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## THE HEART SUTRA, A MEDITATION ON EMPTINESS

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PRACTICE





THE ASIAN CLASSICS

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INSTITUTE

Thank you for your interest in the Asian Classics Institute's Daily Practice Topics. The text and audio may be downloaded (see [www.world-view.org](http://www.world-view.org) in the on-line teachings section), or ordered by mail (see the Courses by mail section of the web site).

This Daily Heart Sutra Practice consists of audio recorded from two original retreats, along with corresponding written materials. Please note that this topic was taught twice, each time with a different emphasis, and both versions have been provided. The version from Godstow Retreat Center has ten sessions, and the version from Land of Medicine Buddha has five sessions.

The audio can be ordered by mail, listened to on-line as streaming Real Audio, or downloaded onto your computer in MP3 or RA formats for playback later. The written materials for this topic are contained in five on-line files which can be downloaded, printed and assembled into a three-ring binder.

A complete binder contains the following sections in this order: a binder cover and spine, readings, homework, and answer keys. For ease of binder assembly, be sure to print the files on three hole paper.

After listening to the audio from a session the corresponding homework and meditation should be completed before continuing on to the next session. The homework can be completed using notes, open book style. Answer keys are supplied so that you may check your homework answers.

Daily practice topics are not graded by the Asian Classics Institute. Please do not mail in any of the papers to be graded.

We would like to emphasize that, although recordings and written materials can be extremely helpful, it is essential for serious Buddhist practitioners to meet and study directly with a qualified Teacher who can give the necessary guidance and personal instructions of the lineage.

In these teachings the wisdom of Enlightened Beings has been passed down in an unbroken lineage to you. May you take these teachings and put them into practice in your life to benefit all. May every goodness grow and spread in all directions right now!

༄༅། །མཇུག། །

*mandel*

།ས་གཞི་སྔོས་ཀྱིས་བྱུགས་ཤིང་མི་ཏོག་བཟམ།

*sashi pukyi jukshing metok tram,*

།རི་རབ་སྤིང་བཞི་ཉི་ལྷས་བརྒྱན་པ་འདི།

*rirab lingshi nyinde gyenpa di,*

།སངས་རྒྱས་ཞིང་དུ་དམིགས་ཏེ་དབུལ་བར་བསྐྱེ།

*sangye shingdu mikte ulwar gyi,*

།འབྲོ་ཀུན་རྣམ་དག་ཞིང་ལ་སྦྱོད་པར་ཤོག །།

*drokun namdak shingla chupar shok.*

།ཨི་དྲི་གུ་རཱ་མཇུག་ལ་ཀི་ནི་རྒྱ་ཏ་ཡ་མི། །

*Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.*

## Offering the Mandala

Here is the great Earth,  
Filled with the smell of incense,  
Covered with a blanket of flowers,

The Great Mountain,  
The Four Continents,  
Wearing a jewel  
Of the Sun, and Moon.

In my mind I make them  
The Paradise of a Buddha,  
And offer it all to You.

By this deed  
May every living being  
Experience  
The Pure World.

*Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.*

༄༅། །སྐབས་འགྲོ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད། །  
*kyabdro semkye*

།སངས་རྒྱས་ཚེས་དང་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་མཚོག་རྣམས་ལ།  
*sangye chudang tsokyi choknam la,*

།བྱང་རྒྱལ་བར་དུ་བདག་ནི་སྐབས་སུ་མཆིས།  
*jangchub bardu dakni kyabsu chi,*

།བདག་གིས་སྤྱིན་སོགས་བགྱིས་པའི་བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱིས།  
*dakki jinsok gyipay sunam kyi,*

།འགྲོ་ལ་ཕན་ཕྱིར་སངས་རྒྱས་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག །།  
*drola penchir sangye druppar shok.*

### Refuge and The Wish

I go for refuge  
To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha  
Until I achieve enlightenment.

By the power  
Of the goodness that I do  
In giving and the rest,

May I reach Buddhahood  
For the sake  
Of every living being.

༄༅། །བཟླ་བ། །

*ngowa*

།དགེ་བ་འདི་ཡིས་སྐྱེ་བོ་ཀུན།

*gewa diyi kyewo kun,*

།བསོད་ནམས་ཡི་ཤེས་ཚོགས་ཚྲོགས་ཤིང་།

*sunam yeshe tsok-dzok shing,*

།བསོད་ནམས་ཡི་ཤེས་ལས་བྱུང་བའི།

*sunam yeshe lejung way,*

།དམ་པ་སྐྱུ་གཉིས་འཕྲོ་པར་ཤོག །།

*dampa kunyi topar shok.*

### **Dedication of the Goodness of a Deed**

By the goodness  
Of what I have just done  
May all beings

Complete the collection  
Of merit and wisdom,

And thus gain the two  
Ultimate bodies  
That merit and wisdom make.

ལྷོ། །མཚོད་པ། །  
*chupa*

།སྟོན་པ་སྣ་མེད་སངས་རྒྱལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*tonpa lame sanggye rinpoche,*

།སྐྱོབ་པ་སྣ་མེད་དམ་ཚཱ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*kyoppa lame damchu rinpoche,*

།འདྲེན་པ་སྣ་མེད་དགའ་འདུན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
*drenpa lame gendun rinpoche,*

།སྐྱབས་གནས་དཀོན་མཚོག་གསུམ་ལ་མཚོད་པ་འབྲུལ།  
*kyabne konchok sumla chupa bul.*

**A Buddhist Grace**

I offer this  
To the Teacher  
Higher than any other,  
The precious Buddha.

I offer this  
To the protection  
Higher than any other,  
The precious Dharma.

I offer this  
To the guides  
Higher than any other,  
The precious Sangha.

I offer this  
To the places of refuge,  
To the Three Jewels,  
Rare and supreme.



## **The Asian Classics Institute Practice VIII: The Heart Sutra**

### **Syllabus**

#### **Session One: Setting the Scene**

A discussion of the meaning of the title, and the translator's obeisance; setting the scene; the Question is asked.

#### **Session Two: Wisdom on the Paths of Accumulation and Preparation**

A discussion of the emptiness of the five heaps, or groups of parts, that make up a normal suffering being.

#### **Session Three: Wisdom on the Path of Seeing**

A discussion of emptiness as it is perceived directly for the first time.

#### **Session Four: Wisdom on the Path of Habituation**

A discussion of emptiness and the perception of things as illusory; emptiness and the twelve doors of sense, the eighteen categories, the twelve links of the wheel of life, and the four truths.

#### **Session Five: Wisdom on the Path of No More Learning, and How to Achieve Enlightenment**

A discussion of emptiness and the final attainment of enlightenment. The meaning of the mantra of the *Heart Sutra*. A brief summary of practice, and the conclusion of the sutra.

༄༅ །འཕགས་པ་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་མ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་

སྤྱན་པའི་སྣིང་པོ། །

*The Exalted One,  
the Lady of Conquest,  
the Sutra on the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*

།།རྒྱ་གར་སྐད་དུ། ལྷ་རྩ་ལྷ་ག་བཏི་ཡུ་རྫོང་ལྷ་ར་མི་ཏུ་མི་དཔལ། བོད་སྐད་དུ། འཕགས་པ་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་མ་ཤེས་  
རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱན་པའི་སྣིང་པོ། བམ་པོ་གཅིག་གོ། །སངས་རྒྱས་དང་། བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཐམས་ཅད་  
ལ་ཕུག་འཚལ་ལོ།

[Tibetan translator's note: The name of this sutra in Sanskrit is Arya Bhagavati Prajnaya Paramita Hirdaya. In Tibetan this is Pakpa Chomden Dema Sherabkyi Parultu Chinpay Nyingpo. (In English this is The Lady of Conquest, the Exalted Sutra on the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom.) This work is completed in a single sheaf. I bow first to all the enlightened beings, and to every warrior saint.]

འདི་སྐད་བདག་གིས་ཐོས་པའི་དུས་གཅིག་ན།

Once I heard this teaching.

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ་ན་བྱ་སྟོན་ཡུང་པོའི་རི་ལ་དགོ་སྟོང་གི་དགོ་འདུན་  
ཆེན་པོ་དང་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་དགོ་འདུན་ཆེན་པོ་དང་ཐབས་ཅིག་ཏུ་བཞུགས་ཏེ།

The Conqueror was staying on Vulture's Peak, in the Keep of the King. With him was a great gathering of monks, and a great gathering of warrior saints.

དེའི་ཚེ་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཟབ་མོ་སྣང་བ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས་ཀྱི་ཉིང་ངེ་  
འཛིན་ལ་སྟོམས་པར་ཞུགས་སོ། །ཡང་དེའི་ཚེ་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་སེམས་དཔའ་  
ཆེན་པོ་འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕུག་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱན་པ་ཟབ་

མོ་སྐྱོད་པར་རྣམ་པར་བལྟ་ཞིང་། སུང་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་དེ་དག་ལ་ཡང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱོང་པར་  
རྣམ་པར་བལྟའོ།།

At a certain moment the Conqueror went into deep meditation on the part of the teaching known as the "awareness of the profound." At that moment too did the realized being, the great warrior, the lord of power, Loving Eyes, see into this one deep practice, the practice of the perfection of wisdom. And he saw perfectly that the five heaps—the five parts of a person—were empty of any nature of their own.

དེ་ནས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་མཐུས་ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ་ལྷ་ར་དུ་ཉིད་བྱས་བྱང་རྒྱབ་སེམས་དཔའ་  
སེམས་དཔའ་ཚེན་པོ་འཕགས་པ་སྐྱུན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཡུག་ལ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་སྒྲུས་  
སོ། །རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱུང་མ། རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱ་མོ་གང་ལ་ལ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་  
ཟབ་མེད་ལྐོད་པ་སྐྱད་པར་འདོད་པ་དེས་ཇི་ལྟར་བསྐྱབ་པར་བྱ།

And then, by the power of the Enlightened One, the junior monk named Shari Putra turned and asked this question of the great warrior, Loving Eyes, the realized one, the lord of power: "If any son or daughter of noble family hoped to follow the deep practice of the perfection of wisdom, what would they have to do?"

དེ་སྐད་ཅེས་སྒྲུས་པ་དང་བྱང་རྒྱབ་སེམས་དཔའ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཚེན་པོ་འཕགས་པ་སྐྱུན་  
རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཡུག་གིས་ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ་ལྷ་རིད་བྱ་ལ་འདི་སྐད་ཅེས་སྒྲུས་སོ།།

This then is the answer that the lord of power, the realized one, the great warrior Loving Eyes gave to the junior monk named Shari Putra:

ལྷ་རིད་བྱ། རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱུང་མ། རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱ་མོ་གང་ལ་ལ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་  
པ་ཟབ་མེད་ལྐོད་པ་སྐྱད་པར་འདོད་པ་དེས་འདི་ལྟར་རྣམ་པར་བལྟ་བར་བྱ་སྟེ།

"Here, Shari Putra, is what any son or daughter of noble family should see who hopes to follow the deep practice of the perfection of wisdom.

སུང་པོ་ལྷ་པོ་དེ་དག་གྱང་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱོང་པར་རྣམ་པར་ཇེས་སུ་བལྟའོ། །གཟུགས་

སྣོང་པའོ། །སྣོང་པ་ཉིད་གཟུགས་སོ། །གཟུགས་ལས་སྣོང་པ་ཉིད་གཞན་མ་ཡིན།  
སྣོང་པ་ཉིད་ལས་གཟུགས་གཞན་མ་ཡིན་ནོ།།

"See first all five heaps—all five parts to a person—as being empty of any essence of their own. Your body is empty; emptiness is your body. Emptiness is nothing but your body, and your body is nothing but emptiness.

དེ་བཞིན་དུ་ཚོར་བ་དང་། འདུ་ཤེས་དང་། འདུ་བྱེད་རྣམས་དང་། རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པ་  
རྣམས་སྣོང་པའོ།།

"The same is true of your feelings, and your ability to discriminate between things, and the other factors that make you up, and all the different kinds of awareness that you possess: all of them are empty.

ལྷ་རིའི་བུ། དེ་ལྟ་བུས་ན། ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་སྣོང་པ་ཉིད་དེ། མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པ། མ་  
སྐྱེས་པ། མ་འགག་པ། སྲི་མ་མེད་པ། སྲི་མ་དང་བྲལ་བ་མེད་པ། སྲི་བ་མེད་པ།  
གང་བ་མེད་པའོ།།

"And thus we can say, Shari Putra, that every existing thing is emptiness. Nothing has any characteristic of its own. Nothing ever begins. Nothing ever ends. Nothing is ever impure. Nothing ever becomes pure. Nothing ever gets less, and nothing ever becomes more.

ལྷ་རིའི་བུ། དེ་ལྟ་བུས་ན་སྣོང་པ་ཉིད་ལ་གཟུགས་མེད། ཚོར་བ་མེད། འདུ་ཤེས་  
མེད། འདུ་བྱེད་རྣམས་མེད། རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པ་མེད།

"And thus can we say, Shari Putra, that with emptiness there is no body. There are no feelings. There is no ability to discriminate. There are none of the other factors that make you up, and there is no awareness.

མིག་མེད། རྣ་བ་མེད། ལྡན་མེད། ལྗེ་མེད། ལུས་མེད། ཡིད་མེད། གཟུགས་མེད།  
སྐྱེ་མེད། སྲི་མེད། རོ་མེད། རིག་བྱ་མེད། ཚོས་མེད་དོ།།

"There are no eyes; no ears; no nose; no tongue; no body; no mind; nothing to see; nothing to hear; nothing to smell; nothing to taste; nothing to touch; and nothing to think of.

མིག་གི་ཁམས་མེད་ཅིང་། མིག་གི་རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པའི་ཁམས་མེད་པ་ནས་ཡིད་གྱི་  
ཁམས་མེད་ཅིང་། ཡིད་གྱི་རྣམ་པར་ཤེས་པའི་ཁམས་གྱི་བར་དུ་ཡང་མེད་དོ།།

"There is no part of you that sees. There is no part of you that is aware of what you see; and this is true all the way up to the part of you that thinks, and the part of you that is aware that you are thinking.

མ་རིག་པ་མེད་ཅིང་། མ་རིག་པ་ཟད་པ་མེད་པ་ནས་ཀླ་ཤི་མེད་ཅིང་། ཀླ་ཤི་ཟད་པའི་  
བར་དུ་ཡང་མེད་དོ།།

"There is no misunderstanding your world. There is no stopping this misunderstanding, and the same is true all the way up to your old age and your death, and to stopping your old age and your death.

སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེལ་བ་དང་། ཀུན་འབྱུང་བ་དང་། འགོག་པ་དང་། ལམ་མེད།

"There is no suffering. There is no source of this suffering. There is no stopping this suffering. There is no path to stop this suffering.

ཡི་ཤེས་མེད། ཐོབ་པ་མེད། མ་ཐོབ་པ་ཡང་མེད་དོ།།

"There is no knowledge. There is nothing to reach. And there is nothing not to reach.

ལྷ་རིའི་བུ། དེ་ལྟ་བུས་ན། བྱང་རྒྱུ་སེམས་དཔའ་རྣམས་ཐོབ་པ་མེད་པའི་སྤྱིར་ཤེས་  
རབ་གྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་གནས་ཏེ་སེམས་ལ་སློབ་པ་མེད་པས་འཇིགས་  
པ་མེད་དེ། སྤྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་ལས་ཤིན་ཏུ་འདས་ནས་སྤང་ན་ལས་འདས་པའི་མཐར་སྤྱིན་  
དོ།།

"Thus it is, Shari Putra, that warrior saints have nothing to reach; and because of this, they are able to practice the perfection of wisdom, and stay in this perfection of wisdom. This frees them of every obstacle in their minds, and this frees them from all fear. They go beyond all wrong ways of thinking, and reach to the ultimate end of nirvana.

དུས་གསུམ་དུ་རྣམ་པར་བཞུགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱང་ཤེས་རབ་གྱི་པ་

རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ཏེ་སློན་མེད་པ་ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་བྱང་ཆུབ་མངོན་པར་  
རྫོགས་པར་སངས་རྒྱས་སོ།།

"All the Enlightened Beings of the past, and present, and the future too follow this same perfection of wisdom, and thus bring themselves to perfect enlightenment: to the matchless state of a totally enlightened Buddha.

དེ་ལྟ་བུས་ན། ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པའི་སྤྲུགས། རིག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྤྲུགས།  
སློན་མེད་པའི་སྤྲུགས། མི་མཉམ་པ་དང་མཉམ་པའི་སྤྲུགས། སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་ཐམས་  
ཅད་རབ་ཏུ་ཞི་བར་བྱེད་པའི་སྤྲུགས། མི་རྣམས་པས་ན། བདེན་པར་ཤེས་པར་བྱ་སྟེ།  
ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པའི་སྤྲུགས་སྟེས་པ།

"Thus are they the sacred words of the perfection of wisdom; the sacred words of great knowledge; sacred words of the unsurpassable; sacred words that are equal to the One beyond all equal; sacred words that put a final end to every form of pain; sacred words you should know are true, for false they cannot be; sacred words of the perfection of wisdom, which here I speak for you:

ཏད་ཟ། ག་ཏེ་ག་ཏེ།

པ་ར་ག་ཏེ། པ་ར་སླ་ག་ཏེ། བོ་རྗེ་སྐྱ་ཏེ།

*Tadya ta, ga-te ga-te, para ga-te,  
para sang ga-te, bodhi so ha.*

ལྷ་རིའི་བུ། བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོས་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་  
སྤྱིན་པ་ཟབ་མོ་ལ་དེ་ལྟར་བསྐྱེད་པར་བྱའོ།།

"And thus it is, Shari Putra, that great warrior saints must train themselves in the profound perfection of wisdom."

དེ་ནས་བཙུམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཏེང་ངེ་འཇིན་དེ་ལས་བཞེངས་ཏེ་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ་  
སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོ་འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག་ལ་ལེགས་སོ། །ཞེས་

བྱ་བ་བྱིན་ནས་ལེགས་སོ། །ལེགས་སོ།།

With this, the Conqueror stirred himself from his deep state of meditation. He turned to the great warrior, to the realized one, Loving Eyes, the lord of power, and blessed his words, saying, "True." "True," he said, and "True" again.

རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱ། དེ་དེ་བཞིན་ནོ། །དེ་དེ་བཞིན་ཏེ། ཇི་ལྟར་བྱོད་ཀྱིས་བསྟན་པ་དེ་བཞིན་  
དུ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པ་ཟབ་མོ་ལ་སྤྱད་པར་བྱ་སྟེ། དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱང་རྗེས་སུ་ཡི་རང་ངོ་།།

"Thus it is, o son of noble family; and thus is it. One should follow the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have taught it. Every one of Those Gone Thus rejoice in your words as I do."

བཙམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱིས་དེ་སྐད་ཅིས་བཀའ་སྤྲུལ་ནས་ཚེ་དང་ལྡན་པ་ལྷ་རིའི་བྱ་དང་།  
བྱང་རྒྱལ་སེམས་དཔའ་འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་དབང་ཕྱུག་དང་། ཐམས་  
ཅད་དང་ལྡན་པའི་འཁོར་དེ་དག་ལྷ་དང་། མི་དང་། ལྷ་མ་ཡིན་དང་། ཇི་ཟེར་བཅས་  
པའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཡི་རང་སྟེ་བཙམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱིས་གསུངས་པ་ལ་མངོན་པར་བརྟོད་  
དོ།།

And when the Conqueror had spoken thus, the junior monk Shari Putra took joy; and the warrior, the realized one, Loving Eyes, the lord of power, took joy as well. And all the assembled disciples took joy, and so did the entire world—with its gods, and its men, and near-gods and spirits too—take joy. All sang their praises of what the Conqueror had spoken.

བཙམ་ལྡན་འདས་མ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་ཏུ་སྤྱིན་པའི་སྣང་པོ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་  
པོའི་མདོ་རྗོགས་སོ། །རྒྱ་གར་གྱི་མཁན་པོ་བེ་མ་ལ་མི་ཏུ་དང་། ལོ་རྒྱུ་བ་དག་སྣོང་  
རིན་ཆེན་སྤྱིས་བསྐྱུར་ཅིང་། ལུ་ཆེན་གྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བ་དག་སྣོང་དང་། རྣམ་མཁའ་ལ་སོགས་  
པས་ལུས་ཏེ་གཏན་ལ་ཕབ་པའོ།།

**Practice VIII**  
**The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom**

*[This ends the sutra of the greater way known as The Lady of Conquest, the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom. It was first translated from Sanskrit by the Indian abbot Vimala Mitra together with a master Tibetan translator, the venerable Rinchen De. It was later checked and standardized by the master translators and editors Gelo and Namka, among others. This translation into English was completed by the American geshe Gelong Lobsang Chunzin, Michael Roach, with the assistance of the American woman with lifetime vows, Christie McNally.]*



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Homework, Class One*

1) Give the full name of the Heart Sutra in English. (Tibetan track give the name both in Tibetan and in Sanskrit.)

2) What is the commentary to the *Heart Sutra* which we will be studying; who is its author, and what are his dates?

3) What is, according to the commentary, the "heart" or essence of all the teachings of the Buddha, as they exist in the form of realizations? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

4) What did the realized being Nagarjuna say about the need to understand emptiness?

5) Give the two meanings of "perfection" in the title of the sutra.

6) Give three meanings conveyed by the words that start the *Heart Sutra*, as they do so many other sutras: "Once I heard this teaching." (Tibetan track write this in Tibetan.)

7) What question starts the sutra, and who asks it, to whom?

*Meditation assignment:* At least 15 minutes per day of formal meditation to identify where your current understanding of emptiness stands, especially how you think emptiness and karma are connected to each other.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Two*

1) Name the first two of the five paths, and describe what happens at each of them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Name and describe briefly the five "heaps," or piles of many things that make up a suffering being. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

3) In what sense do these five heaps exist; that is, in what sense do they exhibit what we call "dependent origination"?

4) In what sense do these five heaps *not* exist; that is, in what sense do they have emptiness?

5) Explain the "four profound statements" made in the *Heart Sutra* about the heap of physical forms, and applied to the other four heaps as well.

a)

b)

c)

d)

6) Is it true that your body could actually *be* emptiness?

*Meditation assignment:* For at least 15 minutes per day in meditation, go through yourself and identify, one by one, your five heaps or parts that make you up. Then go back and try to see how each of them might be a collection of parts that your mind has forced you to organize into a particular object, forced to do so by your past karma.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Three*

1) Explain the two characteristics that each thing does have, and then the characteristic that they do not have.

2) Some Tibetan versions of *The Heart Sutra* in circulation nowadays read "Nothing is ever impure. Everything is free of impurity." Other versions read, "Nothing is ever impure. Nothing ever becomes pure." Which is correct, and why?

3) What does the sutra mean when it says, "Nothing ever gets less, and nothing ever becomes more"?

4) The lines of the sutra at this point refer to the "three doors to freedom." Name the door which corresponds to each of the following lines, and describe it briefly.

a) "Every existing thing is emptiness."

b) "Nothing has any characteristic of its own. Nothing ever begins. Nothing ever ends. Nothing is ever impure. Nothing ever becomes pure."

c) "Nothing ever gets less, and nothing ever becomes more."

5) Is it true that "every existing thing is emptiness"? Why or why not?

*Meditation assignment:* Review, for 15 minutes per day, the practical circumstances you will need in order to see emptiness directly.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Four*

1) Quote the lines from *The Heart Sutra* which indicate the main task to be undertaken during the path of habituation on the track of the greater way.

2) *The Heart Sutra* in this section alludes to the Wheel of Life. Explain how we stop the second link of the wheel, which is "making fresh karma."

3) Explain how we stop the tenth link, of ripe karma.

4) Explain how we stop the twelfth link, of aging and death.

*Meditation assignment:* Each day, try to imagine three situations that you may encounter today or tomorrow where realizing that some person or situation is not coming from its own side (but is rather caused by your own perceptions, forced on you by your past karma) will help keep you from collecting new negative karma.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

Name:
Date:
Grade:

*Homework, Class Five*

1) Describe the perfection of wisdom which warrior saints, and Enlightened Beings, are said in the sutra to practice.

2) Explain each of the following parts of the mantra of *The Heart Sutra*.

*tadya ta =*

*ga-te =*

*ga-te =*

*para ga-te =*

*para sang ga-te =*

*bodhi so ha =*

3) Explain why Lord Buddha, who never speaks a word without great meaning, says "True" three times at the end of the sutra.

4) What we call the "word of the Buddha" comes in three different forms. Which of these forms does *The Heart Sutra* follow?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day reciting the mantra of *The Heart Sutra*, thinking about the actual paths or stages of realization represented by each of the parts of the mantra.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

*Answer Key, Class One*

1) Give the full name of the Heart Sutra in English. (Tibetan track give the name both in Tibetan and in Sanskrit.)

**English:** *The Lady of Conquest, the Exalted Sutra on the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom.*

**Tibetan:** འཕགས་པ་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་མ་ཤེས་རབ་གྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པའི་སྣོད་པོ།  
*pakpa chomden dema sherab kyi parol kyi parol tu jinpay nyingpo*

**Sanskrit:** *Arya Bhagavati Prajnya Paramita Hridayaa*

2) What is the commentary to the *Heart Sutra* which we will be studying; who is its author, and what are his dates?

**The commentary is called *Sunlight on Suchness*; it was written by Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748), a famed textbook writer from Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery who also composed the only commentary on *The Diamond Cutter Sutra*.**

3) What is, according to the commentary, the "heart" or essence of all the teachings of the Buddha, as they exist in the form of realizations? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**It is the worldview based on a knowledge of emptiness.**

སྟོང་ཉིད་རྟོགས་པའི་ལྷ་བ།

*tongnyi tokpay tawa*

4) What did the realized being Nagarjuna say about the need to understand emptiness?

**He said:**

**Anyone who knows not emptiness  
Has no hope of freedom at all.  
Left in darkness, they will circle  
In the prison, six realms of pain.**

5) Give the two meanings of "perfection" in the title of the sutra.

**In one sense, the word "perfection" means "that which *makes* you perfect, referring in this sutra, for example, to the five paths. In another sense, the word "perfection" refers to enlightenment, or the result of following the paths.**

6) Give three meanings conveyed by the words that start the *Heart Sutra*, as they do so many other sutras: "Once I heard this teaching." (Tibetan track write this in Tibetan.)

The implication first is that the speaker has heard the teaching of *The Heart Sutra* directly from Lord Buddha. Secondly, he wishes to indicate the rarity of this teaching by saying it was only given once. Thirdly, the phrase indicates the intellect of Lord Buddha's early disciples, who could learn a sutra by heart upon hearing it once.

འདི་སྐད་བདག་གིས་ཐོས་པ་དུས་གཅིག་ན།

*dike dakgi tupa duchik na*

7) What question starts the sutra, and who asks it, to whom?

**The junior monk Shari Putra, acting almost as a puppet under the influence of Lord Buddha (who is in deep meditation), asks the great warrior Loving Eyes (Avalokiteshvara) the following question: "If any son or daughter of noble family hoped to follow the deep practice of the perfection of wisdom, what would they have to do?"**



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Two*

1) Name the first two of the five paths, and describe what happens at each of them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**The first of the five paths is the "path of accumulation." You have reached it when you've achieved true renunciation. On the Mahayana track, this renunciation is also directed towards others, and you have bodhichitta, or the Wish to achieve enlightenment so you can show others how.**

**The second of the five paths is the "path of preparation"; this means that you are preparing to see emptiness directly. This path is marked by four increasingly deeper intellectual understandings of emptiness.**

ཚོགས་ལམ།

*tsok lam*

སྟོན་ལམ།

*jor lam*

2) Name and describe briefly the five "heaps," or piles of many things that make up a suffering being. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

a) **The heap of physical forms: basically, all the parts of our physical bodies**

གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ།

*suk kyi pungpo*

- b) **The heap of feelings: basically, those feelings which are good, bad, or indifferent**

ཚོར་བའི་ཕུང་པོ།

*tsorway pungpo*

- c) **The heap of discriminations: all the determinations made by our ability to distinguish between things—this is good, that bad; she is tall, he short; this is red, that is green.**

འདུ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ།

*dushe kyi pungpo*

- d) **The heap of "other factors": all the other mental functions after eliminating feelings and discriminations; and parts of us which are neither physical nor mental, such as the idea or concept of "Frank" or "Susan." Note: this heap is defined in the Abhidharma as simply "all those parts to a person not covered in the other four heaps."**

འདུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ།

*duje kyi pungpo*

- e) **The heap of "consciousness": our six kinds of consciousness, from consciousness of what we see to consciousness of what we think.**

རྣམ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོ།

*namshe kyi pungpo*

- 3) In what sense do these five heaps exist; that is, in what sense do they exhibit what we call "dependent origination"?

**They are collections of parts that our minds organize into wholes which are either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, forced to do so by our past karma.**

4) In what sense do these five heaps *not* exist; that is, in what sense do they have emptiness?

**They do not exist "out there, from their own sides." A pen is a pen because my mind, forced to do so by my past karma, interprets a cylinder as a pen. But the pen itself has no "pen-ness," or nature of being a pen from its own side.**

5) Explain the "four profound statements" made in the *Heart Sutra* about the heap of physical forms, and applied to the other four heaps as well.

**a) "Your body is empty": Your body has no nature of being a body from its own side, without its parts being organized into and perceived as a body by your mind, forced to do so by its past karma.**

**b) "Emptiness is your body": Although it's true to say that your body does not have any nature of being a body from its own side, your karma does force you to perceive it as a body, and so you do have a body, albeit not in the way you used to think you had. That is, the perception of a body forced on you by your past karma makes the body real.**

**c) "Emptiness is nothing but your body": Meaning that the emptiness of the body depends upon the body.**

**d) "Your body is nothing but emptiness": The very existence of your body is dependent upon its emptiness.**

6) Is it true that your body could actually *be* emptiness?

**Not at all. Your body is a changing, positive thing which is part of "deceptive" reality. Emptiness is an unchanging, negative thing (an *absence* of something) which is part of ultimate reality.**



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Three*

1) Explain the two characteristics that each thing does have, and then the characteristic that they do not have.

**Things like physical form do possess their own unique or defining characteristics—which in the case of physical form means that they "can be pointed to as being what 'physical form' means" (this being the definition of physical forms like the color red). They also possess more general characteristics such as (again in the case of physical form) being a changing thing, or something which exhibits a lack of a self-nature. But they do not possess any characteristic at all which comes from its own side, which is not a production of our own projections, forced upon us by our past karma.**

2) Some Tibetan versions of *The Heart Sutra* in circulation nowadays read "Nothing is ever impure. Everything is free of impurity." Other versions read, "Nothing is ever impure. Nothing ever becomes pure." Which is correct, and why?

**The latter reading is correct. The reference is to the lack of a self-nature to both the cycle of suffering life, and to nirvana, or freedom from it.**

3) What does the sutra mean when it says, "Nothing ever gets less, and nothing ever becomes more"?

**The mental-afflicted side of existence will get less in us, but not from its own side. The enlightened side of existence will become more in us, but not from its own side. Both will be a product of our perceptions, forced upon us by our past karma.**

4) The lines of the sutra at this point refer to the "three doors to freedom." Name the door which corresponds to each of the following lines, and describe it briefly.

a) "Every existing thing is emptiness."

**This refers to the door to freedom called "emptiness." This door generally relates to the emptiness of things in their essence.**

b) "Nothing has any characteristic of its own. Nothing ever begins. Nothing ever ends. Nothing is ever impure. Nothing ever becomes pure."

**This refers to the door to freedom called "freedom from characteristics." This door generally relates to the emptiness of things as causes.**

c) "Nothing ever gets less, and nothing ever becomes more."

**This refers to the door to freedom called "freedom from wishing." This door generally relates to the emptiness of things as results.**

5) Is it true that "every existing thing is emptiness"? Why or why not?

**All those things which are *not* ultimate reality are not emptiness. It is though true that the only thing which presents itself to the perceptions of a person who is in the act of perceiving emptiness directly is emptiness.**



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Four*

1) Quote the lines from *The Heart Sutra* which indicate the main task to be undertaken during the path of habituation on the track of the greater way.

**The main task is to use what you have learned about the four arya truths during the path of seeing to eliminate your mental afflictions, and to go on further to eliminate even your own aging and death. The lines say:**

**"There is no misunderstanding your world. There is no stopping this misunderstanding, and the same is true all the way up to your old age and your death, and to stopping your old age and your death.**

2) *The Heart Sutra* in this section alludes to the Wheel of Life. Explain how we stop the second link of the wheel, which is "making fresh karma."

**We stop the second link by stopping the first, which is ignorance. We stop thinking that things, and especially the problems of this suffering life, come from their own sides. We realize that they are perceptions forced upon us by our past karma as it dictates how we organize the raw data around us into objects, pleasant or unpleasant. Since we now know that the suffering around us is coming from our own past negative deeds, we refuse to do these kinds of deeds (fresh karma) again.**

3) Explain how we stop the tenth link, of ripe karma.

**We stop the links of craving and grasping, which are both related to thinking of ourselves and our feelings as self-existent, especially when we are close to death.**

4) Explain how we stop the twelfth link, of aging and death.

**We use our wisdom (the opposite of the ignorance in link number one) to stop what causes our fresh karma (in link two) to become the ripe karma in link ten. This prevents normal rebirth (link eleven), and normal aging and death.**



PRACTICE VIII  
The Heart Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Five*

1) Describe the perfection of wisdom which warrior saints, and Enlightened Beings, are said in the sutra to practice.

**This perfection of wisdom is the perception of emptiness by a person whose mind is filled with the Wish for enlightenment.**

2) Explain each of the following parts of the mantra of *The Heart Sutra*.

*tadya ta* = "This is how it is."

*ga-te* = "Go [reach the path of accumulation]."

*ga-te* = "Go [reach the path of preparation]."

*para ga-te* = "Go beyond [both these paths, and reach the path of seeing]."

*para sang ga-te* = "Go beyond [this too], in a perfect way, [and reach the path of habituation]."

*bodhi so ha* = "And reach to enlightenment."

3) Explain why Lord Buddha, who never speaks a word without great meaning, says "True" three times at the end of the sutra.

**With the first "True," he is telling Loving Eyes that the bodhisattva has taught the meaning of emptiness well, and truly. With the second "true" he is expressing his pleasure at this accurate teaching. And with the third "true" he is indicating to other disciples that this is a teaching which they may consider authoritative, and one which they should rightly follow.**

4) What we call the "word of the Buddha" comes in three different forms. Which of these forms does *The Heart Sutra* follow?

**All three forms of the word of the Buddha are found in this one sutra. The description of the scene at the beginning of the sutra, as well as the description at the end of what happened after Lord Buddha taught the sutra, are what we called the "permitted" word, meaning that Lord Buddha has in advance permitted such comments to be added to one of his sutras.**

**The "word that comes from the blessing of the Buddha" is found in both the question posed by Shariputra and the answer given by Loving Eyes.**

**When Lord Buddha himself says "True, true," this is the "word from Lord Buddha's own lips," which is the third form that the word takes.**



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