven constituents that are mind

being included in the mental source. My point regarded why there are twelve sources and eighteen constituents since all phenomena are included in the phenomena source.

STUDENT: The divisions into five aggregates, twelve sources, and eighteen constituents are for people with sharp, middling, and dull faculties.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Yesterday I was debating with you and was not setting out my own system. It is true that the divisions are made on the bases of different types of faculties. Similarly, there are also extensive, middling, and abbreviated Perfection of Wisdom Sutras – the *Hundred Thousand Verse*, *Twenty-five Thousand Verse*, and *Eight Thousand Verse*. Although their subject matter is similar, there is a difference in their length and the complexity of their explanations. Therefore, they too were taught for disciples of sharp, middling, and dull faculties. One explanation is that the *Hundred Thousand Verse* is for the sharp facultied, the *Twenty-five Thousand Verse* is for the middling facultied, and the *Eight Thousand Verse* is for the dull facultied. However there is also an explanation that is completely opposite to this which says that the *Hundred Thousand Verse* is for the dull facultied, the *Twenty-five Thousand Verse* for the middling facultied, and the *Eight Thousand Verse* for the dull facultied. When the *Hundred Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* is said to be for those of sharp faculty, it is in terms of the sharp facultied being able to retain and understand a great amount detail whereas those of dull faculties can only manage a shorter presentation, such as the *Eight Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. However, it can also be said that those of sharp facultied do not need much explanation and therefore the *Eight Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* was taught for them, whereas the dull facultied need more explanation and therefore the *Hundred Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* was taught for them. These two explanations appear to be quite contradictory.

STUDENT: With respect to the two sections “the prologue that produces the sutra” (*mdo byung ba'i gleng gzhi*) and “the actual sutra produced from that” (*de las byung ba'i mdo dnos*), what does “that” mean in “produced from that”?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The word “prologue” in Tibetan is *leng zhi* (*gleng gzhi*). The word *zhi* (*gzhi*) means base, therefore the prologue is the base of something, that is, it is the base of the sutra itself. Therefore, it is the sutra that comes from the prologue.

STUDENT: Does it mean that it comes from that in terms of *that* being its cause?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It is difficult to say that the prologue is the cause of the sutra, although the Tibetan could be interpreted in that way as *jungwa* (*byung ba*) means “to arise.” However, the word *leng zhi* (*gleng gzhi*), [translated here as “prologue,”] means “basis of narration,” the narration being the sutra itself, and the prologue being the basis or foundation of that sutra. Although the word *byung ba* could give the idea that the sutra arises from the prologue, that would not be a correct understanding because the sutra comes from the meditative stabilization of the Buddha by means of which Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara were blessed. Also, because the exclusive prologue says “at that time” which is explained to mean “at that time when the roots of virtue of the audience had ripened,” the ripening of the roots of virtue of the audience can also be taken to be a cause for the arising of the sutra. Thus, the conditions that brought about the sutra are the meditative stabilization in which the Buddha was absorbed, the time of the roots of virtue of the audience having ripened, and the special place, which is Vulture Peak. It is said that

although an intermediate state being in general is not obstructed by any form, even mountains, walls, and so forth, it is obstructed by Vulture Peak. Therefore, Vulture Peak, like Bodhgaya, is a very special place. Vulture Peak and Bodhgaya are said to be stable and unmovable, whereas other places are not in that they can be shaken by earthquakes and so forth. Just as Bodhgaya, which is called the Vajra Seat, is a suitable place for all the buddhas to come enlightened in that it is immovable, so too Vulture Peak was a suitable place for teaching the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras because it is unmovable. That they are immovable does not mean that the earth there cannot be dug and so forth. Rather it means that Bodhgaya is a special place in that all the buddhas attain enlightenment there and Vulture Peak is a special place in that the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras were given there.

Jewel Light says:

2 A discussion of the actual sutra produced from that

With regard to the second, the meaning of the actual sutra, there are three parts:

- 1 how Shariputra asked his question,
- 2 how Avalokiteshvara answered, and
- 3 how that was admired by the Teacher.

Here three divisions are set out. However, there should be fourth division, that of the audience pledging or promising to uphold the sutra, that is, to practice it.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

Then by the power of the Buddha, Venerable Shariputra said to the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom?”

Jewel Light says:

1 How Shariputra asked his question

The first is from, “Then by the power of the Buddha,” to “who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom.” “Then” means after Avalokiteshvara had been empowered by the Tathagata to fully understand the meaning of what was to be explained.

By the power of the Buddha’s meditative stabilization, first Avalokiteshvara was empowered to understand the topic to be explained and then Shariputra was empowered to ask his question. In other words, the power of Buddha blessed Avalokiteshvara to comprehend the subject matter to be explained and the power of the Buddha blessed Shariputra to ask his question. The word “Then” at the beginning of the sentence implies that something had finished and something else was about to begin. What has finished is that, by the power of the Buddha, Avalokiteshvara had fully understood the meaning of what is to be explained, and what was about to begin is that, by the power of the Buddha, Shariputra asks his question.

It is said that by the power of the Buddha, Avalokiteshvara was empowered to fully understand the meaning of what was to be explained. However, why did Avalokiteshvara

need to be empowered? Had he not already understood the meaning? This is a dilemma that arises for Jetsun Chogyi Gyeltsen's followers of Sera Je because they say that Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Vajrapani were already buddhas who took the aspect of tenth ground bodhisattvas in the retinue of the Buddha, and therefore Avalokiteshvara would not have needed to be empowered by the Buddha. However, according to Drepung Loseling's textbooks, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Vajrapani were actually tenth ground bodhisattvas, so the followers of these texts would readily accept that Avalokiteshvara needed to be empowered. However, it has to be born in mind that the entire sutra was taught for the benefit of disciples in whose eyes Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Vajrapani appeared to be bodhisattvas. Therefore, in this case Avalokiteshvara, a tenth ground bodhisattva, needed to be empowered by the Buddha.

While those who say that Avalokiteshvara is a tenth ground bodhisattva can easily accept that he needed to be empowered by the Buddha, they, on the other hand, have a problem with respect to asserting that Avalokiteshvara is not a buddha when it is explained that Avalokiteshvara is the form or manifestation of the compassion of all the buddhas. This is because how can that which is the manifestation of the compassion of all the buddhas not himself be a buddha?

Jewel Light says:

“Venerable” is a term which is generally famous for addressing those junior, but if this term is a term that occurs in the context of the compilation of the word [of the Buddha], it is not correct that Shariputra was junior in training to the compiler [Ananda]. Therefore, it is spoken with the special meaning of one endowed with a life that has abandoned the afflictions and that is free from birth and death by actions and afflictions.

Shariputra, generally speaking, was known to be a Hinayana hearer. However, it cannot be definitely said that he was in fact a Hinayana hearer. For example, Lama Tsongkhapa's *Golden Rosary* says that it is not right to say that Maudgalyana and Shariputra were definitely hearers as this is just a popular way of portraying them.

The term translated here as “Venerable” is *tse dang den pa* (*tshe dang ldan pa*) in Tibetan, which literally means “endowed with life.” This is a title that is commonly used to address those who are junior in the trainings or vows, that is, junior in ordination. The term “elder” or “sthavira” (*gnas brten*), on the other hand, is used for those who took vows before oneself and are therefore older in ordination.

“Then by the power of the Buddha, Venerable Shariputra said to the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara” were words that were added at the time of compiling the sutra during the first council, they were not actually spoken at the time of the sutra. At the time of the first council Shariputra was no longer a junior but was an elder, so why would he have been addressed at the first council as if he were junior? Because of this it cannot be said that *tse dan dan pa* means junior in this context. Instead it just means “endowed with life,” that is, endowed with a life that has abandoned the afflictions and that is free from birth and death by actions and afflictions. It is used as a title of affection that indicates closeness.

Jewel Light says:

Regarding “Shariputra,” a child, who was an emanation of [the bodhisattva] Sarvanivaranaviskambhin, was born from the union of his mother Sharika, who had eyes like a *sharika* bird that lives in the reed or *nalandra* forests, and his father Tishya. His name taken from his father was Upatishya and his name taken from his mother was Shariputra. Because he was of the Sharadvati family, he is also called Sharadvatiputra.

Here Shariputra’s name is explained. “Putra” means “son,” whereas *shari* comes from his mother’s name Sharika. Although he was also called Upatishya, he was commonly known as Shariputra. In some places in the *Heart Sutra* he is also addressed as “Sharadvatiputra,” although when the Sera Je monks recite the sutra they commonly shorten it to “Shariputra.”

Jewel Light says:

“Son and daughter of good lineage” means those who have the Mahayana lineage. The purpose of saying son and daughter is that only those who are male or female can create all the good qualities of the path and the realizations; eunuchs and impotent people cannot. Therefore, [it is said] in order to exclude them. “Whosoever” means distinctions are not made; that is, anyone who does not fear emptiness and has interest is suitable.

The question asked is: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom?” Thus, it only mentions “any son of the lineage,” whereas when Avalokiteshvara answers he also includes women by saying: “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom...” “Lineage” (*rigs*), which also means family, refers in this context specifically to the Mahayana lineage or family. Although the question does not explicitly say “daughter,” the word “whosoever” (*gang la la*) includes everyone who is not frightened by emptiness, whether male or female. “Son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage” is specifically mentioned because all the qualities of the paths and realizations can only be generated in those who possess the form of a male or female. In other words, they cannot be generated in neuters and hermaphrodites because they cannot take the vows and because they have a lot of jealousy. In short, while “whosoever” usually refers to anyone at all, here it is qualified in that it does not include neuters and hermaphrodites and those who do not like emptiness. Rather, it includes men and women and anyone who likes emptiness and is not frightened by it.

Jewel Light says:

With respect to “How should one train who wishes to practice the profound,” that which is the profound practice of the perfection of wisdom is the practice of the meaning [of the perfection of wisdom]. He asks how those who wish to act, that is, who wish to practice, should practice. The occurrence of the phrase, *spyod pa spyad par 'dod pa* in the majority of texts these days is incorrect; it should say *spyad pa spyod par'dod* because *spyad pa* and *spyod pa* refer to the object of achievement and the means of achievement or to the object of practice and the practitioner. Vimalamitra says in his vast commentary, “In some editions it says, ‘those who wish to practice.’ This means that there is no difference between do and achieve.” The master Prashastrasena says in his

commentary. “The practitioner is the person, the bodhisattva. The practice is the doctrine, the perfection of wisdom.”

The question “How should one train who wishes to practice the profound” sets out the three: (1) that which is to be practiced, (2) the practitioner who practices it, and (3) how it is to be practiced. Many versions of the *Heart Sutra* have a grammatical error and say *spyod pa spyad par 'dod pa* whereas they should say *spyad pa spyod par'dod*. The profound” is emptiness.

Wednesday afternoon, 23 November 2005

STUDENT: This morning it was said that eunuchs and hermaphrodites cannot generate the qualities of the paths and realizations. I can understand that eunuchs cannot practice tantra as they would lack sexual energy due to being without a sexual organ, but what about hermaphrodites who perhaps have twice as much sexual energy because they have both male and female organs? What is the reason that they cannot practice the three higher trainings?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: When the text says “son of the lineage” and “daughter of the lineage,” it sets out the *best* basis for a practice, that is, the body of a male or female human being. But then the text says “whosoever” which includes everyone, even eunuchs and hermaphrodites as long as they like emptiness and are not afraid of it. There are those who have no sexual organ at all and those who have the body of a male but the sexual organ and desires of a female and so forth. On the other hand, those who have no liking or inclination for emptiness and are afraid of it, whether they are male or female, will not be able to practice the perfection of wisdom. According to Vinaya eunuchs and hermaphrodites are not suitable vessels for vows in that although they can take them they will not be of much benefit. It cannot be said that all eunuchs and hermaphrodites have jealousy, but it does seem that many of them have this affliction.

To practice tantra, one needs to have a mind of attachment, but it is not that the mind is controlled by attachment. In tantra, attachment is used on the path. Perhaps it is the case that eunuchs and hermaphrodites do not have a clear type of attachment because their body is male and their attachment is female or vice versa. While it cannot be said that they cannot practice tantra, they may experience some difficulties.

STUDENT: Since homosexual men have the body of a male but the attachment of a woman and lesbians have the body of a woman but the attachment of a man, they would have similar problems.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: You should not think one can practice tantra because of being a heterosexual male who has attachment to women or a heterosexual woman who has attachment to men. Attachment is to be abandoned, whether it occurs in a heterosexual or homosexual person. When one becomes a monk or nun, one gives up all sexual relationships, that is, one sets them aside. I have seen that in the case of two homosexual males, sometimes one takes on the role of the woman, even to the extent of putting on makeup, while the other takes on the role of a man. In Florence railway station I saw a man dressed up as a woman who was putting on lipstick in a mirror and in America I saw women who were dressed up as men.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

He said this and the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara said this to Venerable Sharadvatiputra. “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom should view it in this way. They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence.

Jewel Light says:

2 How Avalokiteshvara answered

Regarding the second, how Avalokiteshvara answered, the short answer is from “[Avalokiteshvara] said this ... should view [things] in this way”, to “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence.”

This is the short answer given by Avalokiteshvara. The extensive answer is given after that when the *Heart Sutra* says:

“Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousnesses are empty.

“Shariputra, thus, all phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless, undiminished, unfilled.

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no tangible object, and no phenomena. There is no eye constituent and so on up to and including no mental constituent and no mental consciousness constituent. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Similarly, there is no suffering, origin, cessation, and path. There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.

“Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana. All the buddhas who abide in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect complete enlightenment through relying on the perfection of wisdom.

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that completely pacifies suffering, should be known to be true; since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

Tadyatha om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom in that way.”

Then, the Transcendent Victor rose from that samadhi and, commending the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara, said this: “Well done...”

Jewel Light says:

The extensive answer is from “Form is emptiness” up to [when Buddha says], “Well done.”

This section in the *Heart Sutra* sets out Avalokiteshvara's extensive answer.

When the five aggregates are not sought but left as they are without any analysis, they perform their respective functions. However, when one begins to search for and analyze them, they cannot be found. The first mode establishes the conventional existence of the aggregates. The second mode, which is to analyze them, does not establish that they do not exist but establishes that they do not exist from their own side. Thus, it establishes the ultimate truth. It is said "Not seeing is the best seeing." In other words, when one searches for the aggregates and does not see or find them, that is the best seeing.

There is the risk that when one analyzes for the ultimate and does not find anything that one will fall into the extreme of non-existence (also called the extreme of annihilation) and become frightened. However, that non-existence is not non-inherent existence, it is just non-existence. When one comes to understand that the not seeing or the not finding is itself the lack of inherent existence, that is the seeing of emptiness. When through analysis, one arrives at non-finding or non-seeing and then takes that non-seeing as one's object and focuses on it without falling into the extreme of non-existence, one is approaching the understanding that phenomena do not exist from their own side. Although phenomena cannot be found or seen, they still perform their respective functions conventionally. When, while concentrating on non-seeing without falling into the extreme of non-existence, one comes to realize that phenomena still exist conventionally and can perform functions, that is the realization of the *subtle* conventional truth. When one analyzes for the aggregates and does not see or find them, at that moment they do not appear. In that state of non-seeing there is no appearance of aggregates. On the other hand, when we do not search for them, the aggregates appear to exist out there and from their own side. Because the state of non-seeing proves that the aggregates do not exist from their own side or by their own nature, that non-seeing is the seeing of emptiness.

In short, it is our own system that at the time of not searching the aggregates are there but at the time of searching they are not there. However, an opponent can say that if one wants to know whether the form aggregate exists or not, whether it performs a function or not, one has to analyze and search for it. And that when one does that, one *will find* a form aggregate that exists, performs a function, and so forth. Therefore, he could ask what does it mean "when one searches one does not find" and "when one does not search one finds"? The meaning of this has to be understood well. For example, if one wants to prove the impermanence of form, one analyzes using reasonings such as "Form is impermanent because it is a product" and so forth, until one finds the impermanence of the form aggregate. This is an example of searching and finding. Therefore, what does it mean that when one searches for the form aggregate one does not find it and when one does not search for it one finds it? Our system is that when one does not search for them phenomena exist and when one searches for them they do not exist. When we say that, not searching, one finds and, searching, one does not find, the difference lies in whether one does conventional analysis or ultimate analysis. When one searches for a phenomenon conventionally, one will find it. For example, to search for an impermanent body, a functioning body, and so forth is a conventional analysis (analyzing for a conventionality), whereby one will find a conventional truth. Therefore, when one

searches for something and finds it, it is not an ultimate analysis (analyzing for an ultimate). An ultimate analysis does not look for the impermanence of the body, the function of the body, and so forth, but looks at where the body is. An ultimate analysis that examines where the body is, brings about the result of it being unfindable. Therefore, searching and not finding is ultimate analysis and not searching and finding is conventional analysis.

Please keep in mind, as I have told you many times, to not believe something just because I say it. You must do your own analysis. If you just believe what I say without examining whether it is true or not, it will remain just words that came out of my mouth without entering your mind. I have not realized emptiness, so you cannot be sure that what I say is right. Emptiness is said to be inexpressible and inconceivable. It is the object of only the exalted wisdom realizing it. While emptiness can be talked about, it is almost impossible to describe it accurately with words. Therefore, it is better to analyze and try to find it with the mind. If one studies and thinks about emptiness, it is possible to gain an understanding of what it is. However, when those who have not studied hear the word “emptiness” all kinds of strange ideas can arise in their mind. If, on the other hand, one says “watch,” “clock,” and so forth, they are easily understood because they are not indescribable. A verse that is commonly recited before any of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras says:

I bow down to the mother of the Conquerors of the three times,
The perfection of wisdom, inexpressible by words or thoughts,
Which is unproduced and unceased [like] the entity of the sky,
The object of the wisdom of unique knowledge.

The perfection of wisdom is inconceivable and inexpressible, not produced and not ceased, like space. Just as space is a non-affirming negative, so too is emptiness. It is the object of only the exalted wisdom realizing it. Emptiness is the object, the exalted wisdom realizing it is the mother of all the buddhas of the three times.

Jewel Light says:

Because the individual words are easy to understand, they do not need to be explained. The word “also” in “those five aggregates also” indicates that not only is the “I” empty of inherent existence, but the “mine” also is empty of inherent existence. Thus, it indicates the stages of understanding of the two selflessnesses [of persons and phenomena].

The sentence in the *Heart Sutra* “any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom should view *it in this way*” sets out what is to be done, whereas the next sentence explains how this is to be done: “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence.” The word “also” indicates that one should not only view the emptiness of I but also the emptiness of mine. It indicates the order in which the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena are realized. Thus, one first realizes the selflessness of persons and then the selflessness of phenomena. Although the sutra does not explicitly mention the selflessness of persons, it is implied by the word “also” which indicates that in addition to viewing the

I as empty of inherent existence one should also view the five aggregates as empty of inherent existence.

“Mine” refers to what belongs to the I, such as *my* aggregates, *my* eyes, and so forth. According to the Prasangika Madhyamaka there is no difference in subtlety of the self of persons and the self of phenomena, the object of negation being the same in both cases. However, there is a difference in terms of which one of them is easier to understand. Thus, because the selflessness of persons is easier to understand, it is realized first. It is not realized first because it is a coarser object of negation, rather it is realized first because it is relatively easy to understand that without the existence of the aggregates there would not be I. In other words, it is not so difficult to understand that when we think “I,” the appearance of I arises in dependence on the aggregates. This understanding helps to understand that the I does not exist inherently or from its own side. For this reason, first there is the realization of the selflessness of persons and later on the realization of the selflessness of phenomena.

In general it cannot be said which one arises first, the self of persons or the self of phenomena. However, with respect to a specific basis, first there is the apprehension of a self of phenomena or the true existence of the phenomenon, and after that there is the apprehension of a self of persons or the true existence of the person. For example, when we see someone, we first see his body and apprehend it to be truly existent. After that, we apprehend the true existence of the person. The realizations of the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena occur in the opposite way in that first there is the realization of the selflessness of persons and then the realization of the selflessness of phenomena.

Jewel Light says:

“Empty of inherent existence” means empty from its own side. Therefore, it means that [phenomena] are not established objectively or from the side of the object. For example, when a house appears in a dream, it does not appear from the side of a basis appearing toward [the subject] but rather is projected out from the side of the perceiving consciousness. Therefore, it must be understood that the conventional status of phenomena is just like that. According to the Prasangikas, inherent establishment is the object of negation of reasonings analyzing the ultimate. Hence, even though the qualification “ultimate” is not affixed explicitly to the object of negation, it is affixed implicitly. Therefore, it is of definitive meaning (*nitārtha*) and is literal.

“Empty of inherent existence” or “emptiness of its own nature” (*rang bzhin gyis stong*) means empty from its own side (*rang ngos nas stong*). There is a non-existence *on* the object. For example, when one dreams of a house, the house does not appear from its own side, but is a projection of the consciousness. That is the way of abiding (*sdod lugs*) of conventional phenomena [translated above as “the conventional status of phenomena”]. The way of abiding of the aggregates, for example, is not that the aggregates exist out there, even though the way in which they appear to the consciousness is as though they exist out there. That is the way in which they appear but it is not the way in which they abide.

Thursday morning, 24 November 2005

According to Prasangika inherent existence and true existence are the objects of negation of reasoning. They say that the *Heart Sutra* is a definitive meaning sutra, whereas according to Svatantrika it is not definitive meaning because they accept inherent existence (existence by its own nature), whereas the *Heart Sutra* says that phenomena do not exist inherently. Svatantrika says that the word “ultimately” has to be added such that the *Heart Sutra* reads “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as *ultimately* empty of inherent existence.” On the other hand, according to Prasangika ultimate existence, existence from its own side, inherent existence and so forth are all to be negated. In short, according to Prasangika the *Heart Sutra* is to be understood literally whereas according to Svatantrika it is not.

Jewel Light says: “According to the Prasangikas, inherent establishment is the object of negation of reasonings analyzing the ultimate. Hence, even though the qualification “ultimate” is not affixed explicitly to the object of negation, it is affixed implicitly. Therefore, it is of definitive meaning (*nitārtha*) and is literal.” However, it is rather strange that the commentary says that the word “ultimate” is affixed implicitly to the object of negation in that this statement accords with the Svatantrika view but not with the Prasangika view as Prasangika says that there is no need to affix the qualification “ultimate.” The actual literal reading of the words of the sutra is that form does not exist inherently (or by its own nature). If form does not exist inherently, inherent existence must be the object of negation according to Prasangika. Therefore, just as there is no need to explicitly affix the word “ultimately,” there is also no need to affix it implicitly. On the other hand, according to the Svatantrika when the sutra says that form does not exist inherently, it is necessary to read it as “form does not *ultimately* exist inherently” because they assert inherent existence. Hence, it seems to me that what is said in the *Jewel Light* accords more with the Svatantrika view than with the Prasangika view.

To review: Svatantrika says that the statement “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence” cannot be taken literally, but must be understood to implicitly say that the five aggregates are *ultimately* empty of inherent existence. On the other hand, according to Prasangika when the sutra says “empty of inherent existence,” that is just what it means and no further qualification is necessary. When Svatantrika says that phenomena do not *ultimately* exist inherently, Prasangika does not say that that is wrong, but they say that it is not necessary to affix the word “ultimately” to the words of the *Heart Sutra*.

STUDENT: When the sutra says “form does not exist inherently” it is enough to say “form does not exist ultimately” as they mean the same.

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: According to Prasangika they mean the same, whereas according to Svatantrika it is necessary to say “form does not *ultimately* exist *inherently*.”

Jewel Light says:

When “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness.” is understood in a coarse way, according to the Chittamatrins it means, “This appearance of form is one’s own mind, which is empty of the duality of subject and object. One’s own mind is the appearance of form. One’s own mind is not other than the appearance of form. The appearance of form is also not other than one’s own mind.” According to the Prasangikas, it

means, “Because something appears as form it does not exist. Because it does not exist it appears as form. This appearance as form itself does not exist but it is not to be sought apart from its non-existence. Since it appears as form while not existing, form does not exist as something separate from that.”

The *Heart Sutra* says: “Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form. Form is not other than emptiness.” There are two ways of looking at form: (1) to look at its conventional mode of existence which is what it is, the function it performs, and so forth and (2) to look at it as appearing to exist out there. The first way of looking at form is valid, the second is mistaken. When one searches for form and does not find it, that refers to the way in which form appears to exist, that is, as existing from its own side. Therefore, with respect to “searching and not finding,” what is not found is form *existing from its own side*. That is what is being sought, one is not seeking form that performs a function and so forth.

It is not that when one looks at form, one first sees color, shape, and so forth and then it appears to exist from its own side. Rather, these two appearances, one valid and one mistaken, occur simultaneously whenever we look at form. Therefore, there is the valid appearance of color and shape and at the same time there is the mistaken appearance of form existing from its own side. However, it is very difficult to separate the mistaken appearance from the valid appearance. When trying to separate them if we come to the conclusion that form itself does not exist, we fall into the extreme of non-existence. When we refute form by way of analyzing for the ultimate, we do not refute the nature of form but refute the way in which it appears. I cannot explain this very well but it is the very essence of this sutra, the subject matter of which is emptiness. Everything else is supplementary information. We will return to this again and again.

What does “Form is empty” mean? Since the previous sentence says “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence,” when the next sentence says “Form is empty” it means “Form is empty of inherent existence.” But this does not mean that the sutra is an interpretive meaning sutra and that it is necessary to add the words “inherent existence.” According to Prasangika it is enough to understand that when the sutra says “Form is empty”, it means “Form is empty of inherent existence.” Likewise, later on when the sutra says “no eye” and so forth this is to be understood to mean “no inherently existent eye” and so forth.

When the commentary explains the meaning of “Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form. Form is not other than emptiness” according to Chittamatra and Prasangika, this subject becomes quite complicated and difficult to understand. For example, the commentary says that according to the Chittamatrins “Form is empty” means “The appearance of form is one’s own mind which is empty of the duality of subject (apprehender) and object (apprehended).” However, the Chittamatrins would more normally say that “Form is empty” means that it is empty of being a different substance from the mind apprehending it. In addition, it also means that form is empty of being an externally existent object because it is implied that if the form and the valid cognizer apprehending it are empty of being different substances that form is empty of being an externally existent object. However, “the appearance of form” implies that there is a valid cognizer apprehending form. These two, form and the valid cognizer apprehending it, are empty of being different substances.

STUDENT: What does the word “coarse” refer to in “is understood in a coarse way”?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It probably means that the author of the commentary will set out a coarse or rough explanation of this subject.

To put this simply, according to Chittamatra “Form is empty” means that form is empty of existing externally. “Emptiness is form” means that the emptiness of existing externally appears as form. “Emptiness is not other than form” means that the emptiness of not being externally existent is not to be found anywhere other than in form itself. “Form is not other than emptiness” means that form is not other than the nature of not existing externally. “Emptiness is not other than form” and “Form is not other than emptiness” explain how the two truths are one entity but different isolates. According to Chittamatra, form and its nature of not existing externally are one entity but different isolates.

STUDENT: So, is the I form? The sutra says “Emptiness is form,” therefore if it is empty, it must be form, that is, it must have a basis that is form.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The four phrases – “Form is empty,” “Emptiness is form,” “Emptiness is not other than form,” and “Form is not other than emptiness” – take form as an example, but the word “form” can be replaced with any of the other four aggregates, the objects, sense powers, consciousnesses, and so forth.

STUDENT: The sutra says “Emptiness is not other than form” so if the I is not form how can it be empty?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: This sutra is to be taken literally, but we have to understand what it means to take something literally, otherwise when we read “no eye, no ear...” and so forth we will have to understand it to mean that the eye does not exist, the ear does not exist, and so forth. To take something literally does not mean to fix upon the words, but to understand their meaning. Thus, when the *Heart Sutra* says “In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousnesses are empty,” we have to refer back to what was said previously about form and apply that to feeling and so forth. If we do not do that, we will think that the eye does not exist and so forth. If they do not exist, why does the *Heart Sutra* have to say “no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind” and so forth as it would be enough to say “no head”? Ha-ha! Thus, just as form is empty so too are feelings, discriminations, and so forth. Form is just taken as an example.

STUDENT: So we could say “The emptiness of form is not other than form” and “Form is not other than the emptiness of form”? This is because not all emptinesses are related to form since there is the emptiness of feeling and so forth.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: You could say that but it is not necessary to add those words. That form is empty means that the nature of form is emptiness.

STUDENT: If, when we try to understand the meaning of the *Heart Sutra*, we have to explain what the Buddha said, it would seem to imply that he had communication problems which would contradict him being a buddha. Therefore, we should just leave the words as they are. Hence if the sutra says “Form is emptiness” we should just leave it at that.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: In the monasteries, for example, there are different classes taught by different teachers who teach in different ways, some more extensively and some less extensively, and so forth. After that the students of the different classes come together and debate what they have been taught. At that time, in addition to the different explanations of the different teachers, there are also present the different levels and ways of understanding of the people in the various classes. Therefore, an exchange among people with different understanding can be very beneficial.

STUDENT: From my limited understanding, I gather that emptiness cannot be explained by words or apprehended by thought, so what is the purpose of using so many words to talk about that which is inconceivable for an ordinary mind?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That it is inconceivable and inexpressible is the very reason why emptiness has to be explained with so many words!

STUDENT: But the words will never bring us to emptiness.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: They are still of benefit in that first we need to achieve a meaning generality of emptiness and only after that do we eventually achieve a direct realization of it.

STUDENT: Since none of our teachers claim to have a direct realization of emptiness, starting from Geshe-la and going up as high as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is accepting the existence of emptiness not merely an act of faith?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It is not just faith that is a blind belief that the ultimate truth is emptiness. First we generate a correctly assuming consciousness with respect to emptiness that is a kind of faith that approaches the meaning of emptiness. Then we come to an understanding of emptiness by means of an inferential valid cognizer, which is another kind of faith. Then we generate a direct valid cognizer of emptiness, which is another level of faith. Although there are those who have blind faith in emptiness, that is not suitable.

The commentary then says: “According to the Prasangikas, it means, ‘Because something appears as form it does not exist. Because it does not exist it appears as form. This appearance as form itself does not exist but it is not to be sought apart from its non-existence. Since it appears as form while not existing, form does not exist as something separate from that.’” This does not seem to be a coarse explanation at all, but seems to me to be quite subtle as the Tibetan is very difficult to understand! The first statement, “Because it appears as form, it does not exist,” can be understood to mean that the form that appears to eye consciousness does not exist because the form that appears to eye consciousness is truly existent form.

Thursday afternoon, 24 November 2005

According to *Jewel Light* the Prasangika presentation of “Form is empty. Emptiness is form: Emptiness is not other than form. Form is not other than emptiness” is: “Because something appears as form it does not exist. Because it does not exist it appears as form. This appearance as form itself does not exist but it is not to be sought apart from its non-existence. Since it appears as form while not existing, form does not exist as something separate from that.” Thus, “Form is empty” means “Because it appears as form, it is empty

of inherent existence.” “Emptiness is form” means “Because it does not exist, it appears as form.” Emptiness means the non-existence of something, but it is not that form does not exist, it just does not exist inherently. Because form does not exist inherently, it exists and conventionally can perform a function.

“Emptiness is not other than form” and “Form is not other than emptiness” means that that appearing as form does not inherently exist, but the non-inherent existence of that form should not be sought in other than form itself. Since it appears as form while not existing inherently, form is not other than non-inherent existence. In other words, because it is the nature of form to be empty of inherent existence, the lack of inherent existence should not be sought anywhere other than in form.

The *Jewel Light* is supposed to be a commentary to the *Heart Sutra* but it seems that the *Heart Sutra* is a commentary to the *Jewel Light* because the *Heart Sutra* is easier to understand than its commentary! While it is easy to say that “Form is empty” means that it is empty of inherent existence, the explanation given in the commentary is much more complicated!

“Form is empty” means that form is empty of inherent existence. “Emptiness is form” means that the emptiness that is a lack of inherent existence appears conventionally as form with its respective functions and appearances. The ultimate truth of form is that it is empty of inherent existence. Therefore, “Emptiness is form” means that emptiness as a conventional entity is form. The lack of even the most subtle particle existing from its own side or existing inherently when taken as an ultimate truth is emptiness, whereas when it is taken as a conventional truth it is form with all its attributes. When one searches and analyzes, it is not found. That not finding indicates a non-existence. What does not exist and what is not found is inherent existence. When not sought, form exists with all its attributes; that is conventional truth. When sought, it is not found; that is ultimate truth. Therefore, “emptiness is form” does not literally mean that emptiness is form but means that when one searches for form one finds emptiness and when one does not search for it one finds form. That is the meaning of “Emptiness is form.”

Then the *Heart Sutra* says “Form is not other than emptiness. Emptiness is not other than form.” If we take form as the basis, its lack of inherent existence is not to be found anywhere other than within the form itself.

Then the sutra continues saying: “In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousnesses are empty.” This means that the same is to be applied to the remaining four aggregates.

Jewel Light says:

In general, there are five kinds of emptiness. The absence of yogurt at the time of milk is the emptiness that is non-existence at a prior [time]. The absence of milk at the time of yogurt is the emptiness that is non-existence after having been destroyed. The non-existence of a pot in a place where there is no bulbous thing is the emptiness of the utterly non-existent. The non-existence of a horse in an ox is the emptiness that is the non-existence of one thing in another. The non-existence of a human at the time of mistaking a cairn for a human is the emptiness of entityness. The mode of emptiness in this case is the last mode of emptiness; this is an essential point. Therefore, with respect to that there are many terms such as empty by way of its own entity, empty of inherent existence, and empty by way of its own character, and there are many examples such as an illusion, a dream, a mirage, a moon in water, and an emanation. I do not explain this [at such

length] because I have nothing else to explain. Therefore, analyze from various perspectives using the example that appears easily to your mind, and when dependent arising appears as the meaning of emptiness, it is best. Until that point, one should create what seems like a fear, worrying that the majority of phenomena, such as forms, have become the object negated by reasoning. Otherwise, even though you say things like, “A pot does not truly exist, inherently exist, or exist by way of its own character,” if the way in which it does not exist is not perceived, you cannot be counted among those who have analyzed emptiness.

There are five types of emptiness, the last one being the most important. According to Prasangika there are many terms that are synonymous such as “empty by way of its own entity,” “empty of inherent existence,” and “empty by way of its own character.” All of these terms indicate the same emptiness. In order to facilitate the understanding of emptiness many illustrations are set forth such as dream, a mirage, a moon in water, an emanation, and so forth. The various illustrations or examples are given in order to help different people come to an understanding of emptiness. If, by using examples that are easy to understand due to being within the realm of experience, accompanied by investigation, dependent-arising dawns as what is meant by emptiness that is the best understanding. If one is unable to arrive at the understanding that dependent-arising and emptiness complement each other, but instead comes to think that form and so forth do not exist and are objects of negation whereby fear arises, that is also good. We should at the very least try to achieve that. If, on the other hand, we just say “A pot does not truly exist, does not inherently exist, and does not exist by way of its own character” without understanding how it does not exist, that is not even considered to be an analysis of emptiness.

It is recounted that Je Tsongkhapa also experienced moments of fear as he approached an understanding of emptiness which he displayed to his disciples by suddenly grabbing hold of his shirt in order to ensure that he still existed. This fear arises because initially one only focuses on ultimate truth. However, later on one comes to understand that phenomena still exist conventionally, whereupon one comes to see that dependent-arising is the meaning of emptiness.

The illustrations of a dream, mirage, and so forth are given because their falsity is easily understood. One can choose whatever illustration is most suitable to oneself and then apply reasoning to it. After that one should apply the results of that reasoning to the self or the I, which is the real target. After understanding the lack of an inherently existent I, one should examine “mine.” The *Heart Sutra* similarly says “They should correctly view those five aggregates *also* as empty of inherent existence,” meaning that the five aggregates as well as the self do not exist inherently. In short, first one should meditate on the lack of inherent existence of the self and after that on the lack of inherent existence of the aggregates. Hence, first one should gain an understanding of emptiness on the basis of illustrations and then apply that understanding to the self and then to the aggregates.

In the case of the syllogism “The person does not exist inherently because it is a dependent-arising,” dependent-arising proves the lack of inherent existence of the person. The person is a dependent-arising, because it is a dependent-arising it does not exist inherently. Therefore, dependent-arising is the reason that proves the person does not exist inherently, that lack of inherent existence is emptiness, because it is empty of inherent existence it is a dependent-arising. Thus, a person is a dependent-arising. If a person existed inherently, it could not exist dependently. Dependent-arising means

existing in dependence, whereas inherent existence means existing independently. Therefore, dependent-arising is the meaning of emptiness and emptiness is the meaning of dependent-arising. They complement each other in this way: by understanding how a person does not exist inherently, one understands how a person is a dependent-arising, and by understanding how a person is a dependent-arising, one understands how a person does not exist inherently.

Does this explanation help your understanding of the statements “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form”? Form is a dependent-arising, it arises in dependence, therefore it does not exist inherently. Therefore, form is empty. Form, due to not existing inherently and by way of being a dependent-arising, appears as form. Therefore, emptiness is form.

Jewel Light says:

Thus, having explicitly applied the four modes of emptiness to the form aggregate, the purpose of merely saying, “In the same way, feeling ...” with respect to the other four aggregates is that from among the five aggregates, form is like a basis or vessel whereas the latter four aggregates are primarily consciousness and are like the water that is supported in that vessel. Hence, just as when the supporting vessel is destroyed, the supported water is also destroyed, so when the form aggregate is understood to be empty, it is easy to understand that the consciousness aggregates that are supported by that are also empty. That is the intention.

The reason why form is mentioned in the statements “Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form. Form is not other than emptiness” and the same is not said with respect to the other four aggregates, is that form is like a container for the other four aggregates which are mainly consciousnesses. Form is like a vessel that contains the consciousnesses which are like water. Therefore, when one understands how form is empty of inherent existence, it becomes easy to understand how the other four aggregates are also empty of inherent existence.

Jewel Light says:

In brief, in order to put an end to common beings becoming attached to form and falling to the extreme of samsara, it teaches that form is emptiness. In order to put an end to some becoming attached to emptiness and falling to the extreme of peace, it teaches that emptiness is form. For example, if a blind person were to go down a narrow path that had thorns on the left and a cliff on the right, and if a sighted person were to say, “There are thorns,” there is a danger of the person falling off the cliff. If he were to say, “There is a cliff,” there is a danger of his falling into the thorns. In order that he not fall to either extreme, a middle path is taught. Those modes are the way to meditate on emptiness on the occasion of [the paths] of accumulation and preparation.

In brief, desire realm beings have attachment to form and, in order to negate that, form is mentioned specifically. Because the forms that appear to us appear to exist as they appear, we generate attachment and anger and various other afflictions toward them. By understanding that form is empty, our attachment and anger will lessen because we understand that form does not exist in the way that it appears.

According to Prasangika, while external form exists, it appears to exist from its own side. Because of that, various afflictions arise such as attachment, anger, jealousy, and so forth. Attachment can arise to all types of forms – visual forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tangible objects. When we have attachment to the body of a person, that person appears to us to be youthful, desirable, and attractive. However, when later on we generate anger for that person, just as attractive as that person was before, now he or she is that repulsive. There are two ways of looking at the same person, one with attachment and one with anger. To one mind that person appears to be attractive and to the other mind that same person appears to be repulsive. When our mind is dominated by attachment, even the person's voice appears attractive, their house seems to be pleasant, and so forth, but when that attachment transforms into anger we become unable to bear his or her voice and everything to do with that person becomes unpleasant. We all have this experience, but we do not make use of it!

When we are really angry at someone, we bring up countless reasons as to why we do not like that person, why he or she is so bad, and so forth. However, this is a complete waste of time as it has no effect upon the person with whom we are angry and only makes us unhappy.

Attachment, on the other hand, appears to be a state of happiness. However, it is not happiness because when we are with the person we have a pleasant time but when we return home we miss that person and constantly think about him or her even when we are studying, when we are meditating, and so forth. That person constantly comes to our mind whatever we do. (ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: I wouldn't know about that, but apparently that is what happens...) If we can use our understanding of emptiness, of the lack of inherent existence, it can really harm attachment, anger, and so forth. It is not easy to understand the disadvantages of attachment, but if we can see them we can start to counteract it. These afflictions are not outside our realm of experience, we can see the suffering that attachment brings in the world around us. But if we do not apply that experience to ourselves, we will go on believing that attachment is a source of happiness. Therefore, we should apply the examples that we see around us of suffering caused by attachment to ourselves.

The commentary says that the reason the *Heart Sutra* says "Form is empty" is to destroy strong attachment and so forth to form. A true cessation is an emptiness according to Prasangika. In the case of the Hinayana path, which has the goal of liberation from cyclic existence, the main object of negation is the conception of true existence. As the conception of true existence is reduced, the suchness of the mind becomes clearer and clearer. Because the conception of true existence acts to veil the mind, as it gradually diminishes the emptiness of the mind becomes clearer. When the conception of true existence is abandoned completely, all that remains is the emptiness of the mind. That emptiness is a true cessation. Joy arises at that time and one enters into meditative equipoise on the suchness of the mind. However, according to the Mahayana that is a fault because while in that meditative equipoise one is not of any help to others. Thus, in order to eliminate the possibility of becoming attached to emptiness, the *Heart Sutra* says "Emptiness is form." Just as form is empty, emptiness is form. Therefore, one should not become attached to emptiness.

If we think about the afflictions that we have, attachment, anger, pride, and so forth, we will find that they act to cover or obscure. They do not obscure the object

because when we have attachment to an object, the object clearly appears. However, because of the very nature of the afflictions, the way in which the mind engages its object is mistaken and therefore the nature of the object is covered or hidden. Therefore, the mind is mistaken and in that sense it is also obscured. Therefore, the gradual abandonment of the afflictions reveals the nature or suchness of the mind. When the suchness of the mind is revealed, the difference between the way in which phenomena appear and the way in which they exist becomes evident. The main cause of obscuration is not understanding emptiness. The main cause that reveals the suchness of the mind and reduces the afflictions is the realization of emptiness. Thus, the main point is the suchness of the mind. Because the afflictions, especially the conception of true existence, are mind, the antidote which is the wisdom realizing the lack of true existence also has to be mind. Hence, the suchness of the mind is the main focus.

Friday morning, 25 November 2005

With respect to explaining the meaning of “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form,” perhaps we can be more precise. These two statements mean that form does not exist inherently and that the state of lacking inherent existence is form. Dependent-arising is the meaning of emptiness. Because form does not exist inherently, it exists as form. If form existed inherently, it could not exist as form. Therefore, because form does not exist inherently, it exists as form. Because of this, emptiness is form. That is one way of understanding this latter statement.

“Emptiness is not other than form” and “Form is not other than emptiness” mean that on form there is the suchness of form. They are one entity but different isolates. Therefore, emptiness is not something other than form and form is not something other than emptiness. However, form is not emptiness and emptiness is not form. But form is empty of inherent existence. The sutra says “Form is empty” and not “Form is emptiness.”

It says in the commentary that the best conclusion that one can arrive at is that dependent-arising is the meaning of emptiness. Dependent-arising and emptiness complement each other. If one cannot arrive at this conclusion, one should at least, by means of analysis, come to the conclusion that all phenomena, form and so forth, do not exist, that is, that form and so forth are the object of negation, and generate the fear that thinks that nothing exists. Even though this is not correct, the generation of this fear is an indication that one’s analysis is going in the right direction. It is not the actual object of negation but it is still good. On the other hand, it is not good to merely go around saying “Form is emptiness” and so forth without having any understanding of the object of negation. That is not even considered to be an analysis of emptiness. On the other hand, if that talk is accompanied by thought and analysis of emptiness, that is fine. But just talking about emptiness without thinking about it, is nothing other than mere words.

The commentary illustrates the middle way with the example of a blind man walking alone a path on one side of which are thorns and thistles and on the other a cliff. If someone says to him “Be careful of the thorns on the right,” he will tend to go toward the left where he will be in danger of falling off the cliff. If, on the other hand, someone says to him “Be careful of the cliff on the right,” he will tend to go toward the right where he will be in danger of falling into the thorny bushes. Therefore, the best is for him to remain in the middle of the path whereby he will not fall to either side. This illustration is

a warning to beware of a particular danger. Where is such a warning found in the sutra? It is found in the words “Form is empty. Emptiness is form.” “Form is empty” warns us of the dangers of cyclic existence because it is said in order to free beings from attachment to the forms of cyclic existence. On the other hand, even though one is free from attachment to cyclic existence, one can still fall into the trap of being attached to the peace of nirvana and wanting to remain in that peaceful state. The warning against this danger is “Emptiness is form.” For this reason the statements “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form” are illustrated by a blind man walking along a path with danger to either side.

Due to attachment to form, we circle in cyclic existence. Due to attachment to the peaceful state of nirvana, in which all suffering has been pacified, the mind of benefiting others is destroyed. Therefore, the two statements “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form” are warnings that accompany us along the path and prevent us from falling to the right or left. In other words, “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form” are to be applied as reasonings to prevent us from falling into either the extreme of existence or the extreme of peace.

This is the way to meditate on emptiness on the path of accumulation and path of preparation. More specifically, this is the way in which someone who is definite in the Mahayana lineage meditates on these two paths. At the time of the path of accumulation and path of preparation, with respect to the side of method, the mind cherishing oneself is to be abandoned and the mind cherishing others is to be developed. Because these two paths are paths of ordinary beings, the danger of falling into the two extremes of existence and peace are still very real. Hence, the warnings “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form” are emphasized at this time. To fall into the extreme of peace is a kind of self-cherishing since it cuts the wish to work for the benefit of others. We have to be careful not to fall into either extreme. Generally on the path of accumulation, one mainly focuses upon hearing and thinking, and on the path of preparation one mainly focuses on achieving a union of calm abiding and special insight. The path of accumulation is divided into small, middling, and great, and the last instant of the path of accumulation, the great level, is single-pointed meditative equipoise. When it is combined with special insight, one enters the great level of the path of preparation.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

“Shariputra, thus, all phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless, undiminished, unfilled.

Jewel Light says:

With respect to the mode of meditation on the path of seeing, it says in the instructions of Atisha set down by Legpe Sherab of Ngog¹ that, having addressed Shariputra, “Thus, all phenomena are empty” indicates the door of liberation emptiness; “without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless” indicate the door of liberation signlessness, and “undiminished, unfilled” indicate the door of liberation wishlessness.

¹ Legs-pa'i-shes-rab of rNgog

This phrase in the *Heart Sutra* indicates how to meditate on the path of seeing. These eight statements – (1) all phenomena are empty, (2) without characteristic, (3) unproduced, (4) unceased, (5) stainless, (6) not stainless, (7) undiminished, (8) unfilled – set out the eight attributes or features of the profound (emptiness) in relation to the doors of liberation.

“All phenomena are empty” means that phenomena in terms of their very nature are empty of inherent existence. “Without characteristic” refers to phenomena that are causes, hence causes in terms of their nature are without inherent characteristics. “Unproduced” and “unceased” refer to results, hence results in terms of their nature are not inherently produced and do not inherently cease. “Stainless” refers to the phenomena of the thoroughly afflicted class, which are the stains, but in terms of their nature do not inherently exist. “Not stainless” refers to the phenomena of the completely pure class which in terms of their nature do not inherently exist. “Undiminished” refers to the complete abandonments of the afflictions and so forth, which do not inherently exist. “Unfilled” refers to the completion of all good qualities, which also does not inherently exist. These eight do not exist, therefore there is no characteristic, no production, no cessation, no stain, no stainless, no diminishing, no filling.

These eight attributes indicate the three doors of liberation: (1) the door of liberation of emptiness, (2) the door of liberation of signlessness, and (3) the door of liberation of wishlessness. “Emptiness” is the nature of all phenomena, “signlessness” refers to the nature of phenomena that are causes, and “wishlessness” refers to the nature of phenomena that are results. These three doors of liberation can be applied to all phenomena. The door of liberation of emptiness is indicated by “All phenomena are empty.” The five attributes of “without characteristic,” “unproduced,” “unceased,” “stainless,” and “not stainless” indicate the door of liberation of signlessness. The last two attributes of “undiminished” and “unfilled” indicate the door of liberation of wishlessness.

That the door of liberation of emptiness is indicated by “All phenomena are empty” is easy to understand. The door of liberation of signlessness or characterlessness refers to the fact that causes are empty of inherent existence. The *Heart Sutra* says “unproduced” or “without production.” While normally causes produce results, the way in which causes produce results is by way of their lacking inherent existence. Because causes lack inherent existence, they can produce results. There is no inherent production. A cause produces a result, but an inherently existent cause does not produce a result.

Then the *Heart Sutra* says “unceased” or “without cessation.” However, normally causes produce results by ceasing. The cessation of the cause brings about the result. However, that cessation is not inherently existent. Therefore, “unceased” or “without cessation” means that there is no inherent cessation of the cause when it produces its result. This refers only to compounded phenomena which cease to exist when they produce a result. Their cessation is not an inherently existent cessation. The cessation of the cup itself is brought about by the very existence of the cup. Therefore, the cessation of the cup is not something that has inherent existence or existence from its own side, it exists because of the cup. There exists the cessation of the cup because there exists the cup. Therefore, there is no inherently existent cessation. Because the cup exists, it has within it the seeds of its own disintegration or destruction. It does not need any other cause for its disintegration other than the cup itself. Therefore, there is no cause for the disintegration of the cup other than the cup itself. Because the cup itself is produced from its respective causes, it, as a cup, does not require any other cause for its own destruction. Someone

might argue: “If someone smashes the cup, that is the cause of the destruction of the cup. So how can it be said that there is no other cause of destruction other than the cup itself?” If someone smashes the cup, that is the condition that brings about the destruction of the cup. However, the cup is by its very nature subject to disintegration. Instant by instant it disintegrates and it is never separated from that nature of disintegrating. Therefore, when someone smashes the cup that nature does not change. When the cup is smashed it is destroyed, but to say that prior to that the cup was not disintegrating would not be correct. Therefore, whatever is destroyed is destroyed in dependence on causes and conditions. Hence, it is not an inherently existent destruction because it depends on causes and conditions.

“Stainless” or “without stains” refers to the afflictions that are the cause of cyclic existence. These causes are without inherent existence. “Not stainless” or “not without stains” refers to the path, especially to the uninterrupted paths by means of which the afflictions are abandoned forever. These paths are causes that produce results, but they are causes that do not inherently exist.

“Undiminished” or “without diminishment” and “unfilled” or “without filling” are the door of liberation of wishlessness, which refers to results. “Undiminished” refers to the result of the path, the complete abandonment of the afflictions and their imprints. It is a result but it is not an inherently existent result. “Unfilled” refers to a completion of all the realizations which are results, but it is not an inherently existent completion.

The three door of liberation do not have to be strictly applied to respectively all phenomena, all causes, and all results, because they can be applied to all phenomena. Space, for example, is empty of inherent existence. The cause that establishes space, a lack of obstructiveness, is also empty of inherent existence. That which is established, space, the result, is also empty of inherent existence.

STUDENT: Why does Geshe-la now say that the three doors of liberation can be applied to all phenomena when before Geshe-la enumerated particular phenomena to which they are related?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: “All phenomena are empty” and “without characteristic” can be applied to all phenomena, but “unproduced” and so forth seem to refer to particular phenomena. However, all eight attributes *can* be applied to all phenomena, for example, although space is permanent and does not have causes, by nature it is unproduced, by nature it is unceased, by nature it is stainless, and so forth.

The way in which form is empty is that it is empty of inherent existence. It is empty of inherent existence because it depends upon a cause. Because it depends on a cause, it is not inherently existent. From the very moment it comes into existence, it does not exist inherently. It is not that it first depends on a cause and then comes to lack inherent existence. Its very nature is to lack inherent existence. In this way all eight attributes can be applied to all phenomena. As long as one remembers to affix the object of negation, inherent existence, one can say that all phenomena are unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless, and so forth.

When one says “all phenomena” it should not be taken to refer to a single conglomeration of phenomena, because within phenomena there are phenomena that are permanent, phenomena that are impermanent, phenomena that are thoroughly afflicted, phenomena that are completely pure, and so forth. Therefore, these phenomena can also

be considered individually in terms of the eight attributes. All compounded phenomena are not produced and not ceased, all thoroughly afflicted phenomena are stainless, all completely pure phenomena are not stainless, all complete abandonments are undiminished, and all completed realizations are not complete. This covers all phenomena.

Jewel Light says:

Mahajana's commentary says that "emptiness" and "without characteristic" are respectively the objects of observation of the doctrinal knowledge (*dharmajnana*) and subsequent knowledge (*anvayajnana*) with respect to suffering. Similarly, "unproduced" and "unceased" are [the objects of observation] of the doctrinal knowledge and subsequent knowledge with respect to sources. "Stainless" and "not stainless" are [objects of observation] of the doctrinal knowledge and subsequent knowledge of the path, and "undiminished" and "unfilled" are explained to be the objects of observation of the doctrinal knowledge and subsequent knowledge of cessation.

Above the interpretation of Atisha was set out. Here Mahajana sets out another interpretation of the eight attributes. He says that they are divided into four sets of two which correspond to the four noble truths. The order of true sufferings, true origins, true cessations, and true paths is not the order in which they arise. This is because first the causes of suffering, true origins, arise, followed by their results, true sufferings. Likewise, first the causes, true paths, arise, followed by their results, true cessations. The order of true sufferings, true origins, true cessations, and true paths is in relation to their practice because first one has to understand sufferings, then one has to understand their causes, then one has to understand that their cessation can be achieved, and then one has to understand that they are achieved by means of meditating the paths. The four noble truths can be divided into two that are to be discarded or abandoned, and two that are to be adopted or practiced.

However, in this context we are talking about the abandonments of the path of seeing. The afflictions that are abandoned by the path of seeing are divided in terms of the four noble truths, whereby there are objects of abandonment in relation to true sufferings, objects of abandonment in relation to true origins, objects of abandonment in relation to true cessations, and objects of abandonment in relation to true paths. These are each further divided in terms of the desire realm and the two upper realms. Among the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing in relation to the four noble truths of the desire realm, the objects of abandonment in relation to true sufferings and true origins are easier to abandon than those related to true cessations and true paths. This is because the objects of abandonment of true cessations and true paths are wrong consciousnesses regarding cessations and paths. Thus, first one abandons the objects of abandonment in relation to true sufferings of the desire realm, then the objects of abandonment in relation to true origins of the desire realm, then the objects of abandonment in relation to true cessations of the desire realm, and then the objects of abandonment in relation to true paths of the desire realm. Then there are the objects of abandonment in relation to four noble truths of the two upper realms. In this way there are eight objects of abandonment of the path of seeing: four in relation to the desire realm and four in relation to the two upper realms.

When these are further divided there are 112 objects of abandonment of the path of seeing, forty of which are related to the desire realm, thirty-six to the form realm, and

thirty-six to the formless realm. The forty objects of abandonment of the desire realm are divided in terms of the four noble truths, there being ten in relation to each truth. We discussed these ten in the context of Awarenesses and Knowers. The first five of the root afflictions are the five non-views, and the sixth root affliction, wrong view, is divided into the five views. These are the ten objects of abandonment which are related to each of the four noble truths of the desire realm. They differ in terms of their subtlety in relation to each of the four noble truths. In relation to each of the two upper realms there are only thirty-six objects of abandonment because there is no anger in these two realms, whereby there are nine afflictions in relation to each of the four noble truths of the form realm and nine afflictions in relation to each of the four noble truths of the formless realm.

Hence, there 112 objects of abandonment which are included in (1-4) objects of abandonment of the four noble truths in relation to the desire realm and (5-8) objects of abandonments of the four noble truths in relation to the two upper realms. These eight objects of abandonment are abandoned by eight uninterrupted paths, whereby eight liberated paths are achieved. These sixteen correspond to the eight forbearances, the four dharma forbearances and four subsequent forbearances, and the eight knowledges, the four dharma knowledges and four subsequent knowledges. The word “dharma” in this case refers to phenomena (note that above it is translated as doctrinal). The forbearances are uninterrupted paths and the knowledges are liberated paths. Here only the knowledges are mentioned, not the forbearances.

There are eight forbearances, of which there are four dharma forbearances that are forbearances with respect to the phenomena of the desire realm in relation to the four noble truths and four subsequent forbearances that are forbearances with respect to the phenomena of the form and formless realms in relation to the four noble truths. They are uninterrupted paths. The result of those eight uninterrupted paths are the eight knowledges, which are liberated paths. There are four dharma knowledges in relation to the four noble truths of the desire realm and four subsequent knowledges in relation to the four noble truths of the form and formless realms.

STUDENT: I find it hard to understand what these divisions of the objects of abandonment actually refer to. I can understand, for example, that there is an attachment that is an object of abandonment in relation to true sufferings of the desire realm but I have a hard time imagining, for example, an anger that is an object of abandonment in relation to true cessations of the desire realm.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: This will be explained later on as I have not yet finished the presentation. We have just begun to enumerate the various objects of abandonment. It is fairly easy to understand the afflictions in relation to true sufferings and true origins but it is more difficult to understand the afflictions in relation to true cessations and true origins. We will continue with this subject next week.

END

Monday afternoon, 28 November 2005

We were talking about the eight forbearances and eight knowledges. Among the forbearances there is the dharma forbearance or phenomena forbearance, the word “dharma” or “phenomena” (*chos*) referring to the phenomena of the desire realm, specifically the afflictions of the desire realm under whose control we are. Because due to attachment we circle in cyclic existence, we are said to have no forbearance or patience (*mzod pa*) with respect to the phenomena of the desire realm. The eight forbearances, which are meditative equipoises directly realizing emptiness, are, on the other hand, able to forbear the afflictions of the desire realm. In other words, the mind is no longer frightened by the afflictions of the desire realm due to realizing emptiness and the afflictions can no longer harm one. In short, one is no longer overcome by the afflictions of the desire realm but can withstand them. Although *zo pa* (*bzod pa*), here translated as forbearance, is also translated as patience, in this context it is not the kind of patience that does not retaliate when harmed. Rather to not have forbearance with respect to the afflictions of the desire realm means that we follow attachment, that is, we are controlled by it. Likewise when anger arises, it controls us. We are not able to bear or withstand the afflictions, instead they control us and we follow them. We are without freedom or independence with respect to them.

It is also difficult to see that we are controlled by attachment because initially when attachment is fulfilled we are happy. We are not aware that we are controlled by attachment. Because of this, we are said to not be able to bear attachment, that is, we do not have forbearance with respect to it. Anger, although generally experienced as unpleasant, appears to give us strength and therefore to act to protect us. It seems right to be angry. However, when we believe that anger is right, we have lost our independence and come under its control. Because of this, we are not able to bear it, that is, we have no forbearance toward it. On the other hand, when we achieve the forbearances we become able to withstand the afflictions of the desire realm.

Here I have been saying “we, we” in the context of “We are under the control of the afflictions,” but perhaps there is a foe-destroyer in this room who is not under their control! So I should “an ordinary person” is under the control of the afflictions of desire realm, whereas a person who has achieved the forbearances of the path of seeing is able to withstand (*thub pa*) the afflictions instead of being overcome by them. Hence, these eight instants of the path of seeing are given the name “forbearance” because they are no longer under the control of the afflictions and instead are able to withstand them.

There are four uninterrupted paths that are dharma forbearances and four uninterrupted paths that are called subsequent forbearances because they come after the dharma forbearances. The latter are forbearances with respect to the upper realms. First one generates a dharma forbearance with respect to the desire realm and achieves a liberated path that is a dharma knowledge. Then one generates a subsequent forbearance with respect to the upper realms and achieves a liberated path that is a subsequent knowledge. The order is like this because if one is unable to generate forbearance with respect to the desire realm, one cannot achieve forbearance with respect to the upper realms. After a forbearance comes a knowledge. The general explanation is that one progresses through these sixteen instants of the eight forbearances and eight knowledges in relation to the four noble truths successively. However, according to the Mahayana, a

person who is definite in the Mahayana lineage simultaneously generates all eight forbearances, the four dharma forbearances and four subsequent forbearances, on the very first instant of the path of seeing. After that, he simultaneously achieves all eight knowledges. Therefore, according to the Mahayana there is one uninterrupted path and one liberated path. Although the uninterrupted path is one, it has eight isolates which are the eight forbearances. Likewise, although there is one liberated path, it has eight isolates which are the eight knowledges.

Hearers are in general said to be dull facultied compared to those of the Mahayana lineage. They do not attain the eight forbearances and eight knowledges simultaneously, rather there are two ways in which they progress through the sixteen instants. Among hearers, there are those who are dull facultied and those who are sharp facultied. The dull facultied attain the sixteen instants successively, one after the other. Hence, they first generate an uninterrupted path in relation to the true sufferings of the desire realm and then achieve a liberated path in relation to the true sufferings of the desire realm, then they generate an uninterrupted path in relation to the true sufferings of the upper realms and then achieve a liberated path in relation to the true sufferings of the upper realms.

Sharp facultied hearers, on the other hand, generate the eight forbearances and eight knowledges simultaneously although not in the same way as the Mahayana. They generate each of the dharma forbearances and subsequent forbearances simultaneously, two by two. In other words, they generate a dharma forbearance in relation to true sufferings of desire realm and a subsequent forbearance in relation to true sufferings of the upper realms simultaneously and so forth.

One student asked a question last Friday about the 40 objects of abandonment of the desire realm, the thirty-six of the form realm, and the thirty-six of the formless realm. The forty are composed of the ten – the five non-views and five views – in relation to each of the four noble truths. The student asked for an example of these afflictions in relation to true cessations and true paths. How do the ten afflictions engage the four noble truths? Given the very fact that they are afflictions, all afflictions engage their object mistakenly. However, some afflictions also engage the four noble truths directly, some indirectly, and some by way of coming under their control. Among the ten, there are five that engage their object mistakenly and directly: two from among the five non-views and three from among the five views. The three views that engage their object directly are the view of the transitory collection, the view of an extreme, and wrong view (which we studied in *Awarenesses and Knowers*). The two non-views that engage their object directly are ignorance and doubt.

The view of the transitory collection observes the aggregates and erroneously apprehends them to be I or erroneously apprehends them to be mine.

STUDENT: It is clear that the view of the transitory collection can be said to observe true sufferings or true origins, but how does it observe true cessations and true paths when it observes the aggregates?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: To observe true cessations erroneously means that one has not yet understood them. It is not that the person observes a cessation that is one of the four noble truths since that would mean that he observes emptiness, whereby that would not be a view of the transitory collection. However, those who are not Buddhists up

through those who have not yet attained the path of seeing but have achieved calm abiding, which suppresses the manifest afflictions of the desire realm, can mistakenly apprehend that suppression of the manifest afflictions to be cessation. In this case, that which is not a true cessation is mistakenly apprehended to be cessation. This mind is a mistaken understanding of cessation.

According to Prasangika there is a conception of emptiness or cessation as truly existent. That conception of true existence of emptiness or cessation is an object of abandonment of the path of seeing and an object of abandonment of the path of meditation. Thus, it is possible for an arya being in subsequent attainment or post-meditation to have a conception of true existence of cessation. In meditative equipoise when emptiness is realized directly, there is no conception of true existence, however this does exist in subsequent attainment. There are different levels of abandonment of the conception of true existence on the path of seeing and path of meditation. On the path of seeing the conception of emptiness as truly existent can still arise. But when it is said that there is conception of true cessations as truly existent, does that person perceive a true cessation and then conceive it to be truly existent? But how can someone perceive a cessation or emptiness and then perceive it to be the opposite of emptiness, that is, truly existent? This can only happen in subsequent attainment because at that time there still exists the innate conception of true existence which is not abandoned until the path of meditation. Until the very last instant of the seventh ground, there still exist instances of the conception of true existence. According to Prasangika Madhyamaka the conception of true existence is an afflictive obscuration that is not completely abandoned until the pure grounds. Therefore, prior to that there is a conception of true existence in subsequent attainment, although it becomes more and more subtle as one abandons the great of the great and so forth.

Is it possible to directly realize true cessation or emptiness and then have a conception of true existence of it? This can happen only for a Prasangika, because according to the Prasangikas the other schools do not have a direct realization of cessation at all and therefore cannot conceive them to exist truly. Hence, one has to come to the rather strange conclusion that only a Prasangika realizes emptiness directly by an uninterrupted path and then afterward comes to conceive it to be truly existent.

Here the non-views and views that are said to engage their objects directly refer only the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing, not to the objects of abandonment of the path of meditation, because we are talking about the 112 objects of abandonment of the path of seeing (the forty of the desire realm, thirty-six of the form realm, and thirty-six of the formless realm). Generally speaking it is not that the Prasangikas have a conception of true cessations as truly existent. Rather the conception of true cessations as truly existent is found in followers of the lower schools and in non-Buddhists, meaning that they have a wrong understanding of true cessation. However, that does not mean to say that in the Prasangika view of how one progresses along the path this does not happen. Instead it is possible that one directly realizes emptiness in meditative equipoise and then in subsequent attainment conceives of true cessations as truly existent. This is possible but it is not their system that this is what happens because for them a true cessation is emptiness. This subject requires a lot of thought as it is quite complicated.

A wrong view denies the existence of that which exists. It observes the four noble truths and thinks that they do not exist or thinks that they exist but exist truly. The view

holding to the extreme of permanence or eternalism and the view holding to nihilism or annihilation observe the four noble truths respectively from the point of view of being either permanent or annihilated. Ignorance, a non-view that engages its object directly, means in this context to not know the nature of the four noble truths. Although there may also be a conception of true existence, here ignorance mainly refers to a darkness of mind with respect to the four noble truths. There is ignorance with respect to the conventional truth of the four noble truths and ignorance with respect to the ultimate truth of the four noble truths. The latter is a conception of the four noble truths as truly existent. The former is ignorance that is an unknowing with respect to the fact that conventionally sufferings arise due to origins, that there are the three types of suffering such as the suffering of suffering, and so forth.

Doubt can arise with respect to the presentation of the four noble truths and their sixteen attributes, for example, that true sufferings are impermanent and so forth, that true origins give rise to true sufferings, that true cessations are emptinesses, and that true paths bring true cessations. Doubt is a two-pointed mind with respect to its object.

The five afflictions that engage their object directly have been explained very superficially as it would take a lot of time to go into detail about them. However, there remains some doubt with respect to doubt. This is because in order to understand the four noble truths, one first has to be taught them and at that time there will naturally arise doubt with respect to them. Afterward, one thinks about them, reads and studies, until the doubt is cleared away. However, that thinking and studying come about as a result of the initial doubt. Therefore, it could be argued that doubt is good. In short, when something new is explained, it is normal to have doubt. This doubt generates the wish to know, and that wish is good because it propels one into hearing and studying and thinking. As I said before, it makes one ask questions and seek their answers. Therefore, doubt would seem to be beneficial. So what does it mean that doubt is an affliction that needs to be abandoned? Generally doubt needs to be eliminated. Doubt does not know, therefore in order for knowledge to arise, doubt has to be abandoned. But the doubt included among the six root afflictions is not this doubt. This particular doubt is dismissive of the four noble truths, it does not generate the wish to know and is similar to non-belief. However, although it tends to be dismissive of the existence of something, it is by definition a mind that wavers between two points. Therefore, when one is presented with the four noble truths and their sixteen attributes, doubt is a mind that does not believe in them and thinks that they probably do not exist.

Tuesday morning, 29 November 2005

If you have doubt regarding teachings that you have received and from that questions arise and you investigate and find answers, that doubt is good since it leads to knowledge. In spite of this, doubt itself still needs to be eliminated as it is not good to remain in a state of doubt. However, here we are talking about doubt that observes the four noble truths and wonders whether they exist or not and whether they true or not without the ability to decide, due to which one sets them aside. If that doubt is a lack of belief that dismisses the four noble truths, it is afflicted doubt.

Among the forty objects of abandonment of the path of seeing in relation to the four noble truths of the desire realm, we have examined the five afflictions that engage

their objects directly. The remaining five of the ten are the two views – the view holding a wrong view to be supreme and the view holding bad conduct and morality to be supreme – and the three non-views, attachment, anger, and pride. Among these five, there are four – the view holding a wrong view to be supreme, the view holding bad conduct and morality to be supreme, attachment, and pride – that engage their object indirectly.

From the view of the transitory collection, the view holding to an extreme, and wrong view, which engage their object directly, arises the view holding a wrong view to be supreme: Hence, the view holding a wrong view to be supreme is said to engage its object indirectly in that it engages its object by way of another view.

An example of a view holding bad conduct and morality to be supreme is when someone with clairvoyance looks at himself and sees that in a previous life he was a pig and comes to the mistaken conclusion that in order to become a human being once again in the future and to achieve liberation it is necessary to mimic the behavior of a pig. He then holds behaving like a pig to be supreme conduct because it eventually leads to liberation and also holds the morality of guarding behaving like a pig as supreme. This view observes the four noble truths, especially the cause and result that are true origins and true sufferings, and understands them wrongly because one thinks that by behaving like an animal (the cause) one will be reborn in the higher realms (the result). One who thinks like this also misunderstands true paths and true cessations because one thinks that by the path of behaving like an animal one will achieve the cessation of suffering.

Therefore, the view holding bad conduct and morality to be supreme engages its object indirectly because it engages it by way of a wrong view. Although it may seem that the view that holds that behaving like a pig leads to liberation engages its object directly, actually the view holding bad conduct and morality to be supreme is based upon a wrong view which either denies the four noble truths or misunderstands them. This is because this person either denies or misunderstands that origins, afflictions and karma, produce sufferings and that true paths produce true cessations. Therefore, this view is said to engage its object by way of a wrong view. In this case, the conduct is to behave like a pig, and the morality is to guard the behavior of a pig. The way in which we can understand this behavior to be wrong is that causes always correspond with their results and are infallible, whereas in the case of behaving like a pig being the cause and being reborn as a human being the result, there is no correspondence at all between them. Therefore, this view is afflicted with respect to the first two truths, sufferings and origins, which are result and cause. This mistake happens because the clairvoyance of this person is limited in that it can only see the past life as a pig and therefore comes to the wrong conclusion that being a pig must be the cause of his present rebirth as a human being. The morality or ethics that the person guards is also wrong because it is based upon a mistaken view of cause and result.

The two non-views, attachment and pride, also engage their object indirectly. Why? Because attachment arises through the power of three wrong views: the view of the transitory collection, wrong view, and the view holding to an extreme. Due to these three views which misapprehend the nature of phenomena, attachment arises. Therefore, attachment is said to engage its object indirectly. Pride also arises because of the three views in that due to these three views one becomes puffed up about one's good qualities.

Anger arises when, for example, someone holds a view that is different from one's own. Due to this, one is said to engage the object under the control of anger., although it

may seem that anger would also engage its object indirectly because it engages by way of one of the views. How does having a different point of view and getting angry with the other person relate to the four noble truths? There are different views with respect to the four noble truths, whereby one can get angry due to someone holding another view. When we get angry, the object of the anger is the view held by the person, not the person himself. In other words, the view regarding the four noble truths is the target of our anger.

We need to think more about the forty objects of abandonment of the path of seeing in relation to the four noble truths of the desire realm. Objects of abandonment are divided into the intellectually acquired and the innate. In this context, the ten – the five non-views and five views – are intellectually acquired objects of abandonment because they are objects of abandonment of the path of seeing, whereas the innate objects of abandonment are abandoned by the path of meditation. Strictly speaking, attachment, for example, is an object of abandonment of the path of meditation because it is not actually abandoned until the pure grounds. However, there is also an attachment that is an object of abandonment of the path of seeing. In addition, there is attachment included in the desire realm and attachment included in the two upper realms. Therefore, there is attachment included in the desire realm that is an object of abandonment of the path of seeing and attachment included in the desire realm that is an object of abandonment of the path of meditation, as well as attachment included in the two upper realms that is an object of abandonment of the path of seeing and attachment included in the two upper realms that is an object of abandonment of the path of meditation.

However, among the ten afflictions, not all are both objects of abandonment of the path of seeing and objects of abandonment of the path of meditation. Those that are only objects of abandonment of the path of seeing are doubt, the view holding a wrong view as supreme, and the view holding bad conduct and morality as supreme. The other seven are both objects of abandonment of the path of seeing and objects of abandonment of the path of meditation.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no tangible object, and no phenomena. There is no eye constituent and so on up to and including no mental constituent and no mental consciousness constituent. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Similarly, there is no suffering, origin, cessation, and path. There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.

Jewel Light says:

With regard to the second, the mode of meditation on the path of meditation, in both the commentary of Vimalamitra and the oral tradition of Atisha it is explained [in terms of the] resulting [translation], “Therefore, at that time, in emptiness there is no form ...”. In some commentaries, it is explained with the resultant translation “Thus, emptiness is not form.” There

is not a great difference in meaning. The supreme scholar Jamyang Gawe Lodro² explains that “in emptiness there is no form”, and so forth means that form and so forth do not exist in the sight of the meditative equipoise on the path of meditation. Vimalamitra has this in mind in his commentary when he says, “in the perception of emptiness, there is no perception of form.” Thus, the non-appearance of the five aggregates to the sight of the meditative equipoise is, “There is no form... there is no consciousness.” The non-appearance of the twelve sources is “no eye... no phenomena.. The non-appearance of the eighteen elements is “no eye constituent... no mental consciousness constituent.” The non-appearance of the thoroughly afflicted and completely pure dependent arising is “no ignorance... up to and including no extinction of aging and death.” The non-appearance of the objects of observation is “no suffering... no path.” The non-appearance of the observer is “no exalted wisdom.” The non-appearance of any attainment or non-attainment of the fruition is “no attainment and also no non-attainment.” In that way, the twelve sources and the eighteen constituents should be taken as substrata.

We have discussed the sections of the sutra that are related to the path of accumulation, path of preparation, and path of seeing. Now the section of the sutra related to the path of meditation is discussed.

The sutra is said to be written for dull facultied bodhisattvas. In general bodhisattvas are said to be sharp facultied but they too can be further divided into the dull, middling, and sharp facultied. In short, the five paths are explained one by one in accordance with dull facultied bodhisattvas.

The path of accumulation is mainly focused upon hearing and thinking. The path of preparation is mainly focused upon achieving a union of calm abiding and special insight, this being meditation from among the three, hearing, thinking, and meditation. The path of seeing is very short and refers to the initial direct realization of the truth, that is, of emptiness. The first instant of the path of seeing is an uninterrupted path, which is followed by a liberated path that is a new and direct realization of emptiness. Then one enters subsequent attainment, which can last for a long time, and engages in other activities. Therefore, when subsequent attainment is included in the path of seeing, the path of seeing can last for a very long time. According to sutra a bodhisattva spends one countless great eon on the path of accumulation and path of preparation, one countless great eon on the path of seeing up to just prior to the pure grounds, and one countless great eon on the pure grounds. Therefore, the path of seeing can be very long when subsequent attainment is included in it.

The way of meditating on the path of meditation is set out in the *Heart Sutra* saying: “therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no tangible object, and no phenomena. There is no eye constituent and so on up to and including no mental constituent and no mental consciousness constituent. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Similarly, there is no suffering, origin, cessation, and path. There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.”

The translation here says “Therefore, in emptiness there is no form...” In both the commentary of Vimalamitra and the oral tradition of Atisha this phrase is explained as:

² ‘Jam-dbyangs-dga’-ba’i-blo-gos

“Therefore, at that time, in emptiness there is no form...” Another translation is “Thus, emptiness is not form...” The *Jewel Light* says that there is not much difference in the meaning of these different translations. “in emptiness there is no form” is explained to mean that in the perspective of the mind of someone in the meditative equipoise on emptiness of the path of meditation there is no form, there is only emptiness, ultimate truth. Hence, within that emptiness, there is no form. When this phrase is translated as “Emptiness is not form,” it can be explained to mean that to the mind of the person in the meditative equipoise of the path of meditation, emptiness is ultimate truth and not conventional truth. In other words, emptiness, which is ultimate truth, is not form, which is conventional truth. However, there does appear to be some difference in the meaning of these two different translations.

What does it mean that in the perspective of the meditative equipoise on suchness of the path of meditation there is no form? It means that within the suchness of form that appears to the meditative equipoise of the path of meditation, there is no form. Is that absence or non-existence of form ultimate truth? Is that absence of form perceived? Form does not appear to that meditative equipoise, therefore form is not seen. As was said before “Not seeing is the best seeing.” Does that best seeing, which is not seeing, actually apprehend the non-seeing of non-form? Not seeing form is seeing, however it is not the seeing of form. Hence, it has to be said that the non-seeing of form is seen. In the perspective of the meditative equipoise on suchness, suchness appears. When this is applied to form, it can be said that the non-seeing of form is seeing. However, it does not mean that simply not seeing form is the best seeing. One has to qualify this non-seeing with “in the perspective of the meditative equipoise of the path of meditation.” Otherwise, a blind man would have the best seeing!

STUDENT: Geshe-la explained that in the perspective of the meditative equipoise on emptiness of the path of meditation there is no appearance of form. However, outside that meditative equipoise, in emptiness there is the conventional appearance of form.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: What does it mean that in emptiness there is the conventional appearance of form?

STUDENT: If one reads the *Heart Sutra* without a commentary when it says “in emptiness there is no form...” it seems “to mean that “in terms of emptiness there is no inherently existent form.”

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It could be taken to mean that “in terms of emptiness there is no inherently existent form but generally form exists.” To say “in emptiness there is no form” does not mean that form does not exist. You can take it to correspond to the second way of translating that says “emptiness is not form” which is a general explanation and not specific to the context of the path of meditation. Although this statement seems to contradict the previous phrase “Emptiness is form,” that was explained to mean that due to the lack of inherent existence form arises, whereas here the explanation is that emptiness is ultimate truth and form is conventional truth, therefore, emptiness cannot be form.

In the perspective of the meditative equipoise on emptiness of the path of meditation there is no form. Form is not seen. That non-seeing itself is seeing. Therefore, non-seeing is the best seeing. This does not refer to the search for the ultimate nature of form but to

the meditative equipoise on emptiness of the path of meditation. In the perspective of that meditative equipoise, the non-seeing of form is the best seeing. Is that non-existence of form in the perspective of that meditative equipoise seen? It is seen. When one analyzes the ultimate, because form is not found there is a danger of falling into the extreme of non-existence. However, the non-seeing of form in the perspective of the meditative equipoise of the path of meditation does not lead one to fall into the extreme of non-existence.

Tuesday afternoon, 29 November 2005

The objects of abandonment of the path of meditation are six for the desire realm and five for the form realm and five for the formless realm. The four non-views that are objects of abandonment of the path of meditation of the desire realm are attachment, anger, pride, and ignorance, whereas the two views are the view of the transitory collection and the view holding to an extreme. These six are objects of abandonment of the path of meditation of the desire realm. There are five that are objects of abandonment of the path of meditation of the form realm and five that are objects of abandonment of the path of meditation of the formless realm, they are the same minus anger.

STUDENT: So anger is also an object of abandonment of the path of meditation and not just of the path of seeing?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That is right. Does that mean that an arya bodhisattva has anger? Since he has not abandoned it, we would have to say that he has anger.

The sixteen objects of abandonment of the path of meditation are abandoned on successive grounds. In terms of their strength they are further divided into great, middling, and small. First the great ones are abandoned, then the middling, and then the small.

The *Heart Sutra* says “In emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness.” What does “in emptiness” mean? It means that in the perspective of the mind in meditative equipoise on emptiness there is no form, no feeling, and so forth. To that mind there is no form, but is that absence of form experienced? Is that absence of form emptiness? We should examine this.

The *Heart Sutra* then says “no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no tangible object, and no phenomena.” This is the list of the twelve sources. Next the eighteen constituents are mentioned saying “no eye constituent and so on up to and including no mental constituent and no mental consciousness constituent.”

Then the sutra mentions the twelve links saying “no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death.” This sets out the twelve links from the point of view of the thoroughly afflicted and from the point of view of the completely pure. The engagement in cyclic existence begins with ignorance, followed by karmic formations, consciousness, and so forth because from ignorance comes karmic formations, from karmic formations come consciousness, and so forth. “No extinction of ignorance” sets out the twelve links from the point of view of the path to freedom because from the extinction of ignorance comes

the extinction of karmic formations, from the extinction of karmic formations, comes the extinction of consciousness, and so forth.

There are four ways of looking at the twelve links:

(1-2) meditation from the point of view of the thoroughly afflicted class in the forward order in relation to engaging in cyclic existence and in the reverse order in relation to engaging in cyclic existence:

- from ignorance comes karmic formations, from karmic formations come consciousness, and so forth;
- aging-death comes from birth, birth comes from existence, existence comes from grasping, grasping comes from craving, and so forth;

(3-4) meditation from the point of view of the completely pure class in the forward order in relation to the cessation of cyclic existence and in the reverse order in relation to the cessation of cyclic existence:

- due to the ceasing of ignorance, karmic formations cease; due to the ceasing of karmic formations, consciousness ceases, and so forth;
- the ceasing of death comes from the ceasing of birth; the ceasing of birth comes from the ceasing of grasping, and so forth.

The first of the twelve links is ignorance. It is the motivating force, that is, it is the causal motivation from which come karmic formations. These karmic formations are deposited as imprints on the consciousness, the third link. However, according to Prasangika the karmic imprints are not deposited on the consciousness but are deposited on the mere I, so what does it mean that the karmic formations are deposited on the consciousness? Although for Prasangika the imprints are mainly deposited on the mere I, it is possible that some imprints are carried by the consciousness. The support for the imprints is the mere I so here, when discussing the imprints deposited on the consciousness, I do not know how to resolve this problem. We need to think about this as it is a subject that can be discussed in great detail. The presentation of the twelve links generally seems to accord more with the assertions of the lower schools than those of Prasangika.

STUDENT: The I of today is not the I of tomorrow and not the I of the next life. So where are the karmic imprints deposited?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Who goes to the next life? It is the I that goes. I go from this life to the next life.

STUDENT: But what happens when I am reborn as a bird?

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: Then one thinks “I am a bird”!

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The body changes when we take rebirth as a bird, but apart from the basis of form that acts as a basis for the imputation “bird,” the rest is a continuation of oneself.

STUDENT: It is easier to understand this according to tantra which says that the continuum is in the heart chakra.

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: It is the subtle wind and mind that continues in tantra.

STUDENT: That is right.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Does it say in tantra that the subtle wind and mind travels to another life, but that the person does not?

STUDENT: I think that we continue from life to life.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It is not just the subtle wind and mind that travel to the next life, otherwise one could say “I will stay here while my subtle mind and wind go to the next life.”

STUDENT: So there are two depositories for the imprints.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That is right, but the main depository is the mere I. The I is imputed on the subtle mind and wind, that is what goes to the next life.

Next the *Heart Sutra* mentions the four noble truths saying “no suffering, origin, cessation, and path.” Then it says “no exalted wisdom.” This is mentioned because someone might think that while to the mind of the person in meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness on the path of meditation, there is no form, no feeling, and so forth, there is exalted wisdom. To counteract this mistaken conception the *Heart Sutra* says that there is also no exalted wisdom in the perspective of that mind. Then the sutra says “no attainment, and also no non-attainment.” Although the process of traveling the path by means of exalted wisdom brings about the result of the qualities and wisdom of a buddha, in the perspective of the mind of the person in meditative equipoise on suchness of the path of meditation there is no attainment and no non-attainment. In other words, the future attainment of buddhahood does not appear to his mind. However, someone might think that because that person has not yet attained buddhahood, that non-attainment of buddhahood appears to him, however that it also does not appear is made clear by stating “also no non-attainment.”

This has been a general presentation of the way to meditate on the path of meditation.

Then the *Heart Sutra* says:

“Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear.

“They rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom” refers specifically to the vajra-like samadhi or meditative stabilization that is the last instant of the continuum of a sentient being, which is the last uninterrupted path of the tenth ground. ““Therefore, Shariputra” refers to the entire process of traversing the paths until one no longer has any mental fabrication or elaboration, that is, until there is no appearance of conventional truth, and only emptiness or suchness appears to the exalted wisdom. “Because bodhisattvas have no attainment” means that when they enter the vajra-like meditative stabilization, they have reached the stage of not turning back and therefore they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom. In other words, on the vajra-like meditative stabilization that is the last instant of the continuum of a sentient being, having abandoned all mental fabrications, bodhisattvas rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom, that is, in emptiness. These bodhisattvas do not arise from that meditative stabilization because in the very next instant they achieve a liberated path and omniscience.

Before we said that on the seventh ground there are two uninterrupted paths, two on the eighth, one on the ninth, and one on the tenth. However, another explanation says that on the eighth there is one uninterrupted path, on the ninth one, and on the tenth two because the subtle obscurations to knowledge are further divided into the coarse and

subtle. Thus, one generates an uninterrupted path of the tenth ground that abandons the coarse subtle obscurations to knowledge, then one achieves a liberated path of the tenth ground, and then one enters subsequent attainment. After that one generates an uninterrupted path of the tenth ground that abandons the subtle subtle obscurations to knowledge and then achieves a liberated path of the buddha ground that is omniscience itself. This last uninterrupted path of the tenth ground is known as “the uninterrupted path from which there is no arisal.” The uninterrupted path of the tenth ground which abandons the coarse subtle obscurations to knowledge and all the previous uninterrupted paths are meditative equipoises in which there is no mental fabrication of true existence, but they are not uninterrupted paths from which there is no arisal because after them there is subsequent attainment. Even after the first uninterrupted path of the tenth ground there is subsequent attainment, so it too is not an uninterrupted path from which there is no arisal.

The first instant of the tenth ground is a liberated path. After that one enters subsequent attainment or post-meditation. Then one achieves an uninterrupted path once again. That last instant of the continuum of a sentient being is an uninterrupted path that brings about a liberated path, which is omniscience. Because after that one again enters subsequent attainment, someone could argue that there is subsequent attainment on the buddha ground just as there is on the tenth ground, however the difference is that on the buddha ground meditative equipoise and subsequent attainment are not mutually exclusive whereas prior to that time they are mutually exclusive. Normally in subsequent attainment one is said to eat, sleep, teach, and so forth, but having reached the buddha ground when one eats, sleeps, teaches, and so forth one remains in meditative equipoise.

One progresses from ground to ground by means of meditative equipoise, that is the boundary between the ten grounds. Also how does one move from the path of preparation to the path of seeing? On the path of preparation there is no direct realization of emptiness, therefore in order to attain a direct realization of emptiness one has to enter a meditative equipoise that abandons all the hindrances to becoming an arya, this being the lack of a direct realization of emptiness. Therefore, one moves from the path of preparation to the path of seeing by means of meditative equipoise on emptiness. Likewise, the first instant of every ground is a liberated path which is the result of an uninterrupted path. On the first ground there are two objects of abandonment, those of the path of seeing and those of the path of meditation. When one realizes emptiness for the first time, there are qualities to attain and faults to abandon. They are abandoned by meditative equipoise on emptiness. By meditating on the faults of the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing, one attains a liberated path which is the first instant of the path of meditation and is still the first ground. Then one enters subsequent attainment, then one generates a meditative equipoise that is neither an uninterrupted path or a liberated path, and then one generates an uninterrupted path that is the direct opponent to the objects of abandonment and achieves a liberated path that is the second ground, and so forth. In this way one progress to each ground by means of meditative equipoise on emptiness.

By means of generating the uninterrupted path of the path of seeing that opposes the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing, one attains a liberated path that is a freedom from the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing. That is not a path of meditation. That is an abandonment of the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing.

In order to enter the path of meditation, one first enters subsequent attainment and collects merit, then one enters into meditative equipoise, then one generates an uninterrupted path whereby one achieves the liberated path of the path of meditation that is the second ground.

“Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom” is said to refer exclusively to the last instant of the continuum of a sentient being which is an uninterrupted path. However, those words alone could also be equally applied to all the previous uninterrupted paths because also on them there is no attainment and the bodhisattva relies on and abides in the perfection of wisdom. So why is that not the case here? By the power of the second part of the phrase: “the mind without obscuration and without fear,” it is made clear that this refers only to bodhisattvas on the last uninterrupted path of the tenth ground.

Wednesday morning, 30 November 2005

Jewel Light says:

The mode of training on the path of no more learning is, “Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment ... through relying on the perfection of wisdom.” The meaning is that the conventional does not appear to the sight of meditative equipoise. Therefore, bodhisattvas practice the perfection of wisdom, abide in it, and go to the completion of nirvana. It is teaching that all of the buddhas of the three times have also become buddhas in that way.

“They rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom” indicates the last instant of the tenth ground. It means that bodhisattvas rely on and abide in the suchness that is the complete pacification of all mental fabrication or elaboration. The subsequent part of the phrase “the mind without obscuration” indicates that they achieve the liberated path that is omniscience and the path of no-more-learning. “The mind without obscuration” means that from the path of accumulation through the path of preparation and the arya paths, one gradually abandons the obscurations. On the first two paths the manifest obscurations are suppressed. On the path of seeing and path of meditation they are gradually eradicated. Then on the last instant of the path of meditation, bodhisattvas abandon the subtle subtle obscurations to knowledge whereby they have no more obscurations in their mind.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana. All the buddhas who abide in the three times also manifestly, completely awoken to unsurpassable, perfect complete enlightenment through relying on the perfection of wisdom.

“Error” (*phyin ci log*) refers to the sixteen mistaken conceptions in relation to the attributes of the four noble truths, such as seeing the impermanent as permanent, seeing suffering as happiness, seeing the pure as impure, seeing the selfless as a self, and so forth. The bodhisattva is “without fear” because he is without these mistaken conceptions, which are the cause of fear. Although the order of how these words occur in the sutra differs from

the explanation, in that first the sutra says “without fear” and then “having completely passed beyond error,” this is the meaning. This is the way of training that leads to the path of no-more-learning, it is not that there is a way to train once one is on the path of no-more-learning. The paths of training or learning include from the path of accumulation through the last instant of the path of meditation, as all of them lead up to the attainment of the path of no-more-learning. “Without obscurations” indicates the first instant of omniscience. From the path of accumulation one applies the direct antidote to the obscurations until one achieves the last instant of the tenth ground when they have all been abandoned, after which one achieves a mind free from obscurations.

“Without fear” occurs as *skrag pa me do* in many versions of the *Heart Sutra*, the *do* indicating the end of a sentence. However, it would be better to say *skrag pa me de* as *de* is similar to a comma and indicates that a reason follows. In this way, the *Heart Sutra* would say “their mind is without obscuration and without fear because they have passed beyond all error (or mistaken conceptions).” Due to having passed beyond misconceptions, they are without fear. Having completely passed beyond these misconceptions, they reach the end-point of nirvana.

Hence, the bodhisattvas rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom – the suchness that is the complete pacification of all elaboration – which acts to abandon the subtle subtle obscurations to knowledge that prevent omniscience, whereby in the next instant they attain omniscience. They are without fear because they have completely passed beyond the sixteen mistaken conceptions.

Alternatively this section can be understood to mean that bodhisattvas abide in the suchness that is the complete pacification of all elaboration from the path of accumulation through the last instant of the tenth ground, whereby their mind becomes without obscuration and without fear, and they completely pass beyond all misconceptions.

The *Heart Sutra* says: “All the buddhas who abide in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect complete enlightenment through relying on the perfection of wisdom.” This teaches that it not just one buddha who achieves enlightenment in this way, but that this is the sole path for all the buddhas of the three times to achieve enlightenment. Although here it just says “the perfection of wisdom,” it should be understood to mean “the *profound* perfection of wisdom,” which refers to both the object, emptiness, and the subject, the exalted wisdom realizing emptiness.

The *Jewel Light* says:

Everything up to this point is for disciples of dull faculties.

Up to this point, the *Heart Sutra* has mainly been presented for dull-facultied disciples because it sets out the paths one by one. The paths are set out individually for the dull facultied because:

- “... They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence” is a brief presentation of the path of accumulation and path of preparation;
- “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors,

and consciousnesses are empty” is a more extensive presentation of the path of accumulation and path of preparation;

- “Shariputra, thus, all phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless, undiminished, unfilled” is the presentation of the path of seeing, especially in relation to the three doors of liberation and the eight profundities;
- “Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no tangible object, and no phenomena. There is no eye constituent and so on up to and including no mental constituent and no mental consciousness constituent. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Similarly, there is no suffering, origin, cessation, and path. There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment” is a general presentation of the path of meditation;
- “Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom” specifically presents the last instant of the path of meditation which is the vajra-like meditative stabilization;
- “the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana” presents the path of no-more-learning; and
- “All the buddhas who abide in the three times also manifestly, completely awakened to unsurpassable, perfect complete enlightenment through relying on the perfection of wisdom” presents the fact that all buddhas follow this one path.

Up to this point the sutra has been mainly taught for dull-facultied disciples who are definite in the Mahayana lineage.

Jewel Light says:

Regarding that, the non-Buddhist Samkhyas [assert] that what is called the self, the conscious *purusha*, abides among the aggregates. They assert that apart from forms being seen and sounds being heard through the sense powers, such as the eye, there is no need for a separate eye consciousness that sees forms and that is other than the self. Khedrub Je says in his *Clearing Away Mental Darkness About the Seven Works[of Dharmakirti]*³ that [the section of the sutra discussed above] is for the purpose of refuting that assertion [that the self is found in the consciousnesses].

The reason why the twelve sources and eighteen constituents are deliberately enumerated is to refute the Samkhyas who assert that there is only one main consciousness. They say that it is the sense powers that see, hear, smell, taste, and so forth. They liken this to a house with six windows in which a single light shines through all six windows. Thus, they say that there is a single consciousness and that when it sees forms it becomes an eye consciousness, when it hears sounds it becomes an ear consciousness, and so forth. Hence, they do not accept separate consciousnesses related to each of the sense powers. They assert that that one main consciousness is the self or being or person. It is responsible for seeing, hearing, and so forth by way of the sense powers. For this reason, Khedrub Je says

³ mKhas-grub-rje says in his *sDe bdun yid kyi mun sel*

that the twelve sources and eighteen constituents, which include individual consciousnesses, are mentioned in the *Heart Sutra* in order to refute the Samkhyas' assertion.

Jewel Light says:

The conception of self asserted by the non-Buddhists is an artificial conception of self. The innate is the conception of a substantially existent person in the sense of self-sufficiency asserted by the Svatantrikas and below. In that mode of conception, the self that serves as the basis of conception thinking "I" does not depend on or rely on the aggregates but appears as the controller or master of the aggregates, and the aggregates appear as the controlled or the servant of the self. [This is demonstrated by the fact that] what an individual conceives of as "my form" and "my feelings" appear to be things that an individual would certainly be willing to give in exchange for those of others if [that were possible].

The conception of a self asserted by the non-Buddhists is, according to Prasangika, an intellectually acquired conception of a self. The innate conception of a self according to the Svatantrika and below is the conception of a self-sufficient substantially existent self. According to Prasangika, the conception of a self is the conception of a truly existent self or a self existing by way of its own characteristics, which can be either intellectually acquired or innate. Hence, there probably also exists intellectually acquired and innate conceptions of a self-sufficient substantially existent self.

The intellectually acquired conception of a self-sufficient substantially existent self is acquired by the study of philosophy or tenets. It deposits seeds. Thus, while the actual intellectually acquired conception of self-sufficient substantially existent self is only found in those who have studied tenets, its seeds can exist even in animals and so forth. This intellectually acquired conception of a self-sufficient substantially existent self is an object of abandonment of the path of seeing. In this way, the Samkhyas' conception of a self arises from holding particular tenets. On the other hand, the innate conception of a self-sufficient substantially existent exists in all beings regardless of whether or not they have studied philosophy.

This self is the basis for thinking "I." That I appears to not depend on the aggregates but to be a master or controller of the aggregates. The aggregates in turn appear to be under the control of this self and to be its servant.

STUDENT: Can it be said that this self is the basis for thinking "I" because usually a basis must be an existent phenomenon whereas such a self does not exist?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: "The basis" here does not refer to an existent basis, such as the five aggregates, in dependence on which there is a conception of self. Here we are talking about how the self is apprehended. The basis of this apprehension or conception is the self that is to be refuted. It is a self-sufficient substantially existent self. In this context "basis" does not mean cause, but instead is that to which the I refers.

STUDENT: Is that not its observed object?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: If one says that it is the observed object of a particular thought, it must exist. In fact the five aggregates, which are the basis of imputing I, exist. However, the basis of the thought "I" is something that appears to be unrelated to the five aggregates.

When one thinks “I,” it is generally not clear what the basis of that thought is. However, it is something that appears to be separate from the aggregates and to be the master of the aggregates. When we are insulted or falsely accused of being a thief, for example, we think “How could he say that to ME?” whereupon we feel the I very strongly. There is a strong thought of an I that appears to exist all by itself without depending on the aggregates.

The *Jewel Light* says “[This is demonstrated by the fact that] what an individual conceives of as “my form” and “my feelings” appear to be things that an individual would certainly be willing to give in exchange for those of others if [that were possible].” In other words, the aggregates appear to be our possessions, something that we own and carry around with us. We talk about “my form” and “my feeling” as if they were something that we could exchange for someone else’s body or feeling, for example, someone else’s beautiful body or happy mind. This is based on the fact that we believe that our form, feelings, and so forth are possessions that belong to us. Of course, these days we can give away our eyes, liver, kidneys, and so forth! When we watch TV or a film and see someone with a beautiful body, for example, we sometimes generate the wish to have that beautiful body. It is often the case that we think “I wish I were beautiful like her,” “I wish that I were happy like him,” and so forth. However, just wishing to attain another person’s happiness and so forth is not enough. In order to obtain them we need to apply the same methods that he used in order to attain them.

We should take care not to burden ourselves with many thoughts of wanting this and wanting that. Such thoughts only make trouble for ourselves. We should have few thoughts, eat food, whether delicious or not, sleep well, and so forth. We should make our lives less cluttered and busy. Otherwise, if we think and think, when we eat food it will not taste good, we will be unable to sleep at night, and we may even become sick. Happiness is not created by others, we alone create our own happiness.

Wednesday afternoon, 30 November 2005

STUDENT: The goal is the wisdom realizing emptiness but I have heard many types of wisdoms mentioned in various teachings including Samantabhadra wisdom, the wisdom of compassion, the wisdom of knowing, the five wisdoms related to the five aggregates, and so forth. They seem like pieces of puzzle that I would like to fit together. Presently we have a kind of wisdom that is commonsense wisdom and a wisdom that understands that if we practice the path we will improve. How are all these various types of wisdoms connected?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The *Heart Sutra* is a Perfection of Wisdom Sutra. In fact it is the essence of all the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, especially the three Mother sutras, the 100,000, 25,000, and 8,000 Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. Therefore, if one understands the *Heart Sutra* well, one will understand the three Mother sutras. While the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* by Maitreya is a commentary on the three Mother sutras, it explicitly teaches the vast, i.e., the side of method, and only implicitly teaches the profound, i.e., the side of wisdom. The *Heart Sutra*, on the other hand, teaches emptiness directly. Therefore, it is said that if one understands the *Heart Sutra* well, one will understand the wisdom side of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, and if one understands

the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* well, one will understand the method side of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras.

When entering the path of accumulation and the path of preparation, we do so on the basis of the five aggregates. In other words, they are the basis of the meditations in which we engage. For those of us who are not yet on a path, the realizations of the path of accumulation and path of preparation lie ahead. This is indicated in the *Heart Sutra* by the statements “Form is empty” and “Emptiness is form.” Such statements are made in order to indicate how we become attached to form and thereby continue to cycle in cyclic existence. Through understanding that, we can turn then away from attachment to form and generate renunciation of cyclic existence. With such a mind of renunciation, we then observe all sentient beings and come to understand that they too circle in cyclic existence due to attachment to form. As a result of this understanding, we generate compassion for them. Then, by means of the seven-fold cause and effect meditation and the meditation on exchanging self with others, we generate the mind of enlightenment and enter the path of accumulation.

“Form is empty” is taught because we are attached to form. This happens because we believe that form exists in the way that it appears. This causes us to continue to wander in cyclic existence. “Form is empty” indicates that form does not exist in the way it appears, instead it is empty of inherent existence. By way of this method, we can come to understand that there is a way out of cyclic existence through understanding the meaning of the lack of inherent existence. Knowing that method frees us from cyclic existence, whereas not knowing it keeps us in cyclic existence. Seeing that there is such a method for attaining freedom from cyclic existence, we then look at sentient beings, whereupon we will see that, although there is such a way out of cyclic existence, they do not know it and therefore continue to be attached to form and to circle in cyclic existence. Seeing this leads us to develop compassion. In short, through understanding that there is a method for attaining freedom from cyclic existence but, not knowing it, sentient beings wander in the three realms, we develop compassion for them. Such a mind is based upon wisdom or knowledge of the path to freedom. Therefore, it is not generated easily and quickly but instead requires a lot of prior hearing and thinking. It is easy to say the words “May all sentient beings have happiness” and so forth but without developing the corresponding minds of love and compassion. The Lam-rim explains the paths of the three types of beings, the small, middling, and great, because in order to develop the mind that genuinely wishes others to be free from suffering, we have to first develop that wish with respect to ourselves. In other words, without the genuine wish for oneself to be free from suffering, a genuine wish for others to be free from suffering will not arise.

Someone might wonder why, since everyone wants to be free from suffering, do we not already have this mind? However, if we examine this very carefully, we will see that this wish is not a flawless desire to be free from suffering because it is only the wish to be free from temporary sufferings such as hunger, sickness, and so forth. As we meet various types of suffering, we generate the wish to be free from them. Our wish to be free from suffering does not go beyond that. Therefore, our not wanting suffering and our wish to be free from suffering is not a pure state of mind. In order to understand the different kinds of suffering we really need to study the Lam-rim teachings in depth. If we do this well, we will eventually come to see that we actually have all the sufferings of human beings presented in the context of middling beings. It is important to contemplate these sufferings.

However, some people do not like to think about suffering, they say that it upsets them. Ha-ha! However, it is essential to think about the suffering and see which sufferings we have. After that, we should think about the fact that although right now we are a human being, we might be an animal in our next life and therefore think about the sufferings of animals. If we examine them, we will see that the sufferings of animals described in the Lam-rim are visible around us. Therefore, we should think about the various types of suffering not only in relation to this life but also in relation to our future lives. This is an essential practice.

If we follow this process, the difference between our present wish to not experience suffering and to become free from suffering and that which comes as a result of contemplating the Lam-rim will become greater and greater. This is because it will no longer be just the wish to become free from our present sufferings as a human being but will become the wish to become free from all the sufferings of the six realms. We should think that whatever happiness we experience, it will come to an end and after that we will once again experience suffering. That wish to not suffer and to be free from suffering is much more advantageous than our usual wish to be free from suffering. If we did not have any suffering, there would be no point to studying and practicing the Dharma. Also if there was suffering but no possibility of becoming free from it, then we should not even think about it but be as happy as we possibly can. However, there is a way out of suffering and, because of that, thinking and meditating on suffering has a reason, a benefit, and a goal. Therefore, the purpose of thinking about suffering is not to become more unhappy!

I say “we” but, of course, I do not know what realizations and qualities you may have. However, in general our minds are weak and when the slightest unhappiness arises we become depressed and unhappy. We need to get rid of this mind. There is no point to meditating on suffering if it is only going to make us more unhappy and overwhelm us. Therefore, we have to rid ourselves of this lack of courage and then meditate on suffering. If we do this, our mind will gradually become stronger and stronger. On the other hand, if we tend to get irritated at the tiniest hardship and want to give everything up, or else tend to think about things until they become bigger and bigger, we will only become more and more unhappy by meditating on suffering. Therefore, first we have to get rid of this wimpy mind.

We are beings of cyclic existence. It is important to know that in cyclic existence nothing is perfect. There are always going to be problems. That is the very nature of cyclic existence. Therefore, we who wander in cyclic existence will experience suffering. We need to realize that this is our situation. This will also help us develop patience and tolerance when unpleasant things happen. If we have some resistance and do not get upset but remain patient, we will be able to deal better with the problems we encounter. When we meet hardships, we should think “This is what happens in cyclic existence” and accept it, rather than wanting things to always be perfect. There is no perfection in cyclic existence, by nature it is faulty. So, if we are unable to bear any suffering at all and constantly search for perfection, we will only become more and more unhappy, frustrated, and irritated. In addition, even though we do not want suffering, we will create more and more suffering. To accept suffering as part of cyclic existence is a much better way of dealing with it.

On the one hand we do not want suffering and on the other we are constantly overwhelmed by suffering. These two do not match, therefore we have to do something about it. We should examine suffering, whereby we will see that our suffering is created by

no one other than ourselves. We should examine the causes of suffering within our own mind and then work to reduce them bit by bit until our mind becomes more relaxed and at ease. If, from within this relaxed state of mind, we begin to practice the path of great beings, our mind will have much more power. Otherwise, if we try to practice from within a mind that is beset by troubles and unable to bear the slightest difficulty, our practice will not take root. Therefore, before beginning to generate the mind of enlightenment, we need a mind that is relaxed and at ease, from within which we can practice and develop great strength of mind. Just wishing to be free from suffering will not put an end to our suffering.

We need to change our mind from a worried mind into a peaceful mind. Our body will definitely experience the suffering of birth, sickness, aging, and death. The suffering of birth is behind us but the sufferings of sickness, aging, and death still lie ahead. We cannot do anything to avoid them, however we can work on our mental sufferings. We can reduce our mental suffering by working with our mind. Because this suffering is created by our mind, it can also be alleviated by our mind. If we are able to generate a relaxed mind, even while we still have physical sufferings such as sickness and so forth, that positive mind will have a positive effect on our body because the body and mind are connected. Because the ailments of the body are linked with the mind, if the mind is at ease this will have a positive effect on the body. We can spend a lot of money of money on doctors and medicines, whereas a relaxed mind is free of charge and the best medicines! It is up to us whether we develop such a mind or not.

It is said that *the practice* of the *Heart Sutra* is very difficult unless one has a lot of merit. In fact in the monasteries many pujas are done for the purpose of supporting the monks in their studies. It is difficult to both study and practice the *Heart Sutra*. The best is to understand it and then put it into practice. However, if that is not possible, one should at least try to keep the meaning in one's mind by picturing the various paths and imagining what they are like. If one cannot do even that, one should study in order to deposit imprints for the future. If one cannot understand something, one should remain relaxed and not get worried. One should have a relaxed approach to studying, just spending one's days eating, sleeping, and studying. Anxiety or worry is a hindrance to knowledge. It only makes us unhappy. The purpose of studying is not to make ourselves unhappy!

Even when we accumulate just a tiny bit of virtue or merit, we should immediately dedicate it wholeheartedly for the benefit of sentient beings. We have a debt with respect to sentient beings because of the fact that they have taken care of us in our past lives. We now need to repay that debt. However, because that is difficult to do right now, we should dedicate to be able to do that in the future. If we only dedicate for our own benefit, the dedication will not be pure. Therefore, we should wholeheartedly dedicate our merit for the benefit of other sentient beings.

We are connected to Buddha Shakyamuni in that we are his followers or disciples. However, we were not among the actual disciples present at the teaching of the *Heart Sutra*. Those disciples were present due to the power of the ripening of their merit. The weaker our merit, the further we will find ourselves from Buddha Shakyamuni, although a relationship still exists. Hence, when we dedicate our merit, we should dedicate it to as many sentient beings as possible because by doing so we will establish a relationship with them. As a result of this, when we become enlightened, they will be in our retinue, that is,

they will be our disciples. Of course, we cannot visualize all sentient beings, but we should visualize as many as we can and think that they represent all sentient beings and then dedicate our merit to them. In the film *Star Wars* there are many strange beings with elephant-like trunks and so forth. I do not know whether such beings actually exist or not, but perhaps there are sentient beings like them. In the monasteries it is said that while the human beings of Jambudvīpa have bodies made of flesh, those of the northern continent have bodies made of butter. Hearing this, we monks asked each other why they do not melt in the sun, but probably they also ask why do we not rot in the sun! In short, when you visualize sentient beings, visualize as many as you can and think that they represent all sentient beings. It is important that this is done from within a relaxed and happy state of mind.

I'm sorry but your original question would take a long time to answer!

Jewel Light says:

The reasoning employed by the non-Buddhists to prove the existence of a substantially existent self of persons is, "The subject, the mind thinking 'I,' operates correctly because it operates naturally upon seeing the aggregates without the mind being previously directed, as is the case, for example, with the apprehension of blue." [That is, the non-Buddhists argue that the self exists because the conception of it is intuitive; the mind automatically and naturally thinks "I" upon seeing the body, just as the mind thinks "blue" upon perceiving a patch of blue.]

Non-Buddhists assert a self-sufficient substantially existent self of persons and prove this by saying that the mind thinking "I" is a mind that engages correctly because it is an automatic response to seeing the aggregates. In other words, because of the fact that as soon as one sees the aggregates, one naturally thinks "I," it is a mind that engages correctly. This assertion is similar to Svatantrikas' assertion that the aggregates are substantially existent whereas the person or I is imputedly existent. Because the aggregates are substantially existent, there can arise an imputedly existent self. On the other hand, if there were no substantially existent aggregates, there could not arise an imputedly existent person that depends upon the aggregates. In order for the self to be imputed, it must depend on something that is substantially existent. That reasoning is similar to the one presented here.

Thursday morning, 1 December 2005

STUDENT: Why do we say that the imprints are deposited on the mere I? Since the mere I is imputed to the aggregates, why do we not just say that the imprints are deposited on the aggregates?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The main reason that we cannot say that the consciousness is the depository for the karmic imprints is as follows. While we can say that the imprints are deposited or stored on the consciousness as described in the twelve links, the actual support or basis of the karmic imprints is the person because it is the person who accumulates karma and the person who experiences karma. Therefore, the person must be the carrier of the karmic imprints. The mere I is the person. Another reason is that if we say that the consciousness carries the imprints, there is the problem that the imprints can be virtuous, non-virtuous, or unspecified, or contaminated or uncontaminated, whereas

when the person becomes an arya his consciousness becomes uncontaminated and therefore could not be the carrier of imprints of contaminated karma. For this reason it is said that the mere I or the person is the carrier of the karmic imprints.

STUDENT: During the death process, the five aggregates dissolve and all that remains is the mind of clear light, so the consciousness of this life is gone. So how can the consciousness carry the imprints?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The person never becomes non-existent. During the death process there is the gradual withdrawing of the coarse consciousnesses until, according to Vinaya, all that remains is an imprint of consciousness, that is, a subtle consciousness. At that time the person is imputed upon the subtle mind and wind, therefore even then the person does not become non-existent. Also the consciousness does not become non-existent in that the subtle consciousness remains. If one is then reborn in the formless realm, where there is no form and no coarse consciousnesses, the consciousness remains subtle. Then later on when one is again reborn in the desire realm, from what do the coarse sense consciousnesses arise? They cannot come from the form of the father and mother, but must come from the imprint of consciousness that was stored for eons. Hence, the consciousness is never completely cut. Likewise, the person is never completely cut because the one who acts and experiences is the person.

STUDENT: I can understand that the subtle mind takes rebirth, but I cannot understand that the imprints are deposited on the consciousness or on the I because according to the Prasangika the I is just an imputation or label that ceases to exist when we die.

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: I is not just a label. I die, I am reborn, I experience happiness, I experience suffering.

STUDENT 2: The person is just a label but still there is experience.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: To say that the person is merely labeled does not mean that the person does not exist.

STUDENT: Conventionally the person exists, but ultimately it does not.

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: You exist: His Holiness says that if you think that you do not exist, take a needle and stick it in your skin!

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: All phenomena are merely imputed but that does not deny their existence. It is not just a matter of saying that everything is a mere label. This understanding comes from searching and analyzing until one comes to the conclusion that something is unfindable whereupon one sees that it is merely imputed. In this room there about forty people, monks, nuns, laymen, and laywoman. Therefore, we easily say "There are forty people in the room" but when we ask where the person is, then it becomes difficult to find. That which is the person is very subtle. One should look for the final illustration of the person. If one searches for the person and cannot find it, one will come to the conclusion that it is a mere imputation. *That* is the person that carries the imprints because that is the illustration of the person.

For example, this is Lama Tzong Khapa Institute, but where is Lama Tzong Khapa Institute? It is in Pomaia. But where is it? Is it in this gompa? It is not here. When we look for the person and truly analyze where the person is, we approach emptiness.

STUDENT: Perhaps this misunderstanding happens because it is easier to understand the insubstantiality of the I as compared to the insubstantiality of the consciousness. That the I is merely imputed on the aggregates is easy to understand. However, that the consciousness is also imputed on a constantly changing flow of instants of consciousness is

less easy to understand. But in reality it is similar to the I. Because of this, when we say that the imprints are deposited on the mere I, it seems that the I is insubstantial and therefore it is difficult to understand how the imprints are deposited on it and it is easier to understand how they are deposited on the consciousness.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That is true, in fact Svatantrika and below would agree with that. The I or person is not the body and not the mind, it is something more nebulous, whereas the consciousness is relatively more solid in that it can be identified as a flow of instants of mind. For this reason, it is easier to understand how the consciousness is the carrier of the imprints compared to how the I is the carrier of the imprints. It is also the reason why it is said that it is easier to understand the selflessness of persons as compared to the selflessness of phenomena. What is a person? There are different assertions regarding this. Some say that it is the aggregates, which is relatively easy to understand because we say that a person is fat, thin, beautiful, ugly, young, old, and so forth in reference to his body. We also say that a person is stupid, intelligent, and so forth in reference to his mind. Therefore, it would seem correct to say that the person is his aggregates. However, others say that the person is the consciousness because when we die the body is left behind and it is the consciousness that goes on to the next rebirth. Prasangika, however, says that the person is not any of the aggregates including the consciousness because the consciousness can become the uncontaminated consciousness of an arya and therefore cannot carry the seeds of contaminated karma. For this reason, they say that the person is not found in any of the aggregates, but is imputed upon them. *That* is the person and *that* is the carrier of the karmic seeds. The carrier of the seeds or imprints can only be the person, it cannot be anything else. The imprints that it carries are countless, given that we are constantly creating karma. However, they are not form, but are potentials. If they were form, they would not fit in the billion world systems. But they are not form, they are a potential to create future results. These potentials are carried by the person.

STUDENT: There seem to be a lot of explanations with respect to the simple question “How are the karmic imprints carried from one life to another by the consciousness?” The distinction between the I, the person, and the consciousness is not clear. I have heard for almost thirty years that the I, self, person, and consciousness are synonymous for Prasangika. But the consciousness disappears at death. In addition, today we also have made a distinction between the consciousness aggregate and the other four aggregates.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: When we say that the consciousness ceases, it does not mean that it becomes non-existent. At the time of death the coarse consciousness withdraws, leaving the subtle consciousness. Hence, that the coarse consciousness ceases means that it is no longer able to function, it does not mean that it disappears.

STUDENT: It makes sense to me that the coarse consciousness stops functioning and that there remains a subtle consciousness that is the depository for the imprints. Therefore, it seems to me that the Chittamatra assertion of a mind-basis-of-all makes the most sense and that it carries the imprints. The mind is said to be the cause and source of everything.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: When the four schools explain what it is that carries the imprints, each of the listeners is free to decide which one to follow. That is fine. Also when studying, one should analyze each of the four schools and then decide which school one prefers to follow. I told you the story before about the two geshe, Gen Tashi Bum and

Gen Lobsang, who used to teach some Indian Buddhists in Mysore. The Indians thought that Gen Tashi Bum was a great teacher because he taught them Vinaya, and thought that Gen Lobsang had it all wrong because he taught Prasangika and the lack of inherent existence. However, Gen Lobsang was known in all three great monasteries as a great scholar of Madhyamaka.

It is entirely up to you what you decide is the person and the carrier of the imprints. If you want to follow Chittamatra that is fine but you should work that out for yourself.

If one really cannot understand something but forces oneself to understand and that results in frustration and confusion, it is better just to set it aside. The four schools and all the different philosophies that exist in the world do not just causally say things are like this and that. Behind all their assertions there is a lot of careful and painstaking investigation. Therefore, when we study them, we too should investigate them well. Although we may have little wisdom at the moment, that wisdom can develop. An existent phenomenon is defined as that which is known or that which is an object of knowledge. This means that, if we make effort, we can come to know and to understand existents. Among you students, there might be some who are more attracted by the Vaibhashika, by the Sautrantika, by the Chittamatra, by the Svatantrika, or by the Prasangika. This attraction is based upon your own thought and analysis. Therefore, when I explain the Prasangika, those of you who are attracted to Prasangika will like what I say and will agree with it, whereas those of you who are attracted to Chittamatra will not like what I say and will not agree with it. Even the great masters of India such as Dharmakirti and Dignaga were Buddhists but studied the Hindu schools and refuted what they thought was wrong and accepted what they thought was right. Like them, even though we are attracted to a particular school, we should not just ignore the assertions of the other schools that do not correspond with it. Instead we should examine the assertions of these other schools and try to understand them. If that means that one moves from one school to another as the result of one's investigation, that is fine. Just because someone believes in Vaibhashika, it does not mean that he will remain a Vaibhashika forever. By adhering to Vaibhashika and accumulating merit and wisdom, in the next life he might move to Sautrantika. For example, Vasubandhu began as a Vaibhashika but then moved on to the Sautrantika and wrote the *Treasury of Manifest Dharma* from this point of view.

STUDENT: When I studied Madhyamaka in 2000, I had the same problem with the assertion of the Prasangika that the mere I carries the imprints but five years later I can understand it. So changes can happen even in one life.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: They can happen even in a matter of weeks or months. The more intelligence and wisdom one has, the quicker one will move from school to school.

Here we were talking about how the Samkhyas assert the person. Svatantrika similarly says that the person is imputed upon the aggregates. They say that while the person is imputed, the aggregates are substantially existent because the basis of imputation has to exist substantially. Hence, because there is a substantial existent, there can be an imputed existent. Because of this, in order for that which is imputedly existent to appear to the mind, it must depend on something that is substantially existent. On the other hand, that

which is substantially existent does not need to depend on something else in order for it to appear to the mind.

STUDENT: Does that “something else” upon which it depends refer to its parts or its causes and conditions?

ENGLISH TRANSLATOR: In dependence on the existence of the aggregates, there arises I.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The aggregates depend on causes, but when the aggregates appear to the mind, there is no need for them to depend on seeing anything else. On the other hand, the person necessarily appears to the mind in dependence on the aggregates

The reasoning presented by the non-Buddhists is that the mind thinking “I” engages its object correctly because it naturally arises upon seeing the aggregates. However, this is not the kind of dependence asserted by Buddhists who say that in dependence on the aggregates there arises “I” and “mine.” The non-Buddhists only say that when the aggregates are seen, the thought “I” arises naturally. They do not say that the I exists in dependence on the aggregates. They say, for example, that when we apprehend blue, we do not think “Now I will apprehend blue.” Rather when we see blue, a consciousness of blue naturally arises. The example is correct in the sense that it is true that when one sees blue, a consciousness of blue arises. However, the example does not correspond with what it is trying to prove because it is not always the case that by seeing the aggregates, a consciousness of I naturally arises.

Thursday afternoon, 1 December 2005

Jewel Light says:

The reasoning that the Buddhists use to refute the existence of a substantially existent person is, “The subject, a self-sufficient person that is not imputed to either the collection or the continuum of the aggregates, does not inherently exist because of not being either the same as or different from the aggregates, as is the case, for example, with the horns of a rabbit.”⁴

Given that they say that when the aggregates are seen the thought “I” naturally arises, the Samkhyas assert a substantially existent person. This is refuted by the Buddhists who say that a self-sufficient person, which is not imputed to either the collection or the continuum of the aggregates, does not inherently exist because of not being either the same as or different from the aggregates, for example, like the horns of a rabbit.

Jewel Light says:

Qualm: This is not a correct reason because that which is stated as the subject does not exist.

Answer: There is no fault. If the accumulated meaning that is the opposite of the composite of the two, a basal subject (*rang rten gyi chos can*) and the predicate of the probandum, is refuted by valid cognition, the reason is not correct; but if the accumulated meaning that is the composite of

⁴ For a discussion of this reasoning, see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 175-196.

the two, a mere subject (*chos can 'ba' zhig ba*) and the predicate of the probandum, is eliminated with valid cognition, the fault of an incorrect reason is not entailed because, in a syllogism that states non-affirming negatives as both the sign and the predicate of the probandum, it is suitable to have a non-existent as the subject. Thus, the subject of the syllogism, a self-sufficient person who is not imputed to the collection or continuum of the aggregates, is called a mere or stated subject. The meaning of the term “self-sufficient person,” that is, the appearance of the self-sufficient person to thought, is the basal subject or the imputed subject of that syllogism.

This discussion is difficult to understand unless one has previously studied Signs and Reasons. In general it is said that it is not a correct reason when the subject is a non-existent. However, this specific syllogism is set out in order to refute the belief of the non-Buddhists in a self-sufficient substantially existent self. In this case, it is acceptable to use this self-sufficient substantially existent self, a non-existent, as the subject of the syllogism. This subject – a self-sufficient person that is not imputed to either the collection or the continuum of the aggregates – is the kind of self that is asserted by the Samkhyas to exist. They say that such a self-sufficient substantially existent self exists without depending on anything else. Such a self does not exist inherently or by its own nature because it does not exist as one with the aggregates or separate from the aggregates. The Samkhyas, on the other hand, say that it is enough to see the aggregates in order for the thought “I” to arise.

The Samkhyas assert twenty-five categories of phenomena, one of which is the self that is the *purusha*, a conscious person. They accept a form aggregate and the five objects, forms, sounds, and so forth. According to them, the self cannot be the aggregates because the self is conscious whereas for them the aggregates are form. Why would they not accept that the self is separate from the aggregates? Because they say that merely upon seeing the form aggregate, the thought “I” naturally arises. If, on the other hand, the self were separate from the aggregates, it would appear without needing to see the form aggregate. Therefore, for them the self is not separate from the aggregates nor is it one with the aggregates.

If someone says that the reason is not correct because the subject does not exist, it has to be taken into consideration that there are two types of subjects. A basal subject has to exist because the reason must exist within it. If that type of subject and the probandum, that to be proven, are refuted by a valid cognizer, i.e., they do not exist, the reason would be incorrect. However, if it is a *mere subject*, a subject on its own, meaning that it exists for the person to whom it is presented, then it is a correct reason because in this case the reason does not have to exist in the subject. It is enough that the person to whom it is presented believes in the subject – a self-sufficient substantially existent self. In the case that both the subject and the probandum are non-affirming negativities, it is acceptable to present a subject that is non-existent. A self-sufficient substantially existent person does not exist. Hence, the subject that is presented does not exist. However, a subject that becomes a subject is one that exists for the person to whom it is presented. In other words, for the mind of the person to whom the syllogism is presented, this subject – a self-sufficient person that is not imputed to the collection or continuum of the aggregates – does exist. In this case it is acceptable to present such a subject.

An alternative explanation is that to the mind of the person to whom this subject is presented a meaning generality or sound generality appears. That sound generality of a self-sufficient person that is not imputed to the collection or continuum of the aggregates does exist. Because that sound generality exists, it can be the basal subject of the syllogism.

The actual subject – a self-sufficient person that is not imputed to the collection or continuum of the aggregates – that is presented in the reason does not exist at all. Such a subject is called a mere or stated subject.

Without going into detail, the way in which the subject is presented accords with belief of the Samkhyas to whom it is presented. They say that such a self-sufficient substantially existent self is the conscious person. To them, one says “That self that you believe in, a self-sufficient substantially existent self, as the subject.” Then one says “does not exist inherently because it does not exist as one with or different from the aggregates.” This is correct. However, if one were to present this same subject to someone other than a Samkhya, the reason would not have any effect because for him the subject does not exist. Thus, only in the case of presenting it to a Samkhya is a self-sufficient person who is not imputed to the collection or continuum of the aggregates suitable as a subject.

Jewel Light says:

The actual basis of the refutation of permanence in the proof of impermanence with respect to sound by the sign of being a product is the appearance of the opposite from non-sound to thought. At that time, sound itself is not appearing to thought directly just as it is. However, I wonder whether there is the fine point that the appearance of opposite from non-sound is not the basal subject in that proof.⁵

The actual basis or subject of the reasoning that proves sound is not permanent is the appearance of the opposite to non-sound to thought, that is, it is the meaning generality of sound. Sound does not appear to thought, but a meaning generality of sound appears to thought. That meaning generality of sound forms the basis of the syllogism that proves that sound is impermanent and not permanent. All tenets systems from Svatantrika and below say that when refuting permanent sound both parties have to agree on the subject, that is, both have to take sound as the subject. That is feasible because sound itself is perceived by everyone. Since there is a common basis between Buddhists and non-Buddhists, there is no need to talk about the meaning generality of sound. When both parties agree on the subject, the debate can begin. Tendar Lharampa wonders whether there is a fine dividing line regarding the appearance of opposite from non-sound not being the basal subject in that proof. He has not come to any firm conclusion about this, but it is probably not. He thinks that sound alone is probably enough as a basis for the reason. A meaning generality is not impermanent.

Jewel Light says:

Furthermore, not only do the non-Buddhists just assert substantial existence in the sense of self-sufficiency; it is clear that the Sautrantikas and Chittamatrins assert that gross form and consciousness are substantially existent (*dravyasat*, *rdzas yod*) in the sense of self-sufficiency because those proponents of true existence assert that if something is imputedly existent (*prajñaptisat*, *btags yod*), it is imputed to a basis of designation that is substantially existent in the sense of self-

⁵ For a discussion of the use of basal subjects and mere subjects in syllogisms, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *A Study of Svatantrika* (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987), pp. 174-179.

sufficiency. How can one know this? It is proven by what is said by Tsongkhapa in his *Illumination of the Thought*:⁶ “The others [the non-Prasangika Buddhist schools] assert that things that are imputedly existent are imputed in dependence on a basis of designation that is substantially existent in the sense of self-sufficiency.” Because this passage is very clear, it does not need to be twisted [to determine its meaning].

It is not only non-Buddhists who assert that the basis of imputation of the self and so forth must be substantially existent, since Sautrantika and Chittamatra also say that the basis of imputation of self is self-sufficient substantially existent. Lama Tsongkhapa says “The others [the non-Prasangika Buddhist schools] assert that things that are imputedly existent are imputed in dependence on a basis of designation that is substantially existent in the sense of self-sufficiency.”

STUDENT: Do all the schools give the same meaning to “substantially existent”? Some seem to say that it means “existing as a substance” and some seem to say that it means “existing independently.” If they have different meanings for the same term, it becomes impossible to confront them.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: There is a general agreement about what substantially existent means in the four schools but when one looks at it in detail one will find some differences. The Prasangika says that the self is imputed upon the aggregates, but the aggregates are themselves imputed.

STUDENT: Chittamatra says that phenomena are substantially existent but they also assert other-powered phenomena. Therefore, if substantially existent means self-existent they cannot be other powered.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: They say that coarse form and coarse consciousness are substantially existent. However, they assert that the person is imputedly existent.

STUDENT: So for them substantially existent does not mean self existent because coarse form is an other-powered phenomenon. Therefore, Chittamatra have a different understanding of substantially existent from the Prasangika.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: For Chittamatra, even though form is an other-powered phenomenon, it exists truly and exists by way of its own characteristics.

STUDENT: That something exists by way of its own characteristics does not mean that it is substantially existent. Let’s take the Prasangika definition of substantial existence as the standard one. The Chittamatra do not assert substantial existence as meaning self existence or independent existence as does Prasangika. Therefore, for them substantially existent does not mean the same as for the Prasangika who say that substantially existent means self existent or existing independently.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: According to Chittamatra, substantially existent means that in order for it to appear to the mind it does not have to depend on anything else.

Imputedly existent is the opposite, meaning that for the imputedly existent to appear to the mind it must depend on something else. For Chittamatra coarse form is imputedly existent, and it is other powered because it is produced in dependence on causes.

According to Prasangika coarse form is imputedly existent because all phenomena are imputedly existent. However, if Prasangika says “The form that you Chittamatrins hold to

⁶ *dGongs pa rab gsal*

be substantially existent is not substantially existent because it is imputedly existent” the Chittamatrins would say “The reason is not accepted.” Also if Prasangika says that form is imputedly existent because it depends on causes and conditions, there is no pervasion. They would not accept that reason

STUDENT: Does Prasangika assert the definition of substantially existent to be as Chittamatra says “that in order for it to appear to the mind it does not have to depend on anything else”?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Prasangika says that, for example, in order for coarse form to appear to the mind it does not need to depend on anything else. Then Chittamatra says that it follows that coarse form is substantially existent!

STUDENT: So what is the Prasangika definition of substantially existent? They must have a definition of substantially existent even if it does not exist. They can define inherently existent even though inherent existence does not exist. Even if “biri biri” does not exist, I can still define “biri biri” otherwise how can I say that it does not exist?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: There is no definition of substantially existent but it could be posited as “that which exists without depending upon anything else.”

STUDENT: Then Chittamatra do not assert substantially existent according to the way in which Prasangika assert it because they do not say that phenomena exist independently.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Yes, there are different understandings of what substantially existent is.

STUDENT: Do the schools really assert what we say they assert or do we just put words in their mouths? If phenomena are said to be substantially existent because they appear to the mind without depending on anything else, this would only fulfill the definition of ultimate truth according to Vaibhashika. No Buddhist school would assert that phenomena exist without depending on anything.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Prasangika would not say that phenomena need to depend on something else in order to appear to the mind.

STUDENT: For the pen to appear to the mind, do the parts not have to appear to the mind?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It is not that in order for the pen to appear to the mind, it needs to depend upon something else. The parts and the pen appear to the mind at the same time. If half the pen were covered, what you say could be true but for the whole pen to appear to the mind it does not have to depend upon some other kind of appearance to the mind. “Depending on something else in order to appear” suggests that it only appears if something else appears first. But that is not the case for the pen and its parts, they appear simultaneously.

STUDENT: But the parts of the cup and the cup are different phenomena.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That is right.

STUDENT: In order for the cup to appear to the mind it depends on something that is not the cup.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: No, it does not. If all the parts are not visible, the whole cup will not appear. But for the cup to appear, it does not depend upon the parts appearing as something else to the mind. If I cover the lid of this cup, in order for the complete lid of the cup to appear to the mind does it depend upon all the lid appearing?

STUDENT: For the complete lid of the cup to appear, it depends on the entire lid of the cup appearing.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: It depends on me removing my hand! Ha-ha!

STUDENT: Jokes aside, then the cup does not depend on anything other than the cup?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: That goes back to the debate about what is the basis of cup and what it depends on in order for it to appear. If I cover half the cup, in order for the entire cup to appear it would accord with what you say in that the appearance of the cup depends on that other half of the cup appearing. But in general for cup to appear to the mind, it does not depend on any other phenomena appearing.

Friday morning, 2 December 2005

Jewel Light says:

With regard to the subtle selflessness of persons in terms of consciousness and gross form in the systems of the proponents of true existence [the non-Prasangika schools], the non-existence of consciousness as an object of use by a person who is substantially existent in the sense of self-sufficiency is posited as the selflessness of persons of consciousness. The others can be inferred.

The lower schools posit the selflessness of persons as the consciousness not being an object of use of a self-sufficient substantially existent person. From this other phenomena can be inferred.

While this is the subtle selflessness of persons according to the lower schools, it is not according to Prasangika. A self-sufficient substantially existent person is beyond speech as being permanent or impermanent, and one with the aggregates or separate from the aggregates. When this selflessness is applied to phenomena, it is that phenomena are not the object of use of such a self-sufficient substantially existent person. Prasangika does not refute this selflessness but posits it as a coarse selflessness.

We need to understand how the Prasangika posit the mere I. We naturally say “my mind,” “my body,” and so forth, which indicates that the I appears to us to be separate from the mind and body. This leads to the view that the self exists by way of its own characteristics. However, if one takes away the body and takes away the mind, what is left? There is no I or self that remains or can be found. Therefore, the I is not one with the aggregates and not separate from the aggregates. How does the I exist? It is merely imputed.

Jewel Light says:

The mode of training on the path of no more learning is, “Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment ... through relying on the perfection of wisdom.” The meaning is that the conventional does not appear to the sight of meditative equipoise. Therefore, bodhisattvas practice the perfection of wisdom, abide in it, and go to the completion of nirvana. It is teaching that all of the buddhas of the three times have also become buddhas in that way.

This explanation seems to be a little different from the previous which said that the first part “Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom” refers to the vajra-like meditative stabilization. Here the

commentary says that the entire paragraph sets out the way of training in the path of no-more-learning, but because it is not correct to say “*the way of training* on the path of no-more-learning” in that on the path of no-more-learning there is no more training, it must mean the training that leads up to the path of no-more-learning: Therefore, this paragraph in fact refers to the last instant of the tenth ground, the vajra-like meditative stabilization.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that completely pacifies suffering, should be known to be true; since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

Tadyatha om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom in that way.”

Jewel Light says:

The instructions for those of sharp faculties are, “Therefore, the manta of the perfection of wisdom... should train in the perfection of wisdom in that way.”

Vimalamitra’s commentary says, “It is a secret manta because of being a consciousness and because of being a protector.” As he says, the original term *mantra* means mind and protector. Due to this, all five paths also have the meaning of consciousness and protector.⁷

Up to here the instructions have been for those of dull faculties, now the instructions for those of sharp faculties are set out.

The Sanskrit word “mantra” is composed of the syllable *man* which means “mind” and *tra* which means “protect.” Although often it is said to mean “that which protects the mind,” here the two syllables are explained separately, *man* meaning “mind and *tra* meaning “protector” Therefore, all five paths also have the meaning of knower and protector (this should be in the root text).

Alternatively, the word mantra can also be understood to have the usual meaning of “that which protects the mind.” If it is understood in this way, whose mind is being protected? It is the mind of the disciple. And what is it protected by? It is protected by the mantra of the perfection of wisdom. The term “perfection of wisdom” can refer to both the object, emptiness, and the subject, the exalted wisdom realizing it. However, here it mainly refers to the exalted wisdom realizing emptiness as this is what protects the mind of the disciple from fear. It cannot be emptiness that protects the mind of the disciple as otherwise we would all already be protected by it. Although emptiness is everywhere, we do not know that. Hence, it is the knowledge of emptiness that is the perfection of wisdom that protects the mind from fear. Because it protects the mind from fear, it is called “*the mantra* of the perfection of wisdom.” It is a *mantra* because the perfection of

⁷ JN: This phrase is missing in the translation.

wisdom is an exalted wisdom consciousness that protects the mind of the disciple from fear.

It is also called “the mantra of great knowledge” (*rig pa chen po*) because it is the opposite of ignorance (*ma rig pa*). In other words, because the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge are abandoned by the perfection of wisdom, it is called “the mantra of great knowledge.” However, if the perfection of wisdom is actually a mantra of great knowledge that abandons all the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge, then, because according to Prasangika the followers of all three vehicles directly realize emptiness, the perfection of wisdom, why have the hearers and solitary realizers not abandoned the obscurations to knowledge? However, among the six perfections of generosity and so forth, is the practice of *generosity* necessarily the practice of the *perfection of generosity*? Is the practice of *morality* necessarily the practice of the *perfection of morality*? Similarly, since here we are talking about the sixth perfection, the perfection of wisdom, is the wisdom directly realizing emptiness necessarily the perfection of wisdom? In other words, is the wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the mind of a hearer the perfection of wisdom? Is it the wisdom gone beyond? What does “gone beyond” mean? Does it mean gone beyond the world, or gone beyond cyclic existence and nirvana into the non-abiding nirvana? Here *pha rol tu phyin pa*, literally “gone beyond,” actually means that which carries one beyond, or that which is *going* beyond because “gone beyond” refers to buddhahood alone. The wisdom gone beyond is the wisdom that leads to the gone beyond, that is, to buddhahood. Therefore, “gone beyond” means going beyond cyclic existence and nirvana into the non-abiding nirvana of enlightenment. Because of this, “gone beyond” should be taken to mean “going beyond” or “carrying beyond,” otherwise it can create confusion. Although there is a lot of discussion about whether hearers have the wisdom gone beyond or not and whether “gone beyond” actually means “going beyond,” the main point is to achieve the wisdom gone beyond, the perfection of wisdom.

When we study these texts, there are many outlines that include definitions, divisions, the presentation of the opponents’ views, their refutations, and so forth. As this can be rather overwhelming for some people, in that case one should limit oneself to understanding the definitions and divisions.

In short, that gone beyond is what leads one to a non-abiding nirvana, it is the exalted wisdom directly realizing emptiness. What is it about one type of exalted wisdom directly realizing emptiness that enables it to carry one beyond cyclic existence and nirvana, whereas another one, for example, the exalted wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the mind of a hearer, is unable to do this? In other words, what is it that makes one wisdom a perfection of wisdom and the other not? Is it in terms of the object, emptiness, or the subject, the mind? One of the differences between them is the amount of reasonings that are relied upon. It is said that hearers directly realize emptiness but that the amount of reasonings used by them is much less than that used by bodhisattvas who are said to use limitless realms of reasonings in order to understand emptiness. So what are the reasonings used by the bodhisattvas that are not used by hearers? This is not easy to understand. The point is that hearers use many reasonings but not *vast* reasonings. Bodhisattvas, because their aim is vast, use vast reasonings. It is similar to the fact that when emptiness is explained to someone who is dull facultied, that person is limited with respect to how many reasonings he can make use of to understand emptiness, whereas when it is explained to someone who is sharp facultied he is not limited in that way.

Another difference between hearers and bodhisattvas concerns their dexterity in meditative stabilizations. Bodhisattvas train in moving through the different meditative stabilizations and gain dexterity and ease in this. Hearers, on the other hand, do not need to do this because they do not need to achieve great power. Because bodhisattvas, on the other hand, need great power, they have to train much more than the hearers in the various meditative stabilizations. For example, in order to understand emptiness, one has to first recognize the conception of true existence of persons and the conception of true existence of phenomena and understand that they are wrong consciousnesses. However, merely understanding that the conception of true existence is a wrong consciousness and must be abandoned does not abandon the imprints of the conception of true existence. They are abandoned only by achieving dexterity in moving through the meditative stabilizations. Generally speaking, the conception of true existence of persons and phenomena is of different levels, the coarse and subtle, but the imprints are even much more subtle than the conception of true existence itself. Therefore, great power of mind is necessary in order to abandon the imprints of the conception of true existence.

Another factor differentiating the exalted wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the mind of a bodhisattva from the exalted wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the mind of a hearer is that in the case of a bodhisattva the exalted wisdom is conjoined with great compassion. That great compassion gives the exalted wisdom greater strength. Compassion gives strength to the exalted wisdom because it supports the wisdom and gives it great courage. Compassion, by its very nature, provides the support of a huge amount of merit. Therefore, the exalted wisdom directly realizing emptiness in the mind of a bodhisattva supported by compassion is “the mantra of great knowledge.” It is a mantra of great knowledge because it abandons the afflictive obscurations as well as the obscurations to knowledge. Likewise, in the previous statement “the mantra of the perfection of wisdom,” it is that which protects the mind from *the fear* of the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge.

The third statement says that it is “the unsurpassed mantra.” Because it is the mantra that abandons all the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge and pacifies all sufferings, there is nothing higher than it. Because there is nothing that is superior to this mantra in being able to abandon all the afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge and pacify all sufferings, it is “the unsurpassed mantra.”

It is “the mantra equal to the unequalled.” “Unequalled” refers that which is the very highest, therefore “equal to the unequalled” means equal to that which is the very highest. The very highest is non-abiding nirvana, and this mantra is equal to that.

It is “the mantra that completely pacifies suffering.” “Completely pacifies suffering” means not only that it completely pacifies suffering but that it also completely pacifies the causes of sufferings together with their imprints. This must be specified because even hearers have completely pacified suffering and its causes, whereas they have not completely pacified or eliminated the imprints. Hence, it is primarily the abandonment of the imprints that differentiates the exalted wisdom of the bodhisattvas from that of the hearers. The hearers have pacified all suffering and abandoned its causes, the ignorance not knowing the reality of phenomena, but they have not abandoned its imprints, the obscurations to knowledge.

Jewel Light says:

“The mantra of the perfection of wisdom” is the path of accumulation. “The mantra of great knowledge” is the path of preparation. “The unsurpassed mantra” is the path of seeing. “The mantra equal to the unequalled” is the path of meditation. “The mantra that completely pacifies suffering” is the path of no more learning.

These five statements that describe the mantra – “the mantra of the perfection of wisdom,” “the mantra of great knowledge,” “the unsurpassed mantra,” “the mantra equal to the unequalled,” and “the mantra that completely pacifies suffering” – are related to the five paths.

Jewel Light says:

In accordance with what is seen by this profound perfection of wisdom, it should be known to be true; that is, if an individual meditates in this way, one will know that it is the cause of going to buddhahood.

The *Heart Sutra* then says that it “should be known to be true; since it is not false.” The five paths were previously explained in relation to different parts of the sutra and specifically in relation to the realization of emptiness conjoined with great compassion in the mind of a bodhisattva. If that perfection of wisdom is practiced, it is not false and is undeceptive. Therefore, one should understand it to be true and because of that practice the profound perfection of wisdom.

The special qualities of the perfection of wisdom are set out here in order to show that it is not just an ordinary realization of emptiness. What does it mean that this particular realization of emptiness is special? Of course, the realization of emptiness is in itself special, but how is this exalted wisdom realizing emptiness special compared to other exalted wisdoms realizing emptiness, for example, that existing in the continuum of a hearer? This is what is shown here.

We all need to develop the realization of emptiness. This begins with first realizing the selflessness of persons. Although there is no difference in the subtlety of the selflessness of persons compared to the selflessness of phenomena, we should begin with realizing the selflessness of persons because it is easier to understand.

It is possible to read the *Heart Sutra* and think that it is too advanced for us because it sets out the realization of emptiness on the path of accumulation and above. However, we should not think like that. Whether something appears to be close or distant is up to us alone. When we think that it is necessary to spend one countless eon on the path of accumulation and path of preparation, another one on the seven impure grounds, and another one on the three pure grounds, we might think that that is too much and lose our enthusiasm. However, we should not think like that. If we think well, we will see that we have already wasted more than three countless great eons in the past and if we are not careful we will waste even more in the future. Therefore, we need courage to face that which lies ahead.

The reason that so many people prefer tantra is that it teaches that one can attain enlightenment in a single lifetime! However, the best way in which to practice tantra is to think is: “If I were to practice sutra alone it would take three countless great eons for me to attain enlightenment and during that time sentient beings would continue to suffering.

I cannot bear this, therefore in order to attain enlightenment quickly I will engage in the practice of tantra, whereby sentient beings will not have to suffer for such a long time.” To think, on the other hand, that because the sutra path is too long and that one cannot bear to practice it for that long, one is going to enter tantra in order to get it over with quickly, is not the right approach. We are obsessed by time, always thinking about how long something will take to accomplish. However, for a real practitioner it does not matter how much time it will take. It only matters that one constantly works to improve one’s mind. If instead one only thinks about how long it will take, that will only make the time involved seem even longer. The great courage of the bodhisattvas that is not discouraged thinks:

For as long as space remains,
For as long as sentient beings remain,
Until then may I too remain
To dispel the miseries of the world.

For someone with such great courage, time passes very quickly. Even three countless great eons pass in no time at all, it may even appear to be too short! Because others are limitless or immeasurable, it is of no importance that it takes three countless great eons to accomplish their benefit.

In addition, sutra is the very foundation of tantra. “Sutra” in this sense mainly refers to the Lam-rim, the teachings on the stages of the path, since the Lam-rim encompasses such subjects as the Ornament, Middle Way, Treasury, and so forth. Likewise, although the Perfection of Wisdom teachings are not called Lam-rim, they are included in it. Lam-rim is the very foundation of tantra, therefore without it the practice of tantra will be of little benefit.

We need to realize emptiness as without this, not only will we not attain enlightenment, we will not even attain nirvana. The realization of emptiness begins with realizing the selflessness of persons. If one is sharp facultied, one can understand emptiness. However, because the mind is contaminated and swayed by familiarity with the afflictions, it is disturbed by laxity on one side and excitement on the other and this prevents the mind from abiding single pointedly on emptiness. For this reason, it is important to develop calm abiding or samatha. Calm abiding on its own is nothing special, we have attained it many times in the past and due to that have been reborn again and again in the form realm and formless realm. Calm abiding only becomes really useful when it is applied to the development of the mind of renunciation, the mind of enlightenment, and the wisdom realizing emptiness.

The attainment of calm abiding depends upon the mind, and that which prevents its development is the faults in the mind, the afflictions. Therefore, they first need to be subdued in order to attain calm abiding. To do that, one first has to subdue the coarser faults of body and speech. Having subdued the body and speech, one can begin to subdue the faults of the mind. In order to subdue the body and speech, vows are necessary. Vows are restraints that hold one back from engaging in non-virtuous actions of body and speech. They include the vows of fully ordained monks and nuns, those of novice monks and nuns, and the vows of laymen and women. If one is unable to take these, from time to time one can take the Eight Mahayana Precepts that last for just one day. Whether one has the vows of individual liberation or not, the nature of morality is a mind of guarding. It is the guarding of one’s body and speech. Even if one does not have any vows but has the

mind of guarding oneself from engaging in non-virtues of body and speech, that is the practice of morality. On the other hand, if one has vows of individual liberation but does not have the mind of guarding, one will commit all kinds of negativities or faults.

This sets out the three higher trainings of morality, concentration, and wisdom. They arise in a specific order because the higher training of morality restrains one from negative actions of body and speech, the higher training of concentration guards one from negativities of mind, and the higher training of wisdom acts as an opponent to the afflictions and their imprints. If one practices in this order, first morality, then calm abiding, and then wisdom, one will be practicing the *Heart Sutra*.

END

Monday afternoon, 5 December 2005

We are almost finished the study of the *Heart Sutra*. Next there is the mantra and then the Buddha says “Well done, well done,” and it is all over! Actually if we had just recited the mere words of the sutra, it would have taken only five minutes. The five paths are explained throughout various parts of the sutra and the mantra. Specifically they are the five Mahayana paths and more specifically they are the five paths of those who are definite in the Mahayana lineage. Although in general such people are said to be sharp facultied, they too are further divided into those of dull and sharp faculties. If we were to explain all five paths in detail then we would never finish the *Heart Sutra*!

Saying “those who are definite in the Mahayana lineage” excludes those who first traveled the Hinayana path and then entered the Mahayana. Among those who are definite in the Mahayana lineage there are those of dull and sharp faculties. The sharp facultied among them do not just believe whatever the Buddha says, but examine whether things exist in accordance with what he taught, and whether they are true or not. Then only when they find what he taught to be true and not harmed by reasoning, do they accept it. Such sharp facultied disciples are called Followers of Dharma, meaning that they are followers of reasoning. On the other hand, those of dull faculties who believe in the Buddha and accept what he teaches out of faith, are called Followers of Faith. Although the Followers of Faith have great faith, it is not irreversible faith of those of sharp faculties. It is not that the Followers of Faith do not analyze and use reasonings, as that would mean that they do not realize emptiness. However, their main motivating force is faith, not reasoning. Those of sharp faculties, on the other hand, do not accept what they hear until they have subjected it to thorough analysis.

The Buddha himself said that just as one examines gold, one should analyze his words in order to determine their truth. When one examines gold, first one heats or burns it to check for coarse impurities on the surface, then one cuts it to check for impurities on the inside, and then one rubs it to check for subtle impurities. The Buddha said that one should subject his words to a similar type of thorough analysis. The reason for investigating is that by analyzing something one comes to know and understand it. If, on the other hand, one does not examine what is taught in a text, it is said that the explanation will remain in the text and not touch one’s mind. Likewise, if one does not examine the words of a teacher, it is said that the words will remain in his mouth and not touch one’s mind. Therefore, it is important to analyze what one reads and hears.

Because we have problems, we need to find solutions to them. Therefore, the purpose of studying is to practice, that is, to bring our knowledge into our daily life. If we put study on one side and our life on the other, such that they remain separate, there will be little benefit from the Dharma. Hence, the point is to apply our Dharma study to our life as a solution to our unhappiness and problems. We should use it to understand our unhappiness and its causes, and use it to eliminate them. If we ask ourselves who created the unhappiness and dissatisfaction in our mind, we will find that we alone are its creator. We tend to make ourselves unhappy. In cyclic existence there is no ideal situation in which there are no problems. Because of this, do not think too much about too many things. It is important to not allow our mind to come under the control of the afflictions but, if that happens, we should recognize that it is these afflictions that lead to unhappiness and work to put a stop to them.

It is a waste of time to look at others and not like them because of the way they look, the things they say, and so forth. This is of no benefit. Their way of life is theirs, our way of life is ours. What they do and say does not impact on us, so allow them to be the way they are without thinking too much about things and making yourselves unhappy. If you are not careful you may come to find that you dislike everything about a certain person, the way he dresses, the way he talks, the way he eats, and so forth. This only results in yourself becoming unhappy. Because we are responsible for our own happiness and suffering, we should work to free ourselves from such thoughts. *Engaging in a Bodhisattva Deeds* also says that if we can fix something, there is no need to worry about it, and if we cannot fix it, there is no good in worrying about it.

STUDENT: The difficulty is in knowing when we can fix something and when we cannot.
GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: In the past whenever a difficult situation arose, our reaction was to get upset and angry. Instead if we try to understand where the fault and problem lies, we can find a solution. Sometimes the opposite is also true, we see a situation that cannot be fixed yet still we try to fix it or get worried about it. In short, if we can fix something we should do that, and if we cannot we should just leave it alone. That is better than worrying!

STUDENT: There are times in our life when something disturbs us but we cannot ignore it. For example, perhaps the thought of studying disturbs and worries me, but I should make the most of this opportunity to study. So then what should I do?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Relax! One of the reasons that our mind gets disturbed when we try to study is a lack of familiarity with study, due to which the mind resists it. Another reason is that when we study we can get *lung*, that is, the *lung* rises up. At that time, you should stop and go to the beach or to the top of a hill and breath in and out deeply. In Tibet we used to walk up to the top of a mountain and shout “Kye hi hi!” or take very deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling deeply. The *lung* or winds can become “crooked” as they pass around the membrane of the heart, causing pain and leading to *life-lung* (*srog lung*) which can cause irrational fear and panic. Before that happens, it is important to stop what you are doing for a few days and take a holiday.

STUDENT: Why is bliss generated when emptiness is realized?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: I don’t know, I haven’t realized emptiness! According to Je Tsongkhapa when we ordinary beings first realize emptiness, we experience great fear, not bliss. When one does analytical meditation analyzing for the ultimate and comes to the point of unfindability, one may reach the conclusion that nothing exists. This brings a sudden jolt of fear. If one is not careful and wise at that time, one can fall into the extreme of annihilation. However, if one is able to avoid that, in the next instant one will understand that although phenomena do not exist inherently they do exist conventionally, whereby one will become free from that fear. Perhaps at this time bliss is generated.

In the monastery sometimes during classes our teachers would leave the subject aside and tell a funny story in order to make us laugh. The reason for this was to dissolve the tension by means of laughter. This is skillful means.

When we study and get irritated and frustrated, we tend to blame the text! We do not understand that it is our own mind that is making us unhappy. How can a text make us unhappy? Yet there are people who say that studying makes them unhappy. In the world it is common to criticize religions because the people who practice them behave badly. Someone once told me that all religions are bad, but in actuality he was blaming the religion for the faults of its practitioners. It is the people who are faulty, not the religion. Likewise, it is the person studying the text who is faulty, not the text.

When we study, we need to be skillful in recognizing when it is time to stop, take a break, talk to a friend, go for a walk, breath deeply, and so forth. There is no benefit to becoming tense and stressed. If we are not skillful in our study, we may give ourselves a hard time and make ourselves unhappy. If we get *lung*, then become sick, angry, irritated, and upset. We need to know how to avoid this. But it is difficult because we need to study and we need to learn. However, if we push too much, then what happens is that after a few months we will reach a point where we are unable to continue. Then every time we try to study, we will become unhappy and even ill. We need to pace ourselves because if we push too much it will become difficult to complete the two years of the Basic Program. There was a monk in Sera who after a few years of very strong study developed a pain in his chest that felt like a nail had been driven into his heart. I told him that he probably had *lung* and should relax. He took a few days off and went for a holiday on a nearby river. When he returned to the monastery, he applied reasoning to understand that if he continued to push himself he would not be able to continue his studies whereas if he paced himself he would be able to finish them. He understood that there would be more profit in slowing down and relaxing, rather than continuing to push.

The words of the *Heart Sutra* are not so difficult to understand, but what is important is to understand emptiness, the meaning of the sutra. This is something that takes many years of study, a few days is not sufficient. Emptiness is the hardest thing to understand but it is also the most beneficial.

As I said before, it is important to control our own mind. If we can control our mind, then even if the entire world rises up as our enemies, it will not disturb us. On the other hand, if we cannot control our mind, then even if the entire world rises up as friends who want to help us, we will only get angry at them. We have to become the master of our own mind. If we can do this, then we can practice. If we are not able to take charge of our own mind, then practice becomes very difficult. Among our body, speech, and mind, it is the mind that is the principle one. Physically we can sit in meditation posture and verbally we can recite prayers, but in the meantime if we do not try to control our mind, it will not become Dharma practice.

There was a monk called Chondze in my monastery who liked to disturb other monks when they were doing their daily recitations. When those other monks would become angry, he would ask them what use were their prayers and sadhanas if they only served to make them angry! The main point is to integrate the Dharma with our mind. If there is Dharma practice in the mind, then the body and speech will automatically follow along. We should not, however, think that it is not necessary to make offerings, recite mantras and prayers, and so forth because they are not the main practice and just concentrate on our mind. That too would be a mistake.

STUDENT: There is a difference between generating correct view and realizing the selflessness of persons. When one meditates, one focuses on the self of persons first because it is easier to recognize the object of negation. However, I read in a text by Gyalwa Ensapa that before meditating one has to first generate correct view in dependence on reasonings such as “A sprout does not exist truly because it is a dependent-arising.” If, in dependence on, that one generates an understanding of selflessness, it is a selflessness of phenomena. If the selflessness of phenomena is harder to understand than the selflessness of persons, why is it necessary to understand the selflessness of phenomena first through reasoning?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: There is no difference in the object of negation with respect to the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena, but there is a difference in terms of which one is easier to understand. For this reason it is recommended to begin with meditating on the selflessness of persons. However, there are people who first come to understand the selflessness of phenomena first because they first understand that “A sprout does not exist truly because it is a dependent-arising,” and only later on come to realize the selflessness of persons. It is similar to the case of the syllogism “Sound is impermanent because it is product,” which is said to someone for whom it is easier to understand that sound is a product than sound is impermanent, but it is also possible to say “Sound is a product because it is impermanent” to someone for whom it is easier to understand that sound is impermanent. Hence, it depends entirely on the person. However, in both the case of meditating on the selflessness of persons and meditating on the lack of true existence of the sprout, first one has to recognize the object of negation.

In the case of the syllogism “A sprout does not exist truly because it is a dependent-arising,” some scholars say that first one understands that whatever is a dependent-arising does not truly exist, whereby one comes to understand the lack of true existence without yet understanding that a sprout is not truly existent. Others would say that that is not correct because that particular reasoning is presented for the purpose of generating a new realization of the lack of true existence, hence when it is presented that person has not yet realized the lack of true existence. In short, these scholars say that because such a reasoning is for the purpose of generating a new and initial understanding of emptiness, there cannot already exist a realization of the lack of true existence.

Tuesday morning, 6 December 2005

The five paths are the essence of the *Heart Sutra*, specifically the five Mahayana paths, and more specifically the five paths of those who are definite in the Mahayana lineage. The entrance to the path of accumulation is an uncontrived or inartificial mind of enlightenment. Because, having generated this mind, one becomes a Mahayanist, it is said to be the door or entrance to the Mahayana path of accumulation. The door or entrance to a path in general is uncontrived renunciation or definite emergence. Having developed this mind, one enters the Hinayana path of accumulation. The entrance to becoming a Buddhist is to have gone for refuge to the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

The generation of an uncontrived mind of enlightenment and entering the Mahayana path of accumulation occur simultaneously. In order to develop uncontrived bodhichitta, one has to rely on various methods such as the sevenfold cause and effect meditation, the meditation on equalizing and exchanging self with others, or the

meditation that is a combination of these two methods. One of the main causes of bodhichitta is the great compassion that observes all sentient beings. Such compassion must arise prior to generating an uncontrived mind of enlightenment.

Prior to generating great compassion, one has to first train in the path of middling beings. By meditating on the sufferings of cyclic existence, one comes to generate the wish for oneself to be free from suffering. Having developed a genuine wish for oneself to be free from suffering, one can then generate the wish for all other sentient beings to be free from suffering. Without the wish for oneself to be free from suffering, one will not be able to generate compassion.

Prior to meditating on the path of middling beings, in which one meditates on the sufferings of cyclic existence in general, one must meditate on the path of small beings, in which one meditates on the sufferings of the lower realms. One meditates on the fact that in one's next life, one can fall into the terrible sufferings of the lower realms. Only having generated an understanding of this, should one go on to meditate on the sufferings of cyclic existence in general.

The best basis for Dharma practice is a human body. This is so because the beings of the god realms have so much happiness, tranquility, and joy, and are so completely lacking in problems, that they never even think of the Dharma. The hell beings and hungry ghosts, on the other hand, have far too much suffering to have the opportunity to practice the Dharma. Animals experience less suffering and more happiness, but they do not have the mental ability to think about the Dharma. Therefore, the best opportunity to practice Dharma is a human rebirth in which one does not have either the excessive happiness of the god realms or the excessive sufferings of the lower realms. Therefore, we should take strive to take the essence of this life.

The subtle mind that travels from life to life is the same in the case of all the migrating beings of the six realms. However, the basis of the subtle mind, which is the body, is greatly different in these realms. Thus, it is only the subtle mind found in a human body that develops into coarse consciousnesses that are suitable for the practice of the Dharma. In general it is explained like this, but if we examine this statement in detail we will find some seeming contradictions. For example, rebirth as a human being is said to be a happy migration that is produced by virtue, whereas the three lower realms are said to be suffering migrations that are produced by non-virtue. Thus, the animal realm is a suffering realm and the human realm is a happy realm, but if we think about it we will see that human beings' great capacity for thought can bring the result of many problems and sufferings. A dog, on the other hand, who does not have this capacity, often seems to be more happy and less worried as it just passes its time in eating, sleeping, and running around. Looking at it in this way, it would seem that a dog rebirth can be more happy than a human rebirth. While a human rebirth is a happy migration, due to the minds of human beings it is not necessarily always a happy state.

For example, in the case of a dog, the more love one gives to it, the more it will show affection in return. However, we are not like that, we are friendly at first but the more we become closer to someone, often the worse the relationship gets. This is a peculiar failing of the human mind. Where does that tendency come from? Dogs do not respond like that but we human beings do. However, I am not saying that you should act like dogs! It is a fault that lies within us and that needs to be recognized: first we are friends with others and very affectionate and loving, but as time goes by we begin to have

problems in our relationships. If we do not set this right, how can we even think of taking another human rebirth in the future? I am not talking about the specific relationship between partners or a husband and wife, but just about the fact that when we first become friends with someone we have much acceptance of the other person, but later on, as the relationship develops, we start to see faults in each other and to create suffering for ourselves. We need to see this tendency, recognize it, and deal with it. There is an expression “Toward new things we are quicker than a horse, but afterward we are shorter than a sheep’s tail.” This means that while initially we have great enthusiasm toward new friends and new things, it does not last long, like a sheep’s tail. This is a fault that exists within us. Therefore, when we get to know someone, we should make sure that the relationship only gets better over time. When we think about our relationships, we should ask ourselves whether we have more or less suffering than a dog!

We do not have any control over where we will be reborn. If we could choose, the suffering realms would be empty because no one would decide to go there. When we die, the strongest karmic imprint ripens first. Alternatively, if there are two imprints of equal strength, the imprint of the more familiar action ripens first, and if there are two imprints of actions that are equal in familiarity, that of the one done most recently ripens first. There are only two possibilities as a result of the ripening of imprints – rebirth in the suffering migrations or rebirth in the happy migrations. While the cause of rebirth in the happy migrations is virtue, if we check our mind well, we will see that we have more non-virtue than virtue and that the non-virtue is far more complete than the virtue. For example, when we are angry with someone and say something bad, there is a motivation to speak, the words are spoken, the other person is hurt, and we rejoice in that. In this case, all the components of the action necessary to create a complete karma are present. When, on the other hand, we do virtue, our motivation may be lacking or very weak and so forth, therefore not all the components are present. Because of this, the chances of being reborn in the lower realms are very high.

Langdol Lama Rinpoche of Sera Je said: “If the suffering of the lower realms is so great, why does everyone go there? If the happiness of the upper realms is so great, why does no one go there? There cannot be that much suffering in the lower realms as everyone wants to go there, and there cannot be much happiness in the upper realms as no one wants to go there.” This is, of course, ironic, but it shows that while we want happiness we do not create its causes, and that while we do not want suffering we do not abandon its causes.

We have this precious human rebirth endowed with great intelligence that can be used either for Dharma practice or to create pain and suffering for ourselves. We can, for example, make our human rebirth into a suffering migration that is worse than that of a dog rebirth. We should examine why we create so much suffering for ourselves. If we look at those who are very wealthy we will see that they do not think of the Dharma, and if we look at those who are poor we will see that they do not think of the Dharma. It is our own responsibility to ensure that we use our mind as a cause of happiness and not as a cause of suffering.

One of the ways in which we make ourselves unhappy is by blaming our unhappiness on others. When someone harms us by saying something unpleasant, that harm just lasts a few seconds but then we think about it over and over again for hours and days, making ourselves more and more unhappy. Therefore, it is we ourselves who cause

our pain and we ourselves who must do something to alleviate it. If we think about who is the main cause of the suffering, the other person or ourselves, we will see that it is ourselves. We have to stop causing ourselves pain as only having done that can we begin to think about how to obtain a happy rebirth in our future lives. Otherwise, there will be no space in our mind for Dharma practice as it is only occupied in creating pain and suffering.

In terms of thinking about future lives, we need to understand karma and our good and bad actions of body, speech, and mind. This involves understanding the ten non-virtues, which are a condensation of limitless types of non-virtues, not all of which are included in them. For example, beating others is not included in the three negative actions of body – killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. We should think about the three negative actions of body, speech, and mind, and then, even though we are unable to eliminate them completely, we should work to reduce those that are manifest and strong and engage in the practice of their opposites, the ten virtues. In this way there will be some hope for us to attain a happy rebirth.

This rebirth with a human body, human speech, and human mind is said to be very special for the practice of Dharma, thus if we do not use it, it will be completely wasted. For example, this human body has great potential for good but if we use it only to engage in actions such as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, it will not have been of any use to us. Likewise, our speech can be used for beneficial purposes but if we use it only in lying, divisive speech, harsh words, and idle talk, its potential for good will have been completely wasted. Likewise, the human mind is very intelligent but if we use it in covetousness, malice, and wrong view, it will not have been of any benefit. We need to take advantage of this precious human rebirth and use it in the practice of virtue and Dharma, whereby we will definitely attain a good rebirth in the future. We should not think of the happiness of this life alone, but think of the happiness of our future lives. If we can do this, we will come to understand that we can do even more than that. On the other hand, if we are unable to use this rebirth for the benefit of future lives, we will not be able to use it for an even greater purpose. If we cannot liberate ourselves from the suffering of the three lower realms, how can we liberate ourselves from the sufferings of cyclic existence?

There is a story about a famous meditator Gen Lamrimpa who lived in retreat in Kham, Tibet. Every now and then he would go to teach Lam-rim in a nearby monastery. When talking about the precious human rebirth he used to recount that when he was in retreat he would often look around at the animals who lived around his cave, the birds, deer, and so forth. Near his cave was a tree in which lived a skunk. It had two babies who would play on the ground below the tree. Once the mother was returning up the tree with her two babies behind her, when a hawk swooped down and snatched up one of the babies. When the mother skunk saw that only one baby had made it up the tree, she must have assumed that Gen Lamrimpa was at fault because she immediately went into his cave and sprayed her scent all over the altar. Gen Lamrimpa tried to clean the altar but it was impossible to remove the smell. The next day the same thing happened and the second baby was snatched away by the hawk, but this time the mother skunk saw what had happened. She then went into the cave and cleaned the altar with her tail and removed the smell. After that she lay in wait in the tree for the hawk until she was able to catch and kill it. Gen Lamrimpa would recount this story to show that even an animal can see who is

at fault and tell the difference between right and wrong. While we human beings can do this, we often do not. In that case, what is the difference between us and animals?

By the practice of the ten virtues, we can obtain a good rebirth as a human being. But thinking about this, we will see that it is not enough, given that even now we are human beings yet still we experience problems. Based on this understanding, we should think about all the sufferings of cyclic existence and improve our practice of the ten virtues.

If someone develops uncontrived definite emergence but is not definite in the Mahayana lineage, he will then enter the path of a hearer or solitary realizer and strive to realize emptiness. On the other hand, if he is definite in the Mahayana lineage, he will see that just as he is suffering so too are all others sentient beings and thereby come to understand that it is not enough to free himself from suffering alone. Thus, although there are people who successively meditate on the path of small beings and develop the wish to obtain a good rebirth, then meditate on the path of middling beings and develop the wish to become free from all the sufferings of cyclic existence and attain nirvana, and then meditate on the path of great beings and develop the wish to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, those who are definite in the Mahayana have the potential for the Mahayana lineage even when they are meditating on the path of small beings. Although right from the beginning they wish to liberate all sentient beings from suffering, they first examine whether or not it is possible to become free from cyclic existence. However, the entire time they have a predisposition toward the Mahayana, due to which the paths of small and middling beings become a way of training their mind for the purpose of developing bodhichitta, the mind of enlightenment. When training in the mind of enlightenment, they use the sevenfold cause and effect meditation or integrate that with the meditation on exchanging self and others.

When one first attains the mind of enlightenment, it is a wishing mind of enlightenment. When that is conjoined with the practice of the six perfections it becomes the engaging mind of enlightenment. There is a lot to be said about the differences between the two types of bodhichitta, however we will not go into that here. The main difference is that the wishing mind of enlightenment is not conjoined with the practice of the six perfections, whereas the engaging mind of enlightenment is conjoined with the practice of the six perfections. It is said that the wishing mind of enlightenment extends from the first instant of the small path of accumulation up to the last instant of the tenth ground. The engaging mind of enlightenment, on the other hand, extends from the small path of accumulation through the buddha ground. We will examine this a bit more later this afternoon.

Tuesday afternoon, 6 December 2005

There are two types of bodhichitta: wishing or aspiring bodhichitta and engaging bodhichitta. Aspiring bodhichitta is generated at the same time as uncontrived bodhichitta and exists from the path of accumulation through the last instant of the tenth ground. It is not explicitly conjoined with the practice of the six perfections. Engaging bodhichitta, on the other hand, is conjoined with the practice of the six perfections, and exists from the path of accumulation up to and including the buddha ground. The way in which the two bodhichittas alternate in progressing along the path is that first an aspiring bodhichitta is

generated at the same time as uncontrived bodhichitta. At that time, because it is not conjoined with the six perfections, it is aspiring bodhichitta. Then, when one practices generating the mind of giving, the bodhichitta is conjoined with generosity and therefore becomes engaging bodhichitta. Then, when one enters the exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise, there is only the appearance of emptiness or ultimate truth and the mind is not conjoined with the practice of the perfections, therefore there is aspiring bodhichitta. When one enters subsequent attainment or post-meditation and the mind is again conjoined with the practice of the six perfections, there is engaging bodhichitta. On the last instant of the tenth ground, which is an uninterrupted path, a meditative equipoise on emptiness, there is aspiring bodhichitta. When one attains the buddha ground, there is engaging bodhichitta.

STUDENT: So is the perfection of wisdom not a perfection?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: The exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise is conjoined with the perfection of wisdom, but it is not explicitly conjoined with it. I will explain this more later on.

One should not think that bodhichitta is generated and then continues to exist without interruption up to the last instant of the continuum of a sentient being. It is not that in every single instant there is aspiring bodhichitta and engaging bodhichitta. When bodhichitta is explicitly conjoined with the practice of the perfections, it is engaging bodhichitta, and when it is not explicitly conjoined with the practice, it is aspiring bodhichitta. Therefore, they alternate, sometimes there is one, sometimes the other.

To be “explicitly conjoined with” or “explicitly held by” means that in the subsequent attainment of any path, when one generates the motivation to practice generosity, morality, patience, effort, concentration, or wisdom (although not the exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise), the bodhichitta is that which is held by the perfection, and that perfection holds the bodhichitta. When there is the practice that holds and the bodhichitta that is held, that is, when both are manifest in the mind, that bodhichitta is said to be *explicitly held by* or *conjoined with* the practice. This is engaging bodhichitta.

Hence, the uninterrupted path of the meditative equipoise of the path of seeing is aspiring bodhichitta because at that time there is the direct realization of emptiness and there is bodhichitta in the mind of that person (according to my school), but that bodhichitta is not explicitly held by the practice, therefore it is aspiring bodhichitta. Because the bodhichitta is not actually manifest at that time, that which is held and that which holds are both not manifest at that time, and therefore the bodhichitta is not *explicitly* held by the practice of the six perfections. Bodhichitta is said to exist at that time because by its power one entered meditative equipoise. Therefore, it helps the exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise and the wisdom realizing emptiness helps bodhichitta, but there is no explicit or actual holding at that time. In order for there to be this explicit holding, it must actually be there. If it is not actually there, there is no explicit holding even though they complement each other.

STUDENT: That aspiring bodhichitta is not manifest enough to say that it is explicitly held by the practice and therefore it is not an engaging bodhichitta, but it is still manifest

enough to be an aspiring bodhichitta although it is not manifest. So why could it not be called an engaging bodhichitta but not be manifest?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: Bodhichitta is there because its continuum has not been cut, it is not there because it is a little bit there. At that time the mind is directly realizing emptiness, therefore bodhichitta cannot be manifest, that is, there cannot be conscious bodhichitta in the mind. However, there is a lot of debate about this question.

Thus, the difference between aspiring and engaging bodhichitta is whether or not the bodhichitta is explicitly conjoined with the practice of any of the six perfections. Are those on the path practicing the six perfections? Some scholars say that they are practicing the perfections in that they are training in them, but that the actual perfections exist only in the mind of a buddha. The practices that will lead to the perfection or gone beyond exist, but the perfections of generosity and so forth themselves do not. Others say that the perfections exist on the path, that these practitioners have an ordinary perfection but do not have a perfect perfection. Therefore, some scholars say that the perfections do not exist on the path and others say that they do exist on the path, but both groups would say that the practice of the perfections exists on the path.

STUDENT: In the *Supplement to the Middle Way* it is said that a mundane perfection exists prior to the path of seeing and a supramundane perfection exists from the path of seeing onward.

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: For those who say that there exists the practice of the perfections but not the perfections on the path, that problem does not exist. But those who say that the perfections exist but are ordinary on the path, say there are mundane perfections prior to the path of seeing and supramundane perfections from the path of seeing onward.

In brief, everyone agrees that there is the practice of the perfections on the path. But what does that mean? Is the practice of generosity, for example, the practice of the perfection of generosity? It is not because the practices of generosity and so forth are also found in Hinayanists, but they do not practice the perfections of generosity and so forth. Hence, “perfection” or “going beyond” does not refer only to going beyond cyclic existence, since otherwise Hinayanists would also practice the perfections. Therefore, going beyond refers to going beyond the extreme of existence and the extreme of peace into a non-abiding nirvana. That is only found in Mahayanists. Therefore, *the practice of the perfections* does not refer to practicing generosity and so forth.

The practice of each of the six perfections includes the other five perfections. In other words, when practicing one perfection, it is possible to practice all six perfections. In this way there is, for example, the generosity of generosity, the morality of generosity, the patience of generosity, the effort of generosity, the concentration of generosity, and the wisdom of generosity, and likewise for the other five perfections. Taking generosity as an example, all six perfections are included in it in the following way. The generosity of generosity is, when giving something to a beggar, for example, to give without any hope of receiving anything in return and without miserliness. In addition, it is to immediately afterward dedicate the roots of virtue created to enlightenment. Therefore, to give without any hope of reward, without miserliness, and with a dedication at the end is the generosity

of generosity. The morality of generosity is to guard the mind from non-virtue while giving. The patience of generosity is to give with patience even though the recipient does not appreciate what is given and so forth. The effort of generosity is to delight in giving. The concentration of generosity is to give without the mind being distracted to anything else but single pointedly focused on the giving. The wisdom of generosity is to think that the gift, the giver, and the recipient all lack inherent existence. This understanding can be applied to the other five perfections in a similar way.

STUDENT: Does the activation of the buddha lineage only happen once prior to entering a path or can it happen several times? For example, if it is activated in this life but then we do not enter a path and even leave the Dharma, can it be activated again in a future life?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: If you mean the Mahayana lineage, the activation of the Mahayana lineage refers to the development of great compassion. Before that, it is possible that when one hears about the advantages of compassion and bodhichitta, that the mind is moved, but that is not the activation of the lineage. After that, one can leave the Dharma even for many lifetimes and then a similar thing can happen again. However, it is only when one generates real compassion that the Mahayana lineage is activated. That happens prior to the path, and after that one generates the extraordinary attitude and so forth.

STUDENT: What is the difference between the lineage being nourished and it being activated? If it is in terms of the resolve to achieve the result, could someone in whom the Mahayana lineage is activated still turn back from it and not develop bodhichitta?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: “Being nourished” refers to the moving of the mind when hearing teachings on compassion, and “being activated” means the actual generation of compassion. When one listens to the advantages of compassion and bodhichitta, it is like a seed being watered, that is, it is nourished. However, at that time it is not necessarily activated and it may be that only in a future life is it actually activated.

STUDENT: Could someone have the outer signs of the lineage being activated, such as tears flowing and the body hairs standing on end, without having the four inner signs and without having the activation of the lineage?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: One can have the outer signs without the lineage actually having been activated in that the inner signs are not present. When someone listens to the benefits of bodhichitta and the sufferings of sentient beings, tears may come to his eyes and his body hairs may stand on end. It is said that that person should then be taught the Mahayana. This refers specifically to these signs in persons of Mahayana lineage, given that there are also Hinayana practitioners in whom tears come to their eyes and their body hairs stand on end when they hear about the benefits of nirvana and the sufferings of cyclic existence. When someone reacts like this when hearing Mahayana teachings, it shows that the seed of the Mahayana is present in that person and he or she is therefore a suitable vessel for the Mahayana and should be taught it.

STUDENT: We already know that the law of cause and effect is a very hidden phenomenon. When we see someone who is rich in this life, we are told that it is the result of generosity in a past life. But if that person is then miserly in this life, he can lose

all his wealth in this life or else become poor in another life. This is how it seems to work in a coarse way. Also Geshe-la said that due to something in this life, we can meet the Dharma again in future lives. My experience is that by trying my best, for example, during a month long retreat with Lama Zopa Rinpoche last year in which emphasized “Without merit, no happiness,” that something small changed in my mind. But perhaps I could still become crazy in this life and lose my connection with the Dharma. So, what to do regarding the collection of merit and wisdom to prevent this from happening?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: If one knows how to do collect them, it is easy. If one does not know, it is not easy. When one studies, one can do both. If the question is about how to develop the merit so as not to lose the connection with the Dharma, it all depends on the motivation. If someone offers one stick of incense with the motivation that it become the cause for the enlightenment of all sentient beings it creates merit equal to the number of sentient beings. If someone else offers even a hundred sticks but without that motivation, the merit of the first offering is much greater. Likewise, even if the world were filled with foe-destroyers all engaged in meditation on emptiness for eons, but there is one bodhisattva who meditates on emptiness for only one instant, still his merit is far greater because of the power of his bodhichitta. It all depends on the motivation, if the motivation is strong there will be no hardships.

STUDENT: But what I am afraid of is that in this life due to certain conditions my mind might become crazy and I turn away from the Dharma. How to prevent this?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: You must master your mind. You must take control of your own mind. If you can master your mind now, then when you get older your mind will remain stable and firm and will not degenerate. Because the degeneration of the body can be accompanied by a degeneration of the mind, we need to gain control over our mind right now, while we still can. I mentioned this morning that we do not take charge of our own mind but react automatically to the people we meet by getting angry and so forth. If we do not take charge of our mind now, while we are young and healthy, how can we do that later on in life? If we manage to take charge of our mind and achieve a happy mind, it will remain with us as we get older. But if we do not do this right now, there will be little chance to do it later on. The mind has the habit of following what is familiar. That is what becomes integrated in the mind. Therefore, we have to familiarize our mind with this. These days everyone says that we should love ourselves, but I think that we do not know how to love ourselves!

STUDENT: If one has a sincere and profound vocation to help others, why think that one might become crazy in this life and why worry about what will happen in the future life? Even if one is not reborn as a Buddhist but as a Christian, Muslim, and so forth, if this wish is sincere will it not come out again? Perhaps I have misunderstood this?

GESHE TENZIN TENPHEL: You are right. If one has such a pure mind, there is no need for such kind of worries. However, with respect to being reborn as a Christian and so forth in a future life, it is not that one is born as a Christian and so forth, but that one is born in a Christian family: Only later on does one actually become a Christian.

Wednesday morning, 7 December 2005

The *Heart Sutra* says:

The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

Tadyatha om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

Jewel Light says:

Tadyatha means “it is so”; that is, it is so that samsara and nirvana are of one taste in being without true existence. *Gate Gate* means “go, go”; the former is to the path of accumulation and the latter is to the path of preparation. *Paragate* means go to the path of seeing. *Parasamgate* means go to the path of meditation. *Bodhi svaha* means be founded in enlightenment, that is, “attain the path of no more learning.” This correlation with the five paths appears in Mahajana’s commentary and is not clear in the other Indian commentaries. Tibetan lamas uphold this, but it is clear that there are other ways of asserting [the meaning of the mantra]. *Om* and *svaha* bless the mantra with power. The absence of *om* here is incorrect because it says in the *Prajnaparamitahrdayasadhana* written by Nagarjuna:

If you are tired, recite the mantra of truth
Adding *tadyatha* and *om*.

Tadyatha means “like this” or “it is so.” Up to this point in the sutra the emptiness of all phenomena has been discussed including both the phenomena of cyclic existence, such as the afflictions, and the phenomena of nirvana, such as the paths. Thus, the mantra means that like this all the phenomena of cyclic existence and nirvana are empty. Because the phenomena of cyclic existence are empty by way of their own characteristics or empty of true existence and the phenomena of nirvana are empty by their own characteristics or empty of true existence, there is no difference between them from this point of view, hence in this sense they are said to be of one taste.

In many mantras *tadyatha* is followed by the word *om*, although it is not mentioned here. Since *om* usually heads all mantras, one should recite the mantra saying “*Tadyatha om...*”

Gate gate means “go, go.” *Paragate* means “go beyond,” that is. go beyond the mundane paths to the path of seeing. *Parasamgate* means “go perfectly beyond,” that is, go beyond the path of seeing to the path of meditation. *Bodhi svaha* means “attain enlightenment,” that is, make enlightenment the final attainment or goal. Thus, the mantra can be understood to refer to the five paths

- *gate* means go to the path of accumulation,
- *gate* means go to the path of preparation,
- *paragate* means go to the path of seeing,
- *parasamgate* means go to the path of meditation, and
- *bodhi svaha* means attain the path of no-more-learning.

The entrance into the path of accumulation is the generation of bodhichitta, therefore the first Mahayana collection of merit that is held by bodhichitta is called “the path of accumulation.” The Tibetan word *sbyor ba* translated as “preparation” in the context of the path of preparation, also means to connect or unite. Therefore, it is called “the path of preparation” because it is the path that connects or unites one to the new and direct realization of emptiness that is the path of seeing. It is called “the path of seeing” because

it is the first or initial seeing or direct realization of the truth, emptiness. It is called “the path of meditation” because one meditates or familiarizes with that which was already seen on the path of seeing. It is called “the path of no-more-learning” because there is nothing more to be learned or trained in.

The *Heart Sutra* says:

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom in that way.”

Avalokiteshvara says this to Shariputra in order to summarize the discourse that he began by saying “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom should view it in this way...”

The *Heart Sutra* says:

Then, the Transcendent Victor rose from that samadhi and, commending the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara, said this: “Well done, well done, son of the lineage. It is just so. It is like that. One should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated. Even the tathagatas admire this.”

The Transcendent Victor having said this, Venerable Sharadvatiputra, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised the words of the Transcendent Victor.

Jewel Light says:

3 How that was admired by the Teacher

The third [section], is the way the Teacher admired [Avalokiteshvara’s teaching], that is, “Then, the Transcendent Victor rose from that samadhi... praised the words of the Tathagata.” The meaning is easy to understand for the most part. His saying “Well done” twice is words of sincerity, not of number. “It is just so. It is like that...” means “Avalokiteshvara, your explanation is just like the mode of being of all phenomena. What I have understood is like that.” The words, “the Transcendent Victor said this” and “having said this” in the prologue and at the end of the text are words [added with] the permission [of the Buddha]. Shariputra’s question and Avalokiteshvara’s answer are words [spoken] through the blessing [of the Buddha]. “Well done... Even the Tathagatas admire this” are words spoken from the mouth [of the Buddha].

That the Bhagavan arose from his samadhi means that *in the eyes of the disciples* the Buddha rose from meditative stabilization because in actual fact a buddha remains at all times in meditative stabilization. He then commended Avalokiteshvara by repeating twice “Well done, well done.” He said this twice, not to waste words as a buddha does not waste words, but in order to emphasize how good it is that this sutra, which is so profound, was spoken. Thus, he repeated these words with a specific purpose, unlike ourselves who often speak meaninglessly about such things as how we slept last night, and use our speech to criticize or disparage others, to praise ourselves, and so forth. Such talk, in the end, only harms ourselves. Because we are responsible for the state of our own mind, we have to set

aside meaningless talk. This takes time because we have been familiar with it for a long time. But we need to do this as we waste a lot of time in meaningless talk.

The tendency to make ourselves unhappy by reacting negatively to people who have a different view or opinion from our own comes down to the fact that they have different likes and different assertions and different ways of being from our own. It could be something that they say or even in the way they look that upsets us just because it does not correspond with our own way of talking or being. Because of this we feel distant from them and look down upon them. However, the only reason that this is based on is our differences. To reduce this tendency, we should begin by looking at one person and asking ourselves what it is about what that person does or says that we do not like. We will see that it comes down to the differences between us. Then we should examine who such dislike helps and who it harms. We will see that it does not benefit ourselves and does not harm the other person, whereby it is of no use at all. If we can lessen this way of thinking with respect to one person, then when we meet other similar people we can remain unaffected and our peace and happiness of mind will not decline. The world is full of different people with different ways of thinking, talking, and acting. Because of this, if we can lessen this wrong way of thinking and keep an even and peaceful mind, we will be much happier. If we can do this basic practice we will find that we will learn to like people more and more and that we can remain in harmony with others. Because our dislike for people has diminished, when we meet someone who would previously make us angry or upset, we will find that our mind remains peaceful and undisturbed. If, on the other hand, we do not strive to do this, we will always be unhappy and irritated in our relationships with others. Since we have to live in society and in a community, we need to have harmonious relationships with others.

In brief, we need to talk less. Presently we talk a lot, often saying the same things over and over again. Most of what we say is meaningless and without any benefit whatsoever. In this way time passes. While we enjoy talking, it fills up our time such that we no longer have enough time for study and meditation. If, on the other hand, we can reduce the amount of time we spend talking, which also automatically reduces repetitive and useless thoughts, we will find that we do have time for study and meditation. It is up to us, it is we who waste time and we who can make time. A lot of talk produces a lot of thought. That only creates bad habits, and then it becomes hard to break the habit. This has to be done slowly, bit by bit. Because we tend to think that the best way to pass time is to talk, it is a difficult habit to break.

Then the Buddha says “It is just so. It is like that.” The “it” in “It is just so” refers to that which Avalokiteshvara has just said, and “is just so” means that phenomena are just like he has explained. The “it” in “It is like that” means that the reality of all phenomena that is understood by all the buddhas is just as has been explained by Avalokiteshvara.

Then the Buddha says. “One should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated. Even the tathagatas admire this.” “The tathagatas admire this” means that all the buddhas of the ten directions rejoice in the practice of the perfection of wisdom.

In the next section the entourage rejoices: “The Transcendent Victor having said this, Venerable Sharadvatiputra, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods,

humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised the words of the Transcendent Victor.” Although it says that they praised the words of the Bhagavan what they actually did was make a commitment to practice the perfection of wisdom as has been taught. In listing the beings who praised the Bhagavan, there is Shariputra, then Avalokiteshvara, and “those surrounding in their entirety” which refers to the great sangha of monks and the great assembly of bodhisattvas that were mentioned in the prologue. Then the gods, human beings, and so other beings who were present at the teaching of the *Heart Sutra* are mentioned.

At this point there could be a discussion about whether the *Heart Sutra* is included in sutra or mantra, but we will set that aside. During these teachings I have tried to explain the essential meaning of the sutra, it is now up to you to decide whether my explanation is correct or not. The essence of the sutra is emptiness, in particular emptiness as asserted by Prasangika. If the sutra is understood to teach emptiness as asserted by Prasangika, then there is no difference between emptiness as taught in sutra and emptiness as taught in tantra.

The speech in this sutra includes examples of three kinds of speech of the Buddha. The words of the prologue “Thus, have I heard at one time...” is Buddha’s speech by permission. It is so-called because the Buddha gave instructions that in the future when the sutras were written down that at the beginning it should say when and where the sutra was taught and to whom. The words at the end of the sutra “Well done, well done...” are actual words that were spoken by the Buddha. The conversation between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, the main part of the sutra, is blessed speech because they were both blessed by the Buddha to speak.

Jewel Light says:

With regard to the way to overcome demons [through reciting the sutra], Khedrub refutes this in his *General Presentation of the Tantras*⁸ saying, “Regarding the way to overcome demons, those in [prayers] such as the ‘clear light’ and the ‘prologue’ are fabrications.” There are, however statements such as “The king of gods Sakra [Indra] thought about the meaning of the profound perfection of wisdom and recited it in order to overcome sinful demons.” Because those words are similar to words in the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrika)* and because, moreover, there are instructions that are said to have been given by Nagarjuna [that it is permissible to recite the sutra in order to overcome demons], it should be analyzed.

This is a discussion about whether or not this sutra can be used as a means of eliminating maras or demons. Khedrub Je seems to say that it cannot be used for this purpose, but in the *Eight Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* it is recounted that Indra was able to dispel demons by reciting the perfection of wisdom so it would seem that it can be used for this purpose. In this context the maras or demons that are to be eliminated are mainly the inner maras of the afflictions. By the power of the perfection of wisdom, they can be eliminated. The outer maras only arise because of the inner maras, therefore the main maras are within us. But, of course, there still outer interferences who harm our practice

⁸ *rGyud sde spyi nam*

and therefore need to be eliminated. The inner maras continuously harm us, whereas the outer maras sometimes harm us and sometimes do not.

The main subject of the *Heart Sutra* is the perfection of wisdom, which refers both to emptiness and to the exalted wisdom realizing emptiness. The implicit subject of the *Heart Sutra* is the vast, the paths. Thus, the explicit subject is the profound, emptiness, and the implicit subject is the vast, the paths. The vast paths are taught implicitly because emptiness is realized by way of the five paths. While the focus of this sutra is primarily on the profound, by meditating on this alone one will not attain enlightenment. In fact, whether one attains nirvana or enlightenment is dependent on method. If one's practice is accompanied by the method that is renunciation, one will attain nirvana. If it is accompanied by the method that is the mind of enlightenment, one will attain enlightenment. Because we need to practice the six perfections in order to attain enlightenment, the *Heart Sutra* is said to teach them implicitly.

One should not think that if one's practice is accompanied by renunciation it will lead to nirvana and if one's practice is accompanied by the mind of enlightenment it will lead to enlightenment, therefore if one is training in the mind of enlightenment there is no need for renunciation. It is not like that. The mind of renunciation in one who is aiming primarily for the peace of nirvana and the mind of renunciation in the mind of a bodhisattva who is aiming for enlightenment are vastly different. The first is a state of mind that mainly focuses on liberating oneself from suffering, whereas the second is a mind that mainly focuses on liberating all sentient beings from suffering.

To summarize the sutra. At the beginning of the sutra "Thus, did I hear at one time" indicates the *perfect time*, "the Bhagavan" indicates the *perfect teacher*, "Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha" indicates the *perfect place*, and "a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas" indicates the *perfect entourage*. This sets out the common prologue that is common to all Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. This is followed by the uncommon prologue: "At that time the Transcendent Victor was absorbed in a samadhi on the categories of phenomena called 'perception of the profound.' Also at the time, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara was contemplating the meaning of the profound perfection of wisdom and saw that those five aggregates also are empty of inherent existence." The dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara is the *perfect teaching*. In this way the five perfections or excellences are indicated.

Then the five paths are taught:

- "They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence" briefly indicates the perfection of wisdom in relation to the path of accumulation and path of preparation. "
- "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousnesses are empty" is a more extensive teaching on the perfection of wisdom in relation to the path of accumulation and path of preparation.
- "Shariputra, thus, all phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless, undiminished, unfilled" teaches the perfection of

wisdom in relation to the path of seeing by setting out the eight uncontaminated profundities and the three doors of liberation.

- “Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no tangible object, and no phenomena. There is no eye constituent and so on up to and including no mental constituent and no mental consciousness constituent. There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Similarly, there is no suffering, origin, cessation, and path. There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment” teaches the path of meditation in general.
- “Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment, they rely on and abide in the perfection of wisdom” teaches the vajra-like meditative stabilization of the last instant of the tenth ground.
- “The mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana” teaches the path of no-more-learning.
- “All the buddhas who abide in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect complete enlightenment through relying on the perfection of wisdom” teaches that not just one buddha attains enlightenment in this way but that all the buddhas of the three times also attain enlightenment in this way.

Up to this point the sutra has been directed at those of dull faculties, whereas the next section is for those of sharp faculties.

- “Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom” sets out the path of accumulation,
 - “the mantra of great knowledge” sets out the path of preparation,
 - “the unsurpassed mantra” sets out the path of seeing,
 - “the mantra equal to the unequalled” sets out the path of meditation, and
 - “the mantra that completely pacifies suffering” sets out the path of no-more-learning.
- “Should be known to be true; since it is not false” teaches the superior qualities of the perfection of wisdom.

“The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared: *Tadyatha om gate gate paragate parasamgate* bodhi svaha” means “So it is, go go, go beyond, go perfectly beyond, attain enlightenment.”

Then Avalokiteshvara summarizes what he said before: “Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom in that way.”

Then the Buddha, in the eyes of the disciples, arose from his meditative stabilization and commended Avalokiteshvara twice in order to emphasize the profundity and importance of the perfection of wisdom: “Then, the Transcendent Victor rose from that samadhi and, commending the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara, said this: “Well done, well done, son of the lineage. It is just so. It is like that. One should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated.”

Then to show that all the buddhas, not just Buddha Shakyamuni, rejoice in this sutra, it says: “Even the tathagatas admire this.”

Then the entourage rejoice in the sutra by praising the words of the Bhagavan and thereby make a commitment to practice the perfection of wisdom as it has been taught: “The Transcendent Victor having said this, Venerable Sharadvatiputra, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along

with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised the words of the Transcendent Victor.”

That is it! No more questions! Now we should make a strong collective dedication together, the best dedication being for the benefit of all sentient beings.

END