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# Prajna-Paramita-Hridaya/the Heart Sutra: Bhagavati, the Heart of Transcendental Knowledge

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## Article

# Prajna-paramita-Hridaya/The Heart sutra : Bhagavati, the Heart of Transcendental Knowledge <sup>†</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> Transliteration of the sutta in Tibetan language and its translation to English language by Sarah Harding, lama in the Shangpa Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and Associate Professor and Core Faculty at Naropa University, has been used here.

The transliteration and translation were printed for Vajra Vidya Seminar 2005, Vajra Vidya Institute, Sarnath, India.

<sup>‡</sup> This work could not have been done without the help of the Vietnamese temple or the Vein Giac Institute at Bodh Gaya.

Sincere thanks to Venerable Thich Thong Tanh for allowing the author to record the audio file of the sutta at the temple as well as sharing the insights of the sutta during the evening times.

**Abstract:** The essence of the sutta that is often stated as the heart sutta or the prajna-paramita, is the wisdom related to the absolute truth or the paramartha, that is experienced in the heart. It is referred to as the foundation stone of the Mahayana Buddhist teachings but in a grander aspect of the nature, truth can neither be labeled as buddhist or hindu or islamic or christian or sikh or tao or zen or parsi or quantum or social etc. When one meditates the identifications dissolve. It would be wrong for anyone to say that she/he would be a buddhist when her/his individuality is lost in emptiness during meditation. What remains is awareness and in awareness, all grasping and feverishness is lost. This knowledge which makes one transcend into the realms of Buddhahood or completely liberated state is revered as goddess also and given a name Bhagavati. So the mother of all Buddhas or the completely liberated ones is nothing but the absolute truth that is encased in the prajna-paramita-sutta. One is raising the female aspect of nature on a higher citadel and terming it as the mother of all Buddhas. Experiencing the absolute truth in heart takes time but it is packed into a verbalized contorted form of a few words. The sutta tries to capture the un-captured absolute and gives a way to explore the deeper realms of the truth at an experiential level. Note that both the former Buddha and the bodhisattva-mahasattva enter into emptiness, experience the knowledge in their entire mind-body complex and after the experience Siddhartha raises Avalokiteshvara to a higher platform and asks him to impart the experienced knowledge in a few words. After the teaching finishes, the Buddha puts a seal on what the bodhisattva has taught by saying "Well done! This is how it should be taught." One has experienced knowledge but one needs a seal of confirmation. The relevance of this knowledge is inexplicable given the magnanimity of conflicts and clashes that happen in the mind body complex pertaining to the spiritual journey one takes. The knowledge is of immense value to those who have experienced deep conflicting issues in their hearts, that have perturbed them regarding the subtle aspects of a spiritual journey. Prajna-paramita-sutta aims to assuage the deeper issues that troubles the heart of a spiritual seeker and makes the path easy enough to reach the goal. The Heart sutra contains the Mahasattipathan sutra.

**Keywords:** Mahayan Buddhism; Theraveda Buddhism; Nirvana; Emptiness

## 1. Author's note

The exposition has been written with a view to open up to those interested in this spiritual journey. What it brings to the readers is a way to study, explore and absorb the spirit behind any spiritual injunction, by delving into a particular sutta in detail. Usually, a sutta is given or open to all in general, but how to unlock the sutta, gain insight into the spirit behind it and finally absorb the inherent knowledge at an experiential level is missing to many. Mere chanting of the sutta has its merits, but it does not help one progress on the journey. What is needed is a way to grasp how the profound knowledge that is locked or sealed in a few words can be opened up. The fact is that the highest is the simplest and sometimes it is so simple that even if it is front, one is unable to experience it. Thus, here the stress is given on deep meditations as a means of practice and then reading a sutta for theoretical purpose. Note that the individual's experiential knowledge needs a stamp or a seal of confirmation in the form of theoretical injunctions of those who have already experienced a particular knowledge

and expressed it in the form of words for the help of many. The endeavour here is to relate the deeper paradoxical opposites which one faces in a spiritual journey into the realms of truth.

The author's journey is long and it is hoped that this exposition will be of help to those interested. Of particular importance is the following. In no way, there is an effort to influence the reader and gain a majority of followers. This is because, when the heart is ready, then only knowledge will dawn within an individual. If the heart is not ready, even sitting next to a fully liberated one will not help the individual. The former Buddha (the fully liberated/enlightened one) at one point explicitly states "it is not my sangha (the community); it is the sangha of truth". In another case, he clearly states "Do not accept words just out of reverence. But by your own personal experience test what has been stated and move". The whole purpose is to open up the inner potential of a being in spiritual dimension.

The author might not have reached the stage of buddhahood, but still out of personal interest and whatever limited knowledge has come to awareness, the author's intention is to open up the reader's heart to the spiritual knowledge by bringing into awareness, the way to explore the deeper aspects of spiritual realms and to make the reader equipped with tools to explore the spirit behind the words of a sutta. In this effort, wherever necessary, proper references have been given and where possible, the author has contributed that which has come to awareness after meditations.

Note that it is not buddh-ism or any other -ism that is important. Meditations are not about religions but a way to explore the immeasurable fields beyond the ordinary perceptions of mind body complex. The author is not sure how any religion will match the experiential knowledge of the heart gained through meditations that brings one in harmony with the natural laws. Again, the author does not condemn religions or any faith for that matter. If it has been perceived in that manner, then I apologize before hand. To make the point more clear, it is not expected that this text will suit everyone, but feel free to acquire whatever is possible and leave the rest behind.

Finally, the author encourages the readers to acquire and explore various advanced texts in the references as well as to communicate with different beings on this journey to expand one's awareness of the different existing systems in a spiritual journey. This might take quite some time depending on intensity and interest (may be 5, 10, 15, 20 years or may be a life time). But do explore and acquire spiritual knowledge from wherever it comes. It will definitely be of aid at some point in time.

Transliteration of the sutta in Tibetan language and its translation to English language by Sarah Harding, lama in the Shangpa Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and Associate Professor and Core Faculty at Naropa University, has been used here. The transliteration and translation were printed for Vajra Vidya Seminar 2005, Vajra Vidya Institute, Sarnath, India. In this text, the transliteration is in **bold**, followed by the translation of lama Sarah Harding in black. Wherever necessary the author's exposition follows in the form of notes and questions and answer sessions. Finally, errors, typos or grammatical mistakes are sole responsibility of the author and later versions will be corrected at the earliest. Important points have been underlined throughout the text.

Complementary Audio file on Heart Sutra has been made available at - <https://sites.google.com/view/shriprakashsinha/shriprakashsinha/recordings> Hope it will be of benefit to the reader. The journey is long and thus please do not be in a hurry, for all hard work is destroyed in haste. My merits are yours too! Love and take care!

## 2. Dedication

To all those who have walked the path into the realms of truth and helped many on their journey. Masters, teachers, mentors of past, present and future, who have imparted and who will transmit knowledge in some way or the other for the benefit of myriads of beings entering existence. Finally, heartfelt gratitude to *Samsara* and mother Nature which prepares one for nirvana and finally, *parinirvana*.

### 3. Acknowledgement

This work could not have been done without the help of the Vietnamese temple or the Vein Giac Institute at Bodh Gaya. Sincere thanks to Venerable Thich Thong Tanh for allowing the author to record the audio file of the sutta at the temple as well as sharing the insights of the sutta during the evening times. Special thanks to Chon Nha Duyen and Do Thi Tuyet Houng, for bearing with the author during the 12 days rigorous course of Prajna-Paramita-Hridaya. Also, Pham Duc Tri for delightful engagement during the discussions of the sutta and his many questions that refined the work. Without their presence, this work would not have take the current form.

### 4. Introduction

In this section, we cover the following topics -

- The importance of experiential knowledge
- The three stages of acquiring knowledge
- How knowledge is acquired?
- An example of whether knowledge has settled or not
- *Sutra or sutta*
- The paradoxical opposites and the two kinds of truths
- What is *prajna-paramita-sutta* or *Bhagavati*, the heart of transcendental knowledge?
- What is the relevance of this knowledge and veracity of the spirit behind the contents of *prajna-paramita-sutta*?

#### 4.1. The Importance of Experiential Knowledge

Why is it important to have experiential knowledge? If experiential knowledge of the heart is not there, then one will state things in a mechanical fashion from the memory. But if the experiential knowledge has settled in the heart, then knowledge will flow naturally from the heart of that being. So, before we begin, an important note to all readers. The experiential knowledge of the spirit behind the words is indispensable in progress. The difference will persist to some extent between the frequency of the sound and the experience. This is mainly due to the fact that a word or a *mantra* (certain frequencies of sound) or a symbol has a limitation of a boundary and tries to capture that which cannot be captured. Nevertheless for the ease of explanation a dialogue has been established. Note that experiential knowledge dawning from meditations are a practical way to grasp the spirit behind what is being stated. So the best way is to meditate and then read any spiritual injunction and then contemplate. This cycle needs to be repeated again and again before the knowledge will open up in one's awareness. Here knowledge is not that which helps one to get a livelihood, but rather that which helps acquire wisdom which leads to a deeper understanding of life from a spiritual perspective. So (1) practice (meditation), (2) theory (reading of spiritual knowledge) and (3) contemplation (pondering over what has been read and why things have been stated the way they have been) go hand in hand. All three are connected as different legs of a table. They all have importance and if you pull one, the other two will come along.

#### 4.2. The Three Stages of Acquiring Knowledge

Now, why this process needs to be followed when dealing with spiritual injunctions? The basic principle is as follows - Knowledge settles in three different ways. One has heard, read, seen or acquired knowledge through the senses. This knowledge is limited to the domain of senses and has its limitations. This is the first form of acquiring knowledge and is referred to as *srutmayi panjna* (pronounced as *shrut-mai pan-ya*; panjna is knowledge or wisdom; srut is heard. Note - *panjna* is also written as *prajna*). The second form of acquiring knowledge is when the mind starts to contemplate over what has been received through the senses. This is the second stage when the mind churns over the acquired knowledge in order to grasp the essence behind what is being stated. This is referred to as *chintanmayi panjna* (pronounced as *chintan-mai pan-ya*; chintan is contemplation or pondering

over the matter). The way to practice contemplation is to sit with the sutra in the mind. Let the sutra release its flavour and consume the mind as a chewing gum releases its flavour and consumes the whole taste sensation. It is like one puts the seed in the soil and then the earth provides nutrition to the seed to break and make it grow into a tree. Similarly, the sutra in mind is the seed and the mind is the earth. The essence of the sutra automatically nourishes the mind. This is an important stage as contemplation helps in making the mind one pointed and to a certain extent still. Finally the last stage of the knowledge is when it settles in one's heart (definitely not the physical one). This happens, when in meditation, the heart of a being opens naturally and spontaneously to the knowledge that comes to awareness and the heart easily experiences the spirit behind the knowledge. The experience of the spirit behind the knowledge in words is the actual progress that happens, but requires a lot of time. This final stage is called as *bhavanamayi panja* (pronounced as *bhavana-mayi pan-ya*). Now depending on the texture of the mind and deep impressions one carries in the flow of consciousness, the time to acquire the experiential knowledge varies. This does not mean that one is superior or inferior or contemporary to the other. It just indicates how much one is closer to such knowledge through experience in the heart. Thus the cycle of meditation (i.e practice), contemplation (i.e pondering long over the what has been stated and why it has been stated in such a manner) and reading or listening or seeing or sensing the knowledge goes on till knowledge or panjna dawns in heart.

#### 4.3. How Knowledge Is Acquired?

There is knowledge. The knowledge is already present in this nature. But the way to acquire knowledge must be known. The journey is of greater importance as it will lead one to the goal. The goal of nirvana is there right now, but it is connected to the journey. So it is extremely valuable to know the way to acquire knowledge. One needs to have a solid grasp of the fundamentals of the lower classes to progress well at higher and simpler levels. "meditate, meditate and meditate and a way is ... sit still and be". The seating requires the the right amount of effort but the happenings in the mind body complex are effortless and reveal itself naturally and spontaneously, without any force or influence. With eyes closed and spine erect, sit still and be. An example - the lotus flower rests gently on the surface of a pond and is still. But the happening within the petals of the flower is natural and spontaneous. It is better to sit under a tree or near a pond. There is no want to go for, no search to go on, no journey to be taken and no effort to be put forth. Nothing to say, nothing to do and nothing to become. Just sit still and be. In awareness, each and every aspect comes to awareness and passes off. Let nature unfold itself! After meditation, open any text and read a line or two and then contemplate or be with what one has read. This process is cyclic in nature until the *srutmayi prajna* becomes *chintanmayi prajna* which eventually turns into *bhavanamayi prajna*.

#### 4.4. An Example of Whether Knowledge Has Settled or Not

For example, everyone knows that death is going to happen. But there are two ways by which one can see that knowledge appear. One is when one expresses the knowledge in an uneasy state of heart and a disturbed mind - "Heh! Everyone knows that death is going to happen!" and another is when one expresses the same knowledge in with a calm heart and an undisturbed mind - "yes! ... death is bound to happen as with each breath every species has walked one step closer to death!" In the second expression, one speaks from one's heart as one has experienced death in meditation. That knowledge of death has already known experientially through the heart. It has come to awareness that the individuality has gone through the death through experience. Thus in the second expression knowledge appears from the heart. Contrary to this, in the first case, when the knowledge has not settled properly in heart or has been lost due to deep impressions in mind body complex, one feels perturbed in both heart and mind. The calmness of the heart is vitiated and thus the mind remains disturbed while expressing the same knowledge.

#### 4.5. Sutra or Sutta

Thus, the fundamental aspect is that meditation helps in gaining experiential knowledge behind the spirit of the knowledge that is packed and transmitted in these *sutras* or *suttas*. A *sutra* or *sutta* is nothing but an expression in words (for the good of many on the spiritual path) of an experiential knowledge that has come to awareness and absorbed in the heart. One finds them across different cultures and traditions. So if one reads any spiritual knowledge, be careful of not reading it as a novel or for that matter to pass time. Meditate, read and contemplate. Let the meditation clear the deeper impressions in the mind so that the bowl like mind becomes transparent and in awareness the essence of the spirit behind the knowledge unfolds itself. Here nature reveals the deeper secrets of the way to progress. Then, that which comes spontaneously and naturally in awareness belongs to you forever!

*Any sutra or sutta will open up to a being who has acquired the merits in her/his heart.* Thus it is imperative that one protects the merits of one's life and develops merits. The meditations and heart felt service to others is an important aspect. Finally, it is good to have knowledge of many sutras, but far better is to have an experiential knowledge of one sutra which will take carry you through to the respective goal in a spiritual journey. One can win many debates based on the theoretical knowledge of the vast compendium of sutras, but whether it will lead to *nirvana* is not known. Your practices are of greatest value. Your heart is clean and you have the merits, then nature will open the knowledge of any sutra for you. It is just a matter of time. So practice is important and be aware not to fall in the trap of collecting all the theoretical knowledge there is while no experiential knowledge dawns in you.

#### 4.6. The Paradoxical Opposites and the Two Kinds of Truths

Of another importance is the fact that explanations will appear to be contradictory or paradoxically opposite to each other mainly due to the existence of two aspects of truth - one the absolute or the *paramartha* and the other the relative or the *samvritti*. All explanations are basically distortions of aspects of the absolute truth. Now it is the nature of truth that it makes one speechless. Truth is not in words. What one experiences in one's heart is truth. It might and often cannot be expressed in words but it is there as experiential knowledge. When Siddhartha the Gautama crossed the gate of *nirvana* or rather *nirvana* happened in him, he remained silent for seven days and nights. It is said that the entire cosmos was waiting to hear from him and he could not speak. Finally, a few beings appeared in front of him and requested him to speak. They knew something beautiful had transpired within this man and wanted to hear and all he could say was - "Those who know, know without my saying. Those who do not know, will never know even if i speak. Thus i am silent!" It is another story that he was forced to speak after many requests for the benefit of those who were on the borderline of being tipped into enlightenment. So coming back, the exposition below will use relative truths as a means to clear the understanding of acquiring knowledge, the way to acquire knowledge and how one can experience the essence of the spirit behind the subtle dimension of truth in context of Bhagavati, The heart of transcendental knowledge or the *prajna-paramita-sutta*. Paradoxically opposite views will be explained in greater detail as the exposition advances.

#### 4.7. What is Prajna-Paramita-Sutta or Bhagavati, the Heart of Transcendental Knowledge?

The essence of the sutta that is often stated as the heart sutta or the *prajna-paramita*, is the wisdom related to the absolute truth or the *paramartha*, that is experienced in the heart. It is referred to as the foundation stone of the Mahayana Buddhist teachings but in a grander aspect of the nature, truth can neither be labeled as buddhist or hindu or islamic or christian or sikh or tao or zen or parsi or quantum or social etc. *When one meditates the identifications dissolve. It would be wrong for anyone to say that she/he would be a buddhist when her/his individuality is lost in emptiness during meditation. What remains is awareness and in awareness, all grasping and feverishness is lost. Then how come one might be something other than awareness itself?* In Tibet's culture, this heart knowledge which makes one transcend into the realms of Buddhahood or completely liberated state is revered as goddess also and given a name Bhagavati. So the mother of all Buddhas or the completely liberated ones is nothing but the absolute truth that is

encased in the *prajna-paramita-sutta*. One is raising the female aspect of nature on a higher citadel and terming it as the mother of all Buddhas. Experiencing the absolute truth in heart takes time but it is packed into a verbalized contorted form of a few words. The sutta tries to capture the un-captured absolute and gives a way to explore the deeper realms of the truth at an experiential level. Note that both the former Buddha and the *bodhisattva-mahasattva* enter into emptiness, experience the knowledge in their entire mind-body complex and after the experience Siddhartha raises Avalokiteshvara to a higher platform and asks him to impart the experienced knowledge in a few words. After the teaching finishes, the Buddha puts a seal on what the bodhisattva has taught by saying "Well done! This is how it should be taught." One has experienced knowledge but one needs a seal of confirmation.

#### 4.8. What Is the Relevance of this Knowledge and Veracity of the Spirit Behind the Contents of *Prajna-Paramita-Sutta*?

The relevance of this knowledge is inexplicable given the magnanimity of conflicts and clashes that happen in the mind body complex pertaining to the spiritual journey one takes. The knowledge is of immense value to those who have experienced deep conflicting issues in their hearts, that have perturbed them regarding the subtle aspects of a spiritual journey. *Prajna-paramita-sutta* aims to assuage the deeper issues that troubles the heart of a spiritual seeker and makes the path easy enough to reach the goal.

The Heart sutra contains the *Mahasattipatthan sutra*. In short, it contains the establishment of the first turning (the 8 fold truth and the path), the second turning (on emptiness or shunyata of the dharma). By the way, the second turning which is often referred to as Mahayana/Vajrayana teachings (mostly practiced in himalayan region) was transformed for a particular mindset by many masters including Kamalashila. Also, within the Kagyu Monlam prayers which contains thousands of lines, is buried the foundation stone of vipassana and samatha in one line. Both the mahayana/vajrayana (the aspects of second turning) are deeply connected to the hinayana (the first turning).

*Note that the experience that has been expressed in words, are from a bodhisattva who has absorbed knowledge in the heart and speaks of the same. But this doesn't mean that one can gain quick results by mere reading of the sutta. The sutta is there as a reference and spiritual practices will help in unlocking the essence behind the sutta. The veracity of the contents of the sutta are to be tested by experience in the heart and the basis of testing the truthfulness is by experiencing shunyata or nothingness or emptiness. Only when one has experienced in heart, one progresses slowly and steadily towards the absolute realms of truth. This is a time taking process and happens slowly. "The way is not in the sky, it is in the heart!" - Siddhartha.*

### 5. *Prajna-Paramita-Sutta* or The Heart Sutra

Abbreviations used - T. transliteration Tibetan in English; T. translation Tibetan to English; Q. question; N. note

T. *Chom den de ma she, rab kyī pa rol tu chin pay nying po* -

T. Noble Lady, the transcendent Conqueror, the heart of transcendent knowledge -

T. *chom den de ma she rab kyī pa rol tu chin pa la chak tsal lo*/

T. Homage to the heart of the transcendental knowledge, the Bhagavati.

T. *Di ke dak gi to pa du chik na*/

T. Thus have i heard at one time :

N. "Thus have i heard ..." - Who can hear? The one whose mind is empty. If the mind is filled with all sorts of information and impressions, then the cup is already filled up. If one pours more water in it then what is being poured will only overflow. Thus the need for emptiness is a necessary to in order to hear.

T. *Chom den de gyal poy khab ja go pung poy ri la ge long gi gen dun chen po dang/ jang chup sem pay gen dun chen po dang tap chik tu zhuk te/*

T. Once the blessed one was dwelling on vulture peak mountain at Rajagrha, together with a great gathering of monks and a great gathering of Bodhisattvas.

N. The context of the Heart Sutra is set in the ambience of the Buddha, the *sangha* (or community) and the bodhi-sattvas.

T. *Dey tse chom den de zab mo nang wa zhe ja we cho kyi nam drang kyi, ting nge dzin la nyom par zhuk so/*

T. At that time the blessed one entered the samadhi that examines the dharms, called "profound illumination".

N. Samadhi means equanimity/equipoise in all states. Samadhi forms one of the three pillars of the spiritual teachings of any Buddha. These three gems are *silā-samadhi-prajñā* (good conduct-equipoise-wisdom from heart). *Now the Heart Sutra begins with the way to study it.* It says that the Buddha as well as a mahasattva-bodhisattva enter Samadhi in order to examine what the truth is. They have entered together to experience the truth in meditation and leave behind the different labels and titles. Both the Buddha and then the Bodhisattva is asked to teach. Later, the Buddha confirms it.

T. *Yang dey tse jang chub sem pa sem pa chen po pak pa chen re zik, wang chuk she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa zab moy cho pa nyi la nam par ta zhing pung po nga po de dak la, yang rang zhin gyi tong par nam par tao/*

T. And at the same time noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva-mahasattva, looking at the practice of profound transcendent knowledge, saw that those five *skandhas* are empty by nature.

N. *He looks at the practice of profound transcendent knowledge.* The practice of the way to enter *Samadhi* via meditation on form (i.e using support *alambana*) to meditation without form (i.e formless without support) in order to experience the truth of emptiness, has been stressed upon. He is looking at the practice first. The knowledge is there, but he is looking at the practice first. This is crucial. He is pointing to the fact that the practice is important. Without proper practice, it is not possible to acquire the deep knowledge. The way to acquire knowledge is absolutely essential.

Then, through the experience of the emptiness in heart, the bodhisattva experiences emptiness in *skandhas*. Experience in heart cannot be matched with limited understanding of the mind as they are beyond the mind.

*Now, why does the sutta start with skandhas and not any other aspect?* A stupid answer is that one has to start somewhere. But jokes apart, the spiritual journey begins with existence of constituents that form an important aspect of a cycle. Here, by experiential knowledge of the heart, the former Buddha acknowledges the existence of the cycle that is crucial for existence of cycle that is crucial for existence of samsara and later on uses the steps in the cycle to experience nirvana. So first there is recognition of existence of cycle through the experiential knowledge and then the cycle is used to unlock this process of repeated births and deaths. He does not say that the cycle is bad. If one notices, Siddhartha as Buddha starts his final journey as Bodhisattva some 534 life times back (as in Jataka Tales) and uses this knowledge of *Samsara* (the inherent cycle), birth after birth to enter *parinirvana*. Again, he is not condemning the cycle. There is an acknowledgement in experience. *If one has not experienced the fundamentals of the nature of the cycle by which things are working in Samsara, then it is not easy to grasp the way to unlock this cycle.*

Q. What are these five skandhas?

Exposition - The five skandhas or aggregates that constitutes the various aspects of samsara or the world i.e the form (*rūpa*), sensations or feelings (*vedana*), perceptions (*saṃjñā*), mental formations (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*viññāna*). There is form or body (*rūpa*) and within the form are sensations (*vedana*). The perception (*saṃjñā*) of these sensations exists and repeated perceptions (*saṃjñā*) of the sensations lead to impressions (*sankhara*) in the mind body complex. And in the flow of consciousness (*viññāna*) the impressions (*sankhara*) pushes one to take the next action in order to maintain the cycle. These are fundamental elements which form an integral aspect of a greater cycle of *Samsara*. In a deeper

sense Samsara or the world is a projection either dynamic or static and neither dynamic nor static aspects which has the property to veil and superimpose the universal truths regarding life and not allow one to see the way things are (i.e *yatha-bhuta*). There are two kinds of truths, namely - *paramartha* or the absolute truth and the *samvritta* or the relative truths of the world. One finds contradictions in the relative truths but the absolute is beyond the relative. Now this doesn't mean that the relative truths are of no value and *Samsara* is bad. It is *Samsara* which prepares one to transcend into the higher states of truth and leads to *nirvana*. Thus *Samsara* is a means or a school where one passes one step at a time to finally merge into the absolute. This is a way of expressing in the relative terms but note that the *Samsara* is connected to *nirvana* through and through. The goal (*nirvana*) and the way to the goal (in *Samsara*) are here and now as the river and the ocean is connected through and through. *Again, it is important to value the path that is there in this Samsara.*

Now again, there are two aspects of the journey. Mostly one is focused on the goal, but rarely one is focused on the way to the goal. The second is extremely rare case where the journey is more important than the goal. Kamalasila explains in his profound and deep treatise on Bhavanakrama (the steps of meditation) that there are usually two kinds of mindsets in enlightened ones. The first is the *pranidhi-chitta* or the mind fixed on the goal and the second is the *prasthana-chitta* or the mind aware of the journey to the goal. This second one is an extremely rare case where a being is more focused on the journey rather than the goal and is referred to as entering the path of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

So to recapitulate, the five *skandhas* or aggregates, that constitutes the various aspects of *samsara* or the world are the form (*rupa*), sensations or feelings (*vedana*), perceptions (*samjna*), mental formations (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*vijnana*). Form (*rupa*) can be any image in any dimension that contains a boundary and gives the perception (*samjna*) of a compounded formation. Perception helps in the cognition of a form (*rupa*) and repeated perceptions of a phenomena or object of perception through sensations (*vedana*) towards the object of perception, in the flow of consciousness (*vijnana*) leads to mental formations (*sankhara*). Thus a cycle is formed. A cycle which leads one from birth to death to birth and so on!

Q. What is the procedure of seeing emptiness?

But before delving deeply into how the cycle works, it is important to know how one sees emptiness in all these five *skandhas*. Seeing is not through the ordinary eyes. It is through the heart. When the heart experiences and absorbs a knowledge through awareness, then the heart sees through the nature of the object under investigation. Thus the way is simple. It is by letting emptiness come to awareness and dissolving the individuality completely into emptiness. This happens through meditation. *Now one does not create emptiness. Emptiness is not an object of meditation. It is already there but it has not been experienced in the heart.* When the essence of emptiness or *shunyata* is experienced in the heart through meditation (i.e *bhavanamayi-prajna*), one experiences the emptiness in form (*rupa*), sensations or feelings (*vedana*), perceptions (*samjna*), mental formations (*sankhara*) and consciousness (*vijnana*). A more detailed explanation of experiencing emptiness is given in latter exposition below. That is how one sees emptiness in the *skandhas*. Finally, emptiness cannot be described in words as it is directly connected to the *paramartha* or the absolute truth. Being not connected to the relative truths or *samvritti*, it can only be experienced in heart. Emptiness in heart, leads to emptiness in mind.

Regarding the deeper aspects of the cycle due to the *skandhas*, it is explained by the former Buddha in detail in the *Paticca-samuppada-sutta* in the *Samyutta-nikaya*, XII (I), 1 -

Avijja-paccaya sankhara,  
Ignorance causes impressions,

sankhara-paccaya vijnanam,  
impressions causes flow in consciousness,

vijnana-paccaya nama-rupam,  
the flow of consciousness causes the appearance

of name and form,

nama-rupa-paccaya salayatanaṃ,  
with name and form arise the senses and the  
complex interactions,

salayatana-paccaya phasso,  
due to the senses and complex interactions  
arise contact,

phasa-paccaya vedana,  
due to contact arises sensation,

vedana-paccaya tanha,  
with sensation arises desire  
(craving and aversion),

tanha-paccaya upadanam,  
with desire arises attachment,

upadana-paccaya bhavo,  
with attachment comes existence,

bhava-paccaya jati,  
due to existence birth happens,

jati-paccaya jara-maranaṃ-soka-parideva-dukkha-  
dhammassupayasa sambhavanti  
with birth comes old age, death, grief, lamentation,  
sorrow (physical,  
mental and spiritual), bitterness of mind and  
other tribulations

Evame-tassa kevalassa dukkhakhandhasa  
samudayo hoti  
Thus by this arises the chunks of sorrow  
in life ...

Of utmost importance is the fact that Siddhartha sets on the journey, by acknowledging the existence of cycle that leads to *samsara*, while experiencing the knowledge and puts forth in words. The cycle begins with the words ignorance. Please remember this!

*Avijja* - ignorance

What is ignorance? What are the properties which makes one recognize ignorance and what are the ingredients which constitutes ignorance? The spirit behind the word ignorance is to capture the nature of compounded materials that blocks awareness from (1) observing the way things are as well as (2) recognizing itself as awareness. These compounded materials can be classified into three divisions, namely (1) the gross materials composed of natural elements of earth, water, fire, air and space. These materials help in constituting the physical bodies of many life forms (both sentient and non sentient beings) (2) the mental materials that constitute various faculties by which different life forms exhibit different temperaments and behaviour. These temperaments and behaviour are often reflected in action through the physical bodies. Note that there are beings without physical bodies also,

whose presence comes to awareness (in case the awareness is refined). (3) Finally, the third material is the spiritual matter that constitutes aspects of life as life force in different forms of sentient and insentient beings. Thus there exist the physical, mental and spiritual bodies (compounded materials or ignorance) of a being, each finer than the other.

All these compounded materials work in tandem with a few more dimensions like time, energy, will and nature. Working in parallel with all these dimensions, ignorance has the property to superimpose layers which do not allow awareness to observe the way things are and also to veil or obstruct awareness from recognizing itself as awareness.

*Sankhara* - impressions

It is these layers (superimpositions) and obstructions (veils) that are like impressions which is referred to as *sankhara*. Now awareness is universal in nature, but depending on the amount of *sankhara* and the individuality reflected in ego, awareness gets restricted in recognizing its own universal nature. *Sankhara* or layers of impressions can be of various types and intensity. It is due to the intensity of the *sankhara* that the cycle of birth and death is maintained. The maintenance of the circulating nature of the cycle is done by consciousness or *vijnanam*.

*Vijnanam* - consciousness

Consciousness helps in maintaining the flow in nature. It has that ability to store the impressions and propel a being into next cycle based on those impressions and their strengths. These impressions can be favourable /pleasant or unfavourable/ unpleasant. Depending on the kinds of accumulated impression the formation of the new identity and form is established. Some impressions lead to merit filled life and others to demerit filled life. The formation of new identity and form is referred to as *naam-rupam*.

*Naam-rupam* - name (also meaning mind) and form (also meaning matter)

The name and form has an identity attached to it. For example, the symbol 0, the name of 0 as zero and the meaning as its identity attached to it. The form is the system that helps carry the current impressions and that of the past. It is also this form and the identity attached to it which interacts with the different stimuli via the different senses simultaneously. The individual identity is a mental aspect at a particular cycle. This along with the form interacts through the senses. This complex interaction through the senses is referred to as *salayatan*.

*Salayatan* - Senses and its interaction

The senses and its complex interaction happens through contact with the different stimuli from the external environment and the internal working of the mind-body complex or *naam-rupam*. This contact is referred to as *phasso*.

*Phasso* - contact

Contact can happen at three different realms (1) the physical realm and the senses of physical dimensions (2) mental realm and the faculties of mental dimension and (3) spiritual realm and the faculties of spiritual dimension. Due to this contact arises sensation with the mind-body complex. The sensation(s) are referred to as *vedana*.

*Vedana* - sensation

*Vedana* is sensation within the frame work of mind- body complex or *naam-rupa*. Also, the sensation might arise due to many of the infinite phenomena occurring in nature. These sensations can be labeled as favourable /pleasant or unfavourable/unpleasant depending on one's structure of the mind-body complex. Note that this complex can also constitute the life forces which form the spiritual body of a sentient/insentient being. Depending on the quality of sensation craving or aversion arises. Example - One sees an ice-cream and contact has been made. This contact leads to sensations in mind and body, which either have a force of desire for or against the object of contact. Based on repeated perception, *Sankhara* of ice-cream happens in the flow of consciousness. At the end, one consumes so much ice-cream that body becomes sick in nature.

*Tanaha* - desire/craving/aversion

The desire and the craving and aversion associated is referred to as *tanaha*. It is this craving and aversion that keeps a being from being free. Depending on the intensity of sensation, craving and aversion appear in equivalent intensity. With craving/aversion attachment dawns towards object of craving/ aversion. This object can be of any form i.e material, mental or spiritual. The composition of this object is again based on the building blocks of material, mental and spiritual components that constitutes ignorance. Thus the *skandhas* are an integral part of explanation and appear in the beginning of the *sutta*.

#### *Upadan* - attachment

The attachment towards object of craving/aversion is upadan. Attachment here means affinity towards object of craving/ aversion. This affinity is a direct connection to the object in attention either through the force of craving or through the force of aversion. For example, "i like ice-cream" - the strength behind liking connects one to the object ice-cream in an attractive way. On the other hand, "i don't like ice-cream" - the strength behind not liking connects one to the object ice-cream in a repulsive way (Deeper explanation will follow below). Similarly, attachment can be for any phenomena/being in the existential world.

#### *Bhava* - existence

The existence that happens due to the attachment is called as bhava. The attachment forces one to come into existence. This existence happens through the formation of spiritual body, the mental body and then the material/physical body.

#### *Jati* - birth

This formation of spiritual/mental/physical body is nothing but birth and referred to as jati. Due to birth (*jati*) arises old age (*jara*), death (*maranan*), grief (*soka*), lamentation (*paridev*), sorrow physical, mental and spiritual (*dukkha*), bitter mindedness (*domanasu*) all come through. It is because of this that the entire mass of sorrow arises. Thus begins the acknowledgement of the first truth, i.e there is misery in life. This acknowledgement can only happen when one realizes through ones heart and not just via knowledge gained through senses or through intellectual curiosity. Next, this misery is due to a cause which forms the second truth. Since misery is not perennial, there is the cause which can be eliminated; the third truth. Finally, the fourth truth is the revelation that there is "a" way out. It is not "the" way out, but there is "a" way out. There is no force here, but an acknowledgement of an existence of a way out of this misery and the countless cycles of birth and death.

These four truths reveal the fundamental nature of phenomena that occurs in a life form (sentient/insentient). The solution to the issues encountered in the four truths are revealed in the next four truths. These truths are basically processes going through which leads to breaking of the cycle of birth and death as well as the miseries associated with it.

To begin with, the essence is to sit still and be. To sit not like a rigid stone on a ground, but as a lotus flower resting on the surface of a pond. Note that the spinal cord needs to be erect with head straight and eyes closed. Now, what happens when one sits still and be? Whatever phenomena in the mind-body-consciousness complex manifests with strongest intensity, comes to awareness. Depending on the structure of one's body, texture of mind and the quality of consciousness, a corresponding experience comes to awareness. For example, if one sits still after having a nice exercise, the temperature of the body comes to awareness. The awareness experiences the intensity of the temperature of the body rising to a peak and then passing off, as a wave rises to a peak and then falls off. Similarly, the density of the body, the throbbing of the heart, the flux of the blood, the flow of the natural breath comes to awareness. The silent untampered experiential acknowledgement or observation by the awareness of the happening phenomena in the gross body is referred to as *kayanupaschayana*.

Longer sittings lead to refinement in awareness when the sensations in the body mainly in the form of currents in the nervous system are experienced. Due to the texture of mind-body complex at a particular moment in time, these subtle sensations might appear as extremely painful, stressful, soothing or blissful (to name a few) in awareness. Again, the silent untampered experiential

acknowledgement or observation by the awareness of the happening phenomena is referred to as *vedananupaschyana*.

Deeper sittings lead to further refinement in awareness when the flow of the thoughts or the texture of the mind is experience. Anger, greed, happiness, bitterness, gratefulness, a child like nature, lust to name a few, comes to awareness. The texture of the mind comes to awareness. Silent untampered experiential acknowledgement or observation by the awareness of the happening phenomena is referred to as *chittanupaschyana*.

Further, when the awareness reaches a more refined state after continued practice, the natural laws pertaining to the mind-body-consciousness complex comes to awareness. The rise, the persistence and the gradual decay of the any phenomena appearing on the complex comes to awareness. If a peaceful nature arises, persists and passes off on this complex, it comes to awareness. This silent untampered experiential acknowledgement or observation by the awareness of the natural rise-persistence-decay law is referred to as *dhammanupaschyana*.

Note that these might happen in any order depending on the nature of the mind-body-consciousness complex at a particular moment in time. Again, advanced sittings lead to a state of awareness when one's discriminative intellect, emotions and individual ego comes to awareness. These arise, persist and gradually dissolve into nothingness. The individuality of the ego is of atomic nature in comparison to the vastness of the universal awareness. Steady continued practice leads to loss of individuality which reveal the nature of universal awareness with innumerable qualities like that of purity, benevolence, compassion, love etc.

*But does one see the essence of the teachings? The former buddha is now using the stepping stones of the great cycle which he has already experienced and uses his own body as a foundation stone to unlock the cycle.* The kaya or body which is a form of ignorance has now become the stepping stone for meditation. The grip of the body comes to awareness and passes off. So on and so forth with the other aspects of sensations and mind.

A stage comes when there are no wants to go for, no search to go on, no journey to be taken and no effort to be put forth. There is nothing to say, nothing to do and nothing to become. Even the search for nirvana stops. In those moments, the inexplicable state of nirvana manifests. Awareness tastes some nectars in silence. Contentment dawns in awareness and so does abundance as one re-enters the limited domain of nature. Now, even if nirvana happens once, the mind can still be impure and this is not the fully liberated stage. This stage is called *Saupadisesa-nibbana*. Depending on the individual further stages pass by in time. This journey is long and a slow process for those who wish to walk the slow and a natural path.

It has been heard that Siddhartha begins his journey one million life times back to the stage of bodhisattva (*nirvana* experienced for the first time). As a bodhisattva, he begins perfecting the knowledge of unlocking the cycle of *samsara*, life after life. In the last life as Siddhartha, buddhahood dawns in him. *Now an important point is this. If you want to become a Buddha you will never become. But when the heart experiences and realizes that there is nothing to become, then the journey into buddhahood has already begun.* He wants to enter parinirvana at the age of 36, but extends his life for a few more years for the benefit of others. Finally, living a life of Buddha for just one life time, he enters *parinirvana*. There is no desire to live many lives as a Buddha also. The journey ends as truth absorbs him completely, erasing his entire existence. So, nirvana has already been experienced, but previous impressions force the being to again enter the school of *samsara* to finish what needs to be finished (stage of *saupadisesa-nibbana*). Life flips between *samsara* and nirvana as the balance is maintained. Entering parinirvana, this flipping stops.

Initially, while sitting still, the four (*kaya* - body, *vedana* - sensation, *chit* - mind and *dhamma* - rise/ persistence/decay of natural laws) truths of silent untampered experiential acknowledgement or observation (*paschyana*) by the awareness are an optimistic, rewarding and a highly scientific way to evolve out of misery.

Extremely important is the way of observation. Neither to be averse with pleasant/unpleasant nor to crave for pleasant/unpleasant phenomena that has come to awareness. In case aversion or craving arises, then there is formation of impressions (*sankharas*) in the flow of consciousness. Silent untampered experiential acknowledgement or observation leads to dissolution of impressions and liberation from misery. Not in fighting but in silent experiential acknowledgement or observation of the untampered passage of the phenomena in the mind- body-consciousness complex is the way out. Thus, the words go deep -

sabbe sankhara annicha  
all impressions are impermanent

yadaya pannyay paschyatti  
if observation happens with wisdom  
(i.e silent untampered experiential  
acknowledgement or observation)

The flowing thoughts of mind like "oh i have to observe" when experienced by awareness indicates *chittanupaschyana*. Right observation breaks this flow. External complexities of life fade away when impurities of one's own words, deeds and actions in life come to awareness which are a result of the impression of mind-body-consciousness complex.

Here ends the exposition of the eight truths. The *Mahasattipatthan sutta* will be of great help to those interested. But such knowledge needs a certain level of maturity. And this maturity dawns when one has experienced from one's heart that there is misery in life. It is only then that the journey begins, in search for freedom from misery. Even some practice to sit still and be might save one from the misery one finds in. An important aspect to note is that as one sits still, automatically the different aspects of body, sensations, mind and the laws of nature starts coming into awareness. Observation happens naturally, without effort. The path is long and here the processes occur naturally. One cannot force one's way here. As a flower blossoms naturally so does advancement towards enlightenment.

Thus the sayings of Kabir goes well -

Dhere dhere re chala re mana,  
Slowly slowly o mind,

dhere sabkuch howay,  
slowly everything happens in nature,

mali seeche saw ghara,  
the gardener waters a hundred pots,

ritu aaye phal howay ...  
when the weather is right, the fruits will arrive ...

The initial teachings begin with the description of the misery, the cause of misery, the possibility of elimination of the cause and the way out of it. But note that the advanced stages described in *prajna-paramita-sutta* does not contradict the initial teachings. Please keep this note in mind when the paradoxical view is reached later on. Finally, the journey is not via negativa. It appears to be so but in fact it is not. *Samsara* and its constituents are a school that help one prepare for nirvana. The school is not filled with misery. The school provides comfort to move into higher and simpler dimension. "Oh! *Samsara* is bad." i am chanting 10,000 times or meditating in silence and a dog comes out of love in my presence and i kick it & say "may all sentient beings be happy!" And again start chanting the mantra. "*Nirvana! Nirvana!* Quick! The fastest way." Let's have so much focus that i break the rules of *samsara*. If a queue is there, i get in the middle as i need to finish work by the power of mantra!

"Samsara is bad!" My dear! It is the same samsara which has given clothes. Why wear them? Throw them off and walk naked. See what happens! If the flower (*nirvana*) is beautiful then how can mud and water and minerals (*samsara* the school) nourishing the lotus is so bad? Now i am not saying you eat mud. Experience the balance of the paradoxical opposites as they will be revealed in the journey!

*T. De ne Sangye kyi tu tse dang den pa Sha ri bu jang chub sem pa sem pa chen po pak pa chen re zik wang chuk la di ke che me so/ Rik kyi bu am rik kyi bu mo gang la la she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa zab moy cho pa che par do pa de ji tar lab par ja/ De ke che me pa dang/*

T. Then through the power of the Buddha, venerable Shariputra said to noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva-mahasattva, "How should those noble men and women learn, who wish to follow the practice of profound transcendent knowledge?" Thus he spoke.

N. How should noble men and women learn this? Already the quality of people who would learn this knowledge has been stated. See, this is not for everybody as qualification has already set. There needs to be nobility and maturity, that has been developed by merit. Without this it might not be possible grasp this knowledge. This knowledge is highly advanced. The practice of the profound transcendent knowledge, is the way to meditate where one uses the the cycle and the constituents of *samsara* to experience the absolute truths and finally unlock the cycle to get completely absorbed into *parinirvana*. See, there is a wish to learn. It is not a desire but a need as the heart has already experienced something. They are looking for a way out. Also, the Buddha raises Avalokitesvara to a higher platform by asking him to share and teach. He does not say that "i am higher than you and thus you can't teach!" He is lifting the other being up to a higher level.

*T. Jang chub sem pa sem pa chen po pak pa chen re zik wang chuk gi tse dang den pa sha ra da ti bu la di ke che me so/ Sha ri bu rik kyi bu am rik kyi bu mo gang la la she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa zab moy cho pa che par do pa de di tar nam par ta war ja te/*

T. And noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva-mahasattva, answered the venerable Shariputra with these words: "Shariputra, those noble men and women who wish to follow the practice of profound transcendent knowledge should look at it like this :"

*T. Pung po nga po de dak khyang rang zhin gyi tong par yang dak par je su tao/*

T. The five skandhas should be seen correctly to be empty by nature.

Q. Again, how does one see the nature of emptiness in the *skandhas*?

N. This has already been dealt with in the earlier exposition above but to recapitulate, it is through meditation and letting one's identity dissolve in emptiness. By the process of meditation one lets the myriads of phenomena and objects come into awareness and pass off thus clearing the mind and making it transparent enough to let the emptiness shine forth. Also, when these myriads of phenomena and objects rises to awareness and makes its presence felt and then moves away, during that period of experience of the phenomena or object, the empty nature of the phenomena or object manifests itself. It is because of the empty nature of the phenomena or the object that it slowly and steadily dissolves in awareness after making its presence felt. Thus by merging oneself completely into emptiness, one sees the empty nature of the *skandhas*.

So, if a form (*rupa*) appears in awareness, its intensity rises to a peak and then dissolves. In that duration of appearance, the empty nature of the form is experienced in the heart. Due to the empty nature, it does not hold (that is the grip of form) for long and dissolves in awareness. Similarly, for any kind of sensation (i.e *vedana*) appearing in the body complex rises to a peak in awareness and then subsides. The related perception (*samjna*) of the sensation also follows the same principle. Repeated perceptions of the sensations lead to mental formations (or *sankharas*) which again appear in awareness as one sits to meditate after a long gap.

Finally, in the flow of consciousness (i.e *vijnanam*) the impressions and the sensations lead to flow of next action. Consciousness itself is revealed in awareness. It is not possible to express consciousness in words but its presence is experienced in awareness. Now the nature of all these aggregates is

revealed when emptiness consumes the individuality and what remains is universal awareness that shines forth and shows the nature of the aggregates.

Now, emptiness does not mean that one is devoid of anything. Emptiness encompasses everything. Emptiness makes one loose the individuality and in awareness the nature of the different phenomena manifest. This again is experienced in the heart and mere intellectual or mental repetition will not help. The knowledge is to be absorbed in the heart. Why? Emptiness cannot be described in words as it is directly connected to the *paramartha* or the absolute truth. Being not connected to the relative truths or *samvritti*, it can only be experienced in heart.

Emptiness in heart, leads to emptiness in mind. Emptiness cleans you inside out. Emptiness is already there but there is a layer that covers the mind and heart from experiencing emptiness. An important note is that awareness is needed to experience the absolute truth. If there is no awareness, then it might not be possible to acquire the required knowledge. Awareness is there in each and every individual but there is a casing over it. In deep meditations, the individuality is lost and universal nature of awareness shines forth. Refining this life after life, the bodhisattvas move to buddhahood thus having universal awareness. Finally, entering *parinirvana*, one leaves the field of universal awareness also as one is absorbed in the absolute truth.

T. Zuk tong pao/ Tong pa nyi zuk so/ Zuk le kyang tong pa nyi zhen ma yin/ Tong pa nyi le kyang zuk zhen ma yin no/

T. Form (*rupa*) is emptiness, emptiness itself is form; emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness.

N. It is easy to know that form (*rupa*) is emptiness in meditation. But how does one acquire the knowledge that emptiness is form itself? In the previous paragraph it is expressed that emptiness encompasses everything. There are stages in deep meditation when emptiness is experienced in complete totality and it is in those moments that emptiness is experienced as basis of all forms. In turn, by experience one concludes that emptiness is form itself as it is the basis of all phenomena and objects of perception. In slightly more paradoxical term it is the formless form! (through experience)

T. De zhin du tsor wa dang/ Du she dang/ Du je dang/ Nam par she pa nam tong pao/

T. In the same way feeling, perception, formation and consciousness are empty.

N. Again, how to observe the emptiness in all these has already covered in the foregoing paragraphs. But note that experiencing emptiness in subtle phenomena as perception and consciousness requires many years of deep meditative seatings. Mere words will not help. So consider this as a precautionary measure and remember that the procedure to see the emptiness in the various aspects remains the same. Also, some experiential knowledge can only be transferred in silence. Thus, feeling/perception/consciousness is emptiness. Similarly, emptiness is feeling/perception/consciousness.

T. Sharibu de ta we na cho tam che tong pa nyi de/ Tsen nyi me pa/

T. Thus, Shariputra, all *dharma*s are emptiness and have no characteristics.

N. Now before we begin to comprehend this, note that this is a highly paradoxical statement. In the beginning of the journey in into the realms of enlightenment, one takes on vows and precepts which are an integral part of the *dharma*s (they also mean the disciple that one takes on oneself in order to progress on the path and live in accordance with the universal laws of nature in a harmonious manner). But here it is stated that all *dharma*s are emptiness and have no characteristic in themselves. "Look! *Dharma* has no characteristics. Why meditate? Why discipline? Throw everything off! Let's eat 5 times a day and see what happens!"

The first thing to understand is that the statement is given by a being who has already crossed certain stage in spiritual realm and is expressing the essence of the teachings of the heart sutra after the experience has already transpired and insight has dawned in the heart. If a person has not crossed certain realms and considers and applies the knowledge that is presented here in day to day life, it will lead to troubles in life. So one needs to carefully understand and absorb the fact that appreciating

the knowledge here is through the experience in the heart and not just blind application of what is being stated in the *sutta*. Now the main issue of emptiness in the *dhammas*. What happens when one meditates and delves oneself in the realms of the emptiness? Slowly and steadily the *dhammas* which have protected one on the path to enlightenment fade away as one crosses the bridge of enlightenment. In that sense, after crossing the bridge of enlightenment, as emptiness dawns within oneself, one sees the emptiness in the *dhammas*. But by no means does it say that it is condemning the *dhammas* or for that matter any object or phenomena that comes to awareness. Here one investigates completely yet honouring all that has come to awareness. In day to day life, one honours all that comes to awareness, but in meditation, one finds the emptiness in each and every one. This paradoxical experience can be a bit shocking to people who are new to such knowledge or they might miss it completely if the spirit behind the words has not been grasped properly, thus making fun of the words in the *sutta*. So be careful while reading these *suttas*. Finally, there is another aspect to view the essence of these teachings. Initially, one takes an object or support (i.e. *alambana*) for the process of meditation. But as one delves into the emptiness, in awareness, the identity and the characteristics of the support (*alambana*) simply dissolves. Again, this doesn't mean that the *alambana* should be treated with disrespect and should be thrown away. They are a means of progress in one's spiritual journey. One is sitting still and the fields of ignorance in the form of body (*kaya*), sensations (*vedana*), mind and flow of mind (*chitta*), the *dhammas* come into awareness and makes its presence felt and slowly dissolve into emptiness (in meditation). So one is using the constituents of ignorance as a support in *samsara* to unlock the cycle and enter the formless state of meditation. One uses the four ways of *anupaschyanas* life after life to enter truth by erasing layers of *sankhara*!

The *dhammas* are emptiness and have no characteristics, holds true, when emptiness is experienced. The experiential knowledge never leaves a being, but the heard or contemplated knowledge might.

T. *Ma kye pa/ Ma gak pa/ Dri ma me pa/ Dri ma dang dral wa me pa/ Dri wa me pa/ Gang wa me pa'o/*

T. They are unborn and unceasing, neither stained nor free from stain, they neither decrease nor increase.

N. They are unborn - There is a circle on a paper. There is no beginning point of a circle. Thus the unborn nature is there. Whichever point one starts with, one goes round and round. It is an unceasing loop. Now, one can say that when one is drawing the circle, there is a starting point and a birth. But then when the end point connects with the starting point, there is no existence of the starting point. Furthermore, by not abiding in *dharma* (the cycle of *dharma* life after life) the *dharma* is stained. But the cycle (circle) of *dharma* by itself is unstained. There is neither an increase in the circle nor there is a decrease in circle. An example of staining/non-staining would be - there is a paper and there is a print on the paper. The print is the stain and it covers the paper but it does not mean that the nature of the paper is lost. Thus the paper is unstained. But the paper carries the print and thus is not free from stain.

In relative terms we say that the *dharma* is stained or unstained, but while in meditation, the characteristics of the *dhammas* lose their essence. This is due to emptiness.

T. *Sharibu de ta we na tong pa nyi la zuk me/ Tsor wa me/ Du she me/ Du je nam me/ Nam par she pa me/ Mik me/ Na wa me/ Na me/ Che me/ Lu me/ Yi me/ Zuk me/ Dra me/ Dri me/ Ro me/ Rek ja me/ Cho me do/ Mik gi kham me pa ne/ Yi kyi kham me yi kyi nam par she pay kham kyi bar du yang me do/*

T. Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no formation, no consciousness, no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no sensation, no *dhammas*; there is no element of sight, and so on until no element of thought and no element of mind consciousness.

N. Now this is profound, in emptiness, there is no such phenomena or form, no instruments of perception (eyes, ear, nose, tongue, body) and no objects (form, sound, smell, taste, sensation) of perception, nor the mode and the medium (*dhammas*) by which the process of knowing about certain

things happens. At a more subtle realm, even formation, feeling, consciousness, perception and thoughts and the elements (mind) that help one to acquire knowledge is also not there.

Now this stage is an extremely advanced stage when the dissolution of the mind has also happened. It is only through meditation and unaccountable high quality numbers of practice that one reaches this stage. In awareness what dawns it that the crystal clear mind also is an object and once its dissolution happens, the awareness grasps its true potential. It does not require a support or *alambana* to shine forth. It is just there. The mind consciousness has also lost its grip on the awareness. This basically means that the covering of the mind on the universal awareness is lost. The limited grip of instruments of perception, perception, objects of perception and other aggregates lose their characteristics while experiencing emptiness.

If one views these words casually, it appears like a joke. There is no eye, no ear, no tongue etc and yet everything exists. But from the perspective of awareness, as the limited grip of individuality is lost in meditation, and slowly and steadily the unlimited expanse of the emptiness comes to awareness, one experiences the non existence of the various aspects that have been talked about. And all this is through experience only and not through words.

*T. Ma rik pa me/ Ma rik pa ze pa me pa ne/ Ga shi me/ Ga shi ze pay bar du yang me do/ De zhin du duk ngal wa dang/ Kun jung wa dang/ Gok pa dang/ Lam me/ Yeshe me/ Tob pa me/ Ma tob pa yang me do/*

T. There is no ignorance and no wearing out of ignorance, and so on until no old age and death nor their wearing out. In the same way there is no suffering, no cause of suffering, no ending of suffering and no path; no wisdom, no attainment and no non-attainment.

N. This part is dangerous, if not experienced properly. The explanation further dives into deeper realms stating that there is no ignorance and no wearing out of ignorance. After nirvana, the former Buddha points to the cycle of misery and states that ignorance is one of the causes of suffering in *Paticcasamuppada-sutta* (explained before). So how do these paradoxical aspects reconcile each other? The key to this resolution is that when one begins on the journey, the fundamentals are set forth for any novice. The ignorance and the properties of ignorance are stated and how meditation helps one clear the different aspects is stated in detail. Note that *samsara* and *nirvana* are connected! Ignorance is a part of *samsara* but it is used as a means to experience *nirvana* via experiencing emptiness in constituents of ignorance. But when one crosses the bridge of enlightenment, it dawns in awareness that ignorance never existed in the first place and thus there is no wearing out of ignorance. What is being stated is that in emptiness the strength of ignorance is lost as it is virtual/relative and it never existed to begin with. Similarly the idea of old age and death is tackled with. Awareness being universal in nature and when one loses one's individuality as well as association with the mind body complex, experiences that what is doing to die and age is just the aggregates that constitute the compounded materials, however complex they might appear to be. The moment the universal awareness shines forth, the ideas of ignorance, suffering, old age, death etc is erased. On reaching that stage, one declares that there is no suffering, no cause of suffering and no ending of suffering. "No suffering! No cause of suffering!" We started with the first truth that there is misery in life and then there is a cause of suffering and the cause can be eliminated and there is a way out (a path)! Now they say it is nothing. Let's throw all this and enjoy! What for all this? "No! No!" The sutta shows the balance that exists between *samsara* and *nirvana*. One side of the sword is *samsara* and the other is *nirvana*. And the blade of the sword is emptiness. The edge is the balance. It is paradoxical that there is no suffering and there is no ending of suffering. The ending does not happen as long as one is established via experiential knowledge about the emptiness and it ends when there is complete experiential knowledge of the emptiness. Thus, no cause of suffering also exists.

Reaching such a stage, one declares that there is no path and neither there is wisdom. There is no wisdom! But the sutta is packed with wisdom! This is madness! Is it possible to see the paradox? The title of the sutta is the heart of transcendent knowledge which is profound, but here it says that there is no path and no wisdom. Be careful about this! One walks the path of the four noble truths explained in

the *kayanupaschyana*, *vedananupaschyana*, *chittanupaschyana* and *dhammanupaschyana* and after through these reaches the ultimate stage of nirvana. So when one sits still, one is not moving but different fields of body, sensations, mind and laws come to awareness and passes off. One is using tools of *samsara* to erase the layers that cover universal awareness to experience *nirvana* and emptiness. In emptiness the great balance of *samsara* and *nirvana* exists as both are connected to each other. Passing through *nirvana*, one states there is no path and there is no wisdom. But if one has not experienced nirvana and says there is no path and no wisdom, it is going to bring troubles in life. The river merges in ocean and its identity is lost, but as long as it is flowing in the mainland, it is a river. The path is there and it merges into *nirvana*. There, in *nirvana*, there is no path. Nor there is any attainment and non attainment. Neither there is anything to attain as all grasping is over and nor there is non-attainment as emptiness does not make one devoid of anything because it encompasses everything in it. Emptiness is already there so there is no attainment but reaching the balance and experiencing emptiness, there is attainment (no non-attainment).

Development of insight into the paradoxes is the key to unfolding the essence that the *sutta* carries. Repeated meditations and study will help in unlocking the potential that the *sutta* carries with it.

*T. Sharibu de ta we na jang chub sem pa nam tob pa me pay chir/ She rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa la ten ching ne te/ Sem la drib pa me ching trak pa me de/ Chin chi lok le shin tu de ne/ Nya ngel le de pay tar chin to/*

T. Therefore, Shariputra, since Bodhisattvas (a state before attaining buddhahood) have nothing to attain, they abide in reliance on transcendent knowledge; and since there is no obscurity of mind they have no fear, they completely transcend falsity and reach ultimate nirvana.

N. Remember the words - "nothing to attain". There are two implications over here. Often one speaks in a disgruntled or disgusted way or with a disturbed state of mind that "there is nothing to attain!" But when one experiences emptiness in awareness the knowledge has settled in one's heart then the entire implication of the words change. One knows by experience that one needs to attain the experiential knowledge of "nothingness" or "nothing". The consequence is that when this experience happens, one states the same words "there is nothing to attain" with stability in heart and peace in mind. Thus the bodhisattvas abide in reliance on the transcendent knowledge. Thus contentment dawns in heart. This contentment in heart doesn't mean that one becomes ineffective in day to day life. Rather the contentment leads to a new found stability in life by which one faces the different issues of life from a completely different perspective. The experience leads to removal of obscurities in the mind and thus fearlessness arises. Such a one transcends falsity and ultimately reaches nirvana. The transcendent knowledge here is the emptiness that is to be experienced in heart and the meditations usually lead to experience of *shunyata* in all phenomena in all ages and dimensions, beyond all fields of existences.

*T. Du sum nam par zhuk pey sang gye tam che kyang/ She rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa di la ten ne/ La na me pa yang dak par dzok pey jang chub tu ngon par dzok par sang gye so/*

T. All the buddhas dwelling in the three times fully and clearly awaken to unsurpassed, true, complete enlightenment by relying on this transcendent knowledge.

*T. De ta we na she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pay ngak/ Rik pa chen poy ngak/ La na me pey ngak/ Mi nyam pa dang nyam pay ngak/ Duk ngal tam che rab du zhi war je pey ngak/ Mi dzun pe na den par she par ja te/*

T. Therefore the mantra of transcendent knowledge, the mantra of deep insight, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that totally calms all suffering, should be known as truth, for there is no deception.

N. Now how to make this profound knowledge accessible? It is not easy for everyone to meditate and reach to that stage where one experiences emptiness totally and completely. Thus the experiential knowledge has been packed in words in the form of a *mantra*. A *mantra* is nothing but the experience dawned in awareness that is verbalized in a few words. The *mantra* helps in binding the wandering and distracted mind due to the myriads of disturbances and helps in cleansing the mind. Truth when

encased in words is not mere words anymore as the mantra carries the weight of the truth to some extent along with it. The second issue that one faces is how to practice the mantra? Is it just a mere mechanical repetition of words, with an aim to reach the goal? No! the way to practice the mantra is to chant or repeat it with full awareness of what one is chanting. One's heart should be soaked in the words of the mantra as one chants the mantra. The devotion (*bhavana*) from the heart is crucial in chanting any mantra. Then the essence behind the mantra gets absorbed in the heart slowly and steadily. The mantra protects the one who chants it, in the spiritual realm. Thus, it is better to chant for say five minutes with deep devotion such that one loses awareness of oneself as well as the surrounding rather than chanting for a hour and looking here and there like a monkey! Depth is more important than duration. Quality is more admirable than quantity. Besides, know well that no buddha is sitting up there and taking note of your repetitions.

Your devotion will lead you to truth. Of course, the buddhas and the enlightened ones will always help in this journey but your right effort is of utmost importance and indispensable in this journey.

T. *She rab kyi pa rol tu chin pey ngak me pa/ Ta ya ta om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi soha/*

T. The mantra of transcendent knowledge is proclaimed : *Ta ya ta om gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi soha.*

N. Usually one can chant *gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi soha*. It means the following -

gate gate - going going

paragate - going beyond

parasamgate - transcending all fields

bodhi soha - one merges into the fully

liberated state of enlightenment

How does one go about? Where does one go? Does one keep running around the planet from country to country, or from one planet to the other? One goes in meditation and travels through the myriads of phenomena in meditation. The travel is the journey of the individual to the loss the individuality. One goes beyond the realms of the measurable and the certain and passes that also, transcending all fields of existences that has to be transcended, to finally merge into the fully liberated state of enlightenment where universal awareness and the truths are all absorbed completely. The individuality is lost completely and truth takes over.

Such is the potency that the mantra carries with it if absorbed properly in time. An extremely important aspect of this sutta is the following - The *Hinayana* path which often takes into account the teachings of the *Mahasattipatthana sutta* takes the body (*kaya*), sensations (*vedana*), mind and its flow (*chitta*) and the natural laws (*dhamma*) as objects/tools of meditation to help move one from field to another (body, to sensation, to mind, to dhamma) and transcending these fields one after another and going beyond all these, one enters the bodhi enlightened state which is established in emptiness (*shunyata*). Now note that one is using the tools that constitute the *samsara* (that is which changing, measurable and relative) to dive into *nirvana*. It is not that *samsara* is separate from *nirvana*; they are connected. *Samsara* is the school that prepares you for *nirvana*. From the use of meditation based on forms/objects/tools to meditation without form or formless meditation where emptiness is the essence of all, one merges into bodhi state. Now the *Mahayana* path which talks about emptiness is extremely important as it connects to the *Hinayana* very well. So stating that *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* are different is not correct, as both are connected deeply. There is no division, yet there is no unity in meaning!

*The deepest secret of the sutta is one does not go anywhere but sits still with a content heart. Myriads of fields passes in awareness. When samsara is erased, nirvana is experienced. In nirvana, the individual identity is lost. The experiential knowledge of fields of kaya, vedana, chitta, dharma, rising and dissolving in awareness in meditation is the chanting of the sutta without expressing it in words.* If one looks at the time when *nirvana* happens in the *Siddharta*, he is sitting still under a tree. It is important to note that he sits still. There is no one (human contact) with him in the forest and he sits still. He is not running around, he not

chanting mantra or doing this worship or that worship. He sits still. Every aspect appears in awareness and passes off and finally the grip of all phenomenas moves away and nirvana happens in him. The body, the sensations, the flow of mind and the rise and fall of the dharmas come to awareness and pass off. See that he is not running anywhere. He sits still and the various fields pass away in his awareness. The grip of the fields loosens its affect and one nears to the higher or the simpler dimensions of the truth. He is not search for it. There is no journey to take as he sits still. It is crucial. There is no search for power, there is no search for spiritual greatness. He has already acquired it in previous life times and then he leaves everything. There is contentment in the heart as he has finished every thing that he had started. He sits still. There is no want to go for, no search to go on, no journey to be taken and no effort to be put forth. Nothing to say, nothing to do and nothing to become. He just sits still and nirvana happens in him. Yet the mind body complex is still there in Samsara. The deep paradox reflects itself. The mind body complex is there in Samara and yet the other side of the blade that is Nirvana is happening in emptiness. The deep balance is already there. But it has taken him so many lifetimes of hard work in Samsara. Life after life he toils through and acquires merits after merits. He gets defeated but he does not gives up. See the devotion and see the hard work. The journey is so important, and he knows the value of the journey. But we only see the final life. To him the journey was important.

*T. Sha ri bu/ Jang chub sem pa sem pa chen po de tar she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa zab mo la lab par jao/*

T. Shariputra, this is how a bodhisattva-mahasattva should learn profound transcendent knowledge.

*T. De ne chom den de ting nge dzin de le zheng te/ Jang chub sem pa sem pa chen po pak pa chen re zik wang chuk la lek so zhe ja wa jin ne/ Lek so lek so/ Rik kyi bu de de zhin no/ De de zhin te/ Ji tar khyo kyi ten pa de zhin du she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pa zab mo la che par ja te/ De zhin shek pa nam kyang je su yi rang ngo/*

T. Then the Blessed One arose from that *samadhi* and praised the noble bodhisattva-mahasattva Avalokiteshvara, saying "well done". "Well done, well done. Noble son, it is so. It is just so. Profound transcendent knowledge should be practiced just as you have taught, and all the tathagatas will rejoice."

N. Tathagatas - means those who have walked the way of tathata (or the things as they are i.e *yatha bhoota*)

*T. Chom den de kyi de ke che ka tsal ne/ Tse dang den pa sha ri bu dang/ Jang chub sem pa sem pa chen po pak pa chen re zik wang chuk dang/ Tam che dang den pay khor de dak dang/ Lha dang/ Mi dang/ La ma yin dang/ Dri zar che pay jik ten yi rang te/*

T. After the Blessed One spoke these words, the venerable Shariputra and the noble bodhi sattva-mahasattva Avalokiteshvara, that whole gathering and the world world with its gods, humans, *asuras* (demons) and *gandharvas* (class of beings usually involved in arts, music, dance), rejoiced and praised the words of the Blessed one.

*T. Chom den de kyi sung pa la ngon par to do/ Chom den de ma she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pay nying po zhe ja wa tek pa chen poy do dzok so/*

T. Thus ends the mahayana sutra called *The Bhagavati, Heart of Transcendent Knowledge*.

N. There are main three systems - the *Hinayana*, the *Mahayana* and the *Vajrayana*. The *Hinayana* is the paths chosen by the arhants (those who have defeated the enemies of their own minds). They usually do not help directly. If one has fallen in spiritual endeavour, they will just stand and watch without helping. The subtle idea is that if one has fallen one has to get up by one's own effort and they will just be a neutral observer. This idea of not helping or giving a lending hand might seem cruel but the deeper essence is to strengthen the individual from inside out. Thus without helping they help the individual in indirect ways. One usually finds the *Hinayana* systems to be followed in South East Asian countries where more stress is given to the *samatha* (to develop equanimity) and *vipassana* (to

develop insight into the way things are, i.e. *yatha-bhoota* or as it is) meditations, fundamental of which are found in the *Mahasattipatthan sutta*. The Mahayana system and the encased *Vajrayana* within it encompass the bodhisattvas. They take into account the fact that it is important to help many on the path to acquire the merit to enlightenment. Thus helping others is an important aspect of generating compassion for uplifting and helping those on the path. The system usually considers recitation of *mantra* and *tantric* systems, including worshiping of deity or a superior god or goddess, or bodhisattva as well as a buddha in the journey to enlightenment. One usually finds these kinds of systems in the northern parts of Asia (i.e. Tibet, China, Korea, etc). *Vajrayana* takes into account the image of a deity or a buddha or considers the guru as a buddha and the student has to worship this kind of system as well as meditate on the chosen image to acquire the advanced state of experiences. This is dangerous and development is extremely fast, but not natural. Note that the fundamentals and the mechanism of the way to meditate remain the same across all the different traditions and the systems. A nice introduction to these issues can be found in Mahamudra : The Quintessence of Mind and Meditation. The title - Tibet's greatest yogi Jetsun Milarepa, covers deeper instructions on the way of meditation in the form of poetry by Milarepa himself, after he acquires the stage of buddhahood (See the chapter on Nirvana). Similar teaching might be found for women aspirant in the Sky dancer : The Secret Life and Songs of Lady Yeshe Tsogyel, where women are placed in a very high position in spiritual evolution and instructions are given to women aspirants. It is requested that the readers acquire fundamental texts and explore the texts as they meditate and read the texts again and again. It takes time to get established in the way to meditate and conduct adequate research work before one finds a suitable way that suits one's frequency. So take it slow and do your research work.

*T. Namoh/ La ma la chak tsal lo/ Sang gye la chak tsal lo/ Cho la chak tsal lo/ Ge dun la chak tsal lo/ Yum chen mo she rab yi pa rol tu chin pa la chak tsal lo/ Dak gi den pay tsik nam drub par gyur chik/*

T. Namoh! Homage to the Guru, homage to the Buddha, homage to the Dharma, homage to the Sangha. Homage to the great mother, transcendent knowledge. May all my true words be accomplished.

*T. Ji tar ngon lhay wang po gya jin ge she rab kyi pa rol tu chin pay don zab mo yi la sam shing/ Tsik kha ton du je pay tu dang nu pa la ten ne du dik chen la sok pa mi tun pay chok tam che chir dok pa de zhin du/ Dak gi kyang she rab ki pa rol tu chin pay don zab mo yi la sam shing/ Tsik kha ton du je pay tu dang nu pa la ten ne du dik chen la sok pa mi tun pay chok tam che chir dok par gyur chik/*

T. Just as formerly Indra, lord of the gods, contemplating the profound meaning of transcendent knowledge, recited these words and by that averted all evil and other disagreeable elements, may I too, by the force and power of contemplating the profound meaning of transcendent knowledge and reciting the words, avert all evil and other disagreeable elements.

*T. Me par gyur chik/ Zhi war gyur chik/ Rab tu zhi war gyur chik/ Gang gi ten ching drel war jung/ Gak pa me pa kye me pa/ Che pa me pa tak me pa/ Ong wa me pa dro me pa/ Ta de don min don chik min/ Tro pa nyer zhi zhi ten pa/*

T. May they be eliminated. May they be calmed. May they be totally calmed. Whatever is inter-dependent, arising from connection, is without cessation and without birth, without end and without permanence, without coming and without going, without division and without unity of meaning; all elaboration fully pacified; teaching peace.

N. *Whatever is inter-dependent, arising from connection, is without cessation and without birth, without end and without permanence, without coming and without going, without division and without unity of meaning; all elaboration fully pacified; teaching peace!*

Without cessation i.e. neither there is process of death and without birth i.e. neither there is germination (more importantly, neither one dies nor there is birth, as one is universal awareness itself and emptiness is one's nature) + without end i.e. neither there is an end and without permanence i.e. nor there is permanence (there is no ending to it and yet it is cannot be permanent) + without division

i.e there is not compartments or categorizations and without unity of meaning i.e but one cannot say it as unified into oneness (i.e duality and multiplicity cannot exist but it doesn't mean that oneness exists in emptiness). Thus all elaborations, expositions and manifestations are fully pacified, teaching peace!

*T. Dzok pey sang gye ma nam kyi/ Dam pa de la chak tsal lo/ Gek rik tong grak gye chu zhi wa dang/ Mi tun no pay kyen dang drel wa dang/ Tun par drup ching pun sum tsok pa yi/ Ta shi de kyang deng dir de lek shok/*

T. i bow to the sacred words of the Perfect Buddha. May the 80,000 kinds of obstructers be pacified, and disagreeable, harmful conditions removed and, becoming harmonious, may this excellent auspiciousness bring happiness and well-being, here and now.

*T. Mangalam*

T. May there be good fortune!

## 6. A Poetry to Share

Like the ocean's silence,  
filled with an ancient nectar,  
called Nirvana,  
the heart is content \&  
the mind still ...

No thoughts of birth,  
neither that of death,  
no want to go for,  
no search to go on,  
no journey to be taken,  
and no effort to be put forth ...

Nothing to say, nothing to do,  
and nothing to become,  
just to sit still,  
and be ...

Thus by grace have i found a way,  
were the heart is content,  
and the mind still,  
that if death comes now,  
i am ready to go ...

May those above,  
live with a content heart,  
may those below,  
live with a heart content,  
may all around,  
find contentment in their hearts,  
wherever i walk,  
as long as life remains ...  
just sit still and be

## 7. The Highest Is the Simplest

The highest is the simplest. Truth searches for simplicity in one's heart and is least interested in what one has acquired. So maintain the simplicity of heart as much as possible. Also, from moment

to moment, nurture the contentment in heart and stability will dawn within you. Your experiential knowledge matters more than anything else in your journey of life.

love and take care! - shriprakash sinha

## 8. Conclusion

The heart sutra raises the female aspect to a higher level, by terming emptiness (a.k.a shunyata) as the mother of all Buddhas. It is not that emptiness has a gender, however, in existence, the female aspect is raised higher. On a deeper level, there are 5 stages into the realms of truth - *Anicca* (impermanence), *Dukkha* (sorrow due to not grasping impermanence), *Annatta* (non-self or an existent individual identity), Shunyata (emptiness) and *Tathagata* (observing the way as it is or what nature wants to show). This 4<sup>th</sup> stage of Shunyata is the mother of all Buddhas. Emptiness or Shunyata is also referred to as Goddess Bhagvati or the transcendental knowledge behind all phenomena. *Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi soha* meaning "going going, going beyond, transcending all fields, one merges into the fully liberated stage of enlightenment". Where does one go? As the lotus flower rests gently on the surface of the pond, while the happenings within the petals of the flower, like the flow of nutrition etc, occurs naturally and spontaneously, so also the when the human body sits still, the fields of body (*kaya*), sensations (*vedana*), mind (*chitta*) and the laws of nature (*dhamma*), come to awareness and passes off. *Kayanupaschyana* (observation of body), *Vedanupaschyana* (observation of sensations within the body), *Chittanupaschyana* (observation of the flow of mind) and *Dhammanupaschyana* (observation of the law of rise, persistence and fall of myriads of phenomena) or the stages of *Vipassana* meditation, all happen naturally and spontaneously as the human body sits still like a resting lotus flower! However the journey is over many life times. The Prajna-paramita-hridaya assauges multiple conflicts that one faces in one's journey into the realms of truth. The exposition sheds light on aspects that have come to awareness and have been put in a few words. However, words cannot completely capture the essence in this journey and one's experiential knowledge is of greatest value. Going going, going beyond, transcending all fields, one merges into the fully liberated stage.

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