

**Heart Sutra Study**  
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Some schools of Buddhism, the suttas, the sutras, studied diligently by the members of the monastic order but from the tradition I come from, we were encouraged to experience the healing power that come with each scripture, each sutra. So, for instance, this Prajnaparamita literature, see Heart Sutra, Heart Sutra too has its healing power. Like this, the import of scripture, they usually reveal the teachings of compassion, and wisdom, and also *upaya*, or skillful means, in conveying the teachings.

So it's, while they're encouraged while studying, even while studying, people are encouraged to experience the healing power. Sometimes they use a short text like this as a protection prayer, or protection power. And, to experience it's wisdom, for instance, the teachings of non-duality. And, in this case, the prajna.

So, first, the lay people, they would visit temples and sit in front of statues, in front of the altar, and watch the Buddha. That means visualize the teachings that may come from, that may be **emanating**, being **emanated** by the Buddha statues as representation of the tradition. So it's visualizing Buddha. And then they would, what we, these days, what we call mindfulness practice, but it's called sati. The original meaning of mindfulness, or sati, means remembrance or remembering. Remembering the teachings. And then it became chanting. So they would chant or invoke the names of the Buddha, and chant the names of the bodhisattvas. Then they would chant dharanis, and mantras, and short texts like that. Actually at the end of this Heart Sutra there is a mantra. It's "Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi, Svaha."

So, some people, they recite, I mean, in the monastery they recite this Heart Sutra at least twice a day. At the end of morning practice and at the end of evening practice. But also, some devoted lay people, they write out in calligraphy brush, they copy the whole sutra every day and they take it to the temple as a votive offering. That's my task while studying this scripture, how I can help you experience it, experience the teachings, instead of just studying the texts in a semi-academic way.

Now, I'll go over a few important concepts that appear in this text. First, bodhisattva. Around the 1st century, around 1st century BCE when Mahayana Buddhist movement arose, it was a revolt against monastic Buddhism. So those who started this new Buddhist movement, both laity and the members of monastic sangha, they actually formed their own groups called *gana* as opposed, against, the word sangha. They found sangha very limiting, it's like confined to monastic practice, not inclusive of lay people. So *gana* is very secular, well *gana* means, like, the meaning

is very similar to English word guild. It's like society of, for common purpose among the kindred people.

So, and then they started calling themselves bodhisattvas. So that's quite an expansion of the notion of bodhisattva. Previously, the word bodhisattva was only used in reference to the historical Buddha before he attained enlightenment sitting under bodhi tree. And also that's after his renouncing the palace life, and he spent six years. So the period of six years just prior to his attaining enlightenment, that period is called bodhisattva period for the historical Buddha. And also, that meaning was extended, like, legend built up. He had to go through many lifetimes. The previous lifetimes, undergoing different practice, eventually maturing or cultivating in this life to attain *anita samma sambuddhasa*, the perfect most complete enlightenment. So those are also bodhisattvaic period.

So anyway, the word was exclusively reserved to historical Buddha undergoing all these practices prior to his attaining enlightenment. Now, anyone undertaking practice seriously is called a bodhisattva. It means you can be ordinary being, whether monastic or laity, but an ordinary being with a great intention, with a great heart, that's bodhisattva. In other words, great heart is awakened heart. So sometimes called mahasattva, just great beings. You're ordinary, but with a great mind. And also they, from the beginning, the intention was that all beings can become Buddhas, are originally Buddhas. So anyone who sets out on Buddhist journey with this comprehension, they are called bodhisattvas.

And now, of course they were aware of their own limitations. Even, you know, they started calling them bodhisattvas, so they needed role models. Like, in American Buddhism, we are, in a sense, in search for role models. So they came, they created different types of bodhisattvas. So, it's called, it's sometimes called celestial bodhisattvas. It's, they're role models. I mean, well they are earthly bodhisattvas. So this Avalokitesvara, the one who is actually preaching Heart Sutra to Sariputra, Avalokitesvara, was created by the members of this new movement, Mahayana Buddhist movement, Avalokitesvara.

Now, I don't have time to talk about all this cult of Avalokitesvara, but let me say one thing. Last week I mentioned that Avalokitesvara, well it says here in one of this, lord avalokita. So it's a compound made up of two separate words, and that's *avalokita* and *svara* or *ishvara*. Now, *svara* means sound. And *avalokita* is perceive or observe. So one who observes the sounds, or one who perceives the sounds of the world or the outcries of the world. But some people maintain it's *ishvara*. When you say *ishvara* then the meaning change, it means lord, lord who looks down. Now, the one who translated the Sanskrit text into the Chinese, *Xuanzang*, he was very clever. He wanted to avoid using, the word lord is kind of coming from Hinduism, not really Buddhist context. So lord is someone who is free from limitations. So he used the word *Svara*, which means, which, roughly translated, means freedom, the one who is free, the one who is liberated.

So that's how it appears in the Chinese Heart Sutra, which people in Korea, Japan, and China have been reciting for many centuries now. So you can see, in any case, Avalokitesvara or

Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, here when he uses the word freedom or liberation, it means more inclined to represent wisdom rather than compassion in this case. Although here I translate it as Bodhisattva of Great Compassion.

So here, the stage is set, like they bring Sariputra. Sariputra is one of the ten great disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha. And also he is the senior disciple of the ten great. And not only that, Sariputra was known for his comprehending, for his understanding of wisdom. And he was a great expounder of Buddhist doctrine. So it's, he brings Sariputra to play a subordinate role here as a listener, as a good listener of new teachings. That's Mahayana teachings. And then the expounder of new teachings is, I mean, the hero of the members of this new movement, Mahayana Buddhist movement, Avalokitesvara, is what they created, you see. It's their role model. So, and then there are many other bodhisattvas.

So that's what the structure of this text. Now, so to understand bodhisattva is very important, you know, to understand this new Buddhist movement. Now this prajna paramita is, I think you, most of you know about this six paramitas. Six paramita is dana paramita, and sila paramita, and ksanti paramita, and virya paramita, dhyana paramita, and the last one, the sixth one is prajna paramita. That's the perfection of wisdom. There is, we usually, actually you can get a copy from bookstore, the dana paramita is "May I be generous and helpful." And sila paramita is "May I be pure and virtuous." And ksanti paramita is "May I be able to bear and forebear the wrongs of others." And virya paramita is "May I be patient, energetic, and persevering." And then, dhyana paramita is "May I practice meditation and attain concentration and oneness to serve all beings." And then the prajna paramita, the sixth, last one is, the last one of these six paramitas, there are also ten paramitas, is "May I gain wisdom and share the benefit of my wisdom with others." That's prajna paramita. So it's one of the six paramitas, one of, the last one, the most important one. So you can see the Maha, Maha is just modifier, Maha Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra.

Now, another meaning of paramita is, it's traditionally, "Crossing over." It's crossing over this shore to the other shore. This shore refers to samsara while the other shore refers to nirvana. So it's crossing over from samsara to nirvana. So it's crossing over from bondage to liberation. So that's, paramita is, and then the mantra clearly indicates that, you know, "Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi, svaha." Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, and bodhi, svaha. I think a while back we had one Korean Buddhist painting hanging up there, it's, there you can see, it's prajna dragonboat, it's called prajna dragonboat, carrying the captain of the boat, it's a bodhisattva. It could be Manjusri or it could be Avalokitesvara. And carrying over these sentient beings and devotees, you know, over tumultuous sea, you know, from this shore to the other shore. And there are a lot of big billows, and it's a very dangerous sea. So, and it's very graphical in some, if you look around, and it's very threatening. The sky is threatening, and the sea is threatening, and, you know, somewhat scared, and then they, the monks guided them, trying to recite, "Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi, svaha." You know, concentration, so they repeat over and over again. "Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi, svaha." What is it, the American fellow who is known as very famous new aged guru, what's his name, he has been chanting that for many years, that Ram Dass.

And, so bodhisattva, and then prajna paramita, and then this sunyata. It's a very important concept. Sunyata is commonly translated as emptiness, but actually it's the same as zero. Indians, they are very good with numerical numbers. It's, it's in, in Buddhist traditions of sudden teachings, or that is promoting sudden awakening and sudden enlightenment such as Zen tradition, they would say you can attain enlightenment just in an instant. Then, if you read in the doctrines, you come across teachings like it would take you three **asamkhyeya kalpas** for a bodhisattva to attain complete and full enlightenment.

Now, what is three **asamkhyeya**? It's, kalpa is, it's, kalpa is a term for an endlessly long period of time. It's kind of a Buddhist reckoning of time. Then you may wonder, how long is a kalpa? There is one, the Buddhist teachings come up with one simile to give you an idea, how long is a kalpa. Every one hundred years, a piece of silk is rubbed on a solid rock. Something like, I forgot, it's something like one hundred cubic miles in size. When this rock is worn away, you know, how long does it take until this rock could be worn away? When this rock is worn away by this act, you know, that's rubbing a piece of silk on this solid rock, you know, every one hundred years, still one kalpa will not have exhausted. So you'd better forget it. So it's something like saying, it's a clever way of saying, if you just say it's emptiness or infinity, people cannot get a handle on it. But at least you give a number, you see, then peoples' imagination works better.

So, and then now, that's, you know, the length of a period of time of one kalpa, but it says three **asamkhyeya**, three **asamkhyeya**. **asamkhyeya** means, simply, numberless, so it's numberless kalpas, kalpas. So it's infinity. So, and then, so it's, you can say Buddhism oscillates between these two extremes, but then you have, like this sutra, like there is a, the host of Buddhist scriptures, even, you know, Prajnaparamita, they come as, you know, the Great Prajnaparamita literature comes in 600 fascicles. Even, you know, even a good Buddhist scholar cannot expect to study all these scriptures. Then it's, then it expands, then it can be reduced to such a short stretch, this one page one. It's called, Heart means, it's, the essence of all the teachings of Prajnaparamita literature is summarized in this one page text. And then, simply, you know, they don't even try to study it, they just recite the title, or just "Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi, svaha," to experience this text. It's like in Buddhist paintings, too, like a Buddha statue, you have all these Buddha statues, and Buddhist pantheons, and thangka paintings, all these things. It can be reduced, and finally just a circle. So it can work both ways, it's like deconstruction, it's like, you can, it's, what this text does is just using so many negatives, it deconstructs the whole teachings. All, even essential teachings.

So now, back to this zero thing. Sunyata is, zero means, one way is, or nothing. But the number zero has a very different meaning. Zero is inclusive, mutually inclusive of both negative numbers and positive numbers. So in a sense this is the mother of all the numbers. So then it's infinity itself. Like progenitor. So, in Buddhism we use a very different language but we can **call** it sunyata, or zero, it can be unconditioned. Unconditioned state of mind, or boundless heart. Or it's Buddha-nature. So it's, gaining insight into sunyata, the teachings of sunyata, is very important for gaining wisdom, transcendental wisdom, this prajna. So in other words, sunyata and prajna are quite identical.

Another role it plays is it brings all these things together in sunyata. Like it's, it's like, something like conflict resolution. It's both conditioned and unconditioned, and samsara and nirvana, and sentient beings and Buddhas, and form and non-form. And the, there is this, the truth, or the ultimate reality in Buddhism is, is sometimes called tathata. It means suchness. To Westerners who are used to assertive language, sunyata sounds too passive. But maybe tathata, suchness, not too bad. But ultimately they are the same. Tathata means suchness, so one of the epithets of Buddha is called Tathagata, the one who has realized suchness. It's called Thus Come One or Thus Gone One. Tathagata.

Actually, the, when the Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, he refers to himself and other Buddhas as Tathagata. He used this word, Tathagata, when speaking of himself and other Buddhas. So it's, frequently appears, Tathagata appears, in the Buddhist scriptures. It's loosely translated as Thus Come One or Thus Gone One, and the meaning is the one who has realized suchness. That means the true nature of all things. That's ultimate truth, the true nature of all things. It's absolute, the absolute and the true nature of all things, and it's generally considered as being beyond all concepts and all distinctions. So it comes, you can see how similar they come to, using different language, sunyata. And suchness is the opposite of that which is apparent, that's phenomena.

Now, *tat*. Tat by itself means that, and there's this "Tat Tvam Asi." It's a very famous line, it means "That Thou Art." It's You Are That, or Thou Art That. So it's, it means, it's like saying you are God or you are Buddha. Here, this "Tat Tvam Asi" appears in one of the Upanishads. Upanishad forms the final portion of Vedic literature, that's the sacred books of Hinduism. It's Brahmanism, that's the forerunner of Hinduism in ancient India. And also, the concluding part of Vedanta philosophy. Comes from, actually, Chandogya Upanishad. So there, their teaching is, you know, the identical relationship between Atman and Brahman. You know, oneself and the universal self. And then they recite the sound of "Aum." So it's "Tat Tvam Asi." It's that teaching of non-duality, or mutual identity. These are also very important in the Buddhist philosophy.

Now, I'd like to go over a couple of key teachings that are important to understanding this text. Sunyata is, probably you know the doctrine of anatman in Buddhism, or non-self. So that's, in Theravada teachings before Mahayana Buddhism arose, there is, well that was, in the original Buddhist teachings, non-self, or anatman, the teaching of non-self. And, but there also, that's, with individual persons, but they recognized this, there is dharma here, dharma with a small "d," dharma, these are things, like these are temporary building blocks of, you know, of things, of experience of reality. But they recognized that, it's called, in the Abhidharma teachings. So, the teaching of the doctrine of non-self is only applied to people, it was not applied to non-sentient beings, to non-human beings, including things. But, and then with the arise of Mahayana Buddhism, sunyata takes it well beyond that. Sunyata denies everything. So it's, you can see the evolving Buddhist teachings from the doctrine of non-self to sunyata. So, that is implied here in the Heart Sutra. That's always, that line here, that "no dharmas."

And now, about the samsara, samsara and nirvana. They are, samsara is made of, made up of three different words, or sometimes called spheres. It's, the first is *kamaloka*. Do you know the word *kama*? You know Kama Sutra? It's desire, desire. So it's, the world of desire is called *kamaloka*. In this world, the basic desire for sexuality and food predominates. So, to this world belong human beings, human beings, and all these six realms. In these three different worlds, within which this six modes of existence take place. That's the human realm, and the gods, and asura, and animals, and hell-beings, and the world of hungry ghosts. You got that?

Okay, well then, there, this is, samsara is of course the wheel of life, the unenlightened world where rebirth takes place one after another. So that's, there are, in the six modes of existence, there are three lower realms, or three good realms, three bad realms, and then three higher realms or good realms. So the three lower realms are hell-beings, animals, and *preta*, that's hungry ghosts. So the world of hungry ghosts is, the size of its belly, of the hungry ghost, is huge, immense. But it's mouth is as big as the mouth of a needle. So you can see, so it suffers torment of hunger constantly. So people and animals, sentient beings with great attachment to greed, envy, and jealousy, they are supposed to fall into this realm of hungry ghost where they have to suffer this constant torment. So it's, the belly is huge but the mouth is just the size of the open of a needle, so always it's undergoing suffering. So that's why you have to tame it, if you have a lot of greed, and envy, and jealousy.

Now, so those are three lower realms, and three higher realms is human beings, and *asuras*, that's fighting demons, and gods. Now, in Buddhism, human beings are regarded much more highly than the gods. Because it is only in human birth that the opportunity is provided to escape the world of samsara. So anyway, that's *kamaloka*, and that's the realm of desire.

Now, and then *rupaloka*. It helps to know something about this so you can find out where you are at this present stage. Human beings are very emphasized, it's called precious human birth, it's always that. It's a rare opportunity to be in the human body, it's emphasized. Now, *rupa* means form or corporeality. So it's, we did five skandhas last week, what are the five skandhas? Five aggregates?

([unclear], perception?)

The first one, well, in order. The first one is *rupa*, form. The first one is *rupa*, form, or matter, or corporeality. And then, yeah, and then the rest four are, you know, this is a physical factor and the rest four are psychological factors of **consciousness**. That's *vedana*, sensation, and *samjna*, perception, and *samskara*, impulse or mental formations, and then *vijnana*, consciousness. Those are five skandhas. So it's important.

Now, *rupa* has four elements. That's, we say it's earth element, water element, and fire element, and air or wind element. It means solid, fluid, heating, and moving. So it's, *rupa* is, that's the four physical elements, so *rupa* means, our body is *rupa*, also it's, Buddha statue is called Buddha-rupa. Or all that which has form. So matter, corporeality is *rupa*. Now, so here, *rupaloka*

is the realm of desireless, so it's kind of advance realm. Desireless corporeality, or desireless embodiment, or simply the realm of the form. Here, the desire for sexuality and food falls away, so you are liberated from such desire. But still, enjoyment prevails. So here, these are still sentient beings, still it's unenlightened realm, these are all, you know, samsaric world. Here, like, some gods, they satisfy themselves like, you know, food or sex is like, you know, when, like, mealtime comes, like, so you just, you know, look at the food. You don't have to eat. So you just look at food and you are already satisfied, you are filled. Right? That'd be nice, eh? Because you don't have to go through the belching and farting and all that. You just, you know, just, food is prepared, you just watch, and smell it, and that's just good enough. And also, like, when [unclear], when you see, you know, beautiful men, and beautiful women, then you are already satisfied. You don't have to go through all the melodrama, or just completely neurosis free. That's *rupaloka*.

So it's like, you know, like, it's, if you have some, you know, if you accumulate a lot of credit, say something like, like if you are a business executive, you know. I mean, you are rich and all that, and now you don't have to go to church on Sunday mornings, you go to your cottage and lie down in your swimming pool. So, until you run out of your credit, then you fall down and...

And now, so that's, this is acquired, called, you know, this, according to Theravada teachings, you know, through four, it's called four dhyana practice, some kind of meditation practice, absorption. So you are very, you become pure.

Now, and then, finally, the third world is called *arupa*, that's formless. Finally, formless, *arupa*. This Sanskrit and Pali, they come, they belong to Indo-European language. So it's, "a" means negative. *Arupa* means formless, so formless world. It's spiritual world, your complete spiritual, spiritual continuing. So here, like, it's much more advanced, you don't even look at food, just think about food, then you are already happy and, you know, satisfied. And the same thing goes without, so you are happy. Just a thought, then you are already, you know, satisfied and happy. Then you sit in the lotus throne. Sometimes your thoughts can go sour, then the way you can tell this, you know, this dwelling in lotus palace, big lotus, and then the lotus flower, this guy's lotus flower kind of withers a little bit. That means his thoughts are going a little sour. Then when you have good thoughts, then it blooms, you know, lush again.

Now, so here, it belongs the six realms, six unenlightened realms of human beings, and gods, and animals, and *pretas*, hungry ghosts, and *asuras*, and all that. That's, that form, means samsara world. Now, how is the process of samsara taking place? As, now there is quite detailed teachings, I'm just, you know, giving, since you may be new to all this so, first I present you with some important notions, and then, so it would sink in, and then afterward I come back with a little bit more information and you develop a picture. It's quite elaborate, you know, the full. And this, the process takes place in what is called "Doctrine of conditioned arising." It's called "Twelve Links of the Conditioned Arising." It starts with, the first one is always ignorance, called *avidya*. That's number one. Ignorance. That's, it means lack of the recognition of Four

Holy Truths. In other words, you don't realize that this life is unsatisfactory. So ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. What are the Four Noble Truths?

(Unclear...)

Dukkha, dukkha.

(Unclear...)

Craving. That's, the effect and cause, and then, that's the first prescription. And then the remedy is cessation, the truth of the cessation of suffering, dukkha. It's, and then the middle way, the Eightfold Path. So *avidya*. And then one thing leading to another, so *avidya* is, ignorance instigates, it's, impulse, mental formations and impulses. That's *samskara*. *Samskara*, it's one of the five skandhas, the fourth one, it's mental formations and impulses. It means, it's intention, it's all volitional acts, intention. Which precede your actions, you see. So it could be, like, you know, good intention, or bad intention, and neutral intention.

So anyway, *samskara* gives rise to consciousness, which has to find its womb, you know? So these three, so these three forms, previous lifetime, these three combined give birth to the, you know, another rebirth. So this consciousness re-enters womb at the death of an individual who has not been liberated and instigates their, the arising of *nama-rupa*, name and form, that's the five skandhas. That's the psychological and physical factors. New empirical being constituted by five skandhas. So that's, so another life begins. It's called *nama-rupa*, name and form, means same as five skandhas, yes. Another personality.

And then the fifth one is six sense organs. Fifth one, I'm sorry. Six sense organs is eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. And then sixth one is contact. Contact, with its environment, living environment, and then *vedana*, sensation. *Vedana*, sensation. And then eighth, craving, *trishna*. So this, so it's ignorance, number one. From ignorance to craving, leads to another life. So that's after the death, and then, you know, the clinging. So nine is called clinging, *upadana*. *Upadana* is important, you have to know this *upadana*. *Upadana*, clinging, hanging on, you know. And then, number 10 is coming into another being, that's the next life, and then number 11 is birth, and then number 12 is old age and death, and repeat. The cycle of existence in the six modes of your existence continuing, from life to life. That's called conditional arising because they are interdependent and condition each other.

So now, in the traditional Buddhism, before the rise of Mahayana Buddhism, understanding of these "Twelve Links of Conditioned Arising" together with the doctrine of non-self, it's very important. So if one comprehends these two core teachings then that's tantamount to attaining enlightenment.

Now, in Heart Sutra, if you experience and completely understand Heart Sutra, that's also awakening, enlightenment. So, in the olden times...

[side A ends, side B begins]

...period of Mahayana Buddhism, they would give a, you know, Heart Sutra, copy of Heart Sutra, as a certificate of enlightenment. The way, Buddhists they go on a pilgrimage and while on pilgrimage, while traveling, they recite Heart Sutra. Also when, in Korea when monks go on begging rounds they play moktak and they recite Heart Sutra accompanied by moktak.

Now, let's look at the text. "The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, from the deep practice of Prajnaparamita." The original has it, "The bodhisattva, the Avalokitesvara, when the bodhisattva is practicing the practice of Prajnaparamita deeply," so practicing the practice of Prajnaparamita, "the bodhisattva perceived the emptiness of all five skandhas and delivered all beings from their suffering." So it means, it's practicing, or experiencing, or realizing the Prajnaparamita. Here, Prajnaparamita, perfection of wisdom, is like ultimate truth. So in other words, the bodhisattva is experiencing the ultimate truth of Prajnaparamita. That's what is the real meaning, here means deeply. Practicing deeply means realizing, experiencing. So when the monks actually read and practice Heart Sutra, they, the role model here, the Avalokitesvara, becomes their own self. So it means when I practice, when I realize the ultimate truth of Prajnaparamita.

Now, "... the emptiness of all five skandhas." So emptiness of all five skandhas, five skandhas, all five skandhas, we are made of all five skandhas. That's, you know, what constitutes as our personality. So it means our existence is empty. Unreal. So that means what make up the existence of people is really empty. It means devoid of its intrinsic quality, of its intrinsic entity. Then, "... delivered all beings from their suffering." Then there's no suffering.

Here, again, it is key to understand emptiness. Now, can you repeat after me, sunyata?

(Sunyata.)

Sunyata.

(Sunyata.)

And prajna.

(Prajna.)

When it comes to sunyata, there is nothing that can be said, but then again, there are a lot of things that can be said. It's like, sunyata means "that which is nowhere," but also it means "that which is everywhere." So here you can see the mutual identity of extremes. It's kind of, almost meeting ground here.

So it's these five skandhas, they are, these five skandhas called *upadana* skandhas, we just did *upadana*. *Upadana*. *Upadana* means attachment. So *upadana* skandha means aggregates, or heaps, of attachment. It's called *upadana* skandha because five skandhas, five skandhas take

objects, you know, as attachments. So it's aggregates, attachment, since craving or desire, attach itself to them, the five skandhas, and attach itself, no, attract them, in return. So it makes of them objects of attachment and brings about suffering. But the thing is, the five skandhas, they are ultimately without essence and impermanent, so it's empty.

But then, then when you look at yourself, you do exist. You have desires, and you have clinging and attachments, and all these things. I mean, you cannot deny that. I mean, it's temporary, changing, impermanent, but they are there, they are quite real. So you learn to cope with them, that's also sunyata means. First it denies, it's unreal, devoid of any reality, but then it recognizes temporal existence. And then, the final meaning is "takes away." Sunyata means "the boundless reality, the boundless life." Helps people see beyond oneself, beyond one's unreality. So sunyata has all these meanings. But it's, it's better not trouble you had, it's just you can see that these things are and then read it on.

Now, "O Sariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form. And form is emptiness, emptiness form." This is very famous lines. In East Asia, in Mahayana countries, people may not know the Buddhist doctrines but they have always heard this. "Form is emptiness, emptiness form." "The same is true of feeling, thought, impulse and consciousness." So it's again talking about five skandhas here, personalities. I mean here, form, rupa, represents the rest of five skandhas but you can just replace rupa, form, with feeling or sensation. Like, sensation is emptiness, emptiness sensation. And impulse, consciousness, it's emptiness, emptiness consciousness.

"O Sariputra, all dharmas are empty. They are not born nor annihilated. They are not defiled nor immaculate. They do not increase nor decrease." Now here, in early Zen tradition these lines are used as hwadu, as koan. Like form is emptiness. So, like, holding this, the teachers would challenge the monks, "Is this form or emptiness?" And then they would ask, here says, all dharmas, they are not born nor annihilated. So it's like unborn nature, unmade. And they are not defiled nor immaculate. They do not increase nor decrease. Then they ask, "Then why do people die?" Because they are not born nor annihilated, so then why people are born, why do they die? "All dharmas empty" means all things are empty. The word dharma is different from the Dharma with a capital "D."

"No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind." So this deconstruction process going on. "No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or objects of mind. No realm of sight, no realm of consciousness." So these Eighteen Realms are denied. Eighteen Realms of Consciousness. "No ignorance, and no extinction of ignorance." That's the Twelve Links of Conditioned Arising, which I just did, is also denied. It's key teachings, all these key teachings are denied. That means it's just abbreviated. "No ignorance, no extinction of ignorance." That's the first and the last of, in other words, there is, the ignorance represents here the Twelve Links of Conditioned Arising, and then no extinction of ignorance is the reverse order. That's the, in other words, samsara and nirvana, both are denied here. It's, cessation of samsara is also denied. So it's, samsara and nirvana, both are denied.

And then it says, “No old age and death and no extinction of them.” And then here, “No suffering, no cause of suffering, no cease from suffering, no path to lead out of suffering.” That’s Four Holy Truths, Four Noble Truths. The Buddha’s, the first sermon is denied. And then, “No knowledge, no attainment, no realization, for there is nothing to attain.” And then, of course, then what is like to point out is the path of Prajnaparamita. That’s where all this deconstruction leads to Prajnaparamita.

The bodhisattva, so bodhisattva, Prajnaparamita, and sunyata, the three important things, okay? “The bodhisattva holds onto nothing but Prajnaparamita.” So these are, even the teachings, they’re all attachments. That’s *upadana*, clinging. “Therefore his mind is clear of any delusive hindrance. Without hindrance there is no fear. Away from all perverted views he reaches final nirvana. All Buddhas of past, present, and future, through faith in Prajnaparamita, attain to the highest perfect enlightenment.” That means Prajnaparamita as being the mother of all Buddhas. That’s, here, highest perfect enlightenment is *anuttara*. *Anuttara* means, it’s usually translated as “unexcelled.” *Samyak-sambodhi*. Bodhi is enlightenment or awakening. *Sambodhi* means, *sam* means complete, so complete enlightenment. And *samyak* is right, or full. Full complete enlightenment, it means, *anuttara* means unexcelled, there is nothing to go further. It’s the ultimate, *anuttara*. It’s complete, highest enlightenment.

Know then the Prajna, well this will do it. So I’ll go over in more detail next week, but if there are any words or terms which you cannot understand please ask question right now.

(unclear)

That we’ll do next week, Dharani. We’ll also recite Great Compassion Dharani here. You haven’t recited Dharani, eh? Great Compassion – yes.

(unclear)

Traditionally when Buddhists, when Buddhists refer to their religion, they call it Buddha-dharma. Actually it’s Buddha-dharma-sangha. So you can say Buddha-dharma is short for Buddha-dharma-sangha. It means, roughly means “the teachings of Buddha.” So Buddhism is the word coined by Western scholars starting Buddhism at the turn of the century, it does not really come from traditional Buddhism. So I think among American Buddhist teachers there was some consensus that we should refer to Buddhism as the Way of Buddha instead of Buddhism. The Way of Buddha. So it’s like the Way of Buddha or the teachings of Buddha, Buddha-dharma. So it means all these Buddhist teachings, one thing you would notice over and over again is it’s a very inclusive term. Which again has influence from the word sunyata. There is no dogma, it’s very, that’s why tolerance, or spaciousness, or, these are very characteristic of Buddhist teachings. So the word Dharma means, it could mean “discipline, truth, and the principle,” like universal principle or universal teachings. You could come up with seven or eight definitions. It’s also one of the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So there it’s Buddha, and his teachings or wisdom tradition, and Sangha.

Now, I mentioned six realms of the three different worlds constituting samsara, right? Now, these are unenlightened realms, or unliberated realms, but in Buddhism we talk about, actually, ten realms. So there are six unenlightened realms and four enlightened realms. The four enlightened realms are *sravaka*, so the six, there are three lower realms and three higher realms, and then the seventh realm is *sravaka*. It's translated as "hearers." So people who are, hear the teachings of the saints, the teachings of the masters or saints, and realize the truth, that's *sravaka*. That's seven, and then eight is *pratyeka-buddha*. It's called solitary Buddhas. *Pratyeka-buddha*. And then the ninth is bodhisattva and the tenth is Buddha. So bodhisattva comes the ninth, next to Buddha.

Now, these ten realms, both enlightened and unenlightened realms, now they are mutually inclusive. So that means each of the ten realms is inclusive of all other realms. And this kind of thing prepares for the final teaching, samsara is nirvana and nirvana is samsara. The teaching of mutual identity. Actually, what I'm trying to do is I'm preparing you for understanding of sunyata, the teachings of sunyata. So that at least you would gain some kind of insight into what prajna is all about. And then the compassion, yes, *Karuna*.

(Um, I think you said something important or long, but in this one, that which is nowhere is everywhere and that's the meeting ground. I think that [unclear] wanted to explain something kind of like that but I sense it, [unclear]. Can you elaborate on that? I think that a few examples of [unclear] to explain it?)

It's, form is emptiness and emptiness is form, and when you go on a pilgrimage, the Buddhists, they go on a pilgrimage walking through the villages, and **treking** in the mountains, and reciting, or chanting, Heart Sutra, either playing moktak or ringing the bell. It's, playing moktak or ringing the bell is, also that's important, it's waking them up, you see? Of course, they play moktak and ring the bell to accompany their **recitation** of sutra, but also it helps them wake up from time to time, or keeping them awake. Through this practice on pilgrimage and also out in the countryside where everything looms so large, so spacious, sky is much bigger, and out there in the fields, in the mountains, your mind becomes much more transparent, then you understand "form is emptiness and emptiness is form." It comes very close.

In a sense, well like, when you're out there somehow you are decentralized. I mean, you know, detached. Here you hold onto, here, everything. Hold onto yourself, your desires, everything. Consciously or unconsciously.

(That which is nowhere means that it's, that it's something. Because it is nowhere, and that something is everywhere. I read [unclear] that. I think that I'm [unclear...])

In a sense it's saying, like, "form is emptiness, emptiness form" is life is death, death is life. In some mystical experiences, and through death you come to life. Your death being transformation, that ultimate transformation.

Any other questions? Yes.

(Unclear)

Kalpa?

(Unclear)

I was mentioning that it's how, I was trying to show you, there's, you know, *kalpa* as an example how Buddhist teachings operate. It's like a folding fan. You can fold it, you know, and there's, you know, usually the folding fans, they have a painting on it. You know, when you fold there's a landscape painting and then you can fold back. So you can open it and close it. Sometimes Buddhist teachings do that. From one extreme to the another extreme. So, like, painting art is a good example. And if you visit Buddhist temples, then all these murals both inner worlds and outer worlds, and so many statues, and so many shrine halls, and all these things. Then sometimes you get really troubled about that, all these things, you know. It's just too much distractions. Then all of a sudden all you see is a circle. Zen circle, mind circle, that's all you have. It's completely reduced down to the circle. No more Buddha statues, no more paintings, no more all these murals, they're all gone. It's just empty circle.

(So the endless variations relate to sunyata [unclear...].)

Well it's just like, you know, zero in emptiness, you know, all the numbers, positive, negative, all the numbers, it's infinite. Then, well it's, then sunyata becomes mind. Mind, your own mind Buddha. Or in Zen they constantly talk about mind, Buddha-mind. So, I mean, your own individual characteristics, your own life, birth, and death, it's just completely absorbed in this Dharma drama, in this panorama. In this vast ocean of sunyata.

Questions?

I'm trying to balance, I'm trying to give you something about doctrine. Like this Twelve Links of Conditioned Arising. But I also mentioned this sunyata, or empty circle, it's unconditioned. So this mind circle or Zen circle here is also this *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* that's here, it says that, what it calls, "All Buddhas of past, present, and future through faith in Prajnaparamita attain to the highest perfect enlightenment." That's *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. So don't let all these words, all these different terms or key terms deceive you. Whether it is called sunyata, or circle, or mind, or the unconditioned, or unborn, unmade, it's creation. It's, all these things can come out of emptiness and return to emptiness. Just folding screen, like folding screen. It's unobstructed. That means, unobstructed means there is no dogma. So all these teachings, it does not depend upon words and letters. So, so many books can be written, so many scriptures can be created, so many bodhisattvas. It's boundless interpenetration. In a sense, it's like Buddhism traveling on Silk Road. It's like the Central Asia was like a melting pot in, you know, in **contemporary** United States.

Any questions? Both doctrinal questions and non-doctrinal questions? Yes.

(Can you explain what *svaha* means?)

What's what?

(What *svaha* means?)

*Svaha*? Well I'll do **that later**. It's, some people translate it as hooray but it's not very satisfactory. Hooray? You know, it was, how do you spell that, h-o-, yeah.

(Oh, hooray.)

Yeah. It's something like "glory," or "victory," or something like, is that right? Huh?

(Yeah.)

It's exclamation, it's kind of a, it's almost used as exclamation mark. Like *svaha*, you see a lot of these things, *svaha*, you know.

(Unclear)

Huh?

(Unclear)

What does that mean?

(Unclear)

But like, in Christianity it's like "glory to God" or something like that.

(Hallelujah.)

(Praise.)

Victory. But when you say hooray what does it mean?

(Nothing, it's an expression.)

(It means it's more spontaneous, like you're cheering.)

(It's an expression of your state, like saying that doesn't refer to...)

(Unclear)

Uh huh. It very frequently appears, *svaha*. It's, in typical Zen fashion it means "words fail." Words fail.

Well it's, actually it's [unclear] sometimes Zen masters, they use sometimes just nonsensical words to make a point. To help people stop fucking their heads. It's, once I heard this, I heard this from [unclear] or somebody. It's, there's this Rochester Zen Centre, they were conducting seven day *Sesshin* so these people were seriously sitting, you know, days and, I think it was like, the end of the sixth day. Was something like Easter weekend or something like that, you know, everything was very quiet and apparently there was kind of a stadium not too far away from where the Zen Centre was. There's, this roaring sound came on, saying say "J." And then all these, you know, hundreds people saying "J," and then say "U." No, say, "J, E, and J, U, S, what they had, Jesus!" Roaring that, and then all these people sitting in meditation, you know, doing the [unclear], burst out into laughter.

(Unclear.)

Yeah, yeah.

(So this must have been a very radical kind of sutra at first since it was denying all these things from the older schools.)

Very radical, very radical. Look at the size of sutra. And all these key teachings are denied, the, you know, Four Noble Truths is denied and all these. It's, the, in Chinese translation by **Xuanzang** which has been recited over many centuries in Japan, Korea, and China, I don't know about Tibet, they do this, it's, it's a beautiful translation, it's very terse, you know. So it's, when you recite, actually you can feel that your mind delights in this, the most terse of the language, the point is punctuated. So kind of awakens you up. But in English it comes out as much more prosaic and again it's, see language is ... But there is longer version which has both the introduction and ending here. This, the other versions are translations from the Sanskrit original.

Just, we have a little time left, but let me ask you this. When you read, you can recite over and over again, but it's, to develop a flavour of the sutra or to develop some feeling of the sutra, but what feeling do you get? I mean, this is, It's not something you can read and comprehend right away or something like that. Do you get that feeling?

Yeah. I mean, it's very different from reading Dhammapada, for instance. Dhammapada is very straightforward. This is, all is, it's, well it's, in one sense this is what Mahayana wisdom sutra is about, Prajnaparamita. Actually this, this whole Prajnaparamita literature or sutra, the earliest form of this sutra is called Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines. Or there are Prajnaparamita in, like, something like Hundred and, One Hundred Twenty Five Thousand Lines. But anyway, this Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines, apparently that's the earliest form. And then after that it went through, like there was a restatement, and accretions, and additions, and all these things, and it becomes very enlarged. And then, then it took reverse form and then condensed, and summarized, and shortened, like Diamond Sutra. And then finally in this form.

But some people say, some specialists say all Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, not just Prajnaparamita, but Avatamsakasutra, there is Lotus Sutra, and then even Vimalakirti Sutra, all these sutras originate from this Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines. So if you understand some of the essence of Prajnaparamita, then it may not be too difficult to read and understand this Avatamsakasutra and other Mahayana sutras. It's kind of a, you know, dramas that are unfolding in ever increasing form, in varied forms. Like Flower Adornment Sutra, for instance, **Hyobong** Sunim, the famous Korean Zen Master, this is, what it means is all these so many varied flowers, they blossom when spring comes, you see. So they're each revealing the utmost knowledge of Buddha-dharma, you see.

So what feeling do you get from reading or hearing about this sutra? Or what feeling do you get from this sutra about Buddhist religion, or Buddhism, or Buddha-dharma? Yeah.

(The whole thing is, I mean, it's a koan in itself, because it's saying "I'm defying all reason and can't think about it, so [unclear].")

Mhm.

(Unclear)

Well yeah, but as I said, you can put yourself in the place of Avalokitesvara. In other words, say, in a sense, we are launching new Buddhist movement in the West, so in America. So, and then, here, well we can put, it says, the people who started Mahayana Buddhist movement, they brought Sariputra to bear witness to this new wisdom. Now, we can place ourselves in the place of bodhisattva and then, you know, bring Avalokitesvara to bear witness to our new movement. It's something like that. So that's, in other words, you have to experience the truth. Or in a sense, new Dharma in the West. That's one way to look at it. That's the hwadu, that's the koan, for Western Buddhists. How the new movement would unfold.

(Unclear)

(Good.)

(It's like seeing through to nothingness, you know. You're, all describing all the [unclear], all the [unclear].)

Mhm.

(Unclear)

So it's, originally there is nothing, so there is everything.

(So is it really meaningless? I mean, meaningful, is it meaningful or meaningless?)

(Both. It's saying even both.)

(Okay.)

(Everything meaningful is meaningless.)

(Is that like nihilism where everything is meaningless. Is that how it is?)

No, no.

(No.)

Well, it's like the hwadu. It's trying to show you your real face. Like, "What is your original face before your parents were born." Something like that. In other words, the way you are, your own face, is false. That's, it's not real. It's your karmic face.

(When I was a kid, we didn't grow up, I didn't grow up like Christian or anything, but we sometimes went to church and there was a strange etiquette and, like, context [unclear...]. There is, I think it's in the benediction before [unclear], from church there's this thing that the peace that passes all understanding, and sometimes I see it in the [unclear]. And I never understood what that was all about because it surpasses all understanding. And I was really confounded by it, and I'm confounded sort of in the same way by the Heart Sutra. But it's not like an agitated, it's not like confounded in an agitated way. It's more like [unclear]. And maybe it's just because I come from that, you know, [unclear].)

It's these three different worlds, that's samsara, constituting samsara. The *kamaloka*, the world of desire, and *rupaloka*, the world of form, and *arupaloka*, the world of the formless. And now *tathagata*, the one who has realized the suchness of samsara or the true nature of samsara would say it is not true, in other words, this samsara is not true, no false, no identical with nirvana. No different from it. And then this comes from Lotus Sutra, the *tathagata* sees samsara, the three different worlds, very differently than sentient beings would see it. That's because *tathagata* understands emptiness. In other words, we see samsara, we see the three different worlds, and also *tathagata* sees it, but *tathagata* sees it differently. Does this help you?

Then why would *tathagata* see it differently? You can ask yourself.

(Sees through unconditioned eyes? It's like how kids make all these goo goo sounds that could be in any different language and we forget how to make these sounds from languages outside your own, and it's hard to learn Chinese when you're 20 and you've only spoken English all your life. But if I learned another language when I was --)

[End of recording]