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# *The Heart Sutra*

by  
Buddha Shakyamuni

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

by  
Tendar Lharampa

Translation of *Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning* by Donald S. Lopez  
Slight editing changes were made and outlines added by Joan Nicell for use in the  
FPMT Basic Program at Institute Lama Tzong Khapa.

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

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

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*The Heart Sutra*

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## *The Heart of the Transcendent and Victorious Perfection of Wisdom*

In the language of India: *Bhagavatiprajñāparamitāhridaya*

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

### *Obeisance to the Transcendent and Victorious Perfection of Wisdom*

This did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was abiding on Pile of Vultures Peak in Rajagriha together with a great sangha of monks and a great assembly of bodhisattvas. At that time the Transcendent Victor was absorbed in a samadhi on the categories of phenomena called 'perception of the profound.' Also at the time, the Bodhisattva, the Mahasattva, the Superior Avalokiteshvara was observing the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and saw that those five aggregates also are empty of inherent existence.

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

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

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

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

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

"Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that completely pacifies

suffering, should be known to be true; since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

*Tadyatha om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha*

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

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

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

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

by Tendar Lharampa<sup>1</sup>

The bee of clear awareness gathers the honey of precepts from the Kadam<sup>2</sup>  
instructions.

Contentment comes from the good taste of the doctrine.

May I be protected with excellent fortune by the supreme spiritual friend<sup>3</sup>,  
The glorious one who bears the banner of the Subduer's teaching.

I pay homage with the crown of my head at the lotuses at the feet of Munindra.  
The gold mountain of his Form Body is surrounded by the light of the major and  
minor marks.

In the ocean of sport of his auspicious speech are reflected the objects of knowledge.  
The sun of his mind destroys the dark troubles of the world.

Goddess Sarasvati, graced with the glory of youth  
Like a goose playing in a lotus lake,  
Remain happily in the clear pond of my unmuddied mind  
And bestow upon me supreme courage.

I respectfully revere Nagarjuna and Asanga  
Whom the Conqueror himself in countless scriptures  
Showered with flowers of explicit praise  
Saying, "They are valid persons, unmistakable."

Although the bee of my mind cannot comprehend  
The vastness of the sky of topics of the profound perfection of wisdom,  
This discourse, holding as much as can be taken with the point of a hair,  
Is made to refresh those who seek much hearing.

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

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

## **1 The general meaning**

The speaker of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras is Shakyamuni. [There are a variety of assertions among the Buddhist philosophical schools] concerning the nature of his speech. The Vaibhashikas assert that it is a non-associated compositional factor (*viprayuktasamskara*), the composite of words, terms, and letters. The Sautrantikas assert that the nature of words, terms,

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<sup>1</sup> bsTan-dar-lha-ram-pa - JN: Wherever the translation has used the Wylie transliteration of Tibetan names, places, and text titles, they have been replaced by phonetics or the English translation and the transliteration has been put in footnotes (the first time it occurs).

<sup>2</sup> Bka-gdams

<sup>3</sup> Long Drol Lama, Ngawang Losang (gLong-grol-bla-ma, Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang) 1719-1794

and letters is external form. The Prasangikas, because they agree with the world, assert that [the word of the Buddha] is sound and matter. The Chittamatrins say that if the word [of the Buddha] and the treatises were real sound, then there would be no word [of the Buddha] or treatises in the continuum of a person who had emitted them as speech. [That is, the words of the Buddha could not exist in the Buddha's mind before he spoke them or in the minds of his audience after he had spoken them.] Consequently, [according to the Chittamatrins,] all phenomena must be established in terms of the individual's mind. Therefore, a buddha is the wisdom directly realizing all phenomena which is constantly in meditative equipoise on the cessation that is the limit of reality. Through the combination of the fulfillment of the aspirational prayers of the Buddha and the pure actions and ripened continua of his disciples, however, the complete enjoyment body (*sambhogakaya*) appears as a teacher to bodhisattvas and the emanation body (*nirmanakaya*) appears as a teacher to shravakas and so forth. The appearance of the doctrine spoken by those [buddha bodies] is asserted to be the word [of the Buddha]. The source for this is a passage in Haribhadra's *Abhisamayalamkaraloka* [cited in] Tsongkhapa's *Golden Rosary of Good Explanations*.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, Ashvabhava's *Mahayanasamgrahopanibandhana* says:

The appearance of prose and poetry as sound are words in the minds of the listeners that operate in accordance with [their] desired aims. If that is the case, how do bodhisattvas set forth [sutras if sutras are actually in the mind of the listener]? The mind of the listener is not what they set forth. [Because the mind of the listener arises] by the power of that [i.e., the bodhisattvas' discourse, that discourse] is called [a sutra]. It is like discovering a treatise or a mantra during a dream due to the power of a deity, etc. [in which a deity causes one to discover something present in one's own mind].

Next, whence do the Perfection of Wisdom sutras arise? They arise from the mouth of the Buddha as well as from other persons due to the power of his blessing.

Where were the Perfection of Wisdom sutras taught? On Vulture Peak. Why is it called Vulture Peak? It is obvious that there are many ways of explaining this because [the following] appear in Desi Sanggye Gyatso's *Clearing Stains From Lapis Lazuli*.<sup>5</sup> [1] the mountain is shaped like a vulture, [2] it is shaped like a pile of vultures, [3] it was given that name because[vultures] protect the mountain where many vultures ate corpses, [4] it is called a pile due to the brilliance of the birds who are beings who understand emptiness, and [5] when the Subduer was fifty-eight years old in the Fire Snake year, he went to that mountain, which was shaped like a vulture's head. A demon who had magically changed himself into a vulture took the Teacher's robe and dropped it on the mountain, where it turned to stone in four layers and is known as the "great vulture pile." Because that mountain is the place where the buddhas teach the perfection of wisdom, it, like the Vajra Seat [in Bodhgaya], cannot be destroyed by hardness or fire and is immovable. Therefore, it is explained that although other mountains do not impede beings of the intermediate state [*bardo*], this one does.

<sup>4</sup> *Legs bshad gser 'phreng*

<sup>5</sup> sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho's (1653-1705) *Bai durya g.ya' sel*

When were the Perfection of Wisdom sutras taught? The scholars of astrology known as “the three oceans,” Tsechung Chodrag Gyatso, Phugpa Lhundrub Gyatso, and Khedrub Norzang Gyatso<sup>6</sup> asserted that he taught the Perfection of Wisdom sutras on the full moon day of the third lunar month and entered nirvana on the fifteenth day of the next month.

Jamyang Zhepe Dorje<sup>7</sup> refutes [the thirteenth century scholars] Chim,<sup>8</sup> the translator Chag, and others in his *Analysis of the Perfection of Wisdom*<sup>9</sup> In his system, he asserts that the Teacher set forth the Perfection of Wisdom sutras the year after he achieved buddhahood. Some people, however, doubt that. When the Teacher achieved enlightenment on the fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month, a son was born to Amrtodana, and that was Ananda. At the time when he set forth the Perfection of Wisdom in the third lunar month, twelve months after he achieved buddhahood, it had been just slightly more than ten months since Ananda was born. How, then, could Ananda have been in the audience when the Perfection of Wisdom was spoken? To that, Jamyang Zhepa responds that there is no fault because Ananda was not in the audience when the Perfection of Wisdom sutras were initially spoken, but he was present when they were spoken later. There are also doubts about this. The prologue to the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrika-prajnaparamitasutra)*<sup>10</sup> says:

Thus did I hear at one time. The Transcendent Victor was staying at Vulture Peak in Rajagriha with a great assembly of monks, 1250 monks. They were all arhats who had exhausted the contaminants ... in control of all minds, and had achieved the excellent perfection, with the exception of one person and this was the venerable Ananda.

If this prologue is the prologue from the time when the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrikaprajnaparamitasutra)* was initially spoken, then it contradicts [Jamyang Zhepa's assertion] that Ananda was absent. If this is the prologue from the time when the word [of the Buddha] was compiled, it contradicts the fact that Ananda was an arhat at that time. If this is a prologue from sometime in between, it seems to contradict [the Buddha's] instruction [to Ananda] in the *Dharmasamgiti* to use these words when compiling [his] word: “Monks, collect the doctrine [adding] ‘Thus did I hear at one time.’”

Some say that Ananda was even present before the Teacher demonstrated the way to become enlightened, because it is explained in Buton's *Source of Dharma*<sup>11</sup> as well as in the *Lalitavistara* that when the young prince Siddhartha was tested in the [martial] arts, Ananda shot [an arrow], the distance of two *kroshta* [approximately four miles]. Some say that there was an elder and younger Subhuti, Ananda, Udayin, and Sutisya, etc., with one appearing earlier and [the other] later, so that the Ananda who appeared in the company of the young bodhisattva was someone other than the son of Amrtodana.

According to *Clearing Stains From Lapis Lazuli*, the Superior Subhuti must have just attained the state of an arhat at the time that the Perfection of Wisdom was spoken, and Subhuti saw the truth for the first time on the day of [the Buddha's] Descent from the Heaven [of the Thirty-Three, to which he had ascended to teach the doctrine to his mother]. The Vinaya also says that

<sup>6</sup> Tsad-chung-chos-grags-rgya-mtsho, Phug-pa-lhun-grub-rgya-mtsho, and mKhas-grub-nor-bzang-rgya-mtsho

<sup>7</sup> 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa'i-rdo-rje

<sup>8</sup> mChims

<sup>9</sup> *Phar phyin mtha' dbyod*

<sup>10</sup> JN: In the case of the titles of the main Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, the English translation has been added and the Sanskrit has been put in brackets.

<sup>11</sup> Bu-ston's *Chos 'byung*

he attained the state of an arhat not long after that. Therefore, having provided many reasons why it is correct that the Perfection of Wisdom sutras were spoken in the Fire Snake Year when the Subduer (Muni) was fifty-eight years old. But below, [on page 402 of the *Clearing Stains From Lapis Lazuli*], he explains that [the Buddha] set forth the Perfection of Wisdom cycle in the Iron Dog year, when he was fifty-one.

There must be a reason why that many scholars disagree. This is what I think. [Consider] the example of the year of the Teacher's birth. In Choje Kyapa's<sup>12</sup> system, it is Earth Dragon [832 BCE], in *mahapandita* Sakyashri's system it is Fire Snake [843], in Kalachakrin Yungton's<sup>13</sup> system it is Earth Mouse [836], in Atisha's system it is Wood Ox [835], in Buton's system it is Fire Horse [854], in Phug's system it is Iron Monkey [876], and, according to the system of Chinese scholars, it is Wood Tiger [1027].<sup>14</sup> Although all are proven with scripture and reasoning, according to common standards, the year of the Teacher's birth is beyond the purview of those scholars. Is [the year of his teaching the Perfection of Wisdom sutras] a similar case?

The Perfection of Wisdom sutras are renowned in Tibet by names such as the seventeen mothers and sons. The most important ones, however, are three – the vast, intermediate, and brief. The vast is the *Hundred Thousand Stanzas (Satasaha-srikaprajnaparamita)*, the intermediate is the *Twenty-Five Thousand Stanzas (Panchavimsatisahasrikaprajnaparamita)*, and the brief is the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrika-prajnaparamita)*. These names are given from the standpoint of the number of shlokas.

In general, there are [five texts] renowned in Tibet as “the five sets of one hundred thousand.” The *Prajnaparamita Sutra* is the hundred thousand of mind, the *Nirvana Sutra* is the hundred thousand of speech, the *Ratnakuta Sutra* is the hundred thousand of body, the *Avatamsaka Sutra* is the hundred thousand of auspicious qualities, and the *Lankavatara Sutra* is the hundred thousand of activities. These are called the five sets of one hundred thousand. The reason for designating them as one hundred thousand is that the vast *Prajnaparamita* has one hundred thousand shlokas. The *Nirvana Sutra* has one hundred thousand testaments made by the Buddha when he was about to pass into nirvana. The *Ratnakuta Sutra* has one hundred thousand different names of the Buddha. The *Avatamsaka Sutra* has one hundred thousand aspirational prayers (*pranidhana*). The *Lankavatara Sutra* has ways of taming one hundred thousand demons.

There are also sutras, known as “the five royal sutras,” that are condensations of the meanings of the five sutras. The condensation of the meaning of the *Mother* is the *Heart Sutra*. The condensation of the *Nirvana Sutra* is the *Atajnana*. The condensation of the meaning of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* is the *Bhadracaripranidhana*. The condensation of the meaning of the *Lankavatara Sutra* is the *Apattidesana*. I believe that the reason those are called “royal sutras” is that in the past the religious kings of Tibet recited those five sutras in their religious services. The *Heart Sutra* is the sutra on view, the *Atajnana* is the sutra on deeds, the *Vajravidarani* is the sutra on ablation, the *Bhadrachari* is the sutra on prayers, and the *Apattidesana* is the sutra on the confession of sins.

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<sup>12</sup> Chos-rjes-skyapa

<sup>13</sup> gYung-ston

<sup>14</sup> These tentative conversions from the Tibetan sexegenary lunar calendar to Western dates are derived from a chart provided by the modern Tibetan historian Khetsun Sangpo in his *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism*, Vol. 1 (Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1973). The Chinese date of 1027 is provided by Roerich in his translation of the *Blue Annals* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1979) p. 18. Whether my conversion of the dates is correct, they at least suffice in illustrating the author's point that there is little agreement among Tibetan scholars concerning the date of the Buddha's birth.



The three – the vast, intermediate, and brief [Perfection of Wisdom sutras] – were spoken simultaneously because all of the requestors are the same and [the sutras] are similar in that there is a prophecy about sister Gangadevi at the point [of explaining] the practice of the pure land. [These sutras were necessarily spoken simultaneously] because it is not feasible that the same buddha would repeatedly prophesize the enlightenment of the same person. This point was made by the omniscient Buton.

The time when the Perfection of Wisdom sutras were recorded in books is known as the time of the third compilation of the word [of the Buddha]. It is not the case, however, that the word did not exist at all in written form prior to that. If it is asked how the Perfection of Wisdom sutras were propagated and in which country, [it is necessary to know] who owned the Perfection of Wisdom [sutras] after the Teacher passed into nirvana. The eight groups of gods, and so forth, gathered together but because they could not agree through discussion, there was a scramble for them. The nagas got the *Vast Mother* [the *Hundred Thousand Stanzas (Satasahasrikaprajna-paramita)*], the gods got the *Eighteen Thousand Stanzas (Astadasahasrikaprajnaparamita)*, the humans got the *Twenty-five Thousand Stanzas (Panchavimsatisahasrikaprajna-paramita)*, the demigods got the *Ten Thousand Stanzas (Dasahasrikaprajnaparamita)*, the king of the yakshas, Kubera, got the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrikaprajna-paramita)*.

Regarding how the *Vast Mother* got back to India, the king of the nagas was ill and nothing could help him. A girl told his fortune, saying that in the land of humans was a master named Nagarjuna who was skilled in the meaning of the two truths and who, if invited, would cure [the king]. In accordance with the prophecy, he went to the land of the nagas; this is called “the retrieval of the *Hundred Thousand Stanzas (Satasahasrika-prajnaparamita)*.” Another version explains that the master went to the land of the nagas looking for some sandalwood to erect an image of Tara. This is called “the retrieval of the *Vast Mother*.” When the *Vast Mother* was taken from the land of the nagas in that way, four chapters from the end were left in the land of the nagas: the *Maitreyapariṣṭha*, the *Dharmodgata*, the *Sadaṣṭarudita*, and the *Parindana*. Therefore, some say that because those are not present at the end of the present version of the *Vast Mother*, it is not complete. Others say that the present version of the *Vast Mother* has the full one hundred thousand shlokas and [the missing chapters] are combined in the *Avikaradharmatva* chapter at the end. Therefore, it is, in fact, complete. Others have a way of filling in [the sutra] from the *Twenty-Five Thousand* and the *Eight Thousand* by taking the *Maitreyapariṣṭha* and the *Dharmodgata* to be one chapter on vows, the *Sadaṣṭarudita* to be the second chapter, and the *Prindana* to be the third. Adding those three chapters to the end of some [versions of] the *Mother* in effect makes the five chapters. Chodrub of Go<sup>15</sup> says that they are also in the Chinese translation.

Regarding how [the Perfection of Wisdom sutras] were propagated in the snowy land of Tibet, during the time of Trisong Detsen<sup>16</sup> (740-c.798), Nyangkhampa,<sup>17</sup> also known as Langkhampa Gochajapa<sup>18</sup>, acquired the ability to memorize without forgetting and was sent to [India] to bring back the Perfection of Wisdom. He memorized the *Vast Mother*, covered his back with a cover of gold, covered his front with a cover of turquoise, tied it with a string of pearls, and returned [to Tibet]. What he had in his mind was dictated in four volumes. It did not say *satasahasrika* in Sanskrit and is called “the red draft,” “the translation of the mind of Lang” and “[the text] kept

<sup>15</sup> Chos-grub of Gos

<sup>16</sup> Khri-srong-sde-btsan

<sup>17</sup> Nyang-kham-pa

<sup>18</sup> rLangs-kham-pa Go-cha-byapa

in a deer leather bag.” Also, Manjushri of Be<sup>19</sup> and Indravaro of Nyang translated the Indian text in four volumes. It had *sahasrika* in Sanskrit and was called the “hundred thousand taxes” and the blue draft. These versions were greatly condensed books, almost like notes. The red [draft] was written with vermilion mixed with blood from the nose of the Dharma king [Trisong Detsen] himself. The blue [draft] received its name from being written with indigo mixed with singed hair from [his] head. The [text] kept in a leather bag was named for the vessel in which it was kept. The container in which it was placed was a deer skin bag. The “hundred thousand taxes” was so-called because it was translated after taxes had been gathered from the subjects.

Also, Vairochana translated it in six volumes. It had *aryasatasahasrika* in Sanskrit and is called “the intermediate translation of lama.” Kapa Peltseg and Chogro Lu’i Gyeltsen<sup>20</sup> translated it in sixteen volumes. It said, “Obeisance to all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas” under the title and is called “the great translation of the lama.” In the earlier versions of the *Mother*, there were only one hundred-nineteen samadhis. The translator Ngog Loden Sherab<sup>21</sup> added the samadhis “lamp of wisdom” (*prajnapradipa*), “clear appearance” (*suddhapratibhasa*), and “lamp of the moon” (*candrapradipa*) from the *Satasahasrika* he received from Phamting<sup>22</sup> [in Nepal], making one hundred-twenty-one. [This version], without the subscribed *ya* and the extra suffix *da* [which had been dropped from many words during the reign of king Relpachen<sup>23</sup>] is called “the translation of Ngog.”

There are three well-known translations of the *Twenty-Five Thousand Stanzas* (*Panchavimsatisahasrika*). There are six translations of the *Eight Thousand Stanzas* (*Astahasrika*), three of which are very famous: the *Malika*, the *Srenika* and the *Sainya*. The variations in terminology and differences in length among these three is said to be due either to their being [based on] different Indian editions or to differences in translation; the *Malika* is the most extensive. Regarding the method of differentiating those three, in the Ko<sup>24</sup> and Jog translation, the *Subhuti* chapter comes after the mendicant Shrenika appears, in the Vairochana translation, the *Subhuti* chapter comes after the mendicant Sainya appears, in the translation by Ngog, the omniscience chapter comes after that, and in that of Gyelbe Jungne of Drom<sup>25</sup> the omniscience chapter comes after the mendicant Malika appears.

Regarding the measurement of the vast, intermediate, and brief [Perfection of Wisdom sutras] made by the translators, it is said that the *Vast Mother* has three hundred sections, seventy-two chapters, 100,000 shlokas, 100,000 vertical strokes (*shad*), and 4,100,000 dots. The *Twenty-Five Thousand Stanzas* (*Panchavimsatisahasrika*) has seventy-eight sections, seventy-six chapters, 20,000 shlokas,<sup>26</sup> 100,000 vertical strokes and 1,100,000 dots. The *Eight Thousand Stanzas* (*Astahasrika*) has twenty-four sections, thirty-two chapters, 8000 shlokas, and 352,000 dots. This reckoning of numbers and some translations are based on the defective edition dictated by the scholar Kocha. Therefore, there are doubts as to whether or not they are accurate. They are recorded as something for scholars to analyze.

Regarding what are referred to as the impressions with seven levels of seals,

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<sup>19</sup> sBas

<sup>20</sup> sKa-pa dPal-brtsegs and Cog-ro Klu’i-rgyal-mtshan

<sup>21</sup> rNgok bLo-ldan-shes-rab

<sup>22</sup> Pham-mthing

<sup>23</sup> Ral-pa-can

<sup>24</sup> sKo

<sup>25</sup> rGyal-ba’i’byung-gnas of ’Brom

<sup>26</sup> The abbreviated title of the *Panchavimsatisahasrika* in Tibetan is *nyi khri* (20,000) leading some to think that the sutra has 20,000 rather than 25,000 stanzas.

- the seal [or imprint] of a dot [keeps] syllables from being confused,
- the seal of a vertical stroke [keeps] groups of word from being confused,
- the seal of a chapter [keeps] the meaning of words from being confused,
- the seal of a section (*bam po*) [keeps] shlokas from being confused,
- the seal of a section number [keeps] sections from being confused,
- the seal of the margin [keeps] the end [of the page] from being confused, and
- the seal of the margin title [keeps] the volume from being confused.

This makes seven. Some people speak [of another set of seven]: the string of the book cover is sealed with seven [knots], the book cover is sealed [or imprinted] with carving, the golden border is sealed with *lancha* script, the ornamental mark [in the upper left corner of the page] is sealed with the page number, the section is sealed with the chapter, the margin is sealed with the margin number, and the red vertical stroke is sealed with a blue vertical stroke. The margin title in this context refers to the name of the text, which is written on either side of the page number at the edge of the volume. [Those who hold to this latter listing of the seven cite as their source] Haribhadra's *Abhisamayalamkaraloka*, which says, "Put it away having tied it tightly with seven sashes with knots in seven places and having put the seal of your name on it seven times." It seems that [this difference in what the seven seals refer to can be accounted for by the fact that the former] is based on the volumes of earlier translations in Tibet, whereas what appears in [Haribhadra's] great commentary on the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrika)* is based on the volumes of Aryadesha [India]. Therefore, the question is whether it is suitable. It should be analyzed by scholars.

## 2 The meaning of the parts

With regard to the second, the meaning of the parts [of the *Heart Sutra*], there are two sections:

- 1 the preliminary [stanzas] and
- 2 the actual [sutra].

### 1 The preliminary [stanzas]

Regarding the first, in great monasteries such as Sera and Drepung,<sup>27</sup> before reciting the sutra, it is customary [to recite] these verses of praise and obeisance.

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

It is said that these verses are words recited by [the Buddha's] son, Rahula, to his mother. The meaning is that the wisdom that goes and is gone beyond samsara does so by means of the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness; [that wisdom] is not an object that can be expressed by speaking words or thinking thoughts. Because that wisdom is not created by way of its own entity, it is not destroyed, but, like the expanse of the sky, is the negation of being established by way of its own entity. That very thing which serves as the sphere of the unique knowledge of meditative equipoise is the mother that gives birth to all the Conquerors of the three times. It is obeisance to the wisdom that know emptiness directly.

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<sup>27</sup> 'Bras spung

## 2 Actual [sutra]

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

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

### 1 The meaning of the title

That which in the language of India is *Bhagavatiprajna-paramitahrdaya*, when translated into Tibetan is *The Heart of the Transcendent and Victorious Perfection of Wisdom*, and that is the title of the sutra. Regarding the purpose for stating the title, if a name were not given, there would be no way of finding out which sutra it was. Hence, the name is stated at the beginning. Regarding the word “heart,” for example, [the place] where all the consciousnesses that pervade the entire body gather is called the heart. In the same way, all the meanings of the vast, intermediate, and condensed Mother sutras are gathered here. Therefore, it is called the sutra of sutras or the heart of sutras. All of the intentions of the Transcendent Victor are gathered in this sutra. As Tsongkhapa says in his *Small Essence of Good Explanations*<sup>28</sup>:

Whatever you have spoken  
Begins from dependent arising  
And is for the purpose of passing beyond sorrow.  
You have no activities that do not bring peace.

The Transcendent Victor thinks only of methods by which sentient beings may pass beyond sorrow, and the method by which they pass beyond sorrow is the wisdom realizing emptiness. Therefore, it is called the essence of wisdom. That which passes beyond sorrow is the reality of sentient beings’ minds. Therefore, it is called the essence of Tathagatas. When it is understood that everything in the sutras and tantras only sets forth methods for purifying the taints of sentient beings’ minds, it is realized that all the teachings are without contradiction. Therefore, because all the buddhas of the three times are born from the wisdom realizing emptiness, that wisdom is referred to with the term “mother.” This is the idea behind *bhagavati*.

“One section” and “Obeisance to the Transcendent and Victorious Perfection of Wisdom” are words written by the translators. In general, there is no certainty about the length of a section. Three hundred shlokas constitute a section in texts like Haribhadra’s *Sphutartha*. Ninety shlokas constitute one section in the *Manjushriparyiccha*. Seventy-five shlokas make three sections in the *Tathagathasamgiti Sutra*. In accordance with [the latter], twenty-five shlokas make one section of the *Heart Sutra*.

In general, with respect to going beyond (*paramita*), beyond a common being is a Superior (*arya*), beyond the conventional is the ultimate, beyond samsara is nirvana, and beyond ignorance is knowledge. From among those, the last is the [referent of the] term “wisdom gone beyond” (*prajnaparamita*). According to the Chittamatrins, the wisdom of the non-duality of subject and object, that is, the marvelous realization of one’s own purpose, refers explicitly to the Sugata. Dignaga says in the *Prajnaparamitapindartha*:

The perfection of wisdom is the non-dual wisdom;  
It is the Tathagata.

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<sup>28</sup> Legs bshad snying po chung ba

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Because they are endowed with methods for attaining the state of a Sugata, the goal, [the term] “perfection of wisdom” is used to designate texts and path. That same text says:

That term [is used] for texts and paths  
Because they have that object [as their] goal.

## 2 The meaning of the text

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

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

### 1 A discussion of the prologue that produces the sutra

With respect to the first, the *common prologue* is from “This did I hear at one time” to “great assembly of bodhisattvas.” The purpose of the prologue is to have the listeners understand that the compiler listened without adding anything or subtracting anything so that they can pay careful attention to him. According to the master Haribhadra, “at one time” means that by the blessings of the Buddha, all the words of the sutra were heard by Ananda in one instant. He says in his *Abhisamayalamkaraloka*, “Because an ear consciousness to which the entire meaning of the sutra arose in one instant.” The master Bhavaviveka asserts that because the Perfection of Wisdom sutras are not within the sphere of shravakas, their compiler is Vajrapani. Haribhadra asserts that although Ananda was not capable of doing so himself, he [compiled the sutras] through the blessing of the Buddha and, therefore, is the compiler of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. Although such things should be explained, an explanation would be too lengthy.

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

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

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

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

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

Regarding the word “great,” it is explained many times in the Indian commentaries that it means a large number. “Bodhisattva” is explained many times in such texts as the *Vairochanabhisambodhi* and the *Sanchayagathaprajna-paramitasutra*. The simple etymology is that because they have purified all faults and accomplished all good qualities, they are *bodhi* and because they contemplate the welfare of all transmigrators and have annihilated demons, they are *sattva*. Or, because they have studied the two truths again and again and have arrived at the meaning of them, [they are called] *bodhi* and because they have endured hardship in contemplating the two truths again and again, [they are called] *sattva*. Regarding great, the *Sanchayagathaprajnaparamitasutra* says:

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

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

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

Regarding “the Superior Avalokiteshvara,” he who has risen far above the level of common beings has the power to free from suffering all sentient beings who can be seen by his eyes. The “practice of the profound” means the observation of emptiness. Observing it means contemplating it. The word “also” in the phrase “these five aggregates also” means that he saw not only the aggregates but also the sources and constituents to be empty of inherent existence. The *ba* prefix on *blta’o* was added by the scribe and is not correct.

## **2 A discussion of the actual sutra produced from that**

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

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

### 1 How Shariputra asked his question

The first is from, “Then by the power of the Buddha,” to “who wishes to practice the profound perfection of wisdom.” “Then” means after Avalokiteshvara had been empowered by the Tathagata to fully understand the meaning of what was to be explained. “Venerable” is a term which is generally famous for addressing those junior, but if this term is a term that occurs in the context of the compilation of the word [of the Buddha], it is not correct that Shariputra was junior in training to the compiler [Ananda]. Therefore, it is spoken with the special meaning of one endowed with a life that has abandoned the afflictions and that is free from birth and death by actions and afflictions. Regarding “Shariputra,” a child, who was an emanation of [the bodhisattva] Sarvanivaranaviskambhin, was born from the union of his mother Sharika, who had eyes like a *sharika* bird that lives in the reed or *nalandra* forests, and his father Tishya. His name taken from his father was Upatishya and his name taken from his mother was Shariputra. Because he was of the Sharadvati family, he is also called Sharadvatiputra. “Son and daughter of good lineage” means those who have the Mahayana lineage. The purpose of saying son and daughter is that only those who are male or female can create all the good qualities of the path and the realizations; eunuchs and impotent people cannot. Therefore, [it is said] in order to exclude them. “Whosoever” means distinctions are not made; that is, anyone who does not fear emptiness and has interest is suitable.

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

### 2 How Avalokiteshvara answered

Regarding the second, how Avalokiteshvara answered, the short answer is from “[Avalokiteshvara] said this ... should view [things] in this way”, to “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent existence.” The extensive answer is from “Form is emptiness” up to [when Buddha says], “Well done.” Because the individual words are easy to understand, they do not need to be explained. The word “also” in “those five aggregates also” indicates that not only is the “I” empty of inherent existence, but the “mine” also is empty of inherent existence. Thus, it indicates the stages of understanding of the two selflessnesses [of persons and phenomena]. “Empty of inherent existence” means empty from its own side. Therefore, it means that [phenomena] are not established objectively or from the side of the object. For example, when a house appears in a dream, it does not appear from the side of a basis appearing toward [the subject] but rather is projected out from the side of the perceiving consciousness. Therefore, it must be understood that the conventional status of phenomena is just like that. According to the Prasangikas, inherent establishment is the object of negation of reasonings analyzing the ultimate. Hence, even though the qualification “ultimate” is not affixed explicitly to the object of negation, it is affixed implicitly. Therefore, it is of definitive meaning (*nitartha*) and is literal. When “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other

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than form; form is not other than emptiness.” is understood in a coarse way, according to the Chittamatrins it means, “This appearance of form is one’s own mind, which is empty of the duality of subject and object. One’s own mind is the appearance of form. One’s own mind is not other than the appearance of form. The appearance of form is also not other than one’s own mind.” According to the Prasangikas, it means, “Because something appears as form it does not exist. Because it does not exist it appears as form. This appearance as form itself does not exist but it is not to be sought apart from its non-existence. Since it appears as form while not existing, form does not exist as something separate from that.”

In general, there are five kinds of emptiness. The absence of yogurt at the time of milk is the emptiness that is non-existence at a prior [time]. The absence of milk at the time of yogurt is the emptiness that is non-existence after having been destroyed. The non-existence of a pot in a place where there is no bulbous thing is the emptiness of the utterly non-existent. The non-existence of a horse in an ox is the emptiness that is the non-existence of one thing in another. The non-existence of a human at the time of mistaking a cairn for a human is the emptiness of entityness. The mode of emptiness in this case is the last mode of emptiness; this is an essential point. Therefore, with respect to that there are many terms such as empty by way of its own entity, empty of inherent existence, and empty by way of its own character, and there are many examples such as an illusion, a dream, a mirage, a moon in water, and an emanation. I do not explain this [at such length] because I have nothing else to explain. Therefore, analyze from various perspectives using the example that appears easily to your mind, and when dependent arising appears as the meaning of emptiness, it is best. Until that point, one should create what seems like a fear, worrying that the majority of phenomena, such as forms, have become the object negated by reasoning. Otherwise, even though you say things like, “A pot does not truly exist, inherently exist, or exist by way of its own character,” if the way in which it does not exist is not perceived, you cannot be counted among those who have analyzed emptiness.

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

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

With respect to the mode of meditation on the path of seeing, it says in the instructions of Atisha set down by Legpe Sherab of Ngog<sup>29</sup> that, having addressed Shariputra, “Thus, all phenomena are empty” indicates the door of liberation emptiness; “without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless” indicate the door of liberation signlessness, and

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<sup>29</sup> Legs-pa’i-shes-rab of rNgog



“undiminished, unfilled” indicate the door of liberation wishlessness. Mahajana’s commentary says that “emptiness” and “without characteristic” are respectively, the objects of observation of the doctrinal knowledge (*dharmajñāna*) and subsequent knowledge (*anvayañāna*) with respect to suffering. Similarly, “unproduced” and “unceasing” are [the objects of observation] of the doctrinal knowledge and subsequent knowledge with respect to sources. “Stainless” and “not stainless” are [objects of observation] of the doctrinal knowledge and subsequent knowledge of the path, and “undiminished” and “unfilled” are explained to be the objects of observation of the doctrinal knowledge and subsequent knowledge of cessation.

Some editions say, “Therefore, all phenomena are empty” and “stainless and free from stain” and there are those who comment on it in that way, but in many Indian and Tibetan commentaries it says “In that way, all phenomena,” and “not stainless.” It is clear that it is more meaningful if it is explained in accordance with the two negative terms appearing in succession.

With regard to the second, the mode of meditation on the path of meditation, in both the commentary of Vimalamitra and the oral tradition of Atisha it is explained [in terms of the] resulting [translation], “Therefore, at that time, in emptiness there is no form ...”. In some commentaries, it is explained with the resultant translation “Thus, emptiness is not form.” There is not a great difference in meaning. The supreme scholar Jamyang Gawe Lodro<sup>30</sup> explains that “in emptiness there is no form”, and so forth means that form and so forth do not exist in the sight of the meditative equipoise on the path of meditation. Vimalamitra has this in mind in his commentary when he says, “in the perception of emptiness, there is no perception of form.” Thus, the non-appearance of the five aggregates to the sight of the meditative equipoise is, “There is no form ... there is no consciousness”. The non-appearance of the twelve sources is “no eye ... no phenomena”. The non-appearance of the eighteen elements is “no eye constituent ... no mental consciousness constituent.” The non-appearance of the thoroughly afflicted and completely pure dependent arising is “no ignorance ... up to and including no extinction of aging and death.” The non-appearance of the objects of observation is “no suffering ... no path.” The non-appearance of the observer is “no exalted wisdom.” The non-appearance of any attainment or non-attainment of the fruition is “no attainment and also no non-attainment.” In that way, the twelve sources and the eighteen constituents should be taken as substrata.

Regarding that, the non-Buddhist Samkhyas [assert] that what is called the self, the conscious *purusha*, abides among the aggregates. They assert that apart from forms being seen and sounds being heard through the sense powers, such as the eye, there is no need for a separate eye consciousness that sees forms and that is other than the self. Khedrub Je says in his *Clearing Away Mental Darkness About the Seven Works[of Dharmakīrti]*<sup>31</sup> that [the section of the sutra discussed above] is for the purpose of refuting that assertion [that the self is found in the consciousnesses].

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

<sup>30</sup> ‘Jam-dbyangs-dga’-ba’i-blo-gos

<sup>31</sup> mKhas-grub-rje says in his *sDe bdun yid kyi mun sel*

The reasoning employed by the non-Buddhists to prove the existence of a substantially existent self of persons is, “The subject, the mind thinking ‘I,’ operates correctly because it operates naturally upon seeing the aggregates without the mind being previously directed, as is the case, for example, with the apprehension of blue.” [That is, the non-Buddhists argue that the self exists because the conception of it is intuitive; the mind automatically and naturally thinks “I” upon seeing the body, just as the mind thinks “blue’ upon perceiving a patch of blue.] The reasoning that the Buddhists use to refute the existence of a substantially existent person is, “The subject, a self-sufficient person that is not imputed to either the collection or the continuum of the aggregates, does not inherently exist because of not being either the same as or different from the aggregates, as is the case, for example, with the horns of a rabbit.”<sup>32</sup>

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

Answer: There is no fault. If the accumulated meaning that is the opposite of the composite of the two, a basal subject (*rang rten gyi chos can*) and the predicate of the probandum, is refuted by valid cognition, the reason is not correct; but if the accumulated meaning that is the composite of the two, a mere subject (*chos can ‘ba’ zhig ba*) and the predicate of the probandum, is eliminated with valid cognition, the fault of an incorrect reason is not entailed because, in a syllogism that states non-affirming negatives as both the sign and the predicate of the probandum, it is suitable to have a non-existent as the subject. Thus, the subject of the syllogism, a self-sufficient person who is not imputed to the collection or continuum of the aggregates, is called a mere or stated subject. The meaning of the term “self-sufficient person,” that is, the appearance of the self-sufficient person to thought is the basal subject or the imputed subject of that syllogism. The actual basis of the refutation of permanence in the proof of impermanence with respect to sound by the sign of being a product is the appearance of the opposite from non-sound to thought. At that time, sound itself is not appearing to thought directly just as it is. However, I wonder whether there is the fine point that the appearance of opposite from non-sound is not the basal subject in that proof.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, not only do the non-Buddhists just assert substantial existence in the sense of self-sufficiency; it is clear that the Sautrantikas and Chittamatrins assert that gross form and consciousness are substantially existent (*dravyasat, rdzas yod*) in the sense of self-sufficiency because those proponents of true existence assert that if something is imputedly existent (*prajnaptisat, btags yod*), it is imputed to a basis of designation that is substantially existent in the sense of self-sufficiency. How can one know this? It is proven by what is said by Tsongkhapa in his *Illumination of the Thought*.<sup>34</sup> “The others [the non-Prasangika Buddhist schools] assert that things that are imputedly existent are imputed in dependence on a basis of designation that is substantially existent in the sense of self-sufficiency.” Because this passage is very clear, it does not need to be twisted [to determine its meaning]. With regard to the subtle selflessness of persons in terms of consciousness and gross form in the systems of the proponents of true existence [the non-Prasangika schools], the non-existence of consciousness as an object of use by a person who is substantially existent in the sense of self-sufficiency is posited as the selflessness of persons of consciousness. The other can be inferred.

The mode of training on the path of no more learning is, “Therefore, Shariputra, because bodhisattvas have no attainment ... through relying on the perfection of wisdom.” The meaning

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of this reasoning, see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 175-196.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the use of basal subjects and mere subjects in syllogisms, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *A Study of Svatantrika* (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1987), pp. 174-179.

<sup>34</sup> *dGongs pa rab gsal*

is that the conventional does not appear to the sight of meditative equipoise. Therefore, bodhisattvas practice the perfection of wisdom, abide in it, and go to the completion of nirvana. It is teaching that all of the buddhas of the three times have also become buddhas in that way.

Everything up to this point is for disciples of dull faculties. The instructions for those of sharp faculties are, “Therefore, the manta of the perfection of wisdom ... should train in the perfection of wisdom in that way.” Vimalamitra’s commentary says, “It is a secret manta because of being a consciousness and because of being a protector.” As he says, the original term *mantra* means mind and protector. Due to this, all five paths also have the meaning of consciousness and protector.<sup>35</sup> “The mantra of the perfection of wisdom” is the path of accumulation. “The mantra of great knowledge” is the path of preparation. “The unsurpassed mantra” is the path of seeing. “The mantra equal to the unequalled” is the path of meditation. “The mantra that completely pacifies suffering” is the path of no more learning. In accordance with what is seen by this profound perfection of wisdom, it should be known to be true; that is, if an individual meditates in this way, one will know that it is the cause of going to buddhahood.

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

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

Some scholars say that this mantra is not included in the tantras, thinking that it is placed in the sutra system basically, but because the sadhanas of Nagarjuna and Darikapa are clearly in the mantra system, there must be a context for including this mantra in the tantras. However, Khedrub Je said that the sadhanas of Nagarjuna and Darikapa are spurious and some scholars say that they are authentic. Also, there is a commentary on the *Heart Sutra* in the mantra system by “Shrisimha.” Therefore, it seems difficult to analyze.

### 3 How that was admired by the Teacher

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

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<sup>35</sup> JN: This phrase is missing in the translation.

With regard to the way to overcome demons [through reciting the sutra], Khedrub refutes this in his *General Presentation of the Tantras*<sup>36</sup> saying, “Regarding the way to overcome demons, those in [prayers] such as the ‘clear light’ and the ‘prologue’ are fabrications.” There are, however statements such as “The king of gods Sakra [Indra] thought about the meaning of the profound perfection of wisdom and recited it in order to overcome sinful demons.” Because those words are similar to words in the *Eight Thousand Stanzas (Astasahasrika)* and because, moreover, there are instructions that are said to have been given by Nagarjuna [that it is permissible to recite the sutra in order to overcome demons], it should be analyzed.

That I have not explained in detail the profound meaning, difficult to fathom,  
Is not due to the fault of having nothing to explain;  
It is only because of the fault of narrowness of my own intelligence  
That I have simply repeated some statements of others.

If you knew that I have turned away from the thought of the Subduer  
Through engaging in sophistry,  
Then just as a loving mother does not become angry at the misdeeds of her  
    unfortunate child,  
You would not be scornful, but would think of me with love.

Like the barley collected by a beggar,  
This is a mixture into one of a variety of texts.  
It is not filled with profound statements,  
But because it was done with a mind not black, I don’t think I am to be blamed.

By this virtue may the white elephant of my mind,  
Its body adorned with ornaments of virtue of much hearing,  
Hold in its trunk of intelligence the sword of emptiness of duality  
And vanquish all the armies of the conception of true existence.

*Commentary on the Heart Sutra, Jewel Light Illuminating the Meaning* was written at the request of Konchog Zopa,<sup>37</sup> the king of proclaimers of the profound texts. It was collected from a variety of texts and set down by the Ngawang Tendar of Alagsha, who is called Lhaden Drakor.<sup>38</sup> It was printed at Kubum Jampa Ling.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> rGyud sde spyi nam

<sup>37</sup> dKon-mchog-bzod-pa

<sup>38</sup> Ngag-dbang-bstan-dar of A-lag-sha, who is called Lha-ldan-grva-skor

<sup>39</sup> sKu’bum-byams-pa-gling