

A WINTER SESSHIN

TEN TALKS ON THE HEART SUTRA

BY ROSHI PAT ENKYO O'HARA

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Journey to the Interior, © 1974, Theodore Roethke: *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke*, 1st Anchor Books, New York, NY



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EDITOR'S NOTE

This is a highly edited version of talks Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara gave on *The Heart Sutra* from December 2004 to March 2005. To provide a sense of continuity and sustained concentration I have created, with Roshi's approval, a fictional framework of a ten-day winter sesshin. My hope was that in some small way this would reflect the "daily return" so dramatically experienced in sesshin, when morning after morning one comes back to the cushion, to the ritual, to the dharma talk. Perhaps a reader could use the text for daily inspiration on an individual retreat.

While the talks are severely edited, I have attempted to preserve Roshi's unique voice. I leave it to her many students and friends to decide if I have succeeded.

Comments, questions, corrections and suggestions are welcome and should be addressed to howard.thoresen@gmail.com. Please include "Heart Sutra" in the subject window.

Roshi, Sensei Barbara Joshin O'Hara, Sensei Sinclair Shinryu Thomson, Paul Romaine and Sybil Myoshin Taylor made useful comments, suggestions and corrections. I am indebted to each of them in many ways, and I thank them all for their encouragement and inspiration. A. Jesse Jiryu Davis provided the beautiful photographs. My friend Al Benditt proofread the manuscript, an invaluable contribution.

It should go without saying, but must be said, that all errors are mine.

Howard Thoresen
New York, 2011



PROLOGUE

I've been reading the poems of Theodore Roethke. * He is a poet of the Northwest who was very popular in the 60s and early 70s; and I've been appreciating him a lot because he always struggled with his mind. He was a very tortured man and a great poet, and like so many of the Zen poets he evoked the landscape often and used the landscape as a way to keep himself sane and to keep himself alive.

Last week I was reading his poem "Journey to the Interior" in which the very beginning stanza reminds me so much of what we are doing here, and how difficult it can be:

*In the long journey out of the self,
There are many detours, washed-out interrupted raw places
Where the shale slides dangerously
And the back wheels hang almost over the edge
At the sudden veering, the moment of turning.
Better to hug close, wary of rubble and falling stones.
The arroyo cracking the road, the wind-bitten buttes, the canyons,
Creeks swollen in midsummer from the flash flood roaring into the
narrow valley...*

...and it goes on, each image building again the terror of the journey into the interior.

Much of *our* journey is that way. There isn't one of us who hasn't had a period of meditation that ended in tears. Why is that? We allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to open to *all* the feelings that are there—not just some bliss state that we've read about and think we should have—but all the human feelings that are inside us. It's a long journey; and it is a journey *out of the self*. This reminds me so much of Dogen Zenji's "To study the Way is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self; and to forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand things." * To be enlightened by everything in the universe is a journey *out of the self*.

I love the line *washed-out interrupted raw places where the shale slides dangerously* because that's when you begin to realize that your sense of self is slipping away. The self is not some solid thing that you've created, but moment-to-moment relationship: it's you, *and* everything else. That's what Roethke is pointing to in this nightmarish first section of "The Journey to the Interior."

But then the poem shifts, much as you may have observed your mind already shifting. One period of *zazen* * can just be about resistance, anger, sleepiness, frustration, or daydreaming; and the very next period can be alive and fresh and full of joy. What happened? You have no idea what happened. It's just different--everything is different.

This is what Roethke finds in the second section of this poem. He drives his car through gravel pits and so forth and slowly the landscape begins to change and become more familiar with the farmhouse in the distance and dogs running. He says:

I rise and fall and time folds into a long moment and I hear the lichen speak and the ivy advance with its white blizzard feet on the shimmering road in the dusty detour.

I rise and fall and time folds into a long moment. The key is to rise and fall with this moment, no matter what it is. This is what Roethke is teaching us, and this is the absolute Zen teaching: to be completely present in this moment whether it's a moment of sleepiness, or a moment of simple quiet.

I hear the lichen speak is to be enlightened by the ten thousand things; to allow each thing to enter you; to realize *that's* who you actually are. We don't just exist as these little globs by ourselves--we're constantly in relationship. For many of us it's easier to be in relationship with some natural thing than with the people, the buildings, or the streets that we live in. So that's a start: to allow the lichen to speak to you; to allow the way the light enters this room to speak to you; and the rustle of a robe as we sit down to speak to you: allowing everything that you're experiencing to speak to you.

In the final section Roethke says,

*As a blind man, lifting a curtain, knows it is morning,
I know this change.
On one side of silence there is no smile;
But when I breathe with the birds,
The spirit of wrath becomes the spirit of blessing,
And the dead begin from their dark to sing in my sleep.*

Just for a moment imagine what it would be to see not with your eyes but with your skin. You lift a curtain and the sun comes in and you know it's morning. It's like listening to the lichen, breathing with the birds--or sitting for a week next to someone and never actually looking them in the eye, and yet getting to know them very, very well. There's an intimacy that grows in *Sesshin* * which is very powerful, and it's much

deeper than that chatter, that kind of small talk that we make to protect ourselves. We begin to experience one another with our ears, with our skin, with our eyes, in a very different kind of way.

So this for me is the teaching of *Sesshin*. It's a luxury to be able to gather your mind. It's a luxury to absorb your mind. To let go of the newspapers, radio, television, to let go of all of that and say:

“What is this? This, my life! What is this life that I'm living?”

THE SUTRA

Maha Prajña Paramita

Heart Sutra

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, doing deep Prajña Paramita,
Clearly saw emptiness of all the five conditions
Thus completely relieving misfortune and pain.
Oh Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness,
Emptiness no other than form;
Form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form.
Sensation, conception, discrimination, awareness are likewise like this.
Oh Shariputra, all Dharmas are forms of emptiness:
Not born, not destroyed; not stained, not pure, without loss, without gain.
So in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, conception,
discrimination, awareness.
No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no color, sound, smell, taste,
touch, phenomena.
No realm of sight, no realm of consciousness; no ignorance and no end
to ignorance,
No old age and death, no end to old age and death,
No suffering, no cause of suffering, no extinguishing,
no path, no wisdom and no gain.
No gain and thus the Bodhisattva lives Prajña Paramita,
With no hindrance in the mind.
No hindrance, therefore no fear.
Far beyond deluded thoughts, this is Nirvana.
All past, present, and future Buddhas live Prajña Paramita
And therefore attain Añutara-Samyak-Sambodhi.
Therefore know Prajña Paramita is the great mantra,
The vivid mantra, the best mantra, the unsurpassable mantra.
It completely clears all pain.
This is the truth not a lie.
So set forth the Prajña Paramita mantra,
Set forth this mantra and say:

Gate Gate Paragate! Parasamgate! Bodhi Svaha!

Prajna Heart Sutra!



FIRST TALK

This is our first day in Sesshin.

“Sesshin” means “to gather the mind” or “to receive the mind” or even “to express the mind.” So this period of time, however long you have to practice here, is a time for you to appreciate your mind and allow your mind to soothe you--which to some of you, if this is your first Sesshin, may sound very strange. You may be feeling a little nervous. I always get a little jittery before Sesshin, and I've been doing this for a long time. I always feel excitement about, “Oh, I'm going to strip away all my distractions and once again really face myself.” So for me that's the edge of excitement: what will I discover? Or what will I *not* discover?

During this Sesshin we're going to be studying the Heart Sutra.

You know, we've chosen this tradition that is always saying, “Don't pay any attention to the words and letters; it's all in the intuitive grasping of emptiness; it's all about our immediate insight and our daily practice.” But this is the same tradition that has more literature than any other tradition and has many, many scholars as teachers. I think we Westerners tend to love this idea of the intuitive--the arrow hitting the target--without realizing that we also need to study the physics of *how* the arrow hits the target.

This is the same Sutra we chant frequently at the Village Zendo * and for those of you who have a serious practice but have not yet memorized it, that would in itself be wonderful: to commit it to memory, to let it be part of you. I can remember my high school English teacher who forced me to memorize various lines from Shakespeare's plays, and I thank her to this day. I'm able to go on and on from *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* and *Richard III* and so on, and these lines become you. In times of sorrow and in times of joy these words arise from inside you. So I suggest that if you don't know the Heart Sutra yet, memorize it. And those of you who do know it begin to investigate: what is it saying to you? What is its relevance to you and your life, or to us in our lives?

Its title is the *Maha* the Great, *Prajna* Wisdom, *Paramita* Highest, *Hridaya* Heart, *Sutra*.

This word *Prajna* means: *that which comes before wisdom*; *pra* means “before” and *jna* means “wisdom.” So *Prajna* is that which comes before any knowing, before any conceptualization, before you know it's the

lichen talking to you; it's just the experience of *that*. If I call it “The Wisdom of Non-Duality”, “The Wisdom of Unknowing”, “The Wisdom of the Source”, then you have a handy shelf to put it on and it's no longer *Prajna*; it's another concept, another idea. I hope you can play with that “before-knowing” quality of your mind, the freshness and aliveness of that. What is true *Prajna*, True wisdom?

Here on our cushions, we can enter the activity of wisdom, the wisdom of the non-dual, of the Source—which is the wisdom of everyday mind. It's not separate from where you are right now.

Paramita usually means “the highest point” so *Prajna Paramita* is often translated as “the perfection of wisdom” or “the most wisdom”. But in the Sutra itself, at the very end when we chant *Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasam Gate...* there is a different Sanskrit word: *para*, which is transliterated the same but it doesn't come from *paramita*; it comes from two different words-- *para mita*--which mean “gone, what has gone beyond”; or as the Chinese translated it “the other shore; what leads us to the other shore.” “What leads us to the other shore” is just this moment when we're not separated from our lives and our relationships; when we are completely present.

Hridaya means “the heart, the center, the essence of the teachings” and *Sutra* is usually translated as “a scripture” but it really means a thread that holds things together like a suture holds two pieces of skin together; *a thread that holds together*. So you could think, “What is it that holds us together; that sews our wisdom together?”

What is it?

At this time of year people all over the country are making New Year's resolutions. There are all these self-help articles about how to keep your New Year's resolutions, and all these articles about why people are *not* able to keep their New Year's resolutions. How can we find ourselves in alignment with what we truly want in our lives? How can we bring our actions and our activities in complete alignment with what is the Good for us?

In my own experience there's nothing like Sesshin for that. It's not that you're sitting and plotting and planning on the cushion; but you are simply allowing yourself to be, without talking to yourself or trying to accomplish something, to pass some koan * or to do some other kind of thing; but simply being present. All of a sudden what comes out is a very clear understanding of what needs to be done.

First we need to gather the mind. It's all over the place. “Blah blah blah blah blah” can't get to the truth. Guaranteed at some point during this Sesshin the mind that's scattered is going to gather. At that time you can receive the wisdom that's always been with you, that has never been separated from you—except, perhaps, you've got caught up in some habitual ways of seeing yourself or experiencing your life. That's what we have an opportunity to drop away from today and for the next several days. Let those old neuronal pathways rest; break out into some new way of experiencing your life and just have confidence in it. See what arises.

In terms of our liturgical practice here: when we're chanting just chant. Don't make a big deal out of it; just chant. See what that's like. You're sitting quietly and suddenly there's a chance to add your voice to the voice of everyone in the room, to create a harmony, to really manifest the relationship that exists all the time as we breathe in and out together. As we chant we concretize that; we can see that; we can hear that. When you bow, just bow; just allow yourself to let it go. And hold the silence, the precious silence that we never have in our ordinary lives. What a luxury this is: to spend this time in silence.

Let me end with what Dogen said about a practice period in the summertime in the year 1245. What he says here is good enough for us, too, I think:

During each practice period make each moment the top of your head. Don't regard this as the beginning; don't regard it as going beyond. Even if you see it as the beginning, kick it away. Even if you see it as going beyond, stomp on it. Then you are not bound by beginning or going beyond.



SECOND TALK

Good morning.

Yesterday I talked about the title of the Heart Sutra: *Maha* (The Great) *Prajna* (Wisdom) *Paramita* (Of the Other Shore) *Hridaya* (Heart, Essence) *Sutra*--a sewn reading or a speech of the Buddha. The *Prajnaparamita* teachings are said to be "The Second Turning of the Dharma Wheel." *

So today I'd like to talk about the first line:

*"Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva * doing deep prajnaparamita..."*

The rest of the sutra says what happens *while Avalokitesvara does prajnaparamita*.

Avalokitesvara -- who is that? You may have heard the Chinese name: Kwan Yin (Japanese: Kannon; Korean: Kwan-um or Kwan-se-um). *Avalokitesvara* is the Buddhist mythological figure that embodies compassion. Just as *Manjusri* embodies wisdom, cutting off our delusions with a knife always in his hand, *Avalokitesvara* embodies compassion and is seen in various forms; sometimes with lots of hands and eyes. These hands are very busy helping people.

In China the male Indian Bodhisattva *Avalokitesvara* becomes a woman; in the Middle Ages in Japan, Kannon is sometimes portrayed as a courtesan, as a woman who seduces men into the Dharma. There are wonderful stories from China of various incarnations of or visitations from Kwan Yin, and many of them are of that nature where she will entice a young man into dedicating his life to helping others. So there's a very interesting quality of femininity and a quality of compassion about this figure.

Avalokitesvara is the speaker of the Heart Sutra, and what's curious is why would this be? This is a wisdom text, so you would think it would be *Manjusri*, the cool warrior, speaking. And this is the crux--and I'll go back to it again and again-- why is *Avalokitesvara* speaking, why isn't it *Manjusri*? People have written long treatises on this over the last couple of thousand years. *Why is it Avalokitesvara?*

Ava means “down”; *lok* means “to look” so *Avalok* means “looking down”, “to look down”; *ita* makes it a noun so it becomes “the one who looks down” and *isvara* means “a lord or noble person who looks down.” So *Avalokitesvara* simply means a noble person who looks down.

However, there is another view by other linguists that instead of *isvara* – “the one who looks down” -- it's *asvara*. It's not clear from the Sanskrit; actually there are Sanskrit texts with both *isvara* and *asvara* and if it's *asvara* it's "The one who looks down upon the sound." The Chinese took that translation and “Kwan Yin” means “the one who looks upon the sounds of the world--the one who looks upon the suffering of the world.”

Kwan Yin embodies that energy of observing, of looking down, of noticing, of being present to the cries, to the lamentations of the world.

A friend sent me an email from a friend of hers--so this is a friend of a friend--who was in Thailand during the tsunami in 2004 *: he and his girlfriend lived in a house on the beach and when the water came she grabbed hold of a coconut tree and just held on, but he got swept along and this email that he has sent out to his friends is like, you know, four pages long and you're just kind of swimming in this. He was at the top of the flood holding on to a water bottle, one of those great big five gallon water bottles, and he was able to hold on; he describes the things that he saw: people surviving and not surviving. I had just been doing this Sanskrit study about *Avalokitesvara* and then I switched over and started reading this email and I thought *Avalokita*--just how we all were looking down, and many of us were looking down with the eyes of compassion, or parts of us had the eyes of compassion--you can't expect us to have complete compassion--but we were able to have that openness, that energy that looks down.

We can also look down at scenes on Broadway. Have you been to the little place around the corner where all the cab drivers go--on Crosby Street? * It's about the size of a closet. You can get great Indian food there and chai. The suffering in that room--such suffering, such joy, such liveliness! Go in there and have a cup of chai sometime; there're three stools, and hundreds of cab drivers go in there by the hour; hundreds! It is the most amazing place. *Avalokita--isvara* can look down there and see that suffering.

What is it about our practice that allows us to view the most tragic thing, the saddest thing, and then, in the next moment, open our hearts and laugh with joy? This is the question that I have about our practice: what is it that frees us so much that we're able to leave a dying person and

laugh and see the sky, hold our lover's hand? How do we do that? It's wonderful!

I just received a manuscript from a friend. He's in his early 80's, a wonderful man, a psychiatrist and teacher at Penn. He was a young doctor at the end of the Pacific war and was sent to Japan in charge of prisoners. So he was 23 years old, a young doctor in charge of prisoners, and one of his prisoners, Count So-and-So, started talking to him about Zen, and sent Mickey to see an old friend of his by the name of D.T. Suzuki. * So Mickey started seeing D.T. Suzuki--the great teacher who brought so much of Zen to this country—and now he has written a memoir about it. He tells this one story that reminds me of this *Avalokitesvara* that is the first word of the Heart Sutra:

Mickey asked D.T. Suzuki, “After you've been enlightened do you suffer any more?” And D.T. Suzuki said, “Oh yes, you do.” Mickey said, “Well, have *you* suffered?” and D.T. Suzuki said, “Yes, when my wife died I cried bitter, bitter tears.” So Mickey said, “Well then, what's the point of the practice?” D.T. Suzuki said, “Oh, my tears had no roots.”

“*My tears had no roots.*” Think now of your own tears. Are you clinging to some root, some source, some origin, some 'truth' about your tears--or are they just tears? There is wisdom in not making it something other than it is: *they're just tears.* “My tears have no roots.” They're not about stories, they're not about blame; they're just my tears. And in that is complete freedom: freedom to laugh in the next moment, freedom to hear the sounds around you without judgment.

This is the energy of *Avalokitesvara*: the ability to look upon the suffering of the world with compassion and yet with no roots; and it's that “no roots” that keeps it from being smarmy, sickening, false.

Let's move on to the second word of the Sutra: *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva*--it's not just *Avalokitesvara*, but she's being called a *Bodhisattva*. “*Bodhi*” means “awake” and “*sattva*” means “someone who's alive.” Sometimes “*sattva*” means “hero”—so we have “an awakened hero”, or “a warrior of the enlightened way”. A *Bodhisattva* vows to help others along the way. A *Bodhisattva* vows to be of use in the world: to not withdraw and only work on his or her own enlightenment but to be alive and aware and responsible.

I think that sounds very noble but I find very few people who truly have that goal in mind when they enter practice. I certainly didn't. I wanted to take care of myself--not realizing that “I” am all beings; and that by taking care of myself I would, in fact, take care of others. So it seems to

me that it's a very noble thing to say -- I'm going to help others -- but what I see in the people who come here and continue to practice is that this is actually what happens because they begin to see *who they are*, and who we are is not limited by this “skin bag”. We are in fact always in relationship. As we enlighten ourselves we enlighten the energy around us and we enlighten those around us: those we work with, those we walk with, those we struggle with. We just do it. And it's described here, but it's just what we do. We are, in fact, *Bodhisattvas*.

If what I'm saying sounds too *holy* for you, I recommend that you get Hakuin's commentary on the Heart Sutra: *Zen Words for the Heart* * because Hakuin isn't holy at all. He's always yelling at people. Here is what he says about *Bodhisattvas*:

The great fellow (he's talking about Kanjisai, which is another name for Avalokitesvara) applies to each and every person here. Nowhere on earth can you find a single unfree soul. You cough, you spit, you move your arms. You don't get others to help you. Who clapped chains on you? Who's holding you back? Lift up your left hand: you may just scratch a Buddha's neck. Raise your right hand: when will you be able to avoid touching a dog's snout? I'll confirm you as Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara right where you stand.

Hakuin is saying in a very Zen way that we're not talking about some embodiment of compassion or some archetypal image, but, in fact, this is just who we are in this moment.

When we begin to practice we often have a lot of resistance. We think that when we're sitting there on the cushion we're *not doing it right*—that somehow this isn't doing deep *Prajna Paramita*—which brings us to the complete opening line:

“Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva *doing deep Prajna Paramita*”

Another translation, which is very beautiful, is “*coursing through Prajna Paramita*” and another one, which isn't so beautiful but is actually most correct, is “*practicing the practice of Prajna Paramita.*”

“*Practicing the practice of Prajna Paramita.*” What Zen's about is practice; just practice. You can't do it wrong. You just have to do it. You have to do it over and over and over again and if your practice is, “*I'm not doing it right but I'll just do it some more,*” that's fine; that's a great practice. Pretty soon you'll let go of “*I'm not doing it right.*” Pretty soon you'll let go of “*I'm not*” or “*I'm*” and you'll just do it; and a great

wisdom arises out of that, and that's all there is to it—wisdom just arises out of that.

What is this *Prajna*--this wisdom? Remember: *pra* means “before” and *jna* means “to know”. This is the insight before knowing. This is not-knowing, the great unknowing, the most profound source of all being; the source of all creativity; the source of great compassion: *Prajna* – not-knowing; before knowing.

In the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra* * a disciple asks the Buddha, “What is the meaning of deep?” The Buddha replies, “*Prajna*.” The disciple then asks, “What is the meaning of *Prajna*?” The Buddha answers, “Deep.”

Just this! The lights in the city, the sound of the horns, the discomfort in our bodies after sitting for so long, this outrageous flower on the altar: *Prajna!* People suffering in this town, across the ocean: *Prajna!* People suffering so badly that they hurt others: *Prajna!* People helping others: *Prajna!* Can you go there, to that place of not-knowing, of no judgment? *Prajna!*

And *Paramita* means “the other shore.” When we're able to understand *Prajna* both as suffering and as joy, and as just this moment, then we see *Prajna*; then we know we can't understand *Prajna*--but we can *be* *Prajna*.

Ryokan says,

*When I think about the misery of those in this world their sadness becomes mine.
Oh that my monk's robe were wide enough
To gather up all the suffering people in this floating world!
Nothing makes me more happy than Amida Buddha's vow:
To save everyone.*

So as we chant the Four Vows * in a few moments, consider these are the vows of the *Bodhisattvas*; these are *Avalokitesvara's* vows.

“We vow to save everyone” -- that's the first vow! We're going to serve everyone, save everyone, liberate everyone, free everyone--and only in the fourth vow do we vow to attain the Way.

Why? Ask yourselves, “Why?”

Study this sutra.



THIRD TALK

So, the big news is the snow.

What a wonderful gift—particularly for me because I'm going to be talking about emptiness today and there could be no better metaphor for it than when you look out and everything is covered with snow, and everything is the same. Of course it's different: the street and the sidewalk and the garbage bags; but everything is covered in white and so there's the difference and there's the sameness; you're able to just *see* it at very special times of the year such as this one.

So far I've spoken about the title of the Heart Sutra, and about the first line--*Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva doing deep Prajna Paramita*--and today I propose to talk about the second line: *clearly saw emptiness of all the five conditions*.

Next time, the next line's going to be: *Thus completely relieving misfortune and pain!*

But today we're going to look at *clearly saw emptiness of all the five conditions*.

I'll remind you that *Avalokitesvara*'s name implies “the one who is looking down and perceiving the suffering, the sounds of the universe.” She’s “practicing the practice of deep wisdom”-- the wisdom of oneness, non-duality, completeness, of the unity of all things--so she is experiencing this wisdom of oneness.

Thich Nhat Hanh's * translation is “shed light on the emptiness of the five skandhas.” Another translation is “had an illuminating vision of the emptiness.” So if you compare many translations you see this quality of “light” coming up although it's not in the Sanskrit; there is this clarity-- this quality of light that seems to be connected to this wisdom that *Avalokitesvara* sees.

What does *Avalokitesvara* see?

Hakuin, our medieval Japanese wiseguy, says, “Where does this seeing take place, anyway?” If there's oneness, if this is before knowing, then there's no one who sees and there's nothing to be seen. So he's reminding you, “You're saying *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva* is seeing this, but you've just said it's all one--so this is a contradiction.” I really encourage you to get the little tiny book: *Zen Words for the Heart; Hakuin's Commentary on the Heart Sutra*. He's always making these little remarks that contradict this sutra in a wonderful way—he makes you question these lines that are held to be so venerable by all of us.

Where does this seeing take place, anyway?

And what did *Avalokitesvara* see? Even though she's not separate, still she saw something. What did she see? *The emptiness of all the five conditions*.

There is a tragedy in the translation of the word *sunyata* as “emptiness.” It sounds like loss; it sounds like vacancy; it's just a terrible word to be using. Thich Nhat Hanh says, “It's not Emptiness, it's Fullness!” I think it's “interdependence” or that quality where there's nothing separate. Thich Nhat Hanh is the first person I ran into saying, “‘Empty’ means ‘empty of a separate self.’” I think that's very useful and very helpful. Empty of what? Empty of a separate self.

Etymologically *sunya* refers to “something that looks like a lot but is really nothing.”

It's like a balloon: it looks like a lot but it's really nothing. *I look like a lot--but actually I'm really nothing.*

I think when the first scholars began to translate *sunya*--as in *sunyata*--they used the word “empty” as a way of emphasizing the insubstantiality of things, the non-substantiality of being, the “not” as if I myself am *not separate from all that is*: I'm not separate from my genetic inheritance; I am not separate from the world I live in; I'm not separate from you right now. So what they wanted to emphasize is that there is no “own being” there is no being that's separate from others and so they chose the word “empty.” They wanted to get us away from the idea of “intrinsic beingness.”

It is the absence of an “own-being”, *svabhava*, that we're talking about; that's what “emptiness” is talking about: you are not separate. We can say that, but to really experience it is something else. I mean in this very moment: the sounds in this room now, the people in this room, and also, all the experiences that we've had in our lives, they're kind of like piled all around us as we come in here; and the experiences of our parents, and

of their parents, all piled around us as we're here. And, maybe, the experiences of this room: what has happened in here in the two years we've been here, and before when it was a dot com? The life of this place when it was a dot com, and when it was a dance studio before that, and when it was a back office for a bank before that--it's all here also. Also out the window--all those things are you.

It is possible to take a very powerful microscope and continuously focus in on ourselves--on our skin, flesh, bone, marrow, cells, nuclei, DNA, on and on--until we find nothing but rhythms, electrical energy, vibrations. And if we're very sensitive we can experience that when we're face-to-face: at bottom what you've got is different frequencies of electrical energies interacting. Take away all these concepts, this clothing that we have on of our ideas of who you are and who I am and see the beauty, the charm, of just electrical energy interacting.

Another aspect of emptiness is “free of all our concepts and ideas about a thing, or a person, or an idea.” That's what Bernie Glassman * focuses on in *Infinite Circle*; in particular he's looking at it from an epistemological point of view. He's saying that all our ideas about something, all our names for something are false; things are just as they are. This zafu * that's squished under my butt right now [*she puts it on her head*] it could be a great hat. I mean why do we think, you know, “this is only for the butt!”

If I were a little less controlled and a little more spontaneous I'd use it as a beanbag and we'd toss it back and forth. It's not a “zafu”--it's just this [*holds it up*]; it could be many, many things. If we had a four or five year old I'm sure that he or she would find a million things to do with that zafu just as it is.

Then, of course, there's the aspect of *impermanence* in emptiness, which means that you are not the same you that was sitting here when we started this talk. Already things have changed. To be able to appreciate your own change *allows* you to change, allows you to grow, and allows you to allow others to change, to be fresh. In relationship we get to think we know what the other person that we're dealing with is. We know what they're all about, we have their signs and all their data, and so we can predict their behavior. What a deadening way to view a relationship as opposed to, “Ah! Surprise!”

I also have to warn you that in some ways you can see the Heart Sutra as a political document arguing with some other schools of Buddhism. You can read some texts that will go through and mention absolutely point-by-point the schools that are being contradicted by the Heart Sutra and in

particular you could say that this word “emptiness”, the word *sunyata* or *sunya* is criticizing both the materialists, who were saying that this body separately exists, and the spiritualists who said that after I die there's a spirit in here that will continue on. And so this document is contradicting both those points of view.

To break down the concept of a separate self, the early teachers of Buddhist psychology used the framework of “the five conditions.” And I always found it kind of a weird framework, like Borges's dictionary that includes all kinds of strange things in it as a set, and you say, “But it doesn't make sense to me as a set.” Well, at the time of the Buddha or during those times when this teaching was being written down (which was several hundred years after Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime) there were these ideas of what made up the personality. And so, because this is fundamentally a political document, it is using that schema, the five conditions. So again, no intrinsic nature; this is not “truth”; but it is a way of understanding, simply *one* way of describing individual personality and *dharmas* in general.

You may have *skandhas* translated as “heaps” or “aggregates” -- which really doesn't help -- but “conditions” at least kind of alerts you to the impermanent quality of these aspects, of these properties. And it also hints at the interdependent nature of them, how one thing conditions another.

The first condition “Form”, the physical shape, the body, describes qualities like gender and height and weight, body type, color of zafu: “Form.” The other four are psychological conditions of the mind: aggregates of attachment which are subject to craving, impermanence, suffering.

“Sensation” is the aspect of mind that experiences things as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. “That pressure on my back is unpleasant!” or “Oh! I see something scary on the forest floor!”

After Sensation is “Conception” (sometimes translated as “perception”, which seems strange to me). The actual Sanskrit means “together know”-it's where we add a judgment on what we have perceived. So as a first step we have the sensation, “My back--the pressure on my back is unpleasant,” or “There's something scary on the forest floor,” and the next step is, “Someone's *pushing* me!” or, “There's a *snake* on the forest floor.”

The next condition is “Discrimination” or “Propensity”, “together-makers”. And this is the step that we really need to look at because this is

the one that causes us to act. It involves everything in our surroundings, and all our history. One could say it's our karma, our *samskara*. I was searching around for a way to explain it and I said to Joshin—who has studied the Diamond Heart tradition—that the best definition I found was by H. H. Almaas describing object-relations as: “systems of memories that have been organized by the individual into an over-all schema, patterning the self.” *

“An over-all schema patterning the self.” That's exactly what *samskara* is. So what is that? First of all we have felt pressure from sensation. Then we realize that someone was pushing us. And now, “She's disrespecting me!” “That snake is gonna bite me!” That's the next one. Or, possibly, if we've done a lot of training: “Oh, it's his backpack. He doesn't know he's pushing me.” Or, “Oh, that's a rope--that's not a snake.” That's *samskara*--it depends on you now, and your karma.

The final step is “Awareness” or “Consciousness”: “I showed her!” “I shot that snake and it slithered away.” “Oh, there I go again mistaking a rope for a snake.” “There I go again thinking I've been disrespected.”

The “five conditions” are a way for us to understand how it is we react moment-to-moment.

While I was writing this, my computer screen suddenly went black. For some reason in the new operating system I have you can't make it warn you that you're nearly out of battery, and you've always been able to do that before in previous operating systems, and so I have a rage about this, you know? I get enraged! I mean there's no reason, the plug, you know, is like a foot away from me. But--so I'm writing about *samskara* and *karma* and all of these things, and then suddenly:

UUUUUUUGGGGGGGGG! Because it just goes black, and, you know, I expect, I have this expectation that it's going to say, “You only have a little bit of battery power left, you better go plug yourself in.” So it is so interesting to me that *exactly* what I was writing about is there, demonstrating.

In this lifetime my practice seems to be about patience, so this was a clear example of the immediate interaction of the five conditions just in that moment. In that moment the *samskara* of deprivation, disappointment, self-grasping, just arises [*snaps fingers*] like that.

So these “five conditions” in our psychological makeup are constantly shifting, changing qualities. In each event-moment they create different sets of vibrations of who we are. These are what *Avalokitesvara* sees as “empty of own-being”. She looks down upon the world and sees all the

suffering and she says, “Yes, there is this suffering, but there's no intrinsic being to it.” And if we can see that just for a moment, we begin to see that we can loosen our desperate hold on who we think we are, what we think our situation is, and who we think the other is; and we allow ourselves to be more interrelated, more active in a true sense; truly active. We begin to experience interconnection, to allow that dance of the harmonies of being in a very different way than when we're being dragged around by our ego from one victory to disappointment to victory to disappointment after another. And we become more compassionate, and more alive.

And then we can understand our whole tradition, where you have Zen teachers shouting and throwing snowballs, putting zafus on their heads--there is no “one way” at all! We want to be free, and in that wanting we can just settle into one more frozen conception of ourselves. To be truly free is to experience this emptiness moment-to-moment.

You know it's actually a pleasure to just be waiting for something when you let go of your ego-grasping and you're able to hear the sounds around you; to see the change of light in a minute or two. You feel truly alive when you're not being propelled forward by this sense that “the ego must...”

So I vow the next time my computer goes black, to just look at it.



FOURTH TALK

Good morning everyone.

The Heart Sutra is a core liturgy, a core understanding of our Zen practice; I am going very slowly so that we can come to internalize it more; so that we can allow ourselves to *become* the Heart Sutra. Then when we meet things and people in our lives or experience feelings and emotions in our lives we can use these teachings to think, feel and act more skillfully.

Previously I have spoken on the lines: *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva doing deep prajnaparamita clearly saw emptiness of all the five conditions.*

Today I propose for us to examine the following line:

Thus completely relieving misfortune and pain.

Some of you here--and I notice there are a few people here from other traditions today--may say, "Wait a minute, that's not a line in the Heart Sutra." It only appears in some translations. It is said it was added by Hsuan-tsang, a very famous monk in the 7th century in China, when he did his set of translations. You may have heard a little bit about him because he's very well known from *Monkey* *--that ancient story from China, made into various plays, puppet shows, operas and animations. It is a very important folk-tale from the east, and he is the main character. He was a pilgrim who as a young man of 17 or so devoted himself to the Dharma and ordained. After studying for some seven years in China he decided he wanted to go to India to retrieve manuscripts and to study the origins of Buddhism in India. And, of course, we're talking about the 7th Century, so it was a very dangerous and difficult voyage that he took.

He did go; he studied at the great monastery at Nalanda * and he traveled around India. As a matter of fact, his records of where he went during his almost 30 years of his pilgrimage are such that scholars now look at them and say, "This place is located here, and perhaps there will be relics there, and at this time such-and-such happened." So he's a key figure from a scholarly point of view, an historical and a literary point of view, for all of us today. A very important fellow! His stories are exciting and wonderful and you can find them in *Monkey*, in scholarly texts, and in a number of popular texts. He encountered goblins and ghosts and all

kinds of spirits that were available to people in the 7th Century that we have now internalized and think are inside us--that's our modern way of looking at things--but he did meet a lot of shifty energies as he traveled through the Gobi Desert and went to places where no guides would go with him. And he was fortunate because very early on in his voyage he was staying at a monastery, and a very old, sick, starving man was hanging out outside the gates. Hsuan-tsang, although he was a very busy man with urgent tasks—we can all identify with this--saw this suffering, very old, weak man, and stopped what he was doing and took care of him. He brought the old man inside and put him on his own cot, and fed him soup and nursed him until the old man recovered. And when he recovered the old man said, “Whenever you're in trouble, whenever you're suffering, chant this mantra and you will be protected: *Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha.*”

After that in his stories and journals Hsuan-tsang very often writes about, you know, the robbers come and they're going to take all his things and then he chants the mantra and things change and he's able to be saved from misfortune and pain; and this is a theme throughout the story of his journey.

When he finally came back to China he was a middle-aged man fluent in Sanskrit and Pali *; he came back with camel- and elephant-loads of sutras and texts to translate, and gifts from various princes and rajas and abbots of different traditions--artifacts that made a huge difference in the Chinese understanding of Buddhism--and he set himself the task of translating all these sutras. One of the texts was the Heart Sutra, and in the process of translating it, his version has this line: *thus completely relieving misfortune and pain*, often translated as *thus completely relieving calamity and suffering*.

Always, when we analyze these texts and think about their meaning for us, we must realize that we're in the world of translation. We're in the world of translation from just speaking to writing something down—a *huge* translation there from orality to literacy—translations from Sanskrit into other languages; and then of course, translation into English. Our particular translation is largely a product of our teacher Maezumi Roshi's lineage; so the decision to say *misfortune and pain* comes through our lineage.

Hsuan-tsang didn't just pull this line out of nowhere and add it in. Later in the Sutra we chant *with no hindrance in the mind, no hindrance, therefore no fear*. And even later: *It completely clears all pain*. So it's kind of like he just decided to take that later energy and put it at the top.

It might be helpful for us to look again at Hakuin, who is in our Rinzai lineage; not in our Soto lineage.* In his commentary on this line--which is translated in his book as *delivered from all distress and suffering*--he says, "How clear in a dream the three worlds are! When you wake, all is empty; all the myriad worlds are Mu." * And then he gives us a poem:

*The ogre outside shoves the door;
The ogre inside holds it fast:
Dripping sweat from head to tail,
Battling for their very lives,
They keep it up throughout the night,
Until, at last, when the dawn appears,
Their laughter fills the early light:
They were friends from the first.*

So this is Hakuin talking about this line *completely relieving misfortune and pain*. What ever does he mean here?

He's using a story from Nagarjuna's * texts: two travelers are journeying deep in the mountains and they become separated--you know how that is: you're hiking along and maybe you're hiking at a little faster pace than your friend, or your friend stops to drink some water from a brook and you go ahead--and somehow these two travelers get separated in these deep mountains. And one, as he goes along, he sees a hut, a little wisp of smoke coming out the chimney; so he goes up and asks to spend the night in the hut, and the owner of the hut says, "I can't put you up because there are goblins and ogres around here. They haunt the place and it's just not a safe place to be." But the traveler says, "I really don't want to spend the night outside *especially* if there are ogres and goblins around! Please, please let me stay here!" Finally he is allowed to stay, and later in the evening, right after he's had his evening soup and is just preparing for bed, he hears this banging at the door. He runs over and holds the door really fast, and then the banging gets louder and louder and he holds it faster and faster, and all night long he holds the door. There is a clawing and a screaming and a yelling on the other side of the door, and a pulling of the door, but he is able to hold the door closed all night long. And then in the morning, when the dawn comes, he looks through the crack in the door and, of course, what does he see but his friend, the other traveler? And then he laughs!

*The ogre outside shoves the door;
The ogre inside holds it fast:
Dripping sweat from head to tail,
Battling for their very lives,
They keep it up throughout the night,*

*Until, at last, when the dawn appears,
Their laughter fills the early light:
They were friends from the first.*

How interesting that this is Hakuin's commentary on the line: *thus completely removing all misfortune and pain.*

Traditionally the ogre inside represents our own courageous heart that wants to protect us, and the ogre outside stands for our own delusions and desires; our own grasping. So all night long we're struggling: there're our desires, our emotions, our grasping on the outside; and our courageous heart of practice inside crying, "No! No!" But when the dawn comes we see they're *not two*; we see that to separate from our emotions, our delusions and our grasping and to call them "the other", to call them "the bad", and to try to push them away is an endless absurd struggle. They're not two: grasping and delusion are our life; just as form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

This is also true in our relations in the world. I just presented it to you from a practice point of view, or from a psychological point of view. But how often we find ourselves *actually* tugging at the door and the other person tugging at the door, neither of us realizing that we're not two. We're one. If one of us were to let go, that struggle would end.

So, just to review: *Avalokitesvara* is the Noble One who is looking down; this one who is looking down is profoundly immersed in *prajnaparamita*—*pra* = before; *jna* = knowing--in that deep awareness that comes before knowing something, in the deepest level of wisdom, the wisdom of the other shore: *Paramita*, or the highest wisdom. *Prajnaparamita* is that incredible spaciousness and immensity that we sense when we let go of what we think we know, when we let down our barriers of conception and ideas and simply experience the truth of the moment.

And in this state, this wonderful state of deep, profound before-knowing, *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva*, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, always "hearing the sounds of the world", looks down, and what does she or he see? The suffering, the pain, the cries of agony of the world. The wanting, the not-wanting. And in that moment of observing the suffering of the world *Avalokitesvara* sees the emptiness of all conditions.

These conditions or *skandhas* I talked about last time are the various ways that we experience our selves, the universe, the world and others: the ways of form, sensation, conception, and discrimination. It's not just that these things change, but the way we view them changes, and in that

is our liberation. They are no longer seen as solid, self-existing entities. If you can see yourself and the world as an element of energy in a shifting, constantly moving universe of interrelationships it is very different from our usual way of understanding ourselves. What I observe in myself is a constantly shifting set of interrelationships right now, thus *completely removing misfortune and pain*.

I actually like the translation *distress and suffering* better, because it's very handy for me to distinguish between physical “pain”, and “suffering” which is more of a psychological kind of pain; it's a psychological thing we do with various aspects of our experience and with the physical pain we might have. I think many of you here already know some techniques for working with your physical pain. If you've been practicing a while you may know how to work with pain in your knee. I hope you do! You know by simple awareness, by breathing, by consciously relaxing the muscles around the area of pain, of finding a way through your breathing to not move away and try to lock and freeze yourself from the pain but to move actually *into* the pain, to allow it to be in your consciousness, the pain becomes less this “black box” called “pain in my knee” but becomes a far more nuanced and subtle event that is changing in each moment. As we observe that change, that movement, we begin not to cut ourselves off from it so much and we begin to appreciate the moments when there is no pain. Because we see that it's not just non-stop pain, it's a moment of this feeling and a moment of that feeling. Each *nen*, each mind-moment, is slightly different. This is an enormously powerful teaching in terms of working with all kinds of suffering and pain.

Another example is the grief process: each moment of grieving is different. It's not just “grief”; it's this moment's grief, and the next moment's, and the next moment's. Or anger: anger isn't just “anger”—just this red square that lives in your heart—but it is constantly shifting and changing. It's our grasping onto the last moment of anger that hangs us up so much. If we're able not to repress it but to *enter* it—to enter our feeling completely with awareness and mindfulness—we are able to experience both ourselves and the one we're angry with as impermanent. Where the situation is workable, there is ease that arises.

To work with that wonderful *paramita* of *kshanti*, patience with our self, to allow those states in our mind, those states of our body, the five conditions, the skandhas, to allow them their own time and rhythm and observe ourselves, our wanting—“I want something else”—just to observe it, to have patience with it; this will relieve our suffering. This is the healing that Hsuan-tsang is offering us in this line.

Can you see the relationship when the ogre on the inside or the ogre on outside lets go for just a moment? If you can meet your “enemy”—if you can see it's both of you on the same side of the door, just for an instant—*thus--relieving misfortune and pain.*

So, *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva* doing the deep practice that you do here clearly observes the emptiness, the Mu, of all conditions—and this is what *you* do.

*The ogre outside shoves the door;
The ogre inside holds it fast:
Dripping sweat from head to tail,
Battling for their very lives,
They keep it up throughout the night,
Until, at last, when the dawn appears,
Their laughter fills the early light:
They were friends from the first.*

Meeting ourselves and meeting the other: then, there's the light.



EXCURSUS

Last week I attended a workshop on Multiculturalism and Different Forms of Modern Oppression. Coming at it from my own perspective, of course, all I could see was the emptiness of all the conditions that we've been talking about; trying to see this training as the teaching of *prajna*, of before-knowing, of dropping conceptions and so forth.

It was very helpful because there were some people in the workshop who always think of themselves in a particular way--it was not a Buddhist workshop by any means; it was very Christian. One of the major teachings was: "We are many different things. We participate all the time in different ways of being." To explore this, the group broke down into *target* and *non-target* communities. The *target* was someone who is targeted for oppression; and the *non-target* was someone who isn't oppressed; so it pretty much breaks down into majority and minority status. We had two different sides of the room depending on what the status marker was. I only got to be on the non-target side once; that's because I'm white. Being white allows me to be on the non-target side. Being a woman pushes me over to the target side, because of sexism. Being over 60 pushes me over to the target side because of ageism. Being Buddhist pushes me over to the target side because we live in a Christian country. My economic status is low; my sexuality is a target status, so on and on. Each time I was going over to the target side; and it took me so long to get it! "You go over there!"

But it's very clear that we are this *and* that. There was no person in the room who was *always* on one side or the other. We're always "this" *and* "that". And so this is completely a "*skandhic*" approach, because we're shifting our identities all the time, in terms of our relationship, and who's in the room, and what kind of work that we're doing.

It's so easy for us to accept only one descriptor. In the early 70s we were "women" and we only saw ourselves as a targeted group until other women--maybe black women--said, "Well, no, you're not a targeted group: you're white." Or they pointed out economic differences, and so forth; those were some of the battles in the women's movement early on. So we have to realize that we shift to different positions. Then we need to look at our own *internalized* sense of oppression: the classic one you know is that "women are always angry." Women are accused of always being angry because they say they're oppressed by men at all times—at school, at work, in society, in the home. Is that our condition, or is that

some *internalized* oppression we bring to it where, “I am always on the outside?”

One of the things that I appreciated so much was that we were given a long list of modern oppressive behaviors: the way that we--all of us here--consider ourselves *non-target*; the ways we oppress other people when we're in power. We might try to “save” them, or we might try to ignore them--ignore their difference: “There's no difference; there's absolutely no difference between you and me.” And there're various other behaviors that we could engage in. But the person on the other side is *not just an object* that we're doing this to. This is another living person who also is experiencing some kind of internalized oppression.

Let me give you a specific example: when I was teaching at the university this kept coming up in my mind because it's a juicy example for someone who has to judge people and give grades every semester. Someone comes in who is not an English speaker, quite a bright sort. The demands of my particular class are to articulate and express certain things in English. So this very bright person who doesn't have a good command of the language --I can like “rescue” this person and give him an A, because I know that he really gets it, even though he hasn't articulated it; actually he's articulated maybe a D or a C. But I, dysfunctionally, can “rescue” this person and move him on to the next level, move him on to the next teacher or professor or wherever they have to go, because I can't deal with, I can't tolerate in myself the problem that this person has.

Say this guy is smart; he realizes he can tell a story to a professor about his oppression in China, and how he just got out and so forth; he's able to beat the system. So together we make a dance that oppresses both of us. And not only us but those around us: the quality of discourse in the class, the quality of discourse in the graduate program, perhaps even the quality of work that he does on the outside; all of these things are impacted by this interrelational dance. I'm not giving blame--I'm saying that this is a co-dependent interrelational dance that occurs.

We become fixed in our ideas of what people are capable of and we forget that all of these things are empty of any solid existence; that in each moment there is an opportunity to shift and to change and to meet things; not to move away from them; which is the teaching of *Prajna Paramita*; the teaching of *form is emptiness, emptiness is form*.

Meeting in the moment—“*this* is what is happening in this moment; *this* is the truth of this moment”-- is dancing as this ogre inside, that ogre outside. Both are empty of any fixed existence.



FIFTH TALK

Good morning. It's nice to see everyone.

We've been studying the Heart Sutra since the beginning of our intensive practice period. I'm being very direct and kind of going line-by-line, sometimes word-by-word, with this sutra, which is chanted in Zen monasteries and temples all over the world, every day. It's *the heart of the practice* in a way. Of course the heart of the practice really is in each of us, and how we live our lives; how we manifest the teachings that are in the Heart Sutra. It's only half a page long, so it's a very convenient condensation of much of the philosophy of the past two thousand years. And so today I think I've gotten down to about the fourth line:

Oh Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form.

This *Oh* is interesting. *Oh! Shariputra. Iha* is the Sanskrit. Originally Conze and others translated it as “Here!” and that's the most common translation: “Here! Shariputra.” Which I think is so Zen! You know it's not “There, Shariputra” or “In your head, Shariputra.” It is “Here” [*shouts*] *HUH!* Very Zen--and actually that's what it's coming to; the reminder that, “Yes, this is the deepest, most beautiful philosophy of inter-relationship and of no separate self and interdependence, interpenetration, and all these wonderful ideas and [*claps her hands*] it only exists right here, right now.” So this “Here!” is just great! I can't remember who said it, but I thought it was just great: “Maybe it should be “Wow! Shariputra.” Wouldn't that be great? “Wow!” So there we are, that's *Oh*.

Then we have *Shariputra*. And this was a question I asked of you all who've been following these talks: “*Why Shariputra?*” Here we have, you know, *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva*, this great Mahayana energy or archetype of energy, of compassion looking down on the suffering of the world and seeing the emptiness of everything; and now this figure turns to, of all people, *Shariputra*. *Why Shariputra?*

Shariputra is the foremost elder in the Old Wisdom School, the *Abhidharma*. *Shariputra* stands for the clarity of the analysis of the *Abhidharma*. What is he doing here? Conze suggests it's exactly that: he's there because this teaching begins where the *Abhidharma* leaves off; this is the beginning of the new teaching, and therefore it makes sense that it would be *Shariputra* who is being addressed.

The story of *Shariputra's* name is lovely. He is named after his mother, which is kind of unusual. Her name was *Shari*; so *putra* means “son”, so

it's "son of *Shari*" and *Shari* is a mynah bird; a bird with these beautiful dark, black, quick eyes, known to be very intelligent. And so he was named for his most intelligent mother *Shariputra*; and her eyes were sparkling and she was a brilliant speaker, and he inherited that quality. His father was a Brahmin and he had studied the Brahmin texts, but what was known about *Shariputra* was his brilliance was equal to his mother's.

When *Shariputra* was born, another young man was born at the same time, *Maudgalyayana*--excuse me for swallowing that, it's a long name--and he was also named after his mother, named "son of a crow". And they were rich young Brahmins and hung out together and liked to go out and drink and carry on; and then one day they saw that that wasn't enough for them, that they wished to find truth.

So they took off their fancy robes and put on the rags of beggars and went out seeking the truth. They became students of a famous sophist master of the time, *Sanjaya*, and studied with him for several years; and then, you know what happens sometimes, it just doesn't take. You study something, it looks so perfect for you; and then something inside tells you it's just not right--and this is what happened to both of them. And they left this famous teacher, *Sanjaya*, and they made a pact that whichever one of them found the truth first would go and get the other one, and that they would study this together.

And they separated. So *Shariputra* ran into *Ashvajita*, one of the few people that the *Buddha Shakyamuni* spoke to in the first turning of the Dharma Wheel; it was that close to the beginning of *Shakyamuni's* teaching. And he asked, "Ashvajita, you look different. What is it that you're studying?" And Ashvajita said, "Oh, I can't really quote my master, but I can just tell you one thing: 'Of what arises from causes, Shakyamuni knows how it begins and also how it ceases.'"

And just hearing that, *Shariputra* got it--he got the entire teaching of the Buddha just hearing this one phrase; so he ran off to find his friend, *Maudgalyayana*, and repeated the phrase to him: "Of what arises from causes, *Shakyamuni* knows how it begins and also how it ceases. What is conditioned, he knows how it arises and how it ceases. I mean, he knows what life and death is, eh? He gets it." When he said this to *Maudgalyayana*, *Maudgalyayana* said, "Yes!" He, too, immediately saw it. They were so excited they thought, "Let's go back and tell our teacher, *Sanjaya*, and we can all go and see this great master who has arisen here in Magada; and they went to *Sanjaya*--he was not pleased [*laughter*].

But they told some of the other students there, and so a great crowd followed them to *Shakyamuni's* place, to the gardens where *Shakyamuni*

was staying. Apparently, upon the sight of *Shariputra* and *Maudgalyayana* leading several hundred people to hear *Shakyamuni's* teaching, *Shakyamuni* said, "These two will be my pillars; pillars of my community." And *Shariputra* became the Number One disciple of the Buddha. *Ananda* was his attendant, but it was *Shariputra* who was his Number One; and he was known for his wisdom. *Maudgalyayana* was known for his powers of concentration, his *samadhis*, and also, in some Tantric texts, his ability to do various Tantric things with his *samadhi*--in other words, magic tricks and so forth.

So this is *Shariputra*, known for his wisdom and known for his development, his clarity and his ability to analyze and take things apart and see how they fit together. He died just a few months before the Buddha. His mother was ill, he went home, and he died, and *Shakyamuni* heard about it just before his own death--that his disciple *Shariputra* had died. So, that's *Oh Shariputra!*

I'm trying to give you a little bit of the background. One of the problems with the importation of this tradition into this country is that we don't have all the myths, all the stories, all the background--it's kind of like the folklore of it--so I like to share that with you from time to time because I think it makes various things--koans for example--more meaningful if you know a little bit about the history.

You know, if I had my way we would all take off a few years and we could read all the books and really enjoy that; but most Zen students live wonderful, varied and intense lives and don't have time for a lot of study. But it is wonderful: the folklore and the mythology of early Buddhism--and the philosophy. And then we begin to better understand our own lore, because it really grew up out of reaction to much of the old wisdom. So, well, just let me take a little drink here [*drinks tea*].

I'm really glad I stopped because I'd forgotten that there's this very hilarious thing in this. [*holds up Hakuin book*]. Those of you who are studying the Heart Sutra--if you don't get this you're really missing a great joy in life. This is Hakuin, who is a late 17th, early 18th Century Japanese Rinzai teacher, and these are his comments on the Heart Sutra, so this is "Very Zen." So this is what he has to say about *Shariputra*:

Shariputra--HUH! What could a little pipsqueak of an Arhat with measly fruits possibly have to offer? Around here even Buddhas and Patriarchs beg for their lives. Where's he going to hide with his Hinayana face and Mahayana heart? At Vimalakirti's he couldn't even get his manhood back. Surely he can't have forgotten the way he sweated and squirmed.

That's a reference to the *Vimalakirti Sutra* *, when, at a certain point this goddess comes and she drops flowers on everybody and the flowers fall off of the *Bodhisattvas*, but they stick to the *Arhats*--of course, *Arhats* aren't supposed to have anything stick to them, they're not supposed to be attached to anything. So *Shariputra* gets worked up about this and he and the goddess have a dialogue in which he finally says to the goddess, "If you're so magical and have so many powers, why aren't you a man?" And she changes him into a woman. We'll get to *Vimalakirti* next year, but anyway, that's a fabulous thing! What Hakuin is saying, is, you know, *Shariputra* doesn't know what to do, he can't do anything, and she says, "So why don't you change yourself into a man again?" but he can't do it because he's not a goddess like she is, and he says, "I am only what I am," which is sort of like the teaching of that Sutra: because you are what you are in each moment. So here Hakuin is saying, "At *Vimalakirti*'s he couldn't even get his manhood back. Surely he can't have forgotten the way he sweated and squirmed."

This is the way Hakuin teaches his students about these old sutras, the Old Wisdom way. And yet what is also very clear in this book is how well read these early, these Zen masters were in the ancient sutras, in the old way, in the *Abidharma* and the old Sutras, the *Nikaya Sutras* and *Majjhima Sutras*. *

So, to return to what we were doing: *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva* has been looking down on the suffering world, and, you remember, she is the one that hears the sounds and the suffering of the world. And doing deep wisdom: penetration, the penetration of the Mahayana insight of not being separate from this suffering, she sees that all these aspects of being are empty, are not separate, are interrelated. And she says, "Oh, Wow, *Shariputra*, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form." So this, the five *skandhas*, is the core understanding that the space *between* us is as alive and valuable and true as the space inside us; and that, in fact, our interpenetration and our ability to be present to everything that's existing in the universe in each moment is the truth of the moment. It is the most profound truth. And it is out of that that compassion arises, and it is the wisdom of the Mahayana, the wisdom of the Heart Sutra, that we are not these separate atoms, these separate beings, but all of us--our forms, our feelings, our sensations, our consciousness--every aspect of our being is in constant motion and interacting with all other things. So it's essentially a completely interrelational view of the world. So form is nothing more than emptiness.

We could say, "This is the teaching of oneness; completeness." No star is separate from any other star, no cell is separate from any other cell, none

of us are separate from one another, and in this moment it's very clear to us. Less clear is how we are interconnected with people in Iraq--unless we think about it for a moment. We're interconnected with everything, and with the past and the future. We are not separate from our genetic heritage; that exists as a testament inside our bodies. And we're not separate from the acts that we perform that create what will happen next. The *Lankavatara Sutra*,* which is another important sutra in the Zen tradition, says it this way:

What is meant by non-duality, Mahatma? It means that light and shade, long and short, black and white, can only be experienced in relation to each other. Light is not independent of shade, nor black of white. There are no opposites, only relationships. In the same way, nirvana and the ordinary world of suffering are not two things but related to each other. There is no nirvana except where the world of suffering is. There is no world of suffering apart from nirvana; for existence is not mutually exclusive.

This is the oneness of life, the understanding that everything is a composite, everything is made up of the causes and conditions, is dependent on everything else. And that's what we mean when we say it's empty: it's empty of any self-existing, intrinsic essence. It implies softness, malleability, openness. And this means you. He's mainly talking about you.

Then *Avalokitesvara*, after telling us that form is emptiness, says, *and emptiness is form*. In a way this is even more important than form is emptiness. What is emptiness apart from form? It's an idea; it's a theory. It can't exist apart from form. And the point, of course, is that we can't manifest, we can't act, if we get stuck in some idea of emptiness. If we think, "Oh, it's all harmonious and wonderful and it's all flowing together" and we don't take the trouble to call 311 and report the furnace that's burning the oil across the street, it's going to continue to burn that oil and we're going to breathe those fumes until somebody calls 311 and is not caught up about the idea about emptiness and form.

That's the power! Emptiness is no other than form! You can't live in emptiness--you have to act, you have to take care of yourself.

There's an early commentary on this from the 4th Century in China. It says, "If this sutra just says *form is empty*, people will get attached to emptiness thinking only it was real, or they will become quietists. It would be like telling a blind person walking down a road with thorns on one side and a ravine on the other, only telling them that there are thorns on the right but not revealing that there's a ravine on the left. Thus we

say that *emptiness is form*, showing that emptiness is not found apart from form.” So this whole concept of detachment is not about blocked feelings and blocked action. When we say “detachment”, we mean we're not caught, not trapped in our desires; we're able to see that they are just part of the flow.

Here's what Hakuin says: “*A nice hot kettle of stew. He ruins it by dropping a couple of rat turds in.*” The two rat turds that Hakuin is talking about are *form* and *emptiness*. “*It's no good pushing delicacies at a man with a full belly. Striking aside waves to look for water when the waves are water.*” So he's using the image, Vasubhandu's image, which is the best one to describe the relationship of form and emptiness, where the ocean is the emptiness and the wave is the form that flows back into it. And then Hakuin concludes this section with a poem:

*Forms don't hinder emptiness.
Emptiness is the tissue of form.
Emptiness isn't destruction of form.
Form is the flesh of emptiness.
Inside the Dharma gates where form and emptiness are not two
A lame turtle with painted eyebrows stands in the evening breeze.*

I don't know what to say about that! But I love the image! It's a lame turtle with painted eyebrows standing in the evening breeze. This is the place where form and emptiness are not two. It's the same *Iha!*, it's the same “Here!” that *Avalokitesvara* is pointing out to *Shariputra*.

You know, this is a complex text and I wanted to share with you its import for us in terms of just our everyday lives. To be able to see that we are responsible for what's being done to this earth, for what's happening to people in our work environment, in our families--we're responsible for all of it. And we *are* it. We're not separate from it. That's what it means to be responsible, to take care of everything. That's why it's *Avalokitesvara*, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, who is giving this teaching. It's so important for us. And that's why we sit! We sit to open our hearts to who we are--which is this emptiness--and we act in form.

So, please take these wonderful teachings to heart. Don't worry about the two rat turds in the stew. Really observe yourself as emptiness and as form.



SIXTH TALK

I'm continuing to examine the Heart Sutra, and I hope that you are, too. I hear from some of you that you're enjoying Bernie's book *Infinite Circle; Teachings in Zen* very much. It's quite a wonderful elucidation of the text; terrific. I'm happy for that.

Last time I spoke about: *Oh Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form.* Today I'd like to talk about:

*Form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form.
Sensation, conception, discrimination, awareness are likewise like this.*

Just to recap, because I love to say it: *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva* the one who looks down on the suffering of the world is *doing deep Prajna Paramita* sometimes translated as *coursing through Prajna Paramita*. So, this great *Bodhisattva* is meditating--is doing *zazen*, as we would say it. Maybe it's not exactly the way that you or I do *zazen* on a daily basis, fretting about this and that; but from point to point, from time to time, from mind-moment to mind-moment, we enter that *Prajna Paramita*--and we may not know it, because we may only enter it for a moment. You know how that is sometimes; things are a little different when you leave? Because in the very moment of really entering *Prajna Paramita*, the wisdom, the highest wisdom, the deepest wisdom, that grasping or aversive self that is so busy skittering around the corners of our mind--stops!

It just stops. And we hear the curtains bang against the window, with no particular judgment about the curtains banging against the window. In that moment, things are just as they are--without an overweening ego that is either blowing itself up or pushing itself down--but just that *Prajna*, that deep wisdom, which we have so many words for "this very moment-ness" or "suchness"; in that moment it's just suchness!

So that's what *Avalokitesvara* is doing; *doing*--we say in our translation--*doing deep Prajna Paramita*. Others say *coursing*--I like that--*coursing through*--it's this kind of like moving through water as it were: the profundity of the ocean; that level of coursing through this deep wisdom.

And then "she saw"--as I said before, sometimes, in some cultures in India and Tibet, *Avalokitesvara* is a male figure, and he transforms into a female figure in China and Japan and Korea. So, naturally, since there are so few female images of *Bodhisattvas*, I like to call her "she". Also, our lineage goes through Japan, so we call her "her".

She looks down and sees *the emptiness of all the five conditions, thus completely relieving all misfortune and pain.*

And so, she looks over at this great *Arhat*, * this great friend and disciple of the Buddha, *Shariputra*, symbol of the *Abidharma*, symbol of the Old Wisdom, the wisdom of analysis, of logic, of understanding, the old Buddhist tradition, and she says, *Oh Shariputra, form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form.*

What we see, what we in any instant call a form--and in particular this is in relation to our own self, our own psychological makeup, and our own sense of reality--what we see is subject to impermanence, and the constant flow of interrelationships. The shifting is always going on, it is not a fixed thing. So it's empty of a fixed existence, of an existence that is separate from everything else. Form is--empty!

But, before we get all caught up with emptiness, we're told that emptiness is form!

There's no way to understand that great interrelationship, that great web other than in form itself, in forms that exist right here in front of you. The only way to see emptiness is through form. That is a really important phrase in the sutra: *Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form.*

But now we're told: *Form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form.* In fact, there is no separation between form and emptiness: they are exactly that. This is what we see in our meditation practice, as we sit quietly.

As you know, the techniques that we use--counting the breaths, following the breath--those just allow us to settle down and quiet down all our *skandhas* enough so that we can perceive who we truly are--which is this emptiness, this form. We can perceive that. Because, as we all can testify, very often when we sit down we've brought in a whole catalog of ills and problems and desires that we begin to reiterate: "Shall I do this? Shall I do that? Should I have done this? Did I do this? I'll plan that!" until we just get tired of it. It's very exhausting to do that, to try to count, to try to check our intention--I mean, it's like an exhausting exercise. So eventually--that's what the "skillful means" is--*[she takes a deep breath]*--"Ah!" --and there's that instant. In Western tradition we call that "surrender". We have a moment of surrender. And where are we? Ah--*form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form.*

They are identical.

A famous Ming Dynasty Zen teacher named Chen-k'o * said, "Ordinary people often don't understand: they see form but they don't see emptiness. Followers of the Way don't understand: they're biased and see emptiness, but they don't see form." We don't run into that too terribly much in our form of Zen that we have developed here in this country where we, most of us, are pretty grounded--we go outside and come back in, and that kind of thing, but we can idealize in our minds and reify; it's certainly possible to think, "Oh, that's where I want to go! What I want to do! I want to get to this Emptiness!" Or sometimes people come up to me and think, you know, that I'm like holding some vessel of emptiness somewhere, you know. They project their idea of emptiness on me; not realizing that, you know, form is emptiness, emptiness form. Exactly! Emptiness is exactly form!

A monk once asked Ummon (Yun-men),* "What is the truth that goes beyond Buddhas and Ancestors? What is this emptiness?" And Ummon said, "A sesame seed cake." Just that: emptiness is form; form is emptiness. I can just imagine it, he's having a cup of tea (picks up teacup, drinks); he was just enjoying his cup of tea; and the way I imagine the scene is probably there were some birds outside chirping. And someone comes up and wants to know about emptiness. Ummon is just getting ready to have a bite of his sesame cake, and this practitioner says, "What is the truth that goes beyond Buddhas and Ancestors? Tell me the Truth!" And he just picks it up and—[mimes eating]--sesame seed cake!

Exactly that! Did he mean that the cake *stands* for emptiness or that pointing to the cake *points* to emptiness? In that moment he just *shows* that emptiness is exactly form, form is exactly emptiness.

But, you know, that can be "Zen Speak" which is really easy to do! One day we should really have a skit about Zen Speak; it would be hilarious. It's one reason why in Zen we're so careful and scrutinize teachers so much, and we take a really long time. Usually it's a 20-year project to work intimately with a teacher before you're asked to teach. There's a real process and there's a real vetting thing, and you can check everybody's credentials on the web--we're very careful about it! Why? Because it's so easy to sound like a Zen person! It's so easy! But unless it manifests in the world, it's not worth anything. And that's what all those years are about: it's trying to bring that together so that it manifests in the world, so that it makes sense--it's not a joke!

Another time there was a monk and he went up to his teacher and he wanted to recite an enlightenment poem, and he started off, and he was quoting this enlightenment poem:

The light serenely shines over the whole universe...

And Ummon, the same teacher, interrupts the student just as he's getting ready to give this very elegant enlightenment poem, and he says, "Isn't that the poem by Chosetsu?" The monk says, "Yes it is!" And Ummon says, "You've missed it! You've missed it!"

The light shines serenely over the whole universe. The poem is actually a very beautiful poem. But Ummon interrupts him, "Isn't that the poem by Chosetsu?" "Yes it is." "You've missed it!"

What was he missing? It was Chosetsu's poem. That's whose poem it was. What was it that the monk was missing? Was it quoting? Is there something wrong with quoting poems? Certainly not in Zen--otherwise you'd have to kick me out of here, because I do it all the time. What did he not see about *form is exactly emptiness--emptiness exactly form* in that very moment?

Sensation, conception, discrimination, awareness are likewise like this. These--as we spoke about before--are what we call "the five *skandhas*". It's not a Buddhist idea that there is "the one way" to talk about reality and the self and the psychology of the self. But it was a common way during the time of the Buddha in the Vedanta tradition and the Yoga tradition and others, to talk about self and reality. * And so, you know, it's like we do now, we try to use the common coin; so Buddhism used this way of organizing reality. And I think of it like a swarm of bees, you know, I think its *bzzzzzzzzz [imitates bees swarming]* because what we are is like that in a way. Have you ever seen a swarm of bees, or a swarm of anything, really? If you look down from the Empire State Building it's like swarms of people. There's a quality of energy where things are interacting and bouncing off of one another and some things are coming in and others going out; but there is an overall movement. I think if you're into Complexity Theory you probably have seen some examples of that.

What are these elements that are constantly changing? They're "form": our shape, our form, our color changes all the time, through time, and moment-to-moment. Subtle Changes! And "sensation": that aspect of the mind that experiences something as pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, feeling, the sensation that we feel. "Conception": what we perceive and what we think we know about what we perceive. What is that smell? I mean, the first instinct is--you smell something, oh, there's a smell and it's good or bad.

Forgive me for using a story that Joshin told in one of her Dharma talks, but it amused me a great deal. She was sitting here and [*sniffs*] smelled an unpleasant odor. So that would be the “sensation” level. And the “conception” level would be the perception of what that is, what you *think* that is: “That's the person next to me; he farted!”

Next would be the “discrimination” level, which is how we organize our whole schema of the self, you know; so it's what about us that might determine how we think about this moment. One might begin to blame this person that is farting: “I can't believe it--there's really a lot of farting going on here, he must be sick!”--so “discrimination”--another word for “discrimination” would be “propensity”. The final step is “awareness”, or we would say “consciousness,” where you suddenly become aware that not only am I feeling, having this sensation, conception, perception; I'm also beginning to have annoyance--awareness of annoyance at this situation. Of course Joshin's story was that actually somebody was cooking beans, or they were cooking cabbage in the back, and when she realized it, she had to go all the way back to “sensation.” She wasn't talking about the *skandhas*, but she had to go all the way back to “sensation” and realize it was a good smell. It was not a bad smell; it was that smell of cabbage soup or something like that.

But in terms of the *skandhas* it's that awareness--Ah!--and that's last. Each one builds on the other essentially. That awareness: Ah! I'm angry. It's like building a castle of sand. Everything is built on something else, and since these different things are coming in, constantly shifting, there's no fixed way they have to go.

Very often we talk about “my anger” as if it's like this little black box that lives inside us: “my depression” or my this or my that, as if it's some kind of a solid thing. But in the way the Heart Sutra talks about it, everything is constantly shifting, constantly moving, with no self-existence. From moment-to-moment you have awareness of these different states of mind and these different aspects of the self.

These aggregates, these--what we call “conditions” which in Sanskrit are the *skandhas*, are also called “*the skandhas of attachment*”. And this is where we all get caught--because we attach! We either say, this is a good thing or a bad thing; and then we begin to either recoil or grasp. In the Buddhist way of thinking, even recoiling and aversive kinds of feelings are merely a reflection of grasping--they're just a different way to grasp, they're the same kind of thing. And they're the way we get stuck, where we get attached. And our awareness is, “I want it, I desire it,” or “I don't want it. I push it away.” And this is when we fall into a kind of delusive

state where we think it's separate from us. We've completely forgotten at this point that emptiness is form and form is emptiness.

Chen-k'o says: "It's just like the water of the Ganges. Fishes and dragons see it as a cavernous home. Devas see it as aquamarine. Humans see it as a flowing current. Hungry Ghosts see it as a roaring blaze. What these four beings see is nothing but their emotions. Those who wake up see that none of this exists." Seeing one thing from different perspectives, those are just like our emotions that we give such power to and we get so attached to that we can't even see the reality in front of us--and we suffer.

Dogen does this wonderful riff in the Mountains and Rivers Sutra on water, and he's addressing the same thing:

"Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither cold nor hot, neither existent nor non-existent, neither deluded nor enlightened. When water solidifies it is harder than a diamond. Who can crack it? When water melts it is gentler than milk; what can destroy it? Do not doubt that these are the characteristics water manifests. But all beings do not see water in the same way. Some beings see water as a jeweled ornament, but they do not regard jeweled ornaments as water. What in the human realm corresponds to their water? We only see their jeweled ornaments as water."

Can you follow that or are you so attached to who you are? You know, I mean, a very Zen thing is to try to shift out of where you are and be in the other position. So what we would like to be is one of these beings that see water as a jeweled ornament. Now just imagine that you are a being that sees water as a jeweled ornament. So in this case you do not regard jeweled ornaments as water. What do you think in my realm corresponds to your water?

Some beings see water as wondrous blossoms. But they do not use blossoms as water. Hungry Ghosts see water as raging fire, as puss and blood. Dragons see water as a palace. Some beings see water as the Seven Treasures, or a Wish-Granting Jewel. Some beings see water as a forest or a wall. Some see it as the Dharma-nature of pure liberation, the true human body; or as the form of body and essence of mind. Human beings see water as water. Water is seen as dead or alive depending on causes and conditions. Thus the views of all beings are not the same. You should question this matter now: are there many ways to see one thing? Or is it a mistake to see many forms as one thing? You should pursue this beyond the limit of your pursuit.

How can you pursue that?

Try it on. We said, *Form is exactly emptiness; emptiness exactly form.*

Try this: *Sensation is exactly emptiness; emptiness exactly sensation.
Conception is exactly emptiness; emptiness exactly conception.
Discrimination is exactly emptiness; emptiness is exactly discrimination.
Your very awareness is exactly emptiness; emptiness exactly your
awareness right now.*

This is what Bernie points to in *Infinite Circle* when he says, "Emptiness is just everything, just as it is right now." But to see it clearly is to function in the world.

Han Shan * says, "All this depends on the meditator who, in the time of a thought can achieve the correct contemplation of the heart."

Hakuin comments on this piece. He gives a poem evoking the forms which are no other than emptiness:

*A bush warbler pipes tentatively in the spring breeze.
By the peach trees a thin mist hovers in the warm sun.
A group of young girls, cicada heads and moth eyebrows
With blossom sprays, one over each brocade shoulder.*

This is his teaching on *form is exactly emptiness, emptiness exactly form:*

"A group of young girls, cicada heads and moth eyebrows"



SEVENTH TALK

Good morning.

I really appreciated the monitor's comments about posture during our first sitting period; the reminder to be aware of the energy in our body. You know we get so heady with our ideas about emptiness that we forget that the *only* expression of emptiness is in form; and the form that we have is the expression of emptiness; so why not make that form the form of the Buddha? Why not sit as a Buddha no matter what situation you may be in physically? I have seen people lying in bed dying who were sitting like a Buddha. So it's not about what you're doing with your body exactly; it's about how you're present in your body; how you're able to be aware and intimate with your own being.

We have a very particular way of sitting. We sit with our eyes looking slightly down--not bent over--but slightly down, which essentially adjusts our neck and our jaw in such a way that we can swallow easily and we don't have trouble with salivation, which we would have if our chin was up; the tongue against the roof of the mouth connects the two energy fields. There are meticulous little aspects to our practice that help us to sit in our Buddha nature and all these are what we call *upaya*, skillful means. We say, "Sit like a Buddha," and then we say, "Take away 'like'," Sit *as* the Buddha that you are. I think it's really good to remember that when we're meditating, when we're sitting together.

I remember a friend who was dying of liver cancer; he was very uncomfortable--an older man, in his 70s. He was at a retreat that I was leading in Philadelphia and he told me he was only going to stay for the morning, but he stayed all day. I asked, "Ed, why did you stay?" And he said, "Well, I was sitting next to this young man and he was so fidgety. I thought if I just sat next to him, and if I was very still, it would help his practice." So Ed sat there all day long like a Buddha. Like a Buddha? *Ed sat there all day long.* And that's what we do in our practice: we have no idea how we are affecting the person next to us. We sit there and we allow our chest to be open, we allow our energy to circulate, and we have no idea what that's doing around us. It's a wonderful thing!

I've been giving talks on the Heart Sutra, and I will continue on to the next section. But first I'd like to tell you that as a recreation I was reading a little bit about interpretation, about translation, by the French theorist Foucault * and he was talking about how commenting on a text is *throwing light on that which is hidden*. It's like there's a text, and the text may be a little jagged at times, and there'll be these little rocks, and

there'll be hidden, shadowy places, and, and to make a comment on them is to go into those areas that are a little dark. And as I read that I thought, Oh, this is really wonderful! It's really like making love to a text, in a way, because it's not really about what I can give you--some sort of version of whatever the Ur-text of the Heart Sutra was. We have no idea, actually. There's great discussion about where it comes from and when. But we do know that through the ages of the Mahayana tradition this is the heart, the core of our understanding. And people that read it and study it come away with a changed view--of themselves and the world that they live in.

A great Chinese teacher named Yong-man asked his teacher Sou-shan, "Why don't we know that there's a place of great intimacy?" Sou-shan said, "Just because it is greatly intimate, we don't know it's there." *Just because of that intimacy. It's so close! We can't see it, it's that close. Mitsu, mitsu, very, very close. So intimate!*

And thus we chant the Heart Sutra every day in the Zen tradition. We chant it every day. In Vietnamese Zen, Korean Zen, Chinese Zen, American Zen, we all chant the Heart Sutra--*intimate*--and on one level we have no idea what it means!

In the early 80's I was walking by the piers over by Christopher Street—you may remember them before they were made into a beautiful park--there was a kind of concrete wall that they had to keep people from falling directly into the water--and scrawled across it as graffiti, over about 20 feet, was this spray painted sign that said "Deconstruct Yourself." And I thought, "Oh! That's so Zen! Deconstruct your *self*." Let go of those fixed ideas: I'm good, I'm bad; he's good, he's bad; I'm healthy, I'm not healthy; my anger--as if it's like this little box we carry inside us. Let go of all that!

*Oh Shariputra, all dharmas are forms of emptiness.
Not born, not destroyed, not stained, not pure, without loss, without gain.*

This is actually only the fourth line of this sutra--you know: check in with me next year! We'll be working on this!

Now this word that we translate as "Oh" is *iha* again, and actually it means: "*Here! Shariputra!*" That's the more direct translation from the Sanskrit. Here! [*she hits the desk*] Shariputra. Right here! [*hits desk*]

Where is this "here" that *Avalokitesvara's* talking about? Right here! [*Hits desk hard*] From the perspective of deep wisdom, from the

perspective of *Prajna*, if emptiness is form and form is emptiness, then [*hits desk hard*] right here *Shariputra!*

Don't forget that *Shariputra* is the king of *Abhidharma*--he is the most analytical and the most precise and the most wonderfully developed mind and logician of the *Abhidharma*; he can analyze things to the seventy-two *dharmas* that exist--he knows it all. So naturally, *Avalokitesvara*, in the deep practice of *Prajna Paramita*, says to *Shariputra*, "Here *Shariputra!*" In the midst of this *Prajna Paramita*, in the midst of this wisdom—what does he say? *All dharmas are forms of emptiness.*

All feelings in this room right now, all the mental constructions in this room right now—"What is she talking about it? I don't get it!" or, "I get it but it doesn't make any sense; this is nuts!"-- all these things that are going on in this room right now are actually empty of any separate being. None of them are self-existing, autonomous events.

Relationship, True Penetration, Oneness, Non-Duality--they are empty of a separate existence, and that's all, that's the point that is being made here.

We could say that *Avalokitesvara*, the very embodiment of compassion, looking down on the suffering of the world, first sees sentient beings suffering. Then, during the course of this deep wisdom meditation she realizes these sentient beings are composed of elements, *skandhas*, which are empty. These *skandhas*--sensation, conception, discrimination, awareness and form itself--are also constituted of *dharmas*; and they, too, are empty; and during that deep wisdom of insight she maintains compassion.

Han Shan, * the great Tang poet-monk, said, "If we know that form and emptiness are equal and of one suchness, thought after thought we save others without seeing others to save, and thought after thought we go in search of Buddhahood without seeing any Buddhahood to find."

Experiencing all of life as suchness, as oneness, then moment to moment [*snaps fingers*] we save others. Ed only knew about the young man on his left; he had no idea about the young woman sitting on his right. "Thought after thought we save others" without recognizing that there are others to save. *We do our best work when we don't know that we're doing it!*

There's a Medieval Christian monk who said, "The best prayer is when we're not aware that we're praying." Isn't that wonderful! The best prayer

is when we're not aware of it. And that's what Han Shan is saying. True compassion is free of ego. You could almost say that it's free of direction. It is, as that great *koan* that many of you are familiar with, as simple as adjusting your pillow in the night. That's true compassion, when it just erupts from you without planning, judging. It arises out of the wisdom that you're not separate.

Oh Shariputra, all dharmas are forms of emptiness.

When I first began to practice I could not figure out what *dharma* was. It seemed like people used the word in many different circumstances and if I looked it up in the dictionary it just didn't make any sense at all--and that's because it has so many different meanings. It comes from the Sanskrit *dhr* meaning "to sustain" or "to uphold, to support." So a *dharma* supports us; we hear that a lot. In Hinduism, in the Rig Veda, very early, it meant ritual or one's obligations or ethical rules; and in Buddhism *the Dharma* can mean ethical precepts, the True Doctrine, Teaching; the Dharma is the Teaching--see the relationship there? "That which supports" is the Teaching. *

But in the *Abhidharma*, of which *Shariputra* was the main spokesperson, *dharma* also had a very particular definition: reality is composed of many elements called *dharmas* and in that framework existence is a flux of these *dharmas*. And different schools had different numbers of *dharmas*; it wasn't like everything was a *dharma* but there were 72 *dharmas* in the *Sarvastivadin* * tradition, which was the particular tradition that the Heart Sutra--when you think of it as a political document--was written to refute. So, we can go there historically and look at that, and, in particular, this phrase: *all dharmas are forms of emptiness* is like "poke-poke" at the *Sarvastivadins*. "You say they exist! Nope!" The *Sarvastivadins* said there were three kinds of *dharmas* that exist: space, and two kinds of *nirvana*.

But that's not what is useful for us in our hearts and in our practice. What is more useful is to remember the *Dharma* as that which supports us, that which holds us--*that very Dharma is empty. There is nothing to hold onto!* What wonderful freedom! It's a little scary--particularly for people drawn to places where black robes are worn and very precise instructions are given about everything. Guess what? It's all empty! Nothing to hold onto!

These last existing elements are vacant, without any autonomous self-existing nature. They are in relationship with everything else. They are changing in each moment. Ultimately, what the physicists now say is: at

the very bottom there's just movement. It's just a dance--the ultimate is just movement of energy.

You look at a mountain--have you ever tried to see if a mountain will move? Oh that I could live so long to see a mountain move a little! But it's moving; it's moving. Everything is contingent, interconnected.

So it's this ocean that allows these little waves to come up, and we are these waves. You know the wave comes up and then it goes back into the ocean, and there's no--there's nothing left of that wave. It's like a cloud in the sky: there it is, and it's gone.

*O Shariputra! All dharmas are forms of emptiness.
Not born, not destroyed, not stained, not pure, without loss, without gain.*

This is very interesting to us because we all really care about birth and death. And we don't care about it abstractly, interestingly enough; we care about MY birth and MY death—that is the most important thing, yes?

Avalokitesvara is saying: *not born, not destroyed*. From the perspective of oneness: *no birth, no death*.

Now, I know I was born and I know I'll die. I doubt if anyone in the room will escape. Yet, if you just enter the deep course of *Prajna Paramita* for a moment, and experience yourself, say, from the perspective of your genetic heritage, just think: 2,000 years ago two people got together...and here we are. Imagine that! Someone you never knew--a man and woman you didn't ever know! And then think, "What about all the ideas that existed in those 2,000 years--and I'm just saying 2,000--10,000 who knows? I can't remember my anthropology, but you know, for whatever *long time*: songs were sung, art was made, healing took place, traditions arose, people formed communities. And we are a part of all of that through our genetic heritage--just who we are! Just coursing through these very bodies sitting here...just imagine, from all these different parts of the world. And now we're all here, affecting one another, in inexplicable ways. It's magnificent! How could we say that we were born in '42? How can we say we'll die in 2010? How? We continue. We continue to continue.

Dogen says, "Within death there is life, within life there is death. When a cloud forms, it forms from the moisture and the temperature, and when a cloud disappears it takes on a new form."

The next set of dualities is *not stained, not pure*. Again, as a political document there's a whole thing about this, but for *us*--we have so many ideas about what's right and wrong, and how much of our suffering arises from that? How much suffering do we cause in others because of our certainty about right and wrong, good and bad, pure and defiled? I try so hard to give you confidence in yourselves. You know, to me, someone who has the great privilege of working with so many different people who are very spiritually inclined, it's such a shock for us, that we all as humans, right now in particular, have so little confidence in ourselves; and we're so demanding, so perceiving ourselves as so stained or defiled.

Ching Chung, an 8th Century monk said, "It's as if someone dreamt that the pearl of the moon was defiled by falling into muddy water, and they tried to wash it clean, and then awoke and realized that the moon was not in the water, and had never been defiled, and that washing it hadn't purified it--that it had always been pure."

We imagine that the moon has been defiled by falling into muddy water, and we try to wash it clean. How often we do that! There is no stained or pure; things are just as they are from the perspective of *Prajna Paramita*.

And then the final set: *without loss, without gain*. Again, how can we think that there is gain and loss? A fool, a sage, a hag, a beauty--it doesn't matter. The body of reality is always right there. Thich Nhat Hanh, talking about this section, says, "It's like the moon. We see the moon increasing and decreasing, but it's always the moon. We say the moon is gaining or the moon is losing, but it's always just the moon."

And Dogen says, "When the need is large, it is used largely. When the need is small, it is used in a small way. Thus no creature ever comes short of its own completeness. Wherever it stands it does not fail to cover the ground."

No gain and no loss; it's always right here.

Not born, not destroyed; not stained, not pure; without loss, without gain.

Zen master Hakuin says, "It's like rubbing your eyes to make yourself see flowers in the air. If all things don't exist to begin with, what do we want with forms of emptiness? He's just shitting and spraying pee all over the clean yard!"

Forgive me for shitting and spraying pee over your meticulous, immaculate yard!



EIGHTH TALK

Welcome everyone.

In a way you could say that everything here is an offering to help teach us. The clattering of the blinds, the sun slipping in the window-- everything is a teaching of form and emptiness if we can just let go of our own suffering long enough to see it; if we can just drop that kind of usually-just-mental-stuff. Occasionally we have some physical association, but mostly it's all the "yada-yada-yada" going on that clouds the mind; it's like walls in the mind, obstructions, hindrances to simple pure being in the moment; being in this space right now.

As you know, I've been going through the Heart Sutra slowly, sometimes an entire talk on one line, because it's such a rich teaching. I encourage you to continue to work with it this way. But today I'm taking a huge chunk:

*So in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, conception,
discrimination, awareness;
No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind;
No color, sound, smell, taste, touch, phenomena;
No realm of sight; no realm of consciousness; no ignorance and no end
to ignorance;
No old age and death and no end to old age and death;
No suffering; no cause of suffering; no extinguishing;
No path, no wisdom and no gain.
No gain. And thus the Bodhisattva lives Prajna Paramita with no
hindrance in the mind.
No hindrance; therefore no fear.*

That seems like a lot to take on, and yet--if you've been following along as I have been working with the *skandhas* and the different explanations before--you'll find that this is simply a complete negation of everything that we've talked about.

I'm enjoying this study very much! Since this is not my first time I've been able to go a little deeper, or a little wider I should say, and read different approaches to the Heart Sutra. There are seven very famous Tibetan commentaries * and, you know, the Tibetans tend to be brilliant logicians. It's like watching fireworks! But in the end, for me it's just an exercise--it's like a song; it's a beautiful song but it doesn't really shed light for me, and I suppose that's why I'm a Zen person. *[Claps her*

hands sharply) sheds more light for me than an exquisite, logical argument that goes on for pages and pages--beautiful, brilliant; but what does it have to do with me and my life, my suffering, and that of others?

When we practice studying and chanting the Heart Sutra, I think it's really important for us to realize that not all of us are scholars--not all of us are going to spend fifty years on the different lines of the Heart Sutra. How can this study help me to experience the truth of my life and offer confidence and joy to others?

As I told you earlier, Hsuan-tsang--who brought the Heart Sutra back from India--chanted it whenever he was in trouble, for protection. One protection it can offer is the *light* it sheds on our understanding, on our way of experiencing ourselves and others.

This section follows the one where we talked about how all *dharmas are forms of emptiness*, and this one starts out "*So in emptiness...*" The "So" doesn't really follow any proposition, it's using "So" in a kind of Southern way. I use "so" a lot and it doesn't mean that "this logically follows from what came above"-- it's just kind of like a breath of air before you say the next thing. "So in emptiness..."

But what about this "in"?

"In emptiness?" How could anything be "in" emptiness? Isn't emptiness all of it? The plane that just went by; the creaking of the floors, the smell of the rice—is anything left out? "In" something implies that there's some "out of" something. But we have to work with language, and so we'll say "in emptiness"; or "where there is emptiness; where there is not emptiness."

Where there is emptiness in our understanding there is no "no" and no "yes". *There is no form, no sensation, conception, discrimination, awareness*. This "no"--in Sanskrit it's *na*--and it was translated into Chinese as "wu" or "mu". We may know about that. We may have heard that sometime. There's a Koan about, "Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?" and great Joshu said, "MU". That's what this Sutra's talking about.

When I was working on this segment yesterday I was searching for a way to talk about Mu, *Na*, No--the identity of yes and no. I looked out the window and it was just at the time that the storm was really going on and when I looked across the horizon (I live on the 10th floor) facing southeast I couldn't see any of the buildings past a block from my place. Usually I can see all the way to the East Village. The snow was covering everything, everything was white; it was hard to tell what was snow and

what was building; what was atmosphere; what was ground. And for me that's a very apt visual metaphor for this "NO".

[*sound*] That's my cell phone. That, too, is empty. [*laughter*] So:

First we have *no form, no sensation, conception, discrimination, awareness.*

Those are the *skandhas* that we've talked about, which have no separate existence.

You cannot isolate them from all that is. Then follows:

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. No color, sound, smell, taste, touch, phenomena.

Yesterday perhaps I understood this better than I do today! I'm going to read you a line I've written here: "The 'no' within the 'no-yes-no' is identical with no 'no' or 'yes'." But today that is not as clear as it was yesterday. [*laughter*]

Dongshan, one of the great founders of our tradition, heard the Heart Sutra when he was a young boy and said to his teacher, " 'No eye'? I have an 'eye', you have an 'eye', what is this 'no eye'?" and his teacher said, "You will be a great Zen master one day." But if we look closely at our "eye" how can we isolate it, where does it begin and where does it end? What about the optic nerve, or, in a Buddhist tradition, what about the object which the eye sees? Where do you separate? Where do you say: "this is the eye?" And that is essentially what this part of the Sutra is pointing out when it's saying, "no eye": no *separate* eye, no eye that exists just in and of itself without its object and without consciousness. We cannot separate these things. And so, all of this chanting that we do over and over again for 30, 40, 50 years, "*no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, phenomena.*" What we're doing is, we're reminding ourselves, over and over again: we are not separate. We cannot separate these elements.

There's a koan that says, "Does the ear go to the sound or the sound go to the ear?"

This is based on one of Nagarjuna's comments about *no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind*. How would you answer that question, "Does the ear go to the sound or the sound go to the ear?"

If you enter the world of "no ear" what do you hear? If you truly enter the world of your suffering what are you experiencing? Where does "I" end and "my friend" begin? Where do "I" end and where do "you" begin? Is there a separation?

At this very moment, we are in this room together.

Daito * wrote: "No form, no sound, but here I am. White clouds fringing the peaks; river cutting through the valley."

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind. Can you smell the rice cooking? See the tulips on the altar? Hear the sound of the screen banging on the window? How can you separate them from yourself? How can you separate yourself from all of us in this room right now? What is it that you can point to that has a separate *svabhava*, separate existence? If we could only see how all our suffering comes from that--clinging to a separate existence. Letting go of that is the great surrender that eliminates all suffering.

But we cling; we cling. As much as we want not to, we cling.

[sound of an airplane passing overhead]

Just for the moment, close your eyes and let go of "my" and let go of "ear" and allow yourself to experience the sounds...not separate from that airplane.

*No ignorance and no end to ignorance;
no old age and death and no end to old age and death.*

This gets back to the Heart Sutra as a political document. I've been reminding you as we've moved along that one way of looking at it is as a rebuttal to the *Sarvastivadin* tradition--and so, once again, it is being attacked and the *Abidharma* is being attacked. This "*No ignorance and no end to ignorance; no old age and death and no end to old age and death*" is referring to that Wheel of Life that many of you may have seen and may not know a great deal about because we don't emphasize it--although it's a very profound teaching in the *Abidharma*; in the early Buddhist tradition.

It is said that the Four Noble Truths are in fact just shorthand for the Wheel of Life, the Wheel of Causation--you may have heard it called that--or The Chain of Origination. It's also called The Twelve Links. It is based on the early Sutras in which Shakyamuni Buddha declares that this is what he saw as the cause of suffering. He saw that ignorance--and ignorance means our spiritual separation--ignorance, our inability to see the truth, gives rise to impulses, which give rise to consciousness, which gives rise to name and form, which give rise to sense realms, which give rise to contact, and contact gives rise to sensations, that give rise to clinging, that gives rise to becoming, that gives rise to birth, that gives

rise to suffering, gives rise to old age and death. This is a completely interdependent chain of origination and causation and you can say that it takes place in your lifetime, or in [*snaps fingers*] that moment. In a *nen*. In a *nen*: arising and falling, causation of suffering arises and falls.

So this part of the Heart Sutra is saying this Chain of Origination has no separate existence, and it's shorthand; it doesn't go through all of them, it starts at the beginning, "no ignorance" and ends with the last one, "old age and death". *This too does not exist!*

Why? Because if we're able to experience ourselves as empty, we experience all these ideas and concepts as merely empty: tags, names, models of reality which are moving and changing at every moment--that they're like schema. We attach to the schema and we miss our life; we miss what's happening right now.

At the end of this *no old age and death* the Heart Sutra says, *no suffering, no cause of suffering, no extinguishing, no path*--which are the Four Noble Truths. Even this! *The Four Noble Truths are empty of any intrinsic existence.*

Now to all you old Zen students, this is no big deal; you know that. But to tie it to our lives is harder. A beginning Buddhist scholar knows it, but an old Zen teacher finds it hard to live. How do we get that? How do we get what the Four Noble Truths are pointing to? What this whole Sutra is pointing to?

Did you feel the wind on your face this morning, your very life in every moment?

What will happen if we realize that there is *no suffering, no cause of suffering, no end of suffering, no path, no wisdom and no gain*? What would it be like for us to live our lives without having anything to attain? Without striving? Those of us in this room, you know, are very suspect because we strive to attain spiritual understanding. And yet we chant, *no wisdom and no gain*. What would it be like to simply experience our lives as perfect and complete, just as they are, without the need to strive? Then what would we do? I say we'd still show up. But our reasoning might be different, we might be a little liberated, maybe we wouldn't curl our shoulders forward quite so much.

No gain; and thus the Bodhisattva lives Prajna Paramita with no hindrance in the mind; no hindrance; therefore no fear.

We talk about this a lot. This is a very famous line that we use when we talk about the liberation of the teachings. But what I really liked on this line as I studied it the last few months is the *Bodhisattva* “lives” *Prajna Paramita*. I went back and started looking at other translations. I'm very fortunate because I'm retired at NYU so I can use their library at any time and I found some fabulous old Sanskrit syllable-by-syllable translations. What I noticed here is that we're the only people--our lineage is the only group of people who say "lives *Prajna Paramita*". Typically it's “takes refuge in *Prajna Paramita*”, or “is bound to *Prajna Paramita*”; the Sotoshu * uses the phrase, “relies on *Prajna Paramita*”-- Yet this “lives *Prajna Paramita*” has got to be the highest wisdom if there is no separation! We don't “take refuge” in the wisdom--we live it! The deepest wisdom--our experience moment-to-moment--is how to live our lives.

We would live, if we could, with *no hindrance in the mind--acitta avaranah*.

Avaranah is “a barrier or obstruction.” Red Pine translates it as “walls of the mind” which is nice, but I like Conze's better: “thought coverings.” You know, it's like we have our thoughts but then we cover our thoughts with thoughts. And it's that shit that covers our thoughts that creates our suffering. I like “thought coverings”: that which obstructs us from the pure action of our lives; that stuff that gets in the way, that clinging.

This is what our practice offers us. This is what we do in these endless periods of zazen when we face the wall and we think, "Oh my Lord, I've just been sitting here thinking for the last 35 minutes! I've not done one moment of zazen! I am so bad! Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah!" But no, we have been doing the work. Just shut up!

That is it! That's what you're doing: you're meeting your thought coverings! You're very slowly tearing down the walls of your mind. It takes time. “Sudden” and “gradual” you know sudden-gradual is about that gradually you [*claps hands*] suddenly have an insight! That's why we practice.

These thought coverings are what stop the flow of our lives. And it's so odd that we have these structures—this dark clothing and these rows and straight lines and all the particular ways we hit the bell. We have all of these structures, but what they are designed for is to help us move freely and easily in our lives.

With no hindrance--no thought coverings--therefore no fear--we say fear but Conze says it's actually “trembling”, which I love. “No trembling.”

You know how we have this trembling about our whole life: are we going to be good enough, and recognized enough and so forth. If we let go of our thought coverings, the trembling ceases.

Here's what Hakuin says about *the Bodhisattva lives Prajna Paramita*:

What a choke-pear! He's gagging on it! If you catch sight of anything at all to depend on, spit it out at once. Tell us you found greed and anger among the Arhats, but don't give nonsense about Bodhisattvas depending on wisdom. If you see them depending on anything at all, they're not unhindered, they're shackled in chains. Bodhisattvas and wisdom are essentially the same. Just like beads rolling on a tray: sudden, ready, uninhibited; it's neither worldly nor saintly, stupid nor wise. A crying shame, when you draw a snake, to add a leg!

Don't add that leg, that depending on wisdom, depending on your practice. Be the practice! Be *Prajna Paramita*. If I can be *Prajna Paramita*, I will be like a bead, like a bead rolling on a tray: sudden, ready, and uninhibited.



NINTH TALK

Good morning.

Time was I thought all good things were *Prajna Paramita*, and all bad things were *not Prajna Paramita*. Oh, but that's two, isn't it? How can we can we experience our lives as one? The teaching is in the Heart Sutra.

Today we begin with the line: *Far beyond deluded thoughts, this is Nirvana.*

Far beyond deluded thoughts this [knocks on desk] this is nirvana. All past present and future buddhas live Prajna Paramita and therefore attain Anutara-Samyak-Sambodhi.

That word “deluded” is “upside down thoughts” in Sanskrit, which I like. Somehow for me “deluded thoughts” makes me feel a little dirty; but “upside down thoughts” --I can really understand how I can have upside down thoughts all the time.

Traditionally, there are four “upside down thoughts,” or “views that can be upset,” or “views that can upset one.” So it's not the situation, I remind you, that is so upsetting but it's our view of the situation that is so upsetting. Always.

The first upside down view is: *taking the impermanent to be permanent*. One thing that can be very upsetting is when we think that things are the way they are and they're not going to change. That we're not going to age, that our friend isn't going to die, that our partner is going to be just like she was when we first met her, that our child will never grow into an irritating rebellious teenager—will always be that beautiful baby. But in every aspect of our life taking the impermanent to be permanent is a source of suffering. And of course that's a basic view of Buddhism.

The second view that can upset, or upside down view is: *taking the self to be separate*.

We talk about this all the time. The relational field that we live in is always interrelated—and that's who we are. And that's what we need to take care of—it includes us and everyone else.

The third view which upsets: *taking delight in that which is painful*.

I've shared with many of you that I suffered from addiction in my 30's and that just immediately comes up to me as the perfect example of taking delight in that which is painful—using drugs, or using alcohol. It's extremely painful, and for the moment we make it into something delightful, but it's not delightful at all. Compulsive sex: it's not delightful at all! You know that, I know that. There are various mental states we can get into where we essentially are torturing ourselves and we begin to think it's delightful. It's the classic "burning house" story in the Lotus Sutra: the children are in the burning house and the father keeps saying come out of the burning house, but they're so busy playing their games they won't go out. Think of all the children imprisoned in this country, playing video games instead of going outside and using their bodies; taking delight in something that really is suffering.

The fourth upside down view sounds very much like the third. It is: *taking suffering to be happiness*. We become so involved in this delight and pain that we begin to think that suffering itself is happiness. Do you remember a Rolling Stones ballad from about five years ago "Always Suffering"—it's a beautiful love song:

*Now we're always suffering,
Already lost,
Always suffering,
We're already lost.*

It's so beautiful, this song. This is the fourth of the upside down views.

But the Sutra is saying we are "far beyond" these deluded thoughts. "This is nirvana."

This is nirvana. The creaking floor of the Village Zendo is nirvana. The floor isn't creaking now but if we wait a minute it will. I'm here a lot in the daytime when no one's here--and the floor creaks. I'm not moving. We don't know why.

Nirvana means "not obstructed". Some people say it means "blown out" but most of the Sanskrit scholars say that's mistaken. It's "not obstructed". So nirvana is simply *samsara*, our ordinary lives, when we are not obstructed, when we are simply present to the pure wind, the clattering of the blind. It is things just as they are. And of course this is completely different from a Theravadin view, which would be that it's removed and separated; this is a Mahayana view of nirvana. It is a state of the mind—things just as they are.

There's a story I want to tell you about Mahasattva Fu. He was a brilliant scholar in China and one day he was lecturing to a large group of people

on the *Paranirvana Sutra*. People had come from a great distance to listen to him. In the middle of his talk, a Zen monk started laughing hysterically. It's as if one of you started laughing right now--hysterically. Fu quickly finished his lecture. He went back to his quarters and asked his attendant to bring the Zen monk in for tea. And when I read that part of the story I thought, you know most of us run away from ridicule and criticism. But how wonderful: you're giving this lecture and someone laughs at you, and you say, "Come on in!"

When the Zen monk came, Fu said, "I've studied these sutras for the last 20 years and I've studied with the great masters here in China. What was it that you saw? What did

I say that is wrong?" The Zen monk said, "You didn't say anything wrong. What you said was absolutely true—but it's all talk! It's so obvious you don't know the thing itself. You don't see the thing itself." And Fu, this wonderful man, says, "What can I do so that I can experience the thing itself?" And the Zen monk says, "You should stay in your quarters and sit zazen; if you do that for ten days I'll bet you'll see what I'm pointing to. Abandon all your thoughts. Have no discrimination. Just see into your inner world." And Fu did that: he told his attendant not to bother him; he went into his room; and he sat zazen. And after several days, he was sitting late at night and he heard a flute playing in the courtyard. Ah! He ran over to where the Zen monk was staying and he knocked on the door. The monk said, "Who is it?" and Fu said, "It's me!" The monk said, "Well who are you?" and Fu said, "I'm myself." And the monk said, "What kind of drunk are you carousing around here late at night? Go back to bed!" and slammed the door. Fu went back to his room and wrote a poem.

*In those days I remember when I had as yet no satori,
Each time I heard the flute played my heart grieved.
Now I have no idle dream over my pillow.
I just let the player play whatever tune he likes.*

What I love about this story is the surrender of Fu; his ability to go deeper, his readiness to experience even more deeply. All of us should remember: yes, perhaps we've had a glimpse, but it's just the beginning. And then I love the monk, instead of saying "Oh yes you've had *satori* * now" he says, "What kind of drunk are you carousing around here late at night? Go back to bed!" That's a wonderful Zen response: don't let it stink!

*In those days I remember when I had as yet no satori,
Each time I heard the flute played my heart grieved.*

Why would that be? When we're separate it grieves us.

Now I have no idle dream over my pillow.

That idle dream: wanting things to be different than they are. No matter how they are, the minute we want them to be different, that minute they are a dream: we've separated, we grieve, we suffer, we cling.

I just let the player play whatever tune he likes.

Whether it's the clatter of the blinds, the creaking of the floors, or the endless concert we're treated to on Crosby Street; none of it has to be an obstruction. All *Prajna*. *Prajna* isn't just the good; *Prajna* is the way things are. Remember *jna* is "knowing", *pra* is "before". It's the wisdom before knowing, before concepts: just things as they are.

Or, as Hakuin said, that freedom is like the freedom of beads that roll on a tray. They're uninhibited and unpredictable and they just roll this way and that. This is *Prajna*.

*All past, present, and future Buddhas live Prajna Paramita.
And therefore attain Anutara-Samyak-Sambodhi.*

Anutara-Samyak-Sambodhi is "unexcelled perfect enlightenment." Actually the root of each of those words is *budh* meaning "to awaken, to recognize, to penetrate, to fathom." Remember that's what *Buddha* means, "The one who has awakened, has recognized the Prajna Paramita."

There's a man I mentioned before who as a young doctor in Japan just at the beginning of the post war period got to know D.T. Suzuki. Suzuki told Mickey about his own enlightenment experience, and I thought I would share that with you today. It has not been published and I think it's very beautiful:

"Going up the old stone steps to the mountain gate at Engaku-ji between the rows of the huge dark cryptomeria trees," he said, "as I walked up the steps I became aware that I was the same as the trees at which I was looking. It was not that I had ceased to be myself; but I had become the trees as well."

It's so simple. "I had become the trees as well." Become the sound of the bell, the clatter of the blind, the creaking floor, the sounds drifting up from the traffic on Crosby Street.

*Therefore know Prajna Paramita is the great mantra,
The vivid mantra, the best mantra, the unsurpassable mantra.
It completely clears all pain.
This is the truth not a lie.
So set forth the Prajna Paramita mantra,
Set forth this mantra and say:*

Gate Gate Paragate! Parasamgate! Bodhi Svaha!

Prajna Heart Sutra!

Much has been written about “What is a mantra doing in this philosophical text?” A mantra is a verbalization, an incantation. A mantra like *Gate Gate Paragate* is an event; it’s no longer a description of *Prajna*, it’s a *performance of Prajna*. It’s an act that we do every time we chant the Heart Sutra. It’s the difference between talking about zazen and ...the difference. After we chant *form is emptiness* then it’s time to enact it by vocalizing.

“Gone gone gone beyond” can be translated either as “the lady who has gone beyond” or “in him who has gone beyond”—it’s not clear, they’re not sure, so we can choose. I chose the lady. If you want to choose “in him” it’s okay with me. *Para* means beyond, *sam* means completeness and *Bodhi* is awakening. So it’s: *gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond. Awakening.*

The last word is *svaha*.

[She cries a cowboy yell.]

Yeeeeeehaaaaaaw!

[Much laughter]

That’s what it means! *Ole’*. You know, sometimes we get so mmmmm you know. This is fabulous. Far beyond our upside down views--gone, gone, we’re gone beyond all that. Even if it’s just for that phrase, hey, how wonderful. *Ole’*. We might change it. Even today the Brahmins say *svaha* at the end of a blessing.

Hooray!

Hakuin, who has all along been telling us about the absurdity of the Heart Sutra, actually gets very sweet at the end and when he talks about the great mantra he says:

Cherish the great mantra of your own nature.

Please hear that: Cherish the great mantra of your own nature. It turns a hot iron ball into the finest sweetest manna. Heaven, hell and the world are right here on earth: a snowflake disappearing into a glowing furnace. How precious our lives are. We only live for a moment in the vast universe of time. That we may be joyful, listen to the mantra of our true nature, see our lives like the blossoms of this forsythia that will be here—maybe until tomorrow--the span of time of a creaking floorboard. This is our life.

Hooray!



TENTH TALK

Good morning everyone.

It's such a wonderful, quiet Sesshin this year. This particular quality this particular year has really touched me a great deal. It seems very quiet and I appreciate everyone's efforts to keep that the way it is.

I was thinking about Ru-jing, * Dogen's teacher. You remember that Dogen attained enlightenment or insight into *Prajna Paramita* when old Ru-jing hit the person next to him on the shoulder with a slipper and said, "Dropping away body and mind, body and mind dropping away." Ru-jing was a very humble Chinese monk, and I love the story of *his* insight into *Prajna Paramita* very much.

He was what today would nicely be called the Sanitation Officer; but in the monasteries in those days that was called "shoveling shit." So he was in charge of the shit. And one day his teacher asked him, "Ru-jing, how can something that has never been soiled be cleaned?" How can something that has *never* been soiled be cleaned? Think of your life. Think of how you think of your life. Think of your idea of shame. How can that which has never been soiled be cleaned?

Ru-jing did not respond immediately. He hung his head and went back and continued to shovel shit. And for over a year he practiced that single question all the time: when he was sitting, when he was eating, when he was working: "How can that which has never been soiled be cleaned?"

One time he said, "I don't think I can see this. I don't understand this Zhijian." * And Zhijian said, "If you'll just climb out of your old rut you'll be free." You can just imagine a rut like wagons make, you know, pure, impure, good, bad...as long as you're there you're not free.

One day while he was in the back shoveling the canals, shoveling the shit out, suddenly, for whatever reason, he got it. And he raced to his teacher and he said, "I have finally hit upon that which is not soiled. *I* have finally hit upon that which is not soiled."

He climbed out of his idea of purity and impurity, his idea of himself as separate from others, his idea that "this is good and this is bad." He was able to be free.

What is it that is “not stained, not pure” ? *Prajna Paramita*, the wisdom of the other shore. *Param*: not knowing, before knowing, the wisdom before knowing something, before knowing that this is good and this is bad. Just this.

Before knowing.

We exist only relationally. There are what we call in Buddhist terms “the causes and conditions” or what you've been chanting, “directly Buddha, indirectly Buddha”. We chant these phrases over and over, but they're not false phrases; we *are* directly Buddha and indirectly Buddha, it is the web of interrelationship. And we manifest that web by pulling those imaginary threads closer to us. We bring our consciousness and our awareness to our relationality: *Thus the Bodhisattvas live this Prajna Paramita with no hindrance in the mind, no hindrance, therefore no fear.* That's always been the line for me. What is this *no hindrance in the mind*? *Acitta avaranah*. *A*, without, so that would be the “no” in “no”, *citta* is “mind, mental activities” and *avaranah* is “barrier, obstruction”. Thus without “mind-hindrance” or we translate it *no hindrance of the mind*. Recall that another translator, Red Pine (Bill Porter), calls it “walls of the mind.” It's kind of like the rut. “Without walls of the mind.” “Thus the Bodhisattva lives this Prajna Paramita with no walls in the mind. No walls, therefore no fear.” Can you tear down the walls in your mind--the walls you've spent so much time building? Being right about everything? Being right about being wrong? Being right about being impure, or seeing impurity over there?

Conze translates this word very differently and he makes a good case for it: “thought coverings”--that which covers or obscures or obstructs our pure mental activities. So it's that which obscures that which would allow us to see clearly. The clothes we put on our thoughts to cover them and to form them. Ignorance, that's what Buddhists call it; Delusion.

Whatever we call them they're all about blocking, stopping the flow of moment-to-moment, the free flow of life that's going on around all the time. Something in our minds stops it: the flow of relationship. So what gets it going again? Where's our Vespa?

It is that experience of *Prajna*, or “meeting each moment.” The truth of this moment: not pushing away this moment in order to create a false moment that we want to have, but actually meeting the truth of this moment with *no hindrance, therefore no fear.*

Conze translates *no hindrance, therefore no fear* as “with no thought coverings, *this one has not been made to tremble.*” I love that because it

turns it into a verb. You know, we think of “fear” as this kind of noun that lives inside us. But “trembling” is a verb. Trembling is what we do in the moment that we're afraid. We tremble. We push whatever it is away and go to the refrigerator--that's what I do. “Can't think of a word, go to the refrigerator!” Or we can create another story, bite our nails, we can do a variety of things to avoid trembling.

What would it be like to *just tremble*?

As I do this right now I think, it's all about my jaw. I don't know where you're feeling it, but when you place the eye of awareness on your trembling you become one with what is happening right now and that has changed in that moment, everything is changing. It might be worse: *tremble, tremble, tremble*. But you're there with it, you're present to it, and you are back in the reality of the constantly changing relation of the whole universe. You're there! You're not locked in a noun called “fear”--another black box.

I think after ten days of Sesshin everyone here is a Bodhisattva, an awakening being. And it's said that awakening beings, beginning Bodhisattvas before they're fully awakened, have five kinds of trembling. I wanted to share this with you; you know, I read these obscure things and I'm dying to share them!

The first kind of trembling is the fear that we will not survive if we practice generosity. The fear that if we give it all away we won't survive. It's when we don't realize that in the giving we have energized the relationship; that *that* is the way it happens. We are creating generosity in the world. But we fear that; it's a common Bodhisattva fear.

The second one is the fear of criticism. If we try to help others they'll criticize us. True!

You know we say a really good talk is a donkey's hitching post. If a person gives a really good talk they've kind of imprisoned everybody in the room. They've put up something where all us donkeys will go over and hitch ourselves up to that post and say, “Yup, that's enlightenment, now we've got it!”

Third is the fear of death; that we won't be able to give ourselves fully to the world; that we'll be cut off. Fourth: fear of a bad existence; that our karma will be such that we can't serve.

And the final one--I'm sure the Shusos * here in the room will appreciate it--is the fear of speaking before the assembly. It's the fear of embarrassment, or of not being understood. Because you know it's

impossible to say anything about this topic. We do our best, and it's always misunderstood. And yet, we just keep doing it. If there's no mind to grasp and no permanent "you" or no permanent "me" to ridicule, then we don't have to tremble, there's just flow, there's just aliveness. We can be lighter about ourselves, realizing our self who is going to be embarrassed is all of this [*gesturing to the room*] not just this [*gesturing to her own body*]. Ryokan wrote this great poem. He says:

*Yes, I am truly a dunce.
Living among the trees and plants,
Don't question me about illusion and enlightenment.
This old fellow just likes to smile to himself.
I wade across streams with bony legs,
And I carry a bag about in fine spring weather.
That's my life, and the world owes me nothing.*

What freedom! We all need to have that freedom of the dunce. Be a dunce! Be a fool!



VOW:

A NEW YEAR'S INVITATION

Note: Roshi Enkyo O'Hara's talks on the Heart Sutra originated at Year End Sesshin 2005. What follows is the second half of the Tenth Talk: Roshi's instructions for the year-end ceremony involving the formation of a vow.

We've had several days practicing being fools. And now we're winding down. Today is New Year's Eve for those of you who have completely lost all track of time! What we traditionally do in this Sangha * is to spend these days aligning ourselves with ourselves and with our reality, and then find a way to make a vow, to set ourselves in a direction for our coming life that starts...now.

So we have a series of practices for the rest of the day. The first one I recommend is that from now until we do zazen in the afternoon that you try the practice of appreciation. Appreciate all the causes and conditions that brought you here. That includes your Mom and Dad--otherwise you wouldn't be here--your co-workers, partners and communities; all the causes and conditions that brought you here. Take a moment to appreciate that--all in relationship to you. See yourself as a part of a web that has allowed you to show up here. Appreciate that. And once having really immersed yourself in that quality, in that feeling of appreciation, you can put yourself in a way of letting go of past karma; letting go of whatever holding there is: of past actions, words, thoughts, opinions, ruts, walls of the mind. Allow yourself to atone for the grudges, the pain, the trembling you've experienced. We can let them go, and one of the practices we'll have this afternoon is our atonement ceremony, in which there is a lot of bowing, and you can either bow physically down and up many times as we do, or if you're not able to do that you can bow with your mind. Let it go. Atone.

Later we'll have a silent walk, and then just after midnight while we're all chanting, we'll bring the great bell out and we'll put it in the middle of the room--and each of us will have an opportunity to go up and just silently say to ourselves our vow, our primary vow for this coming period of time. And then we ring the bell.

What is that vow for you? Not self-improvement. That never seems to work, you know. I'm an expert on broken vows! Doesn't seem to work, to improve that self-separated-from-myself immediately.

You know, I attended some workshops at MIT with the Dalai Lama and a bunch of cognitive scientists. It was very interesting to me that in Western cognitive science they have a way of describing the process of reacting to an event: there's the event, and then there's the assessment, then the impulse, then the action. You push me (event). I say, "She's dissing me!" (assessment). The impulse is to want to say, "Hey you!" and then the action is to say it. In the Western style of anger management, we try to stop things between the impulse and the action so we allow it to go all the way up to the point where we want to say "Hey you!" to the person or we want to hit them. We try to train people between the impulse to hit and the hitting to stop and breathe and take a moment. And of course on a very crude level that does work--I mean it stops us from actually kicking the car. (I'm a pedestrian in Manhattan and most of my anger events occur when I'm trying to get across the street. Usually I'm running the light, too, so it makes no sense at all!)

But in Buddhist psychology we focus earlier. Generally speaking, they say that if you've practiced for many years--many, many, many years--you can begin to effect the assessment. Between the event and the assessment: Push—"Oh, that's just a body moving against mine." Usually that's after long practice; for beginning Bodhisattvas like all of us in this room, we can look at between the assessment and the impulse: Push—"Ah--Oh, wait a minute: did that person really intend to push me?" We can check ourselves at that point rather than follow the impulse to hit out. It requires absolute awareness, absolute concentration, and habit. We begin to see that in the assessment we are ascribing intentionality all the time to those we think are hurting us, without seeing their suffering; their inability to control what's going on. Through monitoring our assessment we're going to be able to open our hearts, to be generous and compassionate--with ourselves first of all. *Not stained, not pure*--ourselves first of all--and then, the world.

Preparing ourselves in that kind of way, we can trust our vows. I think of a vow as simply setting off on a path, putting myself in the direction of something. It's kind of like when you get ready for a hike: you get your maps, you get your compass, you get your water, you have what you need, and then you strike off. But then, there's a very interesting glen over in *that* direction. So you may or may not stay on the path you were going to, but you put yourself in the general direction of the hike that you're going to take.

There's a delight in a vow that comes out of your body, out of your heart, out of a week of practice; that arises not from "should" or "ought to" but from our deepest understanding of where we are now and what it is that

we truly want to do. Make your vow your life. Make your vow *you*--and then you can't break it, it's who you are.

There's a story about Tetsugen, * the Japanese teacher in the Middle Ages who vowed to print the entire Buddhist sutras in Japanese; they hadn't been printed yet. And he went all around Japan begging and raised money to print the sutras for everyone. And just when he had raised enough money to have the printing blocks carved, there was an earthquake. So he took the money and, instead of printing the sutras, he used it to feed and clothe the people who were suffering. Even though all these people had given him money for this one thing he used it in the way he felt was appropriate. And then he went around Japan again and he started raising the money again to print the *Tripitaka*, the entire collection of Buddhist sutras. And he had almost raised the money again when there was an epidemic. And once again he spent all of the money that he had raised to take care of the orphaned children and the people who needed help. Finally he went around one more time--I can't believe these wonderful donors! I just think, "You're gonna try and publish that again? And raise the money again?" But at last he did produce the first Japanese rendering of the entire *Tripitaka*. And in Japan when they tell this story they say, "His first two vows were the deepest and most holy."

When we set ourselves in a certain direction we don't know what will happen. I thought I'd set myself in the direction of the Dharma--and it changed my life. I had no thought of the Village Zendo. I had a thought of sitting every morning before I went to work. We don't know. But what we can do is be at one with our vow, be at one with the wisdom of who we are. We can offer a lot to the world--but the world offers a lot to us! We're always in relationship, and the way to notice that, to see that, is to be present to everything: your trembling and your joy.

"Make each moment the top of your head. Don't regard the vow as the beginning and don't regard it as going beyond. Even if you see it as beginning, kick it away. Even if you see it as going beyond, stomp on it. Then you are not bound by beginning or going beyond. You are free."

You are free.

You are free.

NOTES

For information on the lineage of Chinese Zen (Ch'an) masters and their biographies, see Ferguson, Andrew E. *Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings*. Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA, 2000.

Unless specifically noted BCE, all dates are Common Era.

PROLOGUE

*Theodore Roethke (May 25, 1908 – August 1, 1963): see bibliography. American poet awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1954 for his book *The Waking*.

**Genjokoan*, Eihei Dogen (1200—1253): founder of the Japanese line of the Soto School of Zen Buddhism; prolific writer, poet, artist. See bibliography.

**Zazen*: the Zen practice of seated meditation.

**Sesshin*: an extended period of Zen practice; usually between three and ten days.

HEART SUTRA

White Plum Asangha translation.

FIRST TALK

**Village Zendo*: A practice center in the heart of New York City. Roshi Enkyo O'Hara is the co-founder, Abbot and Spiritual Director. (<http://villagezendo.org>)

**Koan* (Japanese, lit. “public case”): a story or phrase from Zen literature, usually concerning an early Chinese or Japanese master, contemplated in *zazen*; one “passes a koan” when one is able to demonstrate one’s understanding to the satisfaction of the teacher.

SECOND TALK

* *“The First Turning of the Dharma Wheel”* was the Buddha’s first sermon given at Deer Park in Sarnath near Varanasi, in which he introduced the Four Truths and other fundamental Buddhist teachings. It can be found in the *Samyutta-Nikaya* V:420

**Bodhisattva* (lit. “great being”): Buddhist archetypes associated with virtues such as compassion, wisdom, discrimination; also a person on the path to becoming a Buddha. Colloquially refers to a great person, a good person, or sometimes to any person. See further discussion in this talk.

**Tsunami*: December 26, 2004; the second largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph triggered a series of tsunamis along the coasts of most land masses bordering the Indian Ocean, killing nearly 230,000 people.

**Crosby Street*: The Village Zendo is in an office building between Broadway and Crosby Street in the Soho district of Manhattan.

*Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (1870—1966): 20th Century interpreter of Zen to the West, author, translator, lecturer, professor—a strong influence on Edward Conze, Heinrich Dumoulin, Alan Watts, and many others.

*Hakuin Zenji (1689—1796): considered the founder of modern Rinzai Zen.

**Zen Words for the Heart*: see bibliography.

**Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*: The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom; see bibliography.

**Four Vows*: the four Bodhisattva Vows are to save all sentient beings, to cut off all delusions, to master all the teachings, and to attain the Buddha Way.

THIRD TALK

*Thich Nhat Hahn: beloved Vietnamese poet, Zen master and social activist; prolific translator and author. See bibliography.

**Infinite Circle, Teachings in Zen*: by Bernie Glassman, see bibliography.

**Zafu*: the small, round cushion used for sitting zazen.

**Diamond Heart Tradition*: “The Diamond Approach is a path of wisdom, an approach to the investigation of Reality and a method of working on oneself that leads to human maturity and liberation.”
(Source: <http://ahalmaas.com>)

FOURTH TALK

**Nalanda University*: one of the first great universities in recorded history; it was a Buddhist center of learning from 427 to 1197.

**Monkey, A Folk Tale of China*: see bibliography.

* As a general rule, Pali is the language of the Theravada Sutras; Sanskrit of the Mahayana Sutras. Buddhist scriptures of all schools have for centuries been preserved in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese translations.

* *Rinzai* and *Soto* (Chinese *Linji* and *Caodong*): are the two major schools of Zen Buddhism in the modern world. Maezumi Roshi, Roshi Enkyo O’Hara and other teachers in the White Plum Asangha lineage have been empowered to teach in both traditions.

**Mu* (literally “no” in Japanese): a syllable of incomparable importance in Zen Buddhism. In this context it is identical with emptiness. The source is a famous koan from the Mumonkan: A monk sincerely asked Joshu, “Does this dog have Buddha-nature?” Joshu answered, “Mu.”

* Nagarjuna, c. 150—250.: Indian philosopher credited with developing the philosophy of the *Prajna Paramita Sutras* and the *Madhyamaka* school of Buddhism; he was closely associated with the Buddhist University at Nalanda.

FIFTH TALK

*Conze, Edward (1904—1979): scholar, author of books on Buddhism and major translator of the *Prajna Paramita* literature. See bibliography.

**Vimalakirti Sutra*: An important Mahayana sutra; see bibliography.

* *Abhidharma*: a term meaning “higher doctrine” and denoting the scholastic analysis of religious teachings. The earliest *Abhidharma* material was composed over several centuries beginning around 300 BCE. (Source: A Dictionary of Buddhism by Damien Keown); *Nikaya Sutras* and *Majjhima Sutras* are major Theravada collections of Buddha’s teachings.

* *Lankavatara Sutra*: see bibliography

SIXTH TALK

**Arhat*: In Theravada Buddhism, one who has attained nirvana and is free of the wheel of birth and death. In the Mahayana, the term Arhat tends to be derogatory, indicating a person who seeks her own freedom, thus falling short of the Bodhisattva ideal.

* Ummon (Chinese Yun-men; c. 862—949): a major Chinese Zen master whose school is associated with *The Blue Cliff Record* and was later incorporated into the Rinzai school

* Chosetsu (dates unknown)

* Chen-k’o (1543—1603): One of the “four great monks of the Ming Dynasty” (see Porter, Bill, p. 166.) He compiled the Ming Dynasty Tripitaka, which was published in 1595.

* Dogen Zenji, *Mountains and River Sutra*: see bibliography

* Han Shan, legendary Tang Dynasty (9th Century): poet, author of *Cold Mountain Poems*, see bibliography

* It is accepted among scholars that Buddhism, Yoga and Vedanta shared common influences and analyses. See, especially, Boisvert, Mathieu: *The Five Aggregates: Understanding Theravada Psychology and Soteriology*; Eliade, Mircea: *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*

Chapter 3, “Yoga and Brahmanism” and Chapter 5, “Yoga Techniques in Buddhism”. For a (Tibetan) Buddhist analysis and critique of various philosophic and religious schools current at the time of the Buddha, see: Hopkins, Jeffrey: *Maps of the Profound*.

SEVENTH TALK

- * *Upaya*: skillful means
- * Foucault, Michel (1926—1984): French historian and philosopher
- * *Dharma*, multiple meanings: see Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, Part I, Chapter 7
- * *Sarvastivadin tradition*: early Indian Buddhist school, flourished for 1500 years (see bibliography: Conze, *Buddhism, Its Essence and Development*)

EIGHTH TALK

- * *Seven Tibetan Commentaries*: see bibliography: Lopez, Daniel
- * Daito (1282-1337): Major figure in the transmission of Zen from China to Japan.
See bibliography: Kraft, Kenneth: *Eloquent Zen*

NINTH TALK

- * *Satori*: Japanese term for “enlightenment” which is variously interpreted as the ultimate goal of Zen practice or as the beginning of serious practice.
- * Mahasattva Fu: see Suzuki, D.T. *Essays in Zen Buddhism, Third Series*

TENTH TALK

* Tiantong Ru-Jing (1162-1228)

* Xuedou Zhijian (Japanese Setcho Chikan) (1105-1192)

* *Shuso* (“head monk”): at the Village Zendo the position of Shuso marks becoming a Senior Student. It involves a period of time with various organizational and liturgical duties, which culminates in the *Shuso Hosan*, when the student gives her first public talk and has her understanding tested by the community in *dharma combat*.

* Tetsugen (1630—1682): Japanese Zen master and early leader in the *Obaku* school of Buddhism. (See bibliography: Baroni, Helen)

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* *Sangha*: the community of Buddhist practitioners.

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