

Heart Sutra Study
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[Chanting}

Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha
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Okay. Emptiness or suchness, or you can just call it in a more affirmative fashion the universe. The universe is the stage, and so the universe is the answer. Suchness. So the, there are seven subsections in this 14 line sutra. And let's say seven. Some **scholars** say there are eight sections that, including the invocation. Let's say there are seven acts to be performed. So in other words, the great Prajnaparamita Sutra, starting with the Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines and in Sixteen Thousand Lines and all this, now finally reduced to this one page sutra, Heart Sutra, with seven acts in it. So, and how this great Prajnaparamita unfolds itself fully in this, you know, brief and terse sutra, Heart Sutra, in such a distillation.

Now, the Avalokitesvara, the great, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, the protagonist, now is disappearing. So we did, there was, here, there is this grand opening scene here. "The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, from the deep practice of Prajnaparamita, perceived the emptiness of all five skandhas and delivered all beings from their suffering." That's the first act, grand opening. And then the second act is the famous, the dialectics of emptiness begins there. First stage, and second stage, and third stage, which we did.

Now, this last, third stage, last stage, it's like climbing. It's like journeying on the desert and climbing this big huge mound of, like sand dunes, you see. And the third one, the last one is the most difficult one to climb, you know. Many people die. So anyway, that overcame, so the three, called dialectics of emptiness, and then finally we are here. The fifth act. "The bodhisattva holds onto nothing but Prajnaparamita." Now here, this bodhisattva is now, the Avalokitesvara would appear again a little later on, but at this stage, just showing the three, these big mounds of sands. There's nothing there, completely abandoned. No soul in sight, there are no birds up in the sky, and no trees, no grasses growing, nothing. **That was a particularly difficult one. So now finally** the person journeying in the desert is brought to Prajnaparamita. After this series of negations, one would expect maybe there's nothing left. Maybe just nihilism would prevail. But instead, one is brought to the ultimate reality, which is Prajnaparamita. So now emptiness, sunyata, turns into Prajnaparamita. It's called embodiment of full emptiness. "The bodhisattva holds onto

nothing but Prajnaparamita. Therefore his mind is clear of any delusive hindrance. Without hindrance there is no fear. Away from all perverted views he reaches final nirvana.”

Let's go to the translation from original Sanskrit. So, “Therefore then, O Sariputra,” that's page 141. “Therefore then, O Sariputra, owing to a bodhisattva's indifference to any kind of personal attainment,” that means, “any kind of personal attainment” means both no attainment and no non-attainment. So completely indifferent, “he dwells as one who has relied solely on the perfection of wisdom.”

Now, this is full emptiness, embodiment of full emptiness. In other words, realization of full emptiness. “In the absence of an objective support to his thought, he has not been made to tremble. He has overcome what can upset, in the end sustained by nirvana.” Okay, that's, that's part. Now let's go back to our translation.

So here, hindrance and no fear, so all this while anxiety would build up. They may finally, there would be nothing left. You would just fall into an abyss. So that's, there is assurance here. There is no anxiety. It says, “no trembling.” Because it does not lead to nihilism but it leads to perfect wisdom, perfection of wisdom. So it's this perfect, perfection of wisdom is in an identity of a host and guest, in an identity of a subject and object.

This one comes from the Faith on Mind, “In one emptiness, the two are not distinguished, and each contains in itself all the ten thousand things.” “Away from all perverted views he reaches final nirvana.” So it's, now, the pathfinder, or the journeyman, finally he becomes a bodhisattva. Out of the desert, this bodhisattva, his mind is finally clear of any delusive hindrance, knowing there was nothing to rely on, and without obstruction, so completely unobstructed by anything at all, that's emptiness. And so without hindrance, without obstacles, there is no fear. Away from all perverted views, so out of ignorance. Out of dualism, he reaches final nirvana. And then, Buddhas, see this is the past bodhisattvas and Buddhas. “All Buddhas of past, present, and future,” in three periods of time, “through faith in Prajnaparamita, attain to the highest perfect enlightenment.”

Now, it means whether the person attains nirvana or the person attains to the highest perfect enlightenment, it's called attainment with no attainment. So that means, all of a sudden, out of the obstacles, out of the desert, the nirvana or enlightenment is all there. Over here, go to the, go back to page 141, so, “All those who appear as Buddhas in the three periods of time, through having relied on the perfection of wisdom, they fully awake to the utmost right and perfect enlightenment.” Now here, bodhisattvas, Buddhas, enlightenment, it's all, it's the, the root verb is Budh. It means, has three meanings. It has waking yourself up. And then awakening others. And then being wakeful, being awake or being wakeful. So unenlightened life, or life helplessly caught in the wheel of samsara, is compared to sleeping. Sleeping in the, in the slumber, in the chamber of delusion. Like dreaming, daydreaming.

So now, in Zen this attainment without attainment is sometimes, ... There was one Zen master, he just woke up. So he attained enlightenment. And so his disciples, they were so excited and asked him, "how are you now?" He said, "As miserable as before."

(As what?)

As miserable as before. Attainment without attainment. There is no sign, no sign of attainment. It's complete freedom. And yet another one said, upon being asked the same question, "My eyes are horizontal, but my nose vertical." And yet, and actually this master, he was testing his disciples and then, he just woke up from his nap. And then when he saw his disciple coming in asked, calling them by their name, the first one, he said, "I just had a dream." You know, he took nap so, I just had a dream. "Do you know what my dream was?" He said, "Yes, venerable sir." And he went out and he brought a basin full of cold water, because he just woke up so the next thing to do is to wash his face. So indeed, indeed, you understand my dream. Waking up. You understand waking up. And then when he saw another disciple coming in, he asked, "Well I just had a dream. Do you know what my dream was?" "Yes, sir." And he went out and brought a towel. And so, waking, so it's, unenlightened life is, in Buddhism it's often said dreaming, or sleeping, in the chamber of delusion.

Now, this, "utmost right and perfect" means, it's, the Buddha's enlightenment compared to the enlightenment of bodhisattvas or pratyekabuddhas is more complete. That's what it means, utmost right and perfect enlightened, more, full enlightenment.

Now finally, therefore, "Know then the Prajnaparamita is the Great Dharani." This is in Chinese translation, but in Sanskrit original it's just a mantra. "Know then the Prajnaparamita is the Great Dharani, the radiant peerless mantram, the utmost supreme mantram, which is capable of allaying all pain. This is true beyond all doubt."

Now here, it's, although invisible, the Avalokitesvara shows up again, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion. Now, by now, after these five acts of great performance with all its implications, and hidden meanings, and illusions, and all that, which we are not familiar. I mean, in those days, when this was written, I mean, this was like, common factors to this guy who are reading this. Here, like still, there would be still a lot of people who watched this show, watched this performance, or play. And they are still unenlightened, still puzzled.

So, then now, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, now compassion is [unclear]. All these are, now is, are, Prajnaparamita. That's wisdom personified. That's Prajnaparamita, bodhisattva that's as mother of all Buddhas, as creator of all Buddhas. That's what it says here. "All Buddhas of past, present and future, through faith in Prajnaparamita attain to ..." So it's Prajnaparamita as mother of all Buddhas.

But still they are puzzled. So then this bodhisattva would not sit idle, would not allow these people to despair. So he comes up with a mantra to help them. To bridge the gap between the

present state of mind of these people and then the practice of great Prajnaparamita. So he comes out again, she comes out again, with a helping hand. So it's, compassion plays here.

Some could have been dead by now because in the, it said, like, there's these birds that fly in the high sky and the fishes that swim in the deep ocean. The water and air are not visible. The water is not visible to the fish swimming in the vast ocean, in the deep ocean, and the air and the vastness of the sky is not visible to the birds flying in high sky. If these were visible they would...so that's why, means, it's also used as, that's, such is emptiness. How you can, once you realize, once you become at one, it's oneness, you become being alone with itself, with emptiness, then you're completely free to perform the manifold acts. Or even multiplicity of life. So the mantra is, his mantra is magical formula. But here it's called allayer of suffering. It's called "allaying all pain" here, "capable of allaying all pain."

There's this, speaking of the desert, **Xuanzang**, the great Chinese monk traveler, who traveled to India in 7th century in search for Dharma in the form of scriptures. He was a scholarly monk, he was a scholar monk, so he made a vow before he set out. Unless he reaches, until he reaches India, the land of Buddha, he would never retreat no matter what happens in his life, dead or alive, would never retreat, he would never retrogress from his journey. He would always go forward. Not even five steps he would retreat, you know. Travel backward. But what happened was, before he started his journey, took him several months to prepare himself for that journey. In those days many people died, you know. Before they, many monks simply perished before they reached India. Took him, you know, even, more than a year or two years. His journey on foot. In the Gobi Desert and the Himalayas. The whole Central Asia. Silk Road.

So when he was staying at this temple **Xian** in, just outside, in the outskirts of capital of China, this was Tang Dynasty, and he found a monk from India. And he was very sick, and he was left alone unattended. And he had to meet this deadline for his journey, so he was really busy gathering things together. But he couldn't just leave the temple, seeing this monk seriously ill without attendant. So just for a little while he completely forgot about his journey and he just threw himself and took care of this monk for a week or so. Just concentrated on caring for him. And, so by the virtue of his caring, this Indian monk, he felt much better and with tears running in his cheeks said, "Well, you know, no words can appropriately thank you, you know, for what you have done to me." Then he took out a small Sanskrit book, you know. Just a couple of pages. And, all I have is this and this may help you. And then told him how to recite. It turned out to be Heart Sutra in Sanskrit. So, this will, you know, provide you with protection when you run into adversities.

So that's, and then he was reciting this while traveling. He had faith in what this Indian monk said. So he was journeying in Gobi Desert. Finally, there's this five outposts, Chinese frontiers, now, in Xinjiang, in today's. So, and then finally past there there's no sign of life. It's just desert, it's Gobi Desert. And just, he was alone with his horse and he was carrying enough water. But what happened was he dropped the water and lost all his water supply. And then, I mean, desert, there's no end in sight, would take him several days to cross this desert. All he can see was there

was no birds flying overhead, no insects crawling. Just big sand dunes made by winds. And all he can see, all road is the white bones. People who are dead, animal and traveling dead. That's the only sign of the, you know, path there. So it's very scary. And now he's without water. So in a moment, he had to go back and get the water at least. So he turned back, and then after a while he remembered his vow. And, so, well, I would rather die than, you know, go back to the lighthouse. So he proceeded and he started seeing mirage. You know these, all these goblins and, you know, the evil doers, they would all show up. All, you know, sometimes in march of caravan coming towards him. So, but he would recite. Once he started reciting the Heart Sutra they would disappear in a moment. But anyway there's these stories. It's crossing the desert.

Also there is another image, you can see that, that's, well in Zen training, in Buddhist training too, you never know how far you have progressed. It's just like crossing the desert. You don't know, you know, how far is the end, the end of the road. How far is left before you reach the oasis. You never, you can't tell. So, I mean, you get scared, it can get scary. And then, say you crossed already half, you may have even crossed two thirds of it, but you don't know. You can go back, you see. It happens. So even you die, you perish while you going back, while returning. So you could be even very close, even 99%, but you never know. So it's, you recite the Heart Sutra to help you cross the desert. So it's, anyway we'll see what this Kwan Seum Bosal says of this.

So it's, speaking of this mantra, it gives you a spiritual protection. It's, of course the power of the mantra derives from it's, this mantra sums up, okay. It's, "Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha." So like it's six phrases, six lines. In these six lines it sums up the whole Prajnaparamita Sutra, you know, it packs up. So you see, the sutra is further reduced down to this mantra. Which is in, say, truth by itself.

So, okay never mind the opening remark, grand opening. The second act, that's "Gate." It starts, the, this, like, thunderbolt of the statement, "Form is emptiness." That's "Gate." Gone.

And then continues. And then the third act, "All dharmas empty." "Gate." So, "Gate, Gate."

And then the fourth act, the entire fourth act is, "Paragate." Completely gone beyond. That's the last stage of the dialects of emptiness. Gone beyond. Self being liberated.

And then the embodiment of full emptiness is "Parasamgate." Act five.

And then, "All Buddhas of past, present, future, through faith in Prajnaparamita." That's, "Bodhi." Bodhi.

And then finally, "Know then the Prajnaparamita is the Great Dharani, the radiant peerless mantram," and all that. So, "Svaha." That's the shout of joy, the final release.

So that sums up the whole Heart Sutra.

So, “Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha.”

You repeat that. It’s, I don’t know exactly how **Xuanzang**, maybe he made, whether he read the whole sutra or just says, “Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha.” That’s Heart Sutra. So, of course this is like ingenious, how the Buddhists, they got [unclear]...

(Sunim, what does Parasamgate [unclear]?)

“Completely.” Para means, “Completely gone.” You see, Paramita is the same thing. It’s crossing, whether it’s desert or whether it’s ocean, it’s, like it’s, the ocean view is, you know, crossing over from this shore to the other shore. So that’s the Heart, we view Heart Sutra as crossing from this shore, from this shore of samsara, from suffering, and to the other shore, to nirvana. Crossing over. That crossing over is called samsara, crossing over the samsara to the other shore. And then, desert is another. So, well the wondrous effect of the Heart Sutra lies in that it opens. It opens enlightenment.

Now this mantra, as being the truth, it’s likened to nirvana. Whether it is the other shore or, has all the traditional attributes of a Buddha. That means, you know, having faith in the mantra is like you are potentially Buddha yourself. And then, from there the mantra derives its power from the perfection of wisdom.

Now, the Heart Sutra, Hridaya Sutra, is also viewed as Dharmachakra. Dharmacakrapravartana Sutra. That is, the Dharmacakrapravartana Sutra was initially the Four Holy Truths. It’s called sutra by which the Wheel of Dharma, the Wheel of the Dharma has been set rolling. That’s the first sermon at Benares. Which the Shakyamuni Buddha delivered.

So now, as I mentioned in the second class, so one way is that the Four Holy Truths are here in this Heart Sutra. That is, in the second act, I’m sorry, in the first act. “The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion from the deep practice of Prajna perceived the emptiness of all five skandhas and delivered all beings from their suffering.” So the first Holy Truth is dukkha, the truth of dukkha, is ill, or suffering, or pain. So, but in the Heart Sutra, instead of seeing suffering, or instead of seeing personalities suffering, or suffering creatures, all the bodhisattva sees is five skandhas. And *upadana* skandhas, for that matter, that’s groups of attachments. Because five skandhas constitute what is generally known as personalities, persons, beings. So instead of seeing beings, or persons, or personalities, or self, others, sees just five skandhas, **created** of five skandhas. **Created** of, you know, the *upadana* skandhas, that’s attachments. That is, the five skandhas are corporeal form, and perception, sensation, and impulses, and consciousness.

So now, this craving or desire attaches itself to five skandhas. And attract them to itself. Thereby making of them object of suffering, object of attachment, and bring out sufferings. It’s called *upadana* skandha. And that forms the ninth of the Twelve Links of Chain of Dependent Arising. And then finally, you know, takes possession of the womb in next life. So that’s craving and attachment.

And so, here, instead of these things, all he sees is **creation** of five skandhas. Skandhas of attachments. And even then he saw them empty. The five skandhas are void of any realities. Emptiness. So that's how Heart Sutra understands the first Holy Truth.

Now the second truth is the truth of the cause of suffering, the cause. Now, since it's emptiness, it has not even originated. So that's the third stage, third act. And then the third Holy Truth is cessation, *nirodha*, cessation of suffering. It can be cured. But cured or not, again, it has not originated. Just emptiness prevails. And then finally there is the, the cure, the regimen. So the Eightfold Path, that's the fourth Holy Truth. So instead of the Eightfold Path as the way out of the suffering, it just gives Prajnaparamita, and bodhisattva, and Buddhas. That's the Four Holy Truths.

Now what it, what it does is the, when Shakyamuni Buddha, when he delivered his first sermon, that's the Four Holy Truths and the Middle Way, the Eightfold Path, that was the turning of the Wheel of the Dharma. That's the first turning of the Wheel of the Dharma, the beginning of Buddhism. But now, with the rise of this new movement, Mahayana movement, that's this, what these people are saying there is, this is the second turning. So that's, the Heart Sutra is, you know, they broadly say Dharmacakrapravartana Sutra. They felt they are, and this is their second turning of the Wheel of Dharma. To start the new Buddhist movement.

And then the implication here is, the first turning, that is Four Holy Truths, it was provisional teaching. Not fully developed. It's still primitive. So this is higher teaching, more advanced teaching. So what they do is, so the word bodhisattva appears first. Not Arhat. The idea of Theravada Buddhism, well Hinayana Buddhism, was Arhat. So they, you know, with bodhisattvas as the heroes, as the ideal type, they called their movement Mahayana. And the rest, the other movement they called Hinayana. This is much bigger. "Maha" means, you know, it's also, implied in this statement is we care for people. Lay people. So, helping the society, or altruism. It's foremost in their mind.

So, also you can see here, hidden, couched in these lines, you can see how to bring it together. That is, the wisdom side of the training and compassionate side of the training. How to bring it together. How to make them work together. Buddhism in retreat and Buddhism out in the world.

So the, again, the, the answer, one of the answers this provides is the way it's, Prajnaparamita, it's, after all these denials, now it's, denials means, it's, it's the root evil, the root villain is ignorance. That's the first in the order of Twelve Links of the Chain of Dependent Arising. So to, and from ignorance people manufacture false identities and rely on these false identities. So, and they call it, it's thought coverings. They use different language like impediments, obstacles, or thought coverings, and all that. Means all ignorance. It's, the, suchness, the truth, the truth by itself, that which is just so, that which is just itself, that is suchness, the truth, or Prajnaparamita, or emptiness. It's there. But it's overclouded, it's covered up with ignorance.

So after, if you work out your ignorance, in other words, waking up, waking up from your dream. Then the truth is right there, right in front of you. So it's over, and over, and over again.

So it says truth, oneness, or *tathata*, it all means the same thing, or just an empty circle. And here, mantra captures this. So even though you cannot understand all these doctrines denied and their empty nature, just if you work on this mantra, having faith.

Now, if I compare this Heart Sutra to our Wednesday evening membership sitting, then first you arrive at the temple. And that's, and then you arrive at the temple and you do Yebul. That's the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, "From the deep practice of Prajnaparamita perceived the emptiness of all five skandhas and delivered all beings from their suffering." So it's, if you bring the right attitude.

This I saw, I mentioned this yesterday at the end of, after my Dharma talk. Couple of days ago a lady came for visit and she was from this contemporary, museum of contemporary art. And the reason why she came was apparently they built a big museum last year, new museum, and then they're expanding their programs. So she's going to teach painting class this fall. So she wanted to bring her students. Somehow she attracted to building, or maybe somebody mentioned, and anyways she showed up and she wanted to bring her students here, but she didn't quite know for what, you know. And, so she wanted me to spend a couple of hours with them, but she didn't know what I can do for them, you know. But anyway, since she was here she wanted to see the temple. So I took her upstairs and then when she entered our *seonbang*, there she stood there, you know, for quite a while. She looked almost stunned. And then she kept saying, "This is powerful, it's a very powerful place." And then finally she turned to me and asked if people who come here, if they feel the same, you know, they feel the power, power place. It's, sometimes I feel that when I visit some *pyramids*, not all the *pyramids*. I had this feeling when I first visited *Oaxaca*, one of the *pyramids* in *Oaxaca* Valley.

It's, well if you visit temples and there is a place, like these sacred places, called power places, doesn't have to be, you know, established temple structure. Could be some place simply called a meditation rock. Sometimes it's not easily accessible because, you know. And then, usually it commands beautiful view, you know. Sometimes overlooking the ocean. There, it's called a meditation rock because it's, over the centuries, many centuries, it's just a big boulder, but it has a very flat surface. So over the centuries the traveling monks, sometimes famous monks, they came and they spent time there meditating. For a season or for three month period. So why then the, you know, the surface is so smooth, it's called a meditation rock. And if you sit there you feel the power. So like, this place, I mean, this place has not been around, but each time we come we contribute, through our cultivation, through our attitude, through our devotions, we contribute to the power of this place, the spiritual healing power.

So anyway, when you arrive and when you enter this place, and that's, so it's, usually your attachments or your melodrama or your defilements are hopefully reduced. You feel the calm, and it's just like renunciation. Complete renunciation is like emptiness. With complete

renunciation, with some renunciation, with fewer thoughts, with courage of mind. So that's the emptiness of all five skandhas and delivered all beings from their suffering. If you're not completely delivered at least your suffering is reduced.

And then, it's, the second act. That's first sitting. And your body-mind sitting. As form, but experiencing emptiness. Just sitting. Just body-mind sitting. Means, "Form is emptiness, emptiness form." And the same is true, not just form is emptiness, well all this sensations, and perceptions, and impulses. And then you have second sitting. "O Sariputra, all dharmas are empty. They are not born nor annihilated. They are not defiled nor immaculate. They do not increase nor decrease." It's going beyond. And then, after good walking meditation, after vigorous walking meditation, third sitting. That's what this, the emptiness first stage, emptiness second stage, emptiness and third stage.

And then, during this third sitting, you come for interview. And that's a very important practice. It's waiting for interview. First you're waiting for interview. That's actually the best time you can practice. You become usually very fully alert. While sitting in meditation you can still daydream, your mind wandering. But when you line up for interview your mind is not wandering. You pay full attention, with *hapjang*. Carrying concentration and you're *hapjang*. And then that's embodiment. Full embodiment, embodiment of full emptiness. So there's no expectation, there's no fear. Just going for interview. So that's, that's bodhisattva stage.

So each stage is awakening. So you experience, at each stage you experience your awakening self. So while waiting for interview. And then, finally when you enter the interview room, you enter as a bodhisattva. No anxiety, no fear. Just show your no-mind or true self. True mind is no-mind. And then, after interview it's, actually the interview process is the highlight of membership sittings. It's like Buddha meeting Buddha. Eye to eye, and mind to mind, heart to heart. You just cross the desert, and you tell the experience. And then, after interview, well we recite Heart Sutra. And then, well it's, you take the mantra with you back to the world.

Any questions?

(In the title it's the Maha Prajnaparamita and then there's Mahayana Buddhism. What does *maha* mean?)

Maha means great. Mahayana means Great Vehicle or Large Vehicle. Also they use the word *maha* as, sometimes it's kind of more, like, decorative.

(I thought there was a connection between the two because this is the beginning of the Mahayana movement.)

Yeah. Well there is a connection. It's called Mahasattva, the bodhisattva is called Mahasattva, Great Beings. It's sometimes called, in translation called [unclear], means, "Ordinary being with a great heart." So it's clear, for ordinary Mahayana Buddhist movement...

[side A ends, side B begins]

...beings, either lay or monastic. But, ordinary beings, but with a great heart. So it means empty heart is great heart. Yes?

(What is the Great Dharani?)

It means Great Mantras. It means, *dharani* means, “All embracing formula.” So it’s, whether *dharani* or mantra, it has to be sung, chanted, or spoken, or murmured, or whispered, or mumbled. So it’s much more tangible, right? If you say just emptiness it’s not tangible enough, right? So now they got the bodhisattva, out of great compassionate heart, you know, think of you and say, you know, here, this is much more tangible. This is much more eloquent than speechless, I mean, you know, silence. I mean, people have difficulty relating to silence, right? Or emptiness and things like that. So it’s something you can play with, you see. So you can say it out loud, and sing it, and murmur it, and, you know, person like **Xuanzang**, you know, crossing the desert. Something you can handle when you begin to see, like, hallucinations. When you dream, right? It’s all these evil shapes and, you know, imagined, you know.

(That reminds me, you were talking about the mirages in the desert and I’ve read that in Japanese, there’s a Japanese word for it called **Makyō**. Is that the same thing that happens during the process of...)

You can take it that way, yeah. Although it’s a little different. It has something to do with support. I mean, it’s our self. I mean, there is this, if you read this sutra there is a strong belief that there are no separate beings, see? So what we think as our self is a spurious entities. So one way to look at this sutra is, of course it’s, it’s now captured in this mantra, but, I mean, the Zen folks, they would say this sutra is no other than your own single mind. It’s a manifestation of your single mind, true mind. But then still others would say this sutra is no other than yourself. Now, what is this self? That’s, they say, “no self, true self,” it’s almost like playing with words but really it means this Self with capital “S” is, it says, what is is, this beyond, it’s Parasamgate. You know, Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate. This para means beyond. Now there is beyond and non-beyond. So, non-beyond is, there is suffering. So this is wisdom that has gone beyond. So self that has gone beyond. So self that has gone beyond is just empty self, but still it’s true self. So there it’s, it’s something like for socially engaged Buddhism, well maybe Buddhists, they have to come up with a Buddhist social self for the mundane world or something.

So you have gone beyond and you come back, and wrestle with the ten thousand things. With great compassionate heart. But this compassion is always based in emptiness, oneness, suchness. Unsupported. Without props and without supports. Because these supports and props, these are fictitious things. That create delusion. So in other words, in all these three stages of emptiness, actually nothing is excluded except ignorance. So you have to, you have to, you have to cross this, these big sand dunes. Just to become free from your ignorance. It’s called, the sand dunes is called emptiness. That’s like sitting, or chanting, or reciting the mantra. So at least you got the mantra now.

So you can see, well if we, this as a play, so there are, what, five acts or seven acts and at the end all this bunch of people who have finally crossed and sit, sit down and chanting, you know, “Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate,” you know. And then “Bodhi, Svaha.” It’s, bodhi is awakening, enlightenment. Svaha means, it’s, well, “All hail.” Anyway it’s, you know, joy, you know. Shout of joy, you know. Ecstatic, you know, sound of...Svaha, but just saying svaha is better. No need to translate.

Yes.

(You said that Theravada Buddhists are socially engaged but not [unclear]...)

No, I didn’t say that.

(Oh, okay.)

All Buddhists are engaged.

(Okay.)

Yes.

(When we practice we focus on using the counting breaths and so forth, that seems to me to be rather an affirmation of the self rather than going beyond. [unclear]. Is there opposition between breathing and being so I’m breathing, I’m doing this, and what you’ve been talking about [unclear]?)

There are a lot of contradictions. There are a lot of contradictions. But it’s, there are a lot of violations of ordinary Western logic. So it’s just going beyond. So it’s, you’ll see a lot of contradictions. And Buddhists, they are not afraid of contradictions. In other words, it’s, is and is not, being or non-being, it’s no problem to Buddhists. It’s, emptiness means, it’s identity. Or if you like, mystical identity of yes and no. You just, it’s a non-issue. In Buddhism. That’s liberating, eh?

(Laughs)

But it’s, say, okay when you sit, when you sit and you struggle to sit or struggle to practice, it’s this, okay there is a conscious I, or unconscious I. But after all, you just sit. You just practice. You just eat and you just shit. You just do it. You just become the doer, for the sake of doing.

(Well if I sit and expect to get something out of it, I’m making a mistake.)

You’ll never make it.

(Laughter)

([Unclear])

You'll be buried alive in the desert. It's clearly said, "There's nothing. Nothing to attain, nothing to expect." Just another neurosis. You just forget it, you know.

Yes.

(Did I read some, about the Dalai Lama and the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion? Am I wrong there?)

Yeah it's, in Tibetan tradition, this does not apply to other Buddhist traditions, you know. Actually, I don't believe in that but, well I own a Tibetan tradition so he's, you know, reincarnated body of **Chenrezig**. That's the Tibetan word for Avalokitesvara, bodhisattva, so. It's like a patron saint, you know? Like in the West, you have a patron saint, right? It's something like that, so he's a patron saint for Tibet. That's, you know, Avalokitesvara. It's this, this reincarnated [unclear], this business, this is not Buddhism, it's Hinduism. It's not Buddhism. So one explanation for that is, some time in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, I don't know, maybe 15th or 14th, 15th or 16th centuries, the, Buddhism became powerful. There was monasteries, the Buddhist monasteries. In all four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism they became, like, kind of feudal lord. The abbot had, you know, immense power. In land holdings and all that. So it's like power house in their own district. So they wanted to, so since so much power was concentrated in the abbot of the monastery, it's like lord, it was, it's just like power politics. If anything happens to abbot, people would compete and fight to succeed the abbot, to seize the power. So to ensure the continuity of the succession of this powerful position, I think they, you know, this is one theory, they created this reincarnation stuff, you see. Through elaborate rituals and all that.

So it's very unique, the endemic to Tibetan Buddhism, we don't see this in any other Buddhist countries. Well, I mean, in Zen tradition if you die you are dead, that's all. Why, you know, going around and searching for, you know, that's, that's delusion, you know. Buddha didn't, like, do that. Buddha is just, you know, cremation, just, you know, ashes, just scatter and that's all. It's like, as if, you know, you go into some kind of storehouse and go and send a search party.

(Well they talked about over many lifetimes sometimes, too.)

Mhm. Oh yeah, that's relevant, that's. You don't believe in many lifetimes?

(Sure, but I don't know...)

Well, in different forms, though. I mean, it's not like you're, you know, I mean, you survive as a soul, you know, going from life to life, not like that, in many different forms. Right?

(Separate forms? Separate...)

Here again, here. That's the trouble, you believe in your separate...

(That's why I have trouble with reincarnation and separate lifetimes.)

It's called rebirth, in Buddhism it's called rebirth. There's a difference between rebirth and reincarnation.

(Does reincarnation signify something individual?)

Reincarnation means there is an entity, you know.

(That's you.)

Yeah, there's, either in the form of a soul or whatever. So...

(That passes from one...)

Yeah, yeah. So if you, like for instance, say you die and you go to the underworld, right? Then when you see your uncle, you know, or your father, who died ahead of you, you cannot recognize that. Oh, you know, father, how are you? But in Buddhism you cannot recognize.

(Even in the context of what we usually think about our life, I mean, it's just, you know, if you get rid of the idea of some sort of abiding being then all your life is this with this sort of combination of skandhas and all this stuff just sort of, like, going on and on, there's a sort of pattern to it that makes...)

Mhm, mhm.

(Sunim, I have a question about what happens when people get to the other side of the Gobi Desert. I mean, is the way they are...)

Inside?

(Inside?)

Inside Gobi Desert, did you say?

(No, the other side.)

The other side.

(You know, it's like, how people come out, I mean, this seems like, you know, "Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha" seems really joyous, you know. And then you've got this guy that says, you know, still miserable. You know, and is that just a function of, like, sort of, like some sort of residue from your personality before, or...?)

No, that means no sign of attainment. No sign of, no trace. If, you know, I mean, it's attainment, no attainment, no non-attainment, or attainment, non-attainment, there is, you can be attached to what you have achieved, to what you have, it's notorious.

(It's what?)

It's notorious. I mean, so it means no sign, that's, you know.

(So some bodhisattvas are happy and some are kind of grumpy, and...)

Well it's, yeah. It's in the...

(Did you say yes?)

Individual characteristics and...it's, basically the Buddhist path is, it's uncovering, discovering, you know. It's covered up, the truth is covered up with your ignorance, with your delusion. So it's like discovering, uncovering. It's like, you know, it's sun coming out of the clouds. Does not say it's my sun or your sun, it's just light. Here is the problem, it's because this thing has to be experience so it's, how much to say it, and what to say, that's, there's always problem with this. Because otherwise, you know, you are spoiled before you cross the desert.

Well it's, you feel, I feel as miserable as before or my nose is vertical and all that is, it's, again, you know, you expect something will big thing. So in Buddhism, in Zen, they always say that never seek sainthood. Just get rid of your ignorance, that's all there is. So it's, trying to seek sainthood would be very wrongful thing. So you have two deluded eyes but just make sure you have one single Wisdom Eye, you see. Since that can see straight. So basically it comes down to making simple and clear, so that you could see. That which is just so, that which is just itself. Suchness.

There's this **Hyewol** Sunim, and he was very famous Zen master. And there was this, called three moons. There's **Hyewol** Sunim, there was, his Dharma name was Wisdom Moon, so **Hyewol**. And then his Dharma brother was Suwol, that's Water Moon. And then there was **Mangong** Sunim, but his Dharma name was [unclear], that's Moon Faced. So those three of them, great Zen masters. They, **Mangong** Sunim was the youngest one, he was, I think, fifteen years younger than **Hyewol** Sunim, but they all trained together under the same master. Called three moon masters.

Now, **Hyewol** Sunim and, after attaining enlightenment, well he just, he was, he was making sandal, straw sandals, and he would take it to market and sell them and, you know, just very humble work, you know. He was not even living in the monastery. So when he attained enlightenment, just he continued to make sandals, there's nothing special.

But word got out and then one day this beggar woman came by, said, well, she saw this monk just living by himself making sandals and, straw sandals and, she thought it would be nice if I live with him, you know, help him, you know. So "Can I live with you?" Said, "Sure." So they kind of, you know, leading, kind of, married life. So she was there, she would do her thing and he would do his thing.

And then this **Tongdosa**, which is a very famous monastery, they needed a new Zen master. So they learned this **Hyewol** Sunim became enlightened, and so, you know, but nobody knew where he was so they sent search parties to find out. And eventually a few monks located him in this really backwater countryside and, in a very, this dingy cottage and living with this woman. So, and then they came and made prostrations, nine prostrations. "Master, you know, now, you know, you cannot live like this and we, you know, we came, you know, we'd like to invite you, you know, to serve as a Zen master at **Tongdosa** temple."

"What!? Will you get lost?"

And, but they all said, but they stayed on, well no, well, you know, "We would not leave unless you come with us."

"But what about my wife!?"

And, so finally they waited for one week and he showed no sign of coming. So finally by force they took him, they carried him on their backs. And then said, really crying, "My poor wife, what would happen to her?" And, you know, crying and all that, and, you know, boo-hoo and all that. And he was carried to the temple by force. And then he was installed and then, then nothing happened, and then, you know, then, everything's, no boo-hoos, anything.

So, but three days later, the monks who, you know, brought him to temple said, "Well, master, what, you know, do you still have, do you still think about your wife?"

"What wife?"

And then, and then he would carry, you know, usually he, you know, he would go and, since he cannot, you know, he was told that Zen master cannot make straw sandals anymore, that's, you know, so then, "What can I do now?" So then he would go and pick, you know, pine cones, you know, as a fire starter. So he would go around and picking pine cones, you know.

And then this governor of the district came to see him, and this is during the Japanese colonial rule, and then, so and then the monks came and then, “Oh the governor came to see you?”

“Oh, governor?”

Now, “You governor? Did you have lunch? And you go and have lunch.” And then he went to pick, you know, pine cones.

That’s empty mind, you know. I mean, you can cry and boo-hoo, but still no attachment. No attachment, no attainment. And he, he left many episodes. And he was living at this **Hwaeomsa** [unclear]. And then the village, they knew, this is a wonderful Zen master so they came up with a scheme and then they came and talked to him and said, well, you see, there is this, I wrote about this in my handbook.

It’s, this very fertile land is this, what you call, wet fields, you know, where people grow rice. It’s very valuable lands. But something like, three acres of land. Three acres is, that’s, it’s a small country, it means, three acres of cultivated land means, tilled land, it means a lot. And, actually, I think five acres. So there’s one, master, you know, “Could you sell this to us?” And then, and then, “You have all this space of wasteland, where it’s very, you know, nothing would grow and all these pebbles and, well there is a lot of, you know, there are about ten acres over there, too.”

He said, “That made sense. Well, you know, so, well this, you know, okay you can have that. But how much? Will you just bring me some money?”

And so, something like, he sold the five acres of this very good fertile land for something like, you know, twenty dollars or something like that. So when the Abbot and when the monastic community learned that, they were stunned. And they all complained, and, you know. Just what a stupid thing he did. And then he said.

So there was, it’s a meeting, you know, to discuss about that. Because the whole monastic community got upset. And then, you know, some monks were saying, “You know, master, you did a really **stupid** thing.”

He said, “Me? Doing stupid things? I think you’re stupid?”

He said, “Why so, why so master?”

“Well, that’s five acres, that’s, they took it, so it’s over there whether you own it or they owe it, the land is over there. But now we have extra ten acres, you know. So we got much more than we sold. So you’re stupid.”

So that's true, I mean, whether the monastery owned, the village owned, the land didn't go anywhere. It's there, you know. So now, they are going to cultivate ten acres. So it means we became that richer, you know.

Okay.

Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha

Thank you, thank you.

(Thank you very much, Sunim.)