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གསལ་བྱེད་ངེས་དོན་སྣང་བ།

**The Light of Definitive Meaning:
A Lamp That Illuminates the Profound
Perfection of Wisdom**

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa zab mo snang ba'i gsal byed nges don snang ba

B444

Kabum, vol. 6 (cha), 169.1–186.6, Dzongsar 2014.

This text was translated by Christian Bernert with the kind assistance of Lopön Sonam Jamtsho as consultant. We would like to also thank Khenpo Chöying Dorjee and Sean Price for their valuable feedback on the commentary, as well as Greg Seton for his suggestions on the translation of the sūtra. The translation was completed under the patronage of Khyentse Foundation and the supervision of Khyentse Vision Project.

First Published 2025

Version 1

Generated from KVP's reading room on 17-Sep-2026

Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

This composition is Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's commentary on the *Heart Sūtra*, one of the most celebrated Buddhist scriptures recited daily in monasteries and homes throughout the Mahāyāna world. It conveys the essence of the Buddha's numerous discourses on the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*),¹ providing insight into the nature of ultimate reality. In only two and a half pages, the *Heart Sūtra* condenses this transcendent knowledge into a series of negations based on the fundamental elements of Buddhist thought—from the five aggregates, the twelve bases of perception, and the eighteen elements of perception to the twelve links of dependent arising and the Four Noble Truths—systematically negating all notions of true existence.

After providing an introduction explaining the title of the work and setting the stage for the dialogue between Śāriputra and the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's commentary illuminates the sūtra's teaching on emptiness, quoting and referencing a wide range of canonical scriptures to emphasize its experiential aspect. The commentary follows the approach of the Pāramitāyāna, the vehicle of the perfections, quoting from numerous Mahāyāna sūtras as well as from works of the Indian masters Nāgārjuna and Śāntideva. Blended into his exposition are certain terms and phrases that, in addition to this more general approach, reflect the experiential dimension of these teachings. Khyentse Wangpo speaks, for instance, of the "expressive power" of awareness and about "knowing all phenomena to be the expression of the mind's expressive play," using terms commonly found in writings associated with the yogic traditions of the great meditators of India and Tibet. Following the main part of the commentary, which includes glosses of the sūtra's technical terms and phrases, Khyentse Wangpo writes about the practice of the perfection of wisdom in terms of the three gates of liberation—emptiness, the absence of attributes, and the absence of aims—and explains how practitioners of varying levels of acumen can use the text itself as a practice support.

Khyentse Wangpo was only seventeen years old when he wrote this commentary. As he states in the colophon, he composed this work by “quickly setting down whatever came to mind without consulting other commentaries,” making the composition even more remarkable.

OUTLINE

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The Light of Definitive Meaning

*Namo Prajñāpāramitāya.*²

*Within the dhātu's expanse, all shackles of the manifold elaborations, without exception,
And the three gates of liberation are of a single taste.
And so I bow to the Great Mother Prajñāpāramitā,
The realm beyond thought, the ineffable expanse.*

This explanation of *The Bhagavatī, the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* has three parts: the beginning section, the main text, and the conclusion.

I. Beginning Section

The beginning comprises the meaning of the title and the meaning of the prologue.

A. Meaning of the Title

The Sanskrit title reads: **bhagavatī** “defeating, endowed, and transcendent mother,”³ **prajñā** “wisdom,” **pāra** “other side,” **mita** “gone,”⁴ and **hrdaya** “heart.” It is given that name because the perfection of wisdom “defeats” all the factors that are to be eliminated; because it is “endowed with” all the sublime qualities that are to be achieved; because it completely “transcends” the levels of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and ordinary beings; and because it is the “mother” who gives birth to all the tathāgatas of the three times. It is endowed with unsurpassed “wisdom” because it has “gone beyond” the wisdom of even the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, which in turn surpasses that of ordinary beings. The term “heart,” derived from the verbal root *hrñ*, which means “to take away,”⁵ denotes that, just as butter [170] is produced by churning

milk, all the vast contents of the scriptures of the second turning of the wheel of Dharma, which discuss the absence of characteristics, are condensed in this text.

B. Prologue

This part includes a condensed account and a detailed explanation.

1. CONDENSED ACCOUNT

These words I have heard at one time.⁶ This single phrase contains the five excellences, with **these words** indicating the teacher, **I** the retinue, **heard** the Dharma, **one time** the moment, and **at** as a locative particle that can be understood to suggest the excellent place.

2. DETAILED EXPLANATION

The Bhagavān indicates the excellent teacher; the meaning of this name was given above. **Vulture Peak Mountain** is the excellent place. In the *King of Samādhi Sūtra*, it is stated:

The buddhas, by the millions and billions and more,
Equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River,
All reside at Vulture Peak.⁷

The words **saṅgha of monks** and so forth illustrate the excellent retinue. The saṅgha of śrāvakas is **great** in both number and qualities: it is composed of five thousand members who possess the qualities of exhaustion of outflows, absence of afflictions, full control, complete liberation of mind, and completely liberated wisdom. These and further qualities are mentioned in other sūtras.⁸ [171]

Likewise, the **saṅgha of bodhisattvas** is **great** in both number and qualities: they are myriad, and possessing mastery over knowledge and liberation, they are undeluded with regard to skillful means and wisdom. This refers only to those bodhisattvas who have attained the bhūmis.

The words **residing together** indicate the excellent time, because all such wonderful factors perfectly came together at that time. The sūtra then continues: **the Bhagavān was absorbed in a samādhi that elucidates phenomena**, which is **called “Illumination of the Profound.”** This passage indicates the excellent Dharma. In *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, it is stated:

Bhagavān, the perfection of wisdom is profound. It cannot be cultivated by anyone...⁹

This quote indicates that the meaning of “the Profound,” which is extremely difficult to realize and lies beyond the reach of the conceptual mind, is clearly revealed. This is connected to the meaning of the name of this samādhi.

The words “absorbed in the samādhi” indicate that, at that time, the Bhagavān withdrew and was perfectly composed in the samādhi of great union, where profound emptiness dawns within the perception of forms, a state not contaminated by thoughts pertaining to the three times, such as daily activities.

The passage beginning with **also, at that time** answers the question of who gave this teaching.¹⁰ The one who expounded it, **the noble bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara**, is said to be “purified” in the sense that he has eliminated all mental afflictions for his own benefit; he is said to be “developed” because he has attained all the sublime qualities of realization for the benefit of others. [172] He is a bodhisattva¹¹ because it is said that he “bravely” never forsakes these two purposes and is called a “noble being,” having completely abandoned the path leading to the peace of the inferior vehicle. He is called “one who sees” because he continuously gazes upon all beings with his eye of great compassion and he always perceives the ultimate reality of phenomena with his eye of pristine wisdom. Of these two qualities, the former is regarded as his characteristic feature. He is called a “lord” because he has perfect mastery of pristine wisdom, where emptiness and compassion are inseparably joined. (The meaning of the words **engaged in the profound perfection of wisdom** should be understood in accordance with the explanation below.)

Regarding the question of why this sūtra is counted among the Buddha’s discourses, even though it was taught by Avalokiteśvara and not spoken by the Buddha himself, it still came about **by the Buddha’s power**, as the sūtra states. When the buddhas placed their hands on Vajragarbha’s head,¹² Vajragarbha was blessed by their touch and then taught *The Ten Bhūmis*. Similarly, to eliminate Ajātaśatru’s remorse, the Buddha gave Mañjuśrīghoṣa his oral permission to teach the sūtra known as *Eliminating Ajātaśatru’s Remorse*. Likewise here, the Buddha blessed Avalokiteśvara through the pristine wisdom of his mind that was absorbed in samādhi, through which the confidence to expound the teaching was born in the bodhisattva.

The *Verses Summarizing the Perfection of Wisdom* states:

Whatever Dharma is taught by the śrāvakas of the Victorious One, [173]
Whatever they explain, know, and truthfully express—
The means that lead to supreme, exalted bliss and the attainment of its result—
It is all by the power of those who have gone to suchness.¹³

This passage explains how these words are identified as being blessed by the Buddha.

II. Meaning of the Main Text

This section has four parts: (1) an explanation of the actual method of the profound path, (2) an explanation of the purpose of maintaining it through mantra, (3)

instructions to train in the methods to cultivate this wisdom, and (4) an expression of praise following the teaching.

A. The Actual Method of the Profound Path

The actual method comprises the formulation of the question, the teaching, and the expression of praise.

1. THE QUESTION

The question is easily understood. It runs from **the venerable Śāriputra** until **if they wish to pursue the profound perfection of wisdom.**

2. THE TEACHING

The teaching itself begins with the words **the great bodhisattva** and extends until **also no non-attainment**. In this section, the phrase **form is empty** indicates the experience of emptiness attained by no longer identifying form as having an inherent nature. Since in terms of the experience emptiness dawns as form, it states **emptiness is form**. Therefore, since form is empty and **emptiness is not other than form**, the path of the union of appearance and emptiness arises with the four characteristics. These are respectively established as the yogas without appearances, with appearances [174], and of the nonduality of appearance and emptiness.¹⁴ In this way, the nature of all phenomena is the Mother Prajñāpāramitā: indescribable, inconceivable, and ineffable emptiness, beyond arising, ceasing, and abiding.¹⁵ If wisdom is cultivated by meditating on emptiness with attributes, however, one incurs the faults alluded to with the following words:

Looking at emptiness in a mistaken way,
Those of lesser wisdom are ruined.¹⁶

And, from the *Verses Summarizing the Perfection of Wisdom*:

Thinking “these aggregates are empty,”
The bodhisattva engages with attributes and thus has no faith in the state of
nonarising.¹⁷

Because emptiness transcends all objects described as empty, non-empty, and so forth, it is **without characteristics**; and it is **unborn** because it does not depend on causes and conditions. Even though it is nonarising in essence, its expression is **unobstructed** because its expressive power can appear in any way, shape, or form. It is **without defilements** because there are no stains to be eliminated through the truth of the path within the fundamental reality of things; and it is **without freedom from defilements** because within that which is primordially undefiled, there is nothing to be eliminated through transient conceptual thoughts.

Since the fundamental reality of emptiness itself is the primordial, spontaneously accomplished state of awakening, the qualities of elimination and realization appear naturally. Therefore, it is **without decrease**. It is **without increase** because there are no newly developed qualities to be added to that which has existed in this way since the very beginning. [175] Even though there are countless scriptural quotations and logical reasonings to support these points, since this is not the place for lengthy explanations, I have limited my comments to a few brief words so that the profound meaning may be easily grasped by those of lesser aptitude.

Even though the primordially liberated natural state of emptiness is devoid of the connection of supporting sense faculties and sense objects on one side and that which is supported on the other side,¹⁸ when the experience of the six sense faculties occurs without conceptual thought, it is the yoga with appearances.¹⁹ The yoga without appearances is knowing the objects appearing to the mind to be the play of its own manifestation; and when the grasping of the six types of consciousness is completely cut off, it is the yoga of union. Even though these yogas do not truly exist within the natural state that is the union of awareness and emptiness, they arise due to the experience of the transient appearances of its expression.

The essential nature of this reality is obscured by innate **ignorance**, and formative factors accumulate the ensuing karma. Based on this, consciousness meticulously discerns the appearances emerging from its expressive power and apprehends name and form. How are they apprehended? By means of the six sense bases. At this point, the sense faculties come into contact with their respective objects, due to which the three types of sensation are experienced. Then craving arises and, as a result of having performed deeds that cause one to cycle in existence, there is the appropriating of a body, birth, and **aging and death**. [176] This passage describes dependent arising in forward order.²⁰

The unfathomable nature of cyclic existence²¹ is counteracted through the process of purification comprised by the limbs of the path of the noble ones. By seeing the essence of awareness as free of elaborations, ignorance is purified into objectlessness, formative factors are completely destroyed, consciousness subsides into its own emptiness, name and form are not apprehended, the doors of the sense bases are closed, and there is no contact between objects and sense faculties. From that point onward, the subsequent links are also counteracted and purified into emptiness. Due to this purification, there is **no** cause of saṃsāra, that is, no mental afflictions that are the **origin** of suffering; **no** resultant unfathomable **suffering**; **no path** to attain the continuum of nirvāṇa; and **no cessation**, the resultant peace. The way these are all empty should be understood in accordance with the three yogas explained above.

Since the pristine wisdom of awareness merges inseparably with basic space, the primordially pure expanse, there is no arising of an independently existing pristine wisdom of awakened knowledge. It therefore states there is **no pristine wisdom**.

Because there is no other ultimate primordial result to be attained apart from seeing this profound and perfect reality—the natural state with nothing added and nothing removed, the dharmakāya of the buddhas—it states there is **no attainment**. Yet, because the expressive power inherent within the perfect discerning awareness of the dharmakāya of the natural state is complete with the spontaneously present illusory display of the kāyas and pristine wisdoms, [177] having the capacity to display them, it says **also no non-attainment**. As Ārya Nāgārjuna states:

Neither one nor many, it is the basis for vast and perfect benefit for oneself and others;

Neither a non-entity nor an entity, like space, its equal taste is difficult to discern.

Untainted and unchanging, it is peace, unequaled, pervasive, free of elaborations, and must be known by oneself.

To the dharmakāya of the victorious ones, I bow in homage!²²

3. THE EXPRESSION OF PRAISE

This section has two parts: (1) how those on the path overcome obstacles by relying on the perfection of wisdom, and (2) how all those who have advanced to the level of no more learning have done so by relying on it.

3.1 *How Those on the Path Overcome Obstacles by Relying on the Perfection of Wisdom*

How those on the path overcome obstacles is taught with the words beginning with **Śāriputra, therefore** until **final nirvāṇa**. The glorious Nāgārjuna states in the *Letter to a Friend*:

Those whose mindfulness is not well established

Hold a view mistaken in four ways and are headed for disaster.²³

In accordance with this quote, there are four views asserted by those following non-Buddhist teachings, which perpetuate and increase belief in the self, the origin of karma, which fundamentally deviates from the correct view of the true nature of things. These are: (1) form being the self, (2) the self possessing form, (3) the self residing in form, and (4) form residing in the self. [178] From these are derived the twenty mountain-like views of identity based on the transitory collection of aggregates,²⁴ and from them three hundred and sixty erroneous notions, such as those based on desire and so forth. All these are eradicated when awareness is endowed with the three yogas and an experience of the five aggregates that includes the four characteristics. That is to say, form is not the self, because the self is regarded as permanent, whereas form is impermanent; and the self is not form, because form perishes, contrary to the self's desire, indicating that it has no control over form. Likewise, form cannot intrinsically reside within the self, because the self does not have

the ability to enter and depart from form at will. If form intrinsically resided within the self, then external forms could not be visible objects without the existence of a self.²⁵ In the abovementioned *Letter to a Friend*, it is stated:

It is taught that form is not the self.

The self does not possess form, nor does it reside within form,

And form does not reside within the self.

In this way, understand the four remaining aggregates to also be empty.²⁶

If you want to understand these points in detail, consult the commentary on this text by the Indian master Mahāmāti.²⁷

Therefore, bodhisattvas [179] **dwell in** this realization of **the perfection of wisdom** and thereby see that the nature of **mind is unobstructed**. Their mind has **no fear** with regard to the profound meaning, because they have **completely transcended** the four **distorted views**. In this way, they swiftly attain the level of unsurpassed, perfect, and complete awakening. This can only be accomplished by the power of the realization of the pristine wisdom of selflessness.

3.2 How All Who Have Advanced to No More Learning Have Done So by Relying on the Perfection of Wisdom

Likewise, all the victorious ones **of the three times** who have departed, are present, and are yet to come attain the level of **complete awakening by relying on** this very **perfection of wisdom**. In the *Verses Summarizing the Perfection of Wisdom*, it is stated:

Not dwelling on any phenomenon, they practice without dwelling.

Not holding on to anything, they attain the awakening of the sugatas.²⁸

B. The Purpose of Maintaining the Perfection of Wisdom Through Mantra

The purpose of maintaining the perfection of wisdom through mantra is taught from **Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom** until **BODHI SVĀHĀ**. From the term “mantra,” which is *ngak*²⁹ in Tibetan, one can derive the meaning “that which protects the mind.”³⁰ **Therefore**, because it protects from plunging into saṃsāra due to having a mind that clings to the self along with its attributes, [180] and because it leads to the final destination of all paths to be traveled, it is **the mantra of the perfection of wisdom**. Due to its purity, being free from all elaborations based on the ignorance of beginningless delusion, it is **the mantra of great knowledge**. Because there is nothing higher to be gained than the natural state of profound emptiness, with nothing added and nothing taken away, it is **the unsurpassed mantra**. Because it leads to the level of buddhahood endowed with unequaled qualities, it is **the mantra that makes one equal to the unequaled**. Because it destroys all forms of the view of a self, which is the root of suffering and the cause and result of conditioned existence, it is **the**

mantra that completely pacifies all suffering. Because these statements are not deceptive, they are **not false and should therefore be known as true.**

The actual meaning of the mantra is as follows: **TADYATHĀ** means “it is like this”; **OM**³¹ conveys the meaning of auspiciousness, promise, the highest blessing, and so forth; **GATE** indicates the attainment of the path of accumulation by ordinary beings who have previously not entered the path; the second **GATE** stands for the progression from the path of accumulation to the path of joining; **PĀRAGATE** means “gone far beyond,” indicating the progression from the path of joining to the path of seeing; **PĀRASAMGATE** means “completely gone beyond,” indicating the progression to the path of learning free from clinging to attributes;³² [181] and **BODHI YE SVĀHĀ** means “firm ground of awakening,” indicating the permanent, continuous, and immutable attainment of the path of no more learning, which transcends all elaborations of the truth of the path.

I will not elaborate on these points in detail here, as I am concerned this explanation might become too long. Those who wish to learn about them should consult the *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras*, its *ṭīkā* commentary, and other treatises.

C. The Instruction to Train in the Cultivation of the Perfection of Wisdom

The sentence **Śāriputra, this is how great bodhisattvas must train in the profound perfection of wisdom** teaches that to demolish all mountain-like views based on belief in a self, a **bodhisattva must unequivocally train in this profound, irreversible perfection of wisdom.** As to why it is described as profound, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* explains:

Śāriputra, bodhisattvas who have given rise to bodhicitta may practice generosity, guard their discipline, accomplish patience, exert diligence, and abide in meditative absorption, doing so extensively and perfectly for as many eons as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and greatly amplify their resolve to attain unsurpassed, perfect, and complete awakening. However, if these practices are not perfectly integrated with the perfection of wisdom and lack skillful means, [182] these bodhisattvas will fall to the level of a śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha.³³

However, this does not mean that the five paths of skillful means are meaningless. The purpose of these subsidiary practices is precisely to facilitate the realization of the meaning of the profound. As it is taught in the *Way of the Bodhisattva*,

All these branches were taught by the Sage
For the sake of wisdom.³⁴

D. The Expression of Praise Following the Teaching

The section beginning with **Then, the Bhagavān arose from that samādhi until the tathāgatas will also rejoice** shows that there is no need to doubt the legitimacy of this teaching given in the form of a dialogue between noble Avalokiteśvara and the arhat Śāriputra. For this reason, **Avalokiteśvara's** words are praised by stating that all **tathāgatas** teach in exactly the same way and that they all **also rejoice** in this teaching.

III. Meaning of the Conclusion

The words from **After the Bhagavān until praised what the Bhagavān had said** were spoken to remove doubt regarding the retinue and to generate confidence, stating that all the various assemblies in attendance were filled with joy and delight, [183] and they respectfully **praised** the qualities of the Buddha. Since the words preceding and following the passages explained here, as well as the translator's colophon, are easy to understand, I will not explain them here.

Appendix: The Practice of the Perfection of Wisdom

I will now briefly elaborate on the practice of the perfection of wisdom. It is stated in the *Middle-Length Prajñāpāramitā*:³⁵

Subhūti, in this way, all phenomena have emptiness as their intrinsic nature;
all phenomena have the absence of attributes as their intrinsic nature; and all
phenomena have the absence of aims as their intrinsic nature.³⁶

As mentioned earlier, the experience of the inconceivable dharmatā, which is unsullied by the elaborations of the five aggregates and the sense consciousnesses, is emptiness in the sense of selflessness endowed with the four characteristics, because it is free of the conventional designations of arising, ceasing, and abiding.

The absence of attributes means that by placing the mind free of activity on this fundamental nature free of elaborations, all conceptual thoughts of the three spheres dissipate into natural, uncontrived radiance and the space-like, primordial perspective becomes apparent. This is expressed by statements such as the following from *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*:

Bhagavān, this perfection of wisdom is like the cultivation of space.
In this way, this perfection of wisdom is the non-cultivation of all
phenomena.³⁷ [184]

Achieving perfect familiarization with profound emptiness in a manner that is beyond meeting and parting, one directly encounters the true face of the indescribable, inconceivable, and ineffable perfection of wisdom, the mother of the victorious ones of

the three times. Since there is no higher resultant state of awakening to be attained, it is referred to as the absence of aims. In the *Verses Summarizing the Perfection of Wisdom*, it is stated:

The supreme perfection of wisdom is not observed.
Neither are the bodhisattvas, nor is bodhicitta.
Having heard these words, the bodhisattva engages in the wisdom of the
Sugata,
Undeluded and without fear.³⁸

These three are also posited as view, meditation, and fruition, respectively, and referred to as the three gates of liberation.

All deluded appearances are fashioned by the mind, and it is due to clinging to these phenomena as possessing inherent identity, even though they are devoid of essence, that beings wander in saṃsāra. *The Way of the Bodhisattva* states:

Who made the burning iron ground?
Where do these blazing fires come from?
All these arise from a malicious mind,
The Sage declared.³⁹

The modes of engagement and disengagement related to saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are perfectly complete within the fundamental reality of emptiness.⁴⁰ Therefore, in meditation, rest in this state beyond thought. In the phases of post-meditation, generate great compassion for all those who have not realized this to be so, and [185] embrace all experiences with the skillful means that integrate all appearances onto the path: know all visible forms to be the inseparable union of appearance and emptiness, like the reflection of the moon on water; all audible sounds to be the inseparable union of sound and emptiness, like an echo; and all conceptual thoughts to be the inseparable union of awareness and emptiness, like a magical illusion. *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* states:

Subhūti, when a bodhisattva possesses two qualities, they can hardly be harmed by the malicious māras or their hordes. Which two, you ask? To never abandon any being and to realize that all phenomena are emptiness.⁴¹

Elsewhere it is taught:

Through the practice of emptiness with a core of compassion,
The merit of one's deeds is purified.⁴²

One should read the sūtra with this approach to practice. As a preparation, one infuses oneself with the elixir of bodhicitta. The main practice for those of superior faculties consists of reciting the text while resting in the state of ineffable pristine wisdom, the

natural state of emptiness as it really is. Those of middling faculties recite the text knowing all phenomena to be like magical illusions, and those of lesser acumen begin by recalling the meaning of emptiness and then focus their undistracted attention on the sound as they recite it. [186] The practice of dedication then serves as the link between the main practice and the phase of post-meditation. For the practice to be complete, it must include these three excellences.

Furthermore, by knowing all phenomena to be the expression of the mind's expressive play, misconceptions regarding the outer world are resolved. By knowing that the nature of the mind is emptiness—free of arising, ceasing, and abiding—misconceptions regarding the inner dimension are resolved. By clearly seeing that the inconceivable pristine wisdom is naked emptiness-awareness, free of a cultivating mind and an object to be cultivated, misconceptions regarding the hidden dimension are resolved. This is the essence of all practice: irreversible direct perception of the ultimate, free of all hope and fear, without anything added and with nothing removed.

To break free from the trap of the belief in a self
And realize the perfection of wisdom beyond elaborations,
May all beings swiftly come to directly know
The reality of that which was so skillfully taught.

Individuals of lesser aptitude who recite the Heart Sūtra will barely catch a glimpse of its meaning. However, with the intention that the merit of their recitation may be enhanced, this extremely abridged commentary that illuminates the profound perfection of wisdom was composed by the young Abbāya at the age of seventeen, quickly setting down whatever came to mind without consulting other commentaries. May it be beneficial.

NOTES

1. Of the 103 volumes in the Derge Kangyur, the Tibetan collection of the Buddha's words, twenty-one are devoted to this subject, the longest being *The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines* (*Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*), which spans over twelve volumes.
2. "Homage to Prajñāpāramitā!" Note that Khyentse Wangpo treats *pāramitā* as a masculine noun in the Sanskrit above. One would expect *pāramitāyai* for the feminine dative.
3. In this section, the title of the sūtra is explained on the basis on the meaning of each syllable of the Tibetan. To follow the commentary here, it is helpful to know that the Sanskrit term *bhagavatī* is translated into Tibetan as *bcom ldan 'das ma*, with each syllable carrying a distinct meaning: *bcom* "to defeat," *ldan* "to be endowed with," *'das* "to transcend," and *ma* as the feminine marker indicating the term "mother."
4. The Sanskrit compound term *pāramitā* is more commonly explained by separating *pāram* (accusative of *pāra*, "other side") and *itā* (past participle of "to go"). It should be noted, however, that the semantic interpretation of the etymology of Sanskrit terms is a very creative science in Buddhist literature, where Sanskrit and Tibetan authors often take liberties to stretch traditional Sanskrit rules to fit the context of a given interpretation.
5. This passage, which identifies the full form of the Sanskrit root (*brñ*) and specifies its meaning, is quoted from the *Kalāpadbhāṭusūtra*, a treatise on Sanskrit roots preserved in Tibetan translation in the Tengyur (Toh. 4422). Thanks to Peter Olin for his help in researching this subject.
6. This standard opening line of most sūtras is commonly rendered as "Thus did I hear at one time," or similarly. The current translation is based on the literal meaning of the Tibetan to accommodate Khyentse Wangpo's explanation of the phrase.
7. *Samādhirājasūtra* 2.19.
8. See, for example, *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* I.1.2.
9. It is helpful to consider the context of this quote from *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* XV. 3.301. When asked by the Buddha why bodhisattvas should not even aspire to the level of buddhahood, Subhūti replies (Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, 193): "Deep, O Lord, is perfect wisdom. It cannot be developed by anything, nor by anyone, nor is there anything or anyone to be developed. For in perfect wisdom nothing at all has been brought to perfection. The development of perfect wisdom is like the development of space, or of all dharmas, or of non-attachment, of the infinite, of what is not, of not-taking-hold-of."

10. Here follows an etymological explanation of the phrase “the noble bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara” (*byang chub sems dpa’ phags pa spyan ras gzigs*) based on the meaning of each syllable of his Tibetan name: *byang* means “purified,” *chub* “developed,” *sems dpa’* “brave hearted,” *phags pa* “noble,” and *spyan ras gzigs* “gazing eyes.”
11. It should be noted that the Tibetan word *byang chub sems dpa’* (literally, “courageous resolve for awakening”) is not a literal equivalent of the Sanskrit *bodhisattva*, which can be rendered as “a being intent on awakening.”
12. *Daśabbūmika* I.19.
13. *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana*.
14. The four characteristics are (1) form is empty, (2) emptiness is form, (3) form is not other than emptiness, and (4) emptiness is not other than form. The last two are listed together since both express the union of appearance and emptiness.
15. The triad “nonarising, unobstructed, and nonabiding” (*skye dgag gnas gsum dang bral ba*) may also be rendered as “nonarising, unceasing, and nonabiding.” In the context of the negation of the three characteristic features of compounded phenomena—coming into being, remaining for one moment, and ceasing to be—the latter translation is indeed preferable. In this translation, however, the words reflect Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo’s interpretation of these three terms based on the next passage.
16. *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* 24.11ab. See Siderits and Katsura, *Nāgārjuna’s Middle Way*, 274.
17. *Prajñāpāramitāsamcayagāthā* 2a7–2b1. The entire stanza reads: *gal te mi shes bzhin du gzugs su ’du shes shing/ tshor ba sems pa rnam shes phung por spyod byed cing/ phung ’di stong zhes rtog na’ang byang chub sems dpa’ ni/ mtshan ma la spyod skye med gnas la dad ma yin//*.
18. In this context, the phrase “that which is supported” (*brten pa*) refers to the six sense consciousnesses, which arise on the basis of the six sense faculties meeting with their respective objects. Thus, this passage explains the lines of the *Heart Sūtra* teaching the lack of inherent existence of the twelve bases of perception and the eighteen elements of perception: “no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no object of touch, and no mental object. There is no element of the eye, up to no element of the mind, and further up to no element of the mental consciousness.”
19. The causal relationship between the sense faculty, the object, and the resultant consciousness occurs only on the conventional level, since each individual element of this equation is established as not existent on the ultimate level. Thus, even though there are ultimately no sense faculties, objects, and consciousnesses, there is still the nonconceptual experience of appearances within the recognition of the ultimate. This is the meaning of the yoga with appearances, which relates to the phrase “emptiness is form.” We would like to acknowledge Khenpo Chöying Dorje for his explanation of this paragraph.
20. For a detailed explanation of the process of dependent arising and its twelve links, see *The Rice Seedling* (*Śālistamba*).
21. In this context, the nature of saṃsāra described as unfathomable seems to refer not to emptiness or its ultimate nature but to the fact that conditioned existence is without beginning and the sufferings experienced in it are limitless.
22. *Kāyatrāyastotra*, 70b3–71a2. A very similar quote is found in the *Śrīkālacakratantrottaraṇṭarābrdaya* 129a1–144a7, 130b. *gang zbig gcig min du ma min la bdag gzhan la phan phun tshogs chen po’i rten gyur pa/ dngos min dngos po med min nam mkha’ bzhin du ro mnyam rnam par dpyad dka’i rang bzhin nyid/ gos med rnam par ’gyur med zhi ba mtshungs pa med pa mnyam zhing khyab la spros pa med/ dpe med so so rang gis rig bya rgyal ba rnams kyi chos kyi sku la bdag phyag ’tshal//*.

23. *Suḥrlekkha* 48. Padmakara Translation Group, *Nagarjuna's Letter to a Friend with Commentary by Kangyur Rinpoche*.
24. For an explanation of these twenty views, refer to Candrakīrti's *Entering into the Middle Way* VI.143–45.
25. These lines of reasoning are taken from Mahāmātī's commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Letter to a Friend* referred to in the next paragraph. Having refuted the notion that form and self are identical, the idea that they are separate entities is refuted next. Three possible relations between the self and form are considered and refuted in turn: the self possessing form, the self residing in form, and form residing in the self. With regard to the latter, it is stated that since it is observed that outer forms come into being and perish without depending on a self, the position that form (in general) resides in the self is not a viable one. For a summary of these arguments see Padmakara Translation Group, *Nagarjuna's Letter to a Friend with Commentary by Kangyur Rinpoche*, 112f.
26. *Suḥrlekkha* 49.
27. This commentary by Mahāmātī is entitled *Clear Words: Extensive Commentary on the Letter to a Friend (Vyaktapadāsuḥrlekkhaṭīkā)*.
28. *Prajñāpāramitāsamcayagāthā* 2a4.
29. *sngags*.
30. This meaning is derived by separating the word *mantra* into its two syllable components: *man* and *tra*. From the root *man* is derived the word *manas*, meaning “mind” (this relation is also reflected in the English word itself), and the suffix *-tra* is related to the root *trai*, which means “to protect.”
31. The syllable OM does not appear in the sūtra preserved in the Derge Kangyur, but it is included in other recensions of the text. For more details, refer to the introduction to the *Heart Sūtra* on the 84000 website.
32. The term “path of learning” generally refers to the first four of the five paths (i.e., the paths of accumulation, joining, seeing, and cultivation). The “path of learning free from clinging to attributes” indicates the fourth path, the path of cultivation (*sgom lam*). After seeing emptiness directly for the first time in the previous stage (i.e., path of seeing), this path consists of deepening the realization by cultivating in meditation the newly gained insight and of gathering powerful merit dedicated to the attainment of buddhahood. In this way, one gradually removes the cognitive veils, which are experienced as clinging to attributes, thereby attaining increasingly higher levels of realization (i.e., the second to the tenth bodhisattva grounds).
33. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* XVI.3.311.
34. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9.1ab. See Padmakara Translation Group, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*.
35. While this title commonly refers to *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines*, in this case it refers to *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines*.
36. *Āryaṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* 64.26.
37. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* XV.3.301.
38. *Prajñāpāramitāsamcayagāthā* 2a2–3.
39. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 5.7c–8b.

40. The modes of engagement and disengagement related to saṃsāra and nirvāṇa describe the process of entanglement in suffering and dissatisfaction on one side and the process of liberation on the other side. These are detailed in the teaching on the twelve links of dependent arising. The process of engagement begins with the first link of ignorance, which conditions karmic formations and so forth, ultimately bringing about the twelfth link of aging and death. The process of disengagement begins with the cessation of ignorance, which ultimately brings about the cessation of aging and death, that is, nirvāṇa.
41. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* XXVII.2.448.
42. *Śikṣāsamuccayakārikā* 21cd, 149b5: *stong pa snying rje'i snying po can/ spyod pas bsod nams dag par 'gyur//*. See Goodman, *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva*, 257.

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GLOSSARY

absence of aims

སྟོན་པ་མེད་པ། • *smon pa med pa* • apraṇihita

One of the three gates of liberation. The absence of conceptual elaborations based on the realization of the ultimate nonexistence of the goal of the path.

absence of attributes

མཚན་མ་མེད་པ། • *mtshan ma med pa* • animitta

One of the three gates of liberation. The absence of conceptual elaborations based on the realization of the ultimate nonexistence of the attributes of phenomena.

affliction

ཉོན་མོངས་པ། • *nyon mongs pa* • kleśa

The mental factors that make the mind unpeaceful, distort perception, and are responsible for inciting unwholesome actions.

Ajātaśatru

མ་རྒྱལ་དབང་པོ། • *ma skyes dgra* • Ajātaśatru

The king of Magadha and son of king Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru ruled during the last ten years of the Buddha's life and about twenty years after. After overthrowing his father and invading other areas to expand the kingdom, he later felt guilt and regret, converted to Buddhism, and supported the Buddha and the community.

arhat

དག་བཅོམ་པ། • *dgra bcom pa* • arhat

A person who has achieved liberation from saṃsāra by eliminating mental afflictions from their mind stream. The highest achievement on the śrāvaka path of individual liberation.

attribute

མཚན་མ། • *mtshan ma* • nimitta

The characteristic of an object of perception. Perception is defined as the apprehending of the attributes of the object. It is the basis for conceptual elaboration and the arising of mental afflictions.

Avalokiteśvara

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས། • *spyān ras gzigs* • Avalokiteśvara

A bodhisattva on the tenth bhūmi, who is the embodiment of the compassion of the buddhas.

awareness

རིག་པ། • *rig pa* • vidyā

In the Dzogchen system, the most subtle and fundamental level of cognition, unstained by mental afflictions and cognitive obscurations. In a more general sense, this term can also mean knowledge or field of knowledge.

basic space

དབྱིངས། • *dbyings* • dhātu

The fundamental, ultimate dimension of the mind.

Bhagavān

བཙུན་ལྷན་འདས། • *bcom ldan 'das* • bhagavān

Epithet of the Buddha. In Tibetan, each syllable of the term carries a distinct meaning: “to defeat,” “to be endowed with,” and “to transcend.” It indicates the defeat of all obstructing forces, the possession of excellent qualities, and the transcendence of all states that are inferior to perfect awakening.

bhūmi

ས། • *sa* • bhūmi

Stage of attainment on the Mahāyāna path. According to the vehicle of the perfections, there are eleven bhūmis, beginning with the attainment of liberation from saṃsāra and leading up to the attainment of buddhahood. In the context of the vehicle of secret mantra, thirteen bhūmis are taught.

bodhicitta

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས། • *byang chub kyi sems* • bodhicitta

Literally, “mind of awakening.” The resolve to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all beings and to accomplish its causes.

bodhisattva

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ། • *byang chub sems dpa'* • bodhisattva

An individual who has generated the resolve to attain the state of complete buddhahood for the sake of other beings and traverses the stages of the bodhisattva path.

dharmakāya

ཆོས་སྤྱུ་ • *chos sku* • dharmakāya

Literally, “dharma body.” The wisdom mind of a buddha and as such the dimension of complete awakening that is not perceptible by others. The dharmakāya is endowed with twofold purity: the natural purity of the mind and the purity resulting from the removal of the two obscurations.

dharmatā

ཆོས་ཉིད། • *chos nyid* • dharmatā

The ultimate nature of phenomena.

dhātu

དབྱིངས། • *dbyings* • dhātu

Expanse or space, often short for *dharmadhātu* (*chos kyi dbyings*), the basic space of phenomena, synonymous with suchness or emptiness. The Sanskrit term *dhātu* is rendered in Tibetan as *dbyings* (“expanse, space, source, root”) or *kham*s (“element, constituent part, ingredient”), depending on the context.

elaboration

སྒྲུབ་པ། • *spros pa* • prapañca

The process of discursive or conceptual activity.

elimination and realization

སྒངས་རྟོགས། • *spangs rtogs*

The two qualities achieved through the path: the elimination of obscurations and the realization of wisdom.

emptiness

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད། • *stong pa nyid* • śūnyatā

Ultimate reality, the lack of inherent existence. As one of the three gates of liberation, emptiness refers to the absence of conceptual elaborations based on the realization of the ultimate nonexistence of phenomena.

expressive power

རྩལ། • *rtsal*

A term associated in particular with the Dzogchen tradition, indicating the mind’s natural, unlimited potential of expression.

five aggregates

ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ། • *phung po lnga* • pañcaskandha

The five groups of psychophysical phenomena, making up the entirety of human experience. The five are form (*rūpa*; *gzugs*), feeling (*vedanā*; *tshor ba*), perception (*saṃjñā*; *’du shes*), formative factors (*saṃskāra*; *’du byed*), and consciousness (*vijñāna*; *rnam shes*).

five paths of skillful means

ཐབས་ཀྱི་ལམ་ལྔ་པ། • *thabs kyi lam lnga po*

The first five perfections of generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, and concentration.

formative factor

འདུ་བྱེད། • *’du byed* • saṃskāra

One of the five aggregates. Formative factors are mental events that condition perception and thus function as the basis for the accumulation of karma.

four characteristics

མཚན་ཉིད་བཞི། • *mtshan nyid bzhi*

In the context of the *Heart Sūtra*, the four characteristics are expressed in four statements: “form is empty,” “emptiness is form,” “emptiness is not other than form,” and “form is also not other than emptiness.” These four characteristics are applied to each of the five aggregates to develop the right view, free of eternalistic and nihilistic beliefs, integrating the union of the two realities.

four distorted views

ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལྔ་ག་བཞི། • *phyin ci log bzhi*

The body being the self or the self having a body, and the self being based on the body or the body on the self. In a more general context, an alternative list of four distorted views consists of seeing what is impure as pure, what is devoid of self as self, what is suffering as happiness, and what is impermanent as permanent.

Ganges River

གཙུག་གི་རྒྱུ་གླིང་། • *gang+gA* • *gaṅgā*

A great river running from the Himalayas through the Gangetic plain of North India into the Bay of Bengal, the Ganges is revered as the most sacred body of water in India.

hidden dimension

གསང་བ། • *gsang ba*

Literally, “secret.” This can refer to ultimate reality, which lies beyond the scope of ordinary beings.

innate ignorance

ལྷན་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་མ་རིག་པ། • *lhan skyes kyi ma rig pa* • *sahajāvidyā*

The instinctive sense of self that accompanies the mind stream of a being from life to life. It is contrasted with conceptually acquired ignorance (*parikalpitāvidyā*; *kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*), which denotes the wrong views newly acquired in each life on the basis of prevalent world views and so forth.

kāya

སྐུ། • *sku* • *kāya*

A buddha's awakening has two dimensions or levels of manifestation, called *kāyas* (literally, “bodies”). These are the dharmakāya or dharma body (*chos sku*), which is a buddha's wisdom mind, not perceptible to beings, and the rūpakāya or form body (*gzugs sku*), which comprises the forms manifested in order to benefit beings. The form body has two levels of manifestation: the saṃbhogakāya or body of enjoyment (*longs sku*), including forms perceptible only to highly realized bodhisattvas, and the nirmāpakāya or emanation body (*sprul sku*), including manifestations visible to ordinary beings. Sometimes a fourth kāya is added: the svabhāvikakāya or essence body (*ngo bo nyid kyi sku*), which refers to the inseparability of the three kāyas.

King of Samādhi Sūtra

ཉིང་འཛིན་རྒྱལ་པོ། • *ting 'dzin rgyal po* • *Samādhirājasūtra*

An important Mahāyāna sūtra, classified as belonging to the third turning of the Dharma wheel.

Letter to a Friend

བཤེས་པའི་སྤྱིང་ཡིག། • *bsbes pa'i spring yig* • *Suḥrillekha*

An important work of spiritual advice by Nāgārjuna.

limbs of the path of the noble ones

འཕགས་པའི་ཡན་ལག། • *'phags pa'i yan lag*

A synonym for the eightfold path of the noble ones: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Explanations of these limbs differ according to the various vehicles.

Mahāmāti

མོ་གྲོས་ཆེན་པོ། • *blo gros chen po* • mahāmāti

Name of an Indian master, the author of the *Vyaktapadāsuḥrillekhaṭikā* (Toh. 4190), as well as of a bodhisattva, one of the main interlocutors in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (Toh. 107).

Mañjuśrīghoṣa

འཇམ་དཔལ་དབྱངས། • *'jam dpal dbyangs* • Mañjuśrīghoṣa

A bodhisattva on the tenth bhūmi, who is the embodiment of the wisdom of the buddhas.

mantra

སྒྲགས། • *sngags* • mantra

A verbal formula composed of syllables that may or may not have semantic meaning. The recitation and contemplation of a mantra is meant to protect the mind and facilitate the attainment of diverse accomplishments.

māra

བདུད། • *bdud* • māra

Obstructive forces, as epitomized by the tempters of Śākyamuni Buddha prior to his awakening.

Middle-Length Prajñāpāramitā

ཡུམ་བར་མ། • *yum bar ma*

Usually this name is used for *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines*, but it can also refer to *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines*.

Nāgārjuna

ཁྲ་སྒུབ། • *klu sgrub* • Nāgārjuna

Ārya Nāgārjuna (fl. ca. second to third century CE) was an Indian master and founder of the Madhyamaka school.

name and form

མིང་དང་གཟུགས། • *ming dang gzugs* • nāmarūpa

The fourth of the twelve links of dependent arising. “Name” stands for the four mental aggregates (sensation, perception, formative factors, and consciousness) and “form” for the aggregate of form.

no more learning

མི་སྒྲོབ་པ། • *mi slob pa* • aśaikṣā

The last of the five paths to awakening. In Mahāyāna, the level of no more learning is the point at which one is free of all obscurations and attains perfect buddhahood.

noble one

འཕགས་པ། • *'phags pa* • ārya

Those who have attained direct cognition of reality through the path of seeing. A noble one of the Śrāvakayāna has gained direct cognition of the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths. A noble one of the Mahāyāna has directly perceived emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena.

Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras

བེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ་སྡེའི་རྒྱུ། • *theg pa chen po'i mdo sde'i rgyan* • *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*

One of the five treatises of Maitreya, the future buddha.

outflow

ཟག་པ། • *zag pa* • asrava, āsrava, āśrava

A technical term for mental defilements, which are said to flow from the unskillful mind toward the objects of saṃsāra.

path of accumulation

ཚོགས་ལམ། • *tsbogs lam* • saṃbhāramārga

The first of the five stages of the path to awakening, attained upon generating bodhicitta out of great compassion for sentient beings. The practice at this stage consists of gathering the accumulations of merit by means of altruistically motivated deeds, and of wisdom, mainly based on study and contemplation.

path of joining

སྟོན་ལམ། • *sbyor lam* • prayogamārga

The second of the five stages of the path to awakening, also known as the “path of application.” At this stage one mainly engages in meditation on emptiness based on the understanding gained on the previous stage. This path is divided into four levels, which represent increasingly higher levels of realization: heat (one starts to feel the “heat” of the “fire of emptiness,” which burns away all afflictions); peak (the realization reaches a new summit, on which the roots of goodness become indestructible); forbearance (one is able to fearlessly accept the reality of emptiness); and supreme dharma (the last phase of worldly existence, immediately preceding the direct realization of emptiness). This path is called the “path of joining” because it functions as a link, bringing the mind to the realization of emptiness.

path of no more learning

མི་སྒྲོབ་ལམ། • *mi slob lam* • aśaikṣamārga

The fifth and last of the five stages of the path to awakening. Having completely eliminated both veils, one attains the stage of buddhahood, consisting of the three kāyas of perfect awakening.

path of seeing

མཐོང་ལམ། • *mtshong lam* • darśanamārga

The third of the five stages of the path to awakening. This path consists of the direct, nonconceptual realization of emptiness. At this stage, the veil of afflictions is eliminated and one reaches the first bodhisattva bhūmi, thus becoming an ārya being.

Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines

བརྒྱད་ཚྭ་། བརྒྱད་ཚྭ་པ། ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ་བརྒྱད་ཚྭ་པ། • *brgyad stong, brgyad stong pa, shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa* • *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*
A central Mahāyāna sūtra expounding the doctrine of emptiness.

phase of post-meditation

རྗེས་ཐོབ། • *rjes thob* • prṣṭhalabdha

Literally, “subsequent attainment.” The phase of practice after meditative absorption, when the meditative experience is integrated and understood, gives rise to the attainment of certain qualities.

Prajñāpāramitā

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ། • *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa* • prajñāpāramitā

The sixth of the six perfections cultivated on the bodhisattva path. This wisdom is the determining factor to transform the other five qualities of generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, and concentration into liberating factors.

pratyekabuddha

རང་སངས་བྱུང་། • *rang sangs rgyas* • pratyekabuddha

An individual on the Hīnayāna path of individual liberation who practices the Dharma during periods when no teachings of a buddha are available. Pratyekabuddhas practice in solitude without relying on a teacher and become realized through their insight into the principle of dependent arising.

primordial perspective

དགོངས་པ། • *dgongs pa*

An honorific for mind or intention, which can also refer to the primordially liberated, ultimate dimension of the mind.

pristine wisdom

ཡེ་ཤེས། • *ye shes* • jñāna

Generally, the nonconceptual wisdom of an awakened being. Depending on the context, however, the term can have a wide range of meanings, from the luminous awareness primordially present in the mind stream of all beings, to specific kinds of wisdom of the path, to the resultant, nonconceptual wisdom of a buddha.

samādhi

ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན། • *ting nge 'dzin* • samādhi

Meditative concentration.

Śāriputra

ཤ་རི་བུ། • *sha ri'i bu* • Śāriputra

One of the chief disciples of the Buddha renowned for his profound wisdom, Śāriputra is one of the main interlocutors in the sūtras on the perfection of wisdom.

second turning of the Dharma wheel

འཁོར་ལོ་བར་པ། • *'khor lo bar pa* • madhyacakra

The second of the three general classes of teachings given by the Buddha according to the Mahāyāna tradition. Intended for the followers of the bodhisattva path, the focus of these teachings is the lack of inherent existence, or emptiness.

six sense bases

སྒྱེ་མཆེད་བླ་གྲག་ • *skye mched drug*

The sense faculties of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

śrāvaka

ཉན་ཐོས། • *nyan thos* • śrāvaka

A disciple of the Buddha who follows the path of individual liberation.

Subhūti

རབ་འབྱོར། • *rab 'byor* • Subhūti

One of the chief disciples of the Buddha and interlocutors in the sūtras on the perfection of wisdom.

sugata

བདེ་གཤེགས། • *bde gshegs* • sugata

Epithet for a buddha. Literally, “gone to happiness” or “well gone.”

tathāgata

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ། • *de bzhin gshegs pa* • tathāgata

Epithet for a buddha. Literally, “gone to suchness” or “thus gone.”

The Ten Bhūmis

མདོ་སྡེ་ས་བརྒྱ་པ། • *mdo sde sa bcu pa* • *Daśabhūmikasūtra*

An important Mahāyāna sūtra that describes the ten stages of the bodhisattva path.

three excellences

དམ་པ་གསུམ། • *dam pa gsum*

The excellent preparation of bodhicitta, the excellent main practice free of conceptualization, and the excellent conclusion of dedication.

three gates of liberation

རྣམ་ཐར་སྒོ་གསུམ། • *rnam thar sgo gsum* • trivimokṣadvāra

Emptiness, absence of attributes, and absence of aims, relating to view, meditation, and fruition, respectively.

three hundred sixty erroneous notions

ལུས་བརྒྱ་དྲུག་ཅུ་འདོད་པའི་ལོག་རྟོག་ * *sum brgya drug cu 'dod pa'i log rtog*

This enumeration is based on the Buddha's teaching that there were three hundred sixty religions and belief systems in the world, which fell into the extremes of either eternalism or nihilism.

three spheres

འཁོར་གསུམ། * *'khor gsum*

The three elements involved in ordinary activity based on conceptual thought: subject, object, and action.

three times

དུས་གསུམ། * *dus gsum* * trikāla

Past, present, and future.

three types of sensation

ཚོར་བ་རྣམ་པ་གསུམ། * *tshor ba rnam pa gsum*

Pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensations, each of which may be experienced on the basis of any of the six sense faculties.

three yogas

རྣལ་འབྱོར་གསུམ། * *rnal 'byor gsum*

The yoga with appearances, the yoga without appearances, and the yoga of union of appearance and emptiness.

tīkā

ཏི་ཀ་ * *tī ka* * tīkā

A commentary on another commentary in the Buddhist tradition.

truth of the path

ལམ་གྱི་བདེན་པ། * *lam gyi bden pa* * mārgasatya

This is the fourth noble truth, which is subsumed into the three categories of discipline, samādhi, and wisdom. It is commonly presented in terms of the eightfold path.

twenty mountain-like views of identity based on the transitory collection

འཇིག་ཚོགས་ལ་ལྟ་བའི་རི་བོ་ཉི་ཤུ། * *'jig tshogs la lta ba'i ri bo nyi shu*

This enumeration is based on four mistaken views being correlated with each of the five aggregates. Based on the aggregate of form, these are: form being the self, the self possessing form, the self residing in form, and form residing in the self.

Vajragarbha

ནེ་རྩི་སྤྱིང་པ། * *rdo rje snying po* * Vajragarbha

This bodhisattva taught the teachings on the *Daśabhūmika*.

Verses Summarizing the Perfection of Wisdom

སྤུད་པ། * *sdud pa* * *Prajñāpāramitāsaṃcayagāthā*

A sūtra on the perfection of wisdom composed in verse.

Vulture Peak

བྱ་གྲོན་ཕུང་པོ་རི། • *bya rgod phung po'i ri* • grdhrakūṭapārvata

Literally, “Flock of Vultures Peak.” Located near Rājagṛha, the ancient capital of the Magadha kingdom, it is an important pilgrimage site today.