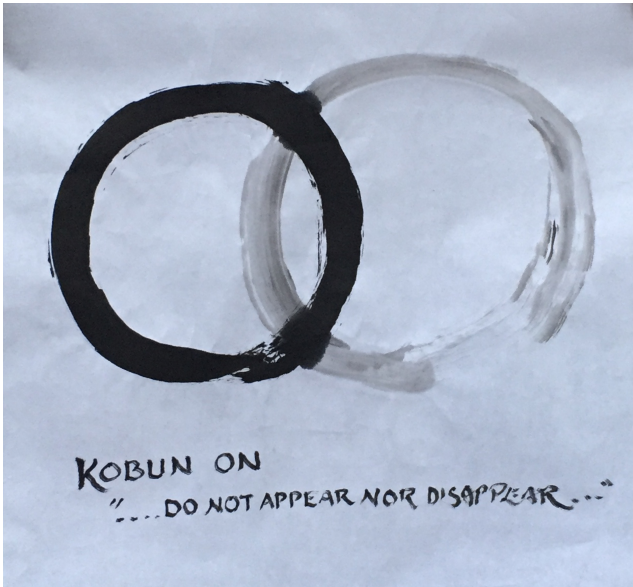


Kobun's talks



on the

Heart Sutra

KOBUN CHINO OTOGAWA

KOBUN'S TALKS ON THE
HEART SUTRA

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Editor's Note

In the early 70's Kobun taught a class on Monday mornings, at various people's houses, where he talked about three important Buddhist sutras. Perhaps the most well-known of these is the Heart Sutra. Angie Boissevain wrote down Kobun's discussions, at first from listening to his slow speaking, and later from tape recordings. The version of the sutra which Kobun introduced at Haiku Zendo is included here. Sanskrit words are explained. When somewhat unfamiliar Japanese terms and Sanskrit words are included in the discussion, these are presented in quotes or italics. Two very personal stories from Kobun's life are also included, in the belief that they help us put these teachings into practice in our own personal lives.

Judy Cosgrove

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The Heart Sutra

THE MAHA PRAJNA PARAMITA HRIDAYA SUTRA

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva

When practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita
Perceived that all five skandhas are empty
And was saved from all suff'ring and distress.

Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness;
Emptiness does not differ from form.
That which is form is emptiness;
That which is emptiness is form.
The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses,
consciousness.

Shariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness;
They do not appear nor disappear,
Are not tainted nor pure,
Do not increase nor decrease.

Therefore in emptiness, no form,
No feelings, perceptions impulses, consciousness;
No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;
No color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch,

no object of mind;
No realm of eyes and so forth until no realm of
mind-consciousness;
No ignorance and also no extinction of it,
and so forth until no-old-age-and-death
and also no extinction of them;
No suff'ring, no origination, no stopping, no path;
No cognition, also no attainment.
With nothing to attain
The Bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita
And his mind is no hindrance.
Without any hindrance no fears exist;
Far apart from every perverted view he dwells in Nirvana.

In the three worlds all Buddhas depend on Prajna Paramita
And attain Anuttara-samyaksambodhi.
Therefore know the Prajna Paramita
Is the great transcendent mantra,
Is the great bright mantra,
Is the utmost mantra,
Is the supreme mantra,
Which is able to relieve all suff'ring
And is true, not false.
So proclaim the Prajna Paramita mantra,
Proclaim the mantra that says:
''Gate - gate - paragate - parasamgate ! Bodhi ! Svaha ! ''

Introduction to Heart Sutra

The Heart Sutra is one of the most representative and basic Buddhist texts. Yet, when you compare this sutra with other religious materials, you find very different characteristics, different feelings. Unfortunately, none of the English translations is very satisfactory, but basically we understand all the translations, in their choice of words and style, as a somewhat slight interpretation by each translator. The original authors of sutras, we cannot find, although translators' names appear. With literal translation and literal word order in the translation, it would be impossible to make a readable text, so it is not word-by-word translating. Each translator has made great effort to make it meaningful, as is true with all kinds of religious materials. They cannot be read like novels or magazine articles, because, without exception, in the beginning you don't understand them.

Somehow, the nature of a sutra is like a mirror. It is empty, actually, and whoever reads it sees a mirror of their own figure, so the mirror is one of the best metaphors to explain the nature of a sutra. Consciously or unconsciously, the action of reading a sutra contains the courageous mind to face to yourself. When you pick up the sutra there is already a strong inner need to see yourself. It doesn't have the sense

of seeking enjoyment, though maybe in a deeper sense there is enjoyment. A sincere interest in your own reality, a clear eye to see your world, is necessary. You think, "If I have made a mistake, I won't ignore it," or if I see goodness, I can say to myself, "I am good." You see these things without judgement, allowing them to be as they are, keeping a strict attitude. There has to be some kind of tension in the author and in the reader. If the sutra is not written with this attitude, you cannot stand to continue to read, because the tension of the reader and the tension of the author has to come together. If the author wrote each word with a tear, the reader really sees that tear in reading the words. If the author writes with cigarette in hand, the reader discovers it. This is how we face the sutra.

Between the sutra and ourselves, we cannot tell which is new, which is old. Hopefully, we are the same age. If it was written ten centuries ago, you don't face it as old stuff. You don't read it as a twentieth century person. You have to go beyond that sense of old and new. This is a point to test whether you can really meet with yourself and whether you can open to meeting with ancient people. So if you understand the sutra as the footsteps of old people, it is the sound of your footstep, too. In Chinese and Japanese, "old" points to long, long life, throughout many criticisms and many disastrous occasions. This "oldness" has the same feeling as "old friend." Even if you are twenty years old, you say, "This is my old friend." It has the feeling that this man is closer to me than I am to myself. An old mirror is like that. Instead of writing a new sutra, your own sutra, you read the old sutra. You read it as your sutra. You chant it as your sutra. For this reason the old manuscript doesn't have a name. It can be anyone's when someone is ready to make it their own.

The sutra was written by blood, so if you really see what

was written, it is the same as your body. It is not a matter of believing what they are talking about, it's a matter of making it yours, finding yourself in it. Many novels have a similar nature, because some authors avow their whole life in their novel. Even though the people are fictitious, each person in the novel is part of the author's body and mind. Sutras have a similar nature. When you read them, you really see how the authors lived, how they saw things.

This Heart Sutra is very short, and is strange in that the whole sutra is one little dream of the Buddha. There is no mention of Shakyamuni Buddha. In another original Sanskrit text, in Tibetan translation, there is a different set-up: Shakyamuni Buddha meditated, and in his meditation this *Avalokiteshvara* and Shariputra appear and speak to each other. *Avalokiteshvara* is teaching something to Shariputra, and at the end of this sutra Shakyamuni Buddha says, "*Avalokiteshvara*, you did a good job. Wisdom is spoken in this way." Since the Buddha was usually meditating, our text omits that part, and begins with *Avalokiteshvara* having a conversation with Shariputra. Strangely, *Avalokiteshvara* is a bodhisattva, and Shariputra is an actual historical figure, the most intelligent, intellectual disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha. *Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva* is beyond a historical figure - this "beyond" also means "beneath, below, within" a living person.

On Chanting

If no one listens to it, the sutra goes alone. Even if someone is not interested in knowing the truth, and even if they do not know what is truth, where is truth, how truth is, truth is always with them, even when they do not pay any attention to it. This sutra is the sound of truth, so unless you are ready to listen to it, the sutra is not understood.

The voice is very important when we chant because the sound of our voice is the sound of our mind. So when you hear the voice of sutra chanting, you understand what kind of mind makes this sound. The important thing is that chanting is not for showing it to others, it is just the doing and expressing of your momentary life. Each word basically has no meaning but what is expressed is your whole life in each word and sound. Sutra chanting is the full expression of samadhi - the samadhi of sutra chanting!

Many times, instead of making various sounds, you make just one sound, and lengthen it for a couple of minutes. It goes high and low, strong and weak. You are familiar with the practice of repeating a mantram, one form of sutra. The word, the sound, "mu," has the same nature as a mantram. And our breath, the sound of breathing which you hear

sometimes, is also a sutra. Then there is the soundless sound of all existence, completely telling us what truth is.

In the *Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra*, *hridaya* is “shingyo” in Japanese. “Shin” means “mind, heart, essence, soul.”

When we chant the sutra, we make a voice from everywhere, from the very center of our body it appears. No one needs to hear our chanting. It is like the wind, everywhere. The very important thing is to listen to it without clinging to the words. Its original message is beyond sound. When we chant, we make the sutra alive, make all the words alive. It is like comparing a scenario with the actual drama, a musical note with the actual performance. We try to play music depending on the notes, to perform a drama depending on the scenario, to cook food depending on the recipe. These are efforts to approach the original form, where the original experience exists. To share this original experience of pleasure, or joy, is the purpose.

We often try to understand what is the meaning of the sutra, what the sutra is teaching us, to interpret what the sound means, how the sounds are asking us to understand their meaning. When we study the sutra we very often forget the space which holds the characters, so naturally, in communicating with each word, we completely lose ourselves in each character of the sutra and the sutra becomes a dictionary.

Instead, we can see the space between the characters as an opportunity to complete the situation. So when I begin to chant this sutra, the air and each of you are part of that space. And then you begin to chant. A little sound becomes a very big sound. It's like thunder! We don't know how many beings have understood this sutra, because it has a very strange, difficult arrangement of words. Naturally, at first,

our intellect sticks to the strangeness, but after one thousand times of chanting, the natural habit of trying to understand words disappears or goes to sleep. Each word of the sutra is ordinary, but the order and the musical arrangement of the words have become very well polished by many voices. Thus each of your voices becomes a very, very important element of the sutra. Each person becomes a very fine musical instrument. No effort is needed. Maybe the key to understanding this is to think about when you have a bad stomach ache, you might begin to moan. You do not make an effort to make a nice moan! It just happens. So when I hear good chanting, I forget the man who is chanting, because sounds appear from everywhere. One monk from Japan chanted very well. When he stood up his voice came from his mouth, but I felt his voice came from his toe!

This is a sutra of joy! When people are very joyful, their joy has sound. It's in the way words of this sutra appear for a dying person's family; for relatives and friends these words appear as the words of a will. Even if you chant this sutra in a funeral ceremony, there is very peaceful satisfaction, even after the person's death. It is in the sound. Waves of the ocean have sound, storm-like sound, and also calm waves have sound, too. When you pay deep attention, sunshine has sound, moonlight has sound. The emphasis in this sutra is naturally on the sound of words. So for us what is important is to feel that the words of this sutra were given only for us. If I breathe, this sutra is for me. How we inhale it and exhale it is very important. When you chant the sutra alone, it is important where your voice comes from.

The *Hridaya* is part of the *Maha Prajna Paramita Sutra*, which is six hundred volumes! When you go to a Japanese temple there are big boxes right behind Buddha's shrine. Every New Year, all the monks in the temple come to the main hall and

let this sutra appear in the air. They open it. They just flip the pages. . . . It smells like a very old library. It was my job to set out the boxes and as I went through the 600 volumes, checking the order, I would see the same character, in the next volume, and the next volume, and when I looked at the meaning, it would be explained in a different way in each volume. It was like the tide of the ocean, the same kind of question, over and over, just like in daily life. So these 600 volumes are expressing our daily life, still going on and on.

There are many sutras, but this *Hridaya* has probably been chanted most often. Through the ages there have been various translations and when each translation appears, there appears the original sutra! There is a story about a Chinese man who translated this sutra in the middle of a battle! So when a living man, a soldier, began to tell that there was something in this hard, terrible life, something beneath it, he began to relate to this sutra. And maybe in translating this sutra, he began to feel the living sutra in his life. The sutra was later found in the early 19th Century, in the cave along the Silk Road, called Tun-huang.

The First Lines

As I have said, The *Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya* is within the Buddha's meditation. *Avalokiteshvara* and Shariputra are the major personal figures, and it looks like *Avalokiteshvara* is talking to Shariputra, but actually it is Buddha who meditated and as his words this sutra appears.

The bodhisattva, *Avalokiteshvara*, is most familiar to you. It can be seen as the personality or nature of a person, a representative characteristic of each person. It is the basic nature of a living thing, both man and woman, wisdom and compassion, because when compassion and wisdom take form they appear as one being. *Avalokiteshvara's* nature is wisdom and his form is compassion. He is made of wisdom, but how he exists in the world, his action as seen by people, is as a compassionate figure. Everyone has the nature of *Avalokiteshvara*, and it appears by action, by expression and by form. Without action, without form, it doesn't exist. When a young boy becomes a grown man and has his own boy, that is the birth of a father, and his fatherhood is in the nature of *Avalokiteshvara*. It is the same for a mother. So in each stage of life there is advance of *Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva*. *Avalokiteshvara* can appear in many forms - the voice of a bird, or beach sounds. A piece of bread, that is *Avalokiteshvara*, too. Maybe

we can understand this name as a question, "What is this?" and not understand it as just one particular figure.

Shariputra is a representative figure of wisdom in Buddhism, and this sutra is a great effort to go beyond the Hinayanistic way of practice to a more universal, higher, mystic way of practice. When you get into this sutra, theoretical expressions which existed from Shakyamuni Buddha to the end of the Hinayanistic material, are well-studied and well-ordered in this sutra. It is not just theorizing, but a dynamic expression, with new understanding which is new and also old. If the historical Buddha appeared, he would say, "This is what I spoke." Many Hinayanistic Buddhist scholars say, "This is radical; we don't say it this way." And some of them say, "This is very nice."

Satva means "man" or "existence." *Bodhi* means "awakened," or "to awake." So "bodhisattva" usually means "awakened being," or "wise man."

We do not know what this *Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva* is, except that we know it is not different from us, but we also do not know who we are, so we ask, "Who am I?" But if we put the emphasis on "knowing," since thinking and knowing are just two of the many functions of our being, "knowing" is already limited. It is just one understanding of how we are. To feel it with your whole body is very important, because feeling comes first, before you begin to know. "I do not know" is the expression of a living, feeling thing where something is going on, keeping a great opening. It is not a negative expression, because something is going on.

Thinking is not for yourself, but for others, to let them exist for you, let you exist for them. Thinking always needs a symbol, like language, which is nothing but a way of commu-

nicating with other existences and your own ideas. You have to exist, in order to let all of your surroundings know where you are! So thinking is a very fine function of discrimination, the same as arranging furniture in a room. But when we chant "When practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita. . ." we are talking about "wisdom." It is intuitive and instantaneous, not logical, rather a quick inspiration of an understanding of things. This is deep, profound understanding. In Sanskrit it is *jin jin gambhirayam prajnaparamitayam*. *Gambhiraya* refers to deep, broad, penetrating knowledge. *Jin jin* means "awareness." *Gambhiraya* has a very misty, not just clear, awareness, which goes very far. The moon is not misty when you see it clearly, but when a cloud comes, it becomes very misty. That is this feeling of *gambhiraya*. In many senses, it is a sense of confusion, a sense of suffering, and yet, a clear understanding of the confusion and suffering. This is not just an explanation of existence, it is direct reality, which is somehow perfect, containing the many, many things which are the contents of life. These are the very contents of practice. *Gambhiraya* expresses awareness of our being among all. It's like all beings are your mirror, so whatever you confront is a mirror of you, and you see one thousand million forms of yourself at the same time, reflecting you in that misty way. You reflect all of them within you, not the same as you, but as different beings. This is expressed in *gambhiraya*. To "deeply practice" *prajna paramita* is to feel this reality of one existence and all existences.

What is expressed in this sutra is a very daily thing, but not an ordinary thing. "Maha Prajna Paramita" is "great, complete wisdom." *Maha* means "no exception, complete." Right inside your skin this *prajna* fully exists. So the first thing is, we have to prepare to feel this sutra, not use our brain to understand it. I think our study of this sutra will be one expression of what we are experiencing in everyday life.

The more we see the nature of everyday life, these words will be understood.

We have the five *skandhas* explained in this sutra: Form, feeling or sensation, perception, impulses, consciousness. They are elements of human existence, explained differently from present-day psychology. At the very beginning of the sutra are these words: "All five skandhas are empty." Later the five senses are listed: "eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body," plus "mind," which is the aggregate of the senses. These five skandas are the vehicle of enlightenment. Or they can be expressed as mind and body. "Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness. . ." is a more detailed explanation of "All five skandas are empty."

“...form does not differ from emptiness”

Form is emptiness. This is our wisdom. But when you say, “Emptiness is form,” it is an expression of our compassion. This is practical, living logic. It may seem like wisdom and compassion occur at different times, but wisdom is the process of returning to compassion. They happen at the same time, so this sutra is called the “Wisdom Sutra.”

“Form does not differ from emptiness. . .” is a paradox in an ontological, metaphysical way, but in an epistemological sense it is about the relativity of existence. For example, I can be a husband because my wife exists. Without a wife, to be a husband is an impossible thing, and without children I cannot be called a father. If I drop the idea of wife, the existence of a woman who is not separate from me, then I can say there is no husband. But that doesn't say this man doesn't exist.

“Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. That which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness is form. . . the same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness. . .” The very analytical way of expression in this sutra lists “form”

and emptiness, "feelings" and emptiness, "perceptions" and emptiness, "impulses" and emptiness, "consciousness" and emptiness. It is not enough just to understand "form and emptiness." Also, "consciousness" does not differ from emptiness, and emptiness does not differ from "consciousness." There are many dynamics that open. This form and emptiness, feelings and emptiness, perceptions and emptiness, impulses and emptiness, consciousness and emptiness, we have to work on each possibility.

For instance, anger doesn't differ from emptiness, emptiness is anger. Anger, seen from emptiness, becomes wisdom. Same anger. Anger, as it is usually seen, is nothing. Or it can also be a way to express strong love. Our vow of not expressing anger is not to act in ways that cause anger of other people toward you. More deeply speaking, there is no such anger. It is a relative word, so when you express anger, anger drops from you. You are not anger, itself, so it drops from you and yet you feel the result of it. In another example, when we look at the character, "three," if it is just "three," no one can tell it is truly "three." If is "minus three" or "plus three" that "minus" or "plus" is how you express "three." Instead of saying "thank you" to whatever comes to you, when negative things happen you say, "damn it" instead of "thank you," but the same "three" can be expressing "minus" or "plus." If a difficult thing happens, very deep wisdom has to appear in you, and a very positive situation needs great effort, too. In a difficult situation there is pleasure if you perceive reality. This is how emptiness penetrates to everything.

Sometimes we see unfamiliar situations in society and feel anger, a very strong concern of what to do. Sometimes you can easily deal with them before you feel anger. Sometimes we have no power to solve a situation, but the situation is

asking us to deal with it. Those are feelings of separation. Anger is anger. It expresses how you are and how everything surrounding you is. But a very secret point is that there is no such separation in emptiness.

We say that forms in the phenomenal world have no substance. In other words, I exist, but “I” don’t exist. Everything exists, but there is not such a particular “I.” This is a very important point in understanding what emptiness means. And yet, the most important thing is that only when form exists is emptiness realized. It means that without form there is no way to realize that emptiness exists. Without form, there wouldn’t be emptiness. It’s not like a vacuum, or mere voidness.

Your individual body, the continuing experience of being an individual, remains a very, very important thing. Your physical body and how you live is the only chance you’ve got to express the truth. Our zazen becomes a very important thing when we come to this understanding. The body is very important, but sometimes you can feel it is a slow, heavy thing to take care of. If I want to feel heavy, at any time I can feel like a heavy stone, expanding my sensitivity and becoming very heavy, like a rock. Even the air feels painful. Fortunately, I usually don’t feel the air is either light or heavy. We are living in just exactly the right world! I used to put a lot of importance on the mental and spiritual element in zazen, but more recently I feel that exactly the same weight of importance is in my live body. If there is perfect awakening, it is not just for mind, it is for body, too. At that time, the body cannot be something slow or dull. The whole body is one intuition. It’s a very fast thing. You cannot catch it, or grab it.

For this reason, practice contains all. The practice time contains realization in it. If, realizing, you forget that you’re

practicing, you don't feel that you're striving. You feel this is a natural thing. As well as seeing and listening, which we call "mind," through various organs, the body is a very intuitive existence. To put this body and mind in some physically stable place and keep this position maybe 20 minutes, 40 minutes, three hours, when you keep it still, then a marvelous thing happens, you realize that is a very important posture. When you are moving, you perceive things which your mind cannot contain, but when your body stops, then you know how you can begin to accept things as they wish to be with you. When we are moving with others, unless we move with exactly the same speed, it is very difficult to know each other. So completely you offer your mind and body for the time of zazen, and let you be like that, and let things be as they go. What will happen is not promised!

“... all dharmas are marked with emptiness ...”

This word “emptiness” has a very profound feeling. If you visualize a deep ocean or calm lake which is very, very deep, you begin to feel it’s something more than scary.

In the words of the sutra, “Shariputra, all existences are marked with emptiness, all dharmas are marked with emptiness,” you have a very interesting thing when you hear this. Dharmas are existences and also teachings. In this sutra, “dharma” can be understood in both ways: Teaching and phenomenal existence. Writing the word, “Dharma” is

I feel a little sorry I cannot speak very well, today. I called Japan and found out my sister-in-law, elder brother’s wife, finally passed away. My elder brother said she went peacefully. She didn’t suffer. I have a good feeling about her, even though she is very young, one year younger than me, thirty-five years old. She was the best friend of my younger sister, from elementary school to university, so I was always with her, playing. She left two children. It’s kind of karma, I feel, clear karma is going on. It’s very strange. She didn’t feel any sadness. For the children it is a very big thing. But maybe it is a big gift to them, too, to die so early. Not existing for them as a mother leaves a huge empty space. For me, the very early death of my father was a huge gift. I still cannot measure how big it is. When I was

referring to the whole teaching in past Buddhist history. When I put the word "no" on each element of it, I am going to make Buddha's teaching appear again in the very original state. At the same time each of us understands all "dharma's" as phenomenal existences. I say "I", you also say "I". "I", "I", "I". These individual existences in the phenomenal world are marked with emptiness, too.

If we experience something, we say it exists. Whether it is truly so or not, we are not sure. When we are dreaming in very deep sleep, we have no sense of, "I am dreaming this." Everything is so real we do not doubt it until someone makes a sound and we wake up. Then we wonder, "Where am I?" waking up from the dream to so-called "reality." Yet

eight years old my father passed away, leaving a very cold sensation on my hand. That was the last sensation. Most of the time I felt a very smooth and warm feeling, but in the end he was colder than ice. I was massaging his toe when he passed away. Now, in wintertime I live with my father very closely. When I have a big difficulty, a dark, painful time, always he appears and carries me on. I cannot see him, but feel his force. My whole body is carried by his existence. . . . Very strong feeling, we knew she would go soon, it's not shocking. It's like seeing a candle burning completely, without leaving anything left over. That kind of feeling, I feel. . . . very peaceful feeling. I don't feel any emotion left over.

Karma is the law of life, you cannot miss it, so you follow your karma. This karmic force becomes the force of wisdom, too, complete expression of wisdom. . . . let me keep silence for a while. . . .

. . . Very interesting feeling is the two children, a little older than my two. Same as mine, a boy and a girl. . . . A while before she passed away, I had a strong feeling that I had to call Japan. She hadn't passed away at that time. My mother and her sister were helping her and my elder brother was at home. He told me, "Don't worry" but I didn't feel okay. Then "something" came and took my place, and I felt okay again. . . . When she died, unfortunately, they called many times but we weren't home. . . . finally the day before yesterday night. . . .

It seems the physical appearance of life, this body, I touch. . . . but the formless life which fills the space between people is more real. Like the appearance of this body is part of a big thing, and this inside which I also feel, consists of this big existence. At the same time, my external feeling is also my body. Like seeing a mountain

it's sad, if this "reality" feels fine to you, to realize it is a dream, and there is nothing to attach and nothing to be attached to. That's too sad. You think that if you could possess things forever, or be possessed forever, you could sleep peacefully without worrying or thinking. But it doesn't happen. Instead, because of many, many things going on, constant tension is needed to carry this dream on, to keep it from being misty or uncertain, or like a nightmare. And yet, in reality, we have many opportunities to wake up from this dream.

"...marked by emptiness" you do not stop existing. The word, "no" and the word, "emptiness" have a big power to free yourself from a stuck state. You cut the delusion from your existing. Like we

- it cannot be a separate body from myself. Moon and stars, sun, wind, rain, everything is your external body, so it is a natural thing to have complete communication between your existence and some part of the outer body of you.

Actually, she lived thirty-five years as a woman. That is one life she had, and I lived thirty-five years of her in me. That is also her life, too. I am thirty-six, a little older, and left by her death. I have some responsibility to fill this empty feeling, which will continue as the children's huge empty space. They will also have to fill it by themselves. So what will happen will be for them to live with the people who are left: My natural mother, her natural mother and father, all her relatives, and the continuous life of her in me. It is karma, of course. The same as our meeting together almost every week. It is not a different thing.

One night, the last time I visited in Japan, in the middle of the night I heard a strange cry, like a coyote, and low groaning. I thought, "What is that little animal-like sound?" It became familiar and I thought, "I have the same sound in me." I woke up in the middle of the night. The whole temple was very dark, and, half-asleep, I followed the sound. Soon I saw my sister-in-law holding the table in the bedroom. My elder brother was holding her shoulder. It is a very sorry feeling, strong feeling, of how people live with this pain growing. You feel shot by truth. No leftover emotion. No judgement. Just accept it. I asked my elder brother, "Can I do something?" and he said, "She is doing okay." I went back to my bedroom. My mother was still awake at that time, writing a letter. It's a strange feeling when someone in the family is very sick and many people hold it, living with the problem. Her doctor asked, "Why did she live so long?" He thought she would pass away last year

don't doubt this is our nose, these are our eyes, and all at once we begin to see the nose is a bump on our face. It is very true. We have nose, eyes, mouth, and skin, too. Everything we experience and how we transcend it in words is very true. At the same time it is not true at all from the very beginning to the very end. We don't need to say it this way. Maybe something sticking out like this nose is actually a "cave" if you say so! To say, "I can see" is completely a word of ignorance. Your eyes are not seeing anything, actually. By starting to see you begin to not see. That is how you discriminate. Perfect existence doesn't need to be seen, so to try to see is the beginning of separation. To say, "the eye's work is seeing," also shows awareness of the reason for separation. To deny it is

about this time, but she continued to live one more year. Sometimes she was very, very bright, like her whole body was light. Sometimes she was just a shadow, a moving shadow.

Length of life is very interesting. Some people live a very short time, some live a long time, and there is no way to say long life is good or short life is good. Some people sleep most of their life and do some amount of work for the world, and some live a very short time and do the same job for people. When I sit with you like this, each of you has a very different impression and vibration, a particular sensation. Often, when I'm alone, I have an image of you, I see you, and what happens is that I have a feeling before the image appears. I think, "Oh, she's appearing." Our mind is so fine, we can't understand it, but it can be very aware, very focused. Everything takes its own place and clearly shows what it is. In the "eko," after chanting, we say "...fulfillment of all relations." To actually fulfill all relations is your practice. It means you are fulfilled by all existence.

Moment after moment, you just live with hand very open, aware, appreciating... this is practice. Otherwise, you are living a complete life with no appreciation of it. People do very good things for you, you owe your whole life to them, but you don't feel it because it's so perfect. If wrong things happen, you feel them, but if everything is perfect, you think, "This is it," and do not say "Thank you." You do not appreciate it. So to be enlightened by all existences is nothing but to enlighten yourself, and enlighten them all at once. (Kobun is talking about his sister-in-law, who had metastasized breast cancer and participated in the trial of an experimental cancer drug, October 28, 1974.)

to bring you back to perfection, actually, constant perfection, without losing your eyes there or here. Perfection, and picking and choosing, work at the same time. This is how we, in our innocence, exist. You do zazen and you come back. You don't lose your body. Your nose is still a nose.

In Mahayana Buddhism, to study this Indian idea of emptiness is the main subject. It translates as “conditioned origination.” Looking at this bag (holding up a purse), I don't know what's in there, but by holding it like this, to feel emptiness means my concern penetrates into all helpers which brought this to me. You can imagine one hundred million hands which made this bag possible. Not only that, but this material is part of a cow. That portion of the cow, when it was alive, from which this part was made, somehow it is almost impossible to imagine. So it is not just the word “empty.” Maybe we should use “nonsubstantiality,” because of the innumerable conditions which made this possible. “No substantiality” doesn't mean just “no self” or “no existence.”

This “emptiness” is not just in this sutra. It is in a basic text of Nagarjuna. There is one famous gatha, number 18 gatha of 24th chapter. The English translation is:

What is originated by conditions That, I say, is identical with
Emptiness. It is also identical with derived name. It is
again the purport of the Middle Way.

One who perceives truly the *pratityasamutpada* (Sanskrit for
“dependence on conditions, variously originated.”) realizes
the (four sacred) truths. . . suffering, it's origin, cessation of
suffering, and the path.

Whosoever sees the *pratityasamutpada* sees the Dharma
Whosoever sees the Dharma sees the *pratityasamutpada*.

Whosoever sees the *pratityasamutpada* sees the Dharma
Whosoever sees the Buddha sees the Dharma.

Sakyamuni Buddha discovered this and tried to let people discover it by themselves, but for a long, long time people just played with his teachings without experiencing what they were.

*“... do not appear nor disappear
...”*

“... All dharmas ... do not appear nor disappear, are not tainted nor pure, do not increase nor decrease...”

For our ordinary mind it is impossible to allow this kind of expression. This kind of understanding is not recognized in our everyday life, in our everyday experience. Our understanding is phenomenal, like from birth to death, appearing to disappearing, or disappearing to appearing. It is like the pendulum on a clock, from good to bad, extreme happiness to extreme unhappiness, from the feeling of being pure to the feeling of being polluted. From heavy to light, gain to loss, the mind works in different realms and with different feelings. If someone says, “River is not river, birth is not birth, death is not death, light is not light, you are not you,” this brings a destructive feeling. You feel it when someone approaches you with, “You may think you exist, but what you understand about yourself may only be partly true. You don’t know yourself at all.” If someone says this to you, how shall you deal with this? It is like when a strong believer in some religion comes to the door and says to you, “You have never heard this; you have never thought this, so you must come to

church. I'll preach to you a lot of things and classify where you are, so you must come to church. Here is the schedule. Come!"

"... all dharmas do not appear nor disappear." The English translation is a little softer than the original: In Sanskrit, *Nutpanna* means "arising" or "being born" so *anutpanna* is "not-appearing" or "not-being-born." *Niruddha* means "disappear." When smoke develops in the air and disappears from your sight, that state is called *niruddha*, scattering away, or penetrating away, like incense penetrates into the air, and disappears. When we are existences, like particles of smoke or incense, we cannot believe that we appear and disappear, but we feel that since we appeared, we will also go away, so there is a limitation. And in between this appearing and disappearing is a big occasion. We are filled by stuff which is the contents of all existence. It goes on until we get tired and disappear. So when we say, "...dharma doesn't appear, doesn't disappear," it sounds like, "No man is to be born, and he never dies." You are saying something is going on which doesn't relate with your idea, feeling, or senses.

Psychologically, if we are told a thing doesn't appear and doesn't disappear, we cannot find such a thing, so we say there is nothing, "no thing." So then you say, "I am no thing; I do not exist. Emptiness means I don't exist so I cannot be known by anybody." In ordinary understanding, to exist is to be known by somebody else. With a deeper way of understanding, we ask: "How can I know 'I' exist? Does an idea exist?" I know 'I' was born, 'I' may die some day. How can it be said, "This 'I' exists.?" If I exist merely as something which you understand to be a man, you look at me and see something which looks like a man, and yet this kind of knowing is the same as seeing footprints in the dust when you walk on the street. Seeing that things exist is like

looking at a star in the sky. By this kind of seeing, you cannot understand what God is, or what emptiness is. But if I say, “I see you’re not a woman,” you may say, “What! I am a woman! My whole body and mind is working as a woman, different from a man!” When I say, “I do not see you as a mere woman,” then you may begin to feel, “He is saying something.” Understanding your existence as a woman, I’m also talking about this existence as something a little more fundamental.

The important point is that one understanding is like a white moon, a completely white, silver moon, and in another understanding all these experiences come in, so maybe a black moon. When a silver moon and black moon merge, maybe a grey moon, maybe just a bright moon appears. That is how you appear. This thing, this Dharma which doesn’t appear and at the same time has never disappeared, the Dharma which has never been tainted nor purified, the Dharma which has never increased nor decreased, actually, what it is, is pointing to you. You exist in that way, in our understanding, in the world as a being, as all these experiences appearing and disappearing, increasing and decreasing; and from small to large, you grow up.

Our mind, in all of the senses, is so important a factor in our existence that we sometimes misunderstand and think that the mind is ourself, “my mind is me.” This is why it happens: When I am happy, I exist as the happy one, and when I’m not happy, I feel I’m a very bad existence. Actually, this phenomenal being is expressing happiness and unhappiness, depending on how it is existing. Someone will feel great happiness from a small thing, someone else will never feel happiness from the same thing. Sunshine, brightness is different depending on each person. Seen just as a physical reflection the moon may appear in the same way to every person, but,

depending on the personal situation of each person, there can be a black moon, or black sun. For some people thunder will be the roar of a hell-dweller, but for some the same thunder is joy of the gods.

Absolute existence and complete perfect existence are constantly merging, and make it possible for a thing to exist. Our understanding can begin from this point, not end at this point. We don't know, and we cannot tell, the reason of life. Why does water, why does a sip of tea, become alive? It is just water. Why does this water turn to my element and actually carry my life? If it is just physical existence, material existence, it cannot become my word, it cannot become some feeling, shine of eyes. Maybe water, itself, is a part of a river which penetrates everywhere, and I am communicating with part of the river which is called water, and this river's basic nature is penetrating into everything, penetrating, not with wetness, but like light, which goes into everything. When it goes into a man's mouth, it becomes man, when it goes into a cow, maybe part of it becomes milk!

The water in this sense is a very important thing for the spiritual world, as a metaphor showing both sides, the material and the spiritual. It maybe shows matter and no-matter in itself. So when the penetration of the water disappears, a whole existence collapses like ashes. Like when a man's mind is very dry. . . .when you pour water in from the top or from the bottom, naturally this man gets life. A very symbolic way to express awareness of this life is through water.

"Are not tainted nor pure, . . ." Whether existence can be "tainted" or "purified," is a very important point, too. Can such a thing as purification exist? Because there was no impurity, no purification is possible to express. You have never been tainted, but you may have thought up to now you have

been tainted! Sin and salvation are the same concept. If you are originally a sinner, there will never be an opportunity to be saved, because sin can never become an element of the Kingdom. Being a sinner and being saved cannot coexist. This means the real world is beyond that, and the real world is always with you.

“...increase nor decrease.” Maybe symbolically I can express what it is: Like a wallet, with much money it expands, with little money it contracts, but this is a very limited view. Actually, money doesn't increase or decrease by your acts. When you buy something, you feel good. When you spend money feeling, “This is a very little part of a big thing,” then you feel good. If the feeling is “This is all the money I have,” you feel you are decreasing. If this happens again and again you can never be freed from your attachment to life. But if you give up completely, you can be freed from life attachment. It doesn't mean you have to give up everything. You can still put clothes on your body, and be freed from life.

The poorest person is the richest person, because the poorest has nothing, not even his life, so he becomes a very rich person. No one can be compared with him. “Form is emptiness” has this logic. A sesame seed and the universe have almost the same weight, if you see in this way. On one side of the scale you put a sesame seed, on the other side you put the whole universe, and also another sesame seed. The scale remains level. This is “form is emptiness.”

I'm talking about yourself. The Self is the universe, including yourself as understood in the ordinary way. People say, “He is Kobun. She is Mary.” This way we exist, permitting and knowing that others exist. You dwell in something which makes you understand others. “Understand,” in this sense, means to make others free in your world. It is impossible

to have two freedoms in one moment. If there are two men, both free from something, they always fight, because with each in complete freedom they never say, "You are free in me." Until the last one, this fighting of freedoms goes on and on. If this happens when humans have faith in an absolute being, the two believers never come together. They come together only with the Absolute, never with each other.

If I go down the street and yell at people, "I am the same as the universe!" people will ask, "Is he crazy?". But what we have to know is, what I actually believe is different from what I am saying. I know that this little body is different from the universe. I am different from the teacup and paper, but when I say, "I am the same as the teacup and paper," I am saying something which is felt within me, not in the usual way. Another way to say this is, "If you move your hand and touch the floor, you are actually feeling yourself, and yet, you are also feeling everything."

*“Therefore in emptiness, no form,
no feelings, perceptions, impulses,
consciousness;”*

There are many theoretical explanations of Buddha’s thought in the sutra. “. . . form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness,” is a very traditional way to perceive the *skandhas*, or elements [of mind]. “Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind,” is a very brief classification of our sense organs.

“Color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of mind,” these are objects of our sense organs. “Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind,” these are six. “Color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object,” makes twelve. And “realm of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind,” make eighteen. Thus, eighteen elements of knowing are expressed. This is *Abhidharma*. Before the Mahayana school arose in history, already this theory of knowing was found in Hinayanistic schools.

In Mahayana Buddhism, a negative expression often appears. “No eyes, no ears, no nose. . .” is saying the eye is not eye, nose is not nose. Even though our usual understanding is “nose is nose”, the Mahayana idea is that nose is not nose, so

it can be nose. This is the basic logic of the Diamond Sutra, which is in the same family as the Heart Sutra. In order to let things exist, you negate them. If you don't do so, you are the same as yesterday. The "you" of today is not the "you" of yesterday. You cut off yesterday's you. This is not just ontological negation, it is also the epistemological function of negation. For example, when people say, "The enlightened one follows the law of causation," you may say, "No. He is free from karma." But by saying so, you live in the air! You start to walk in the air, not on the ground, step by step. But if you agree, "The awakened one follows karma," that is not right, either. For an awakened one, there is no karma, so there's no way to follow to it. But there is something there which takes the place of karmic force. This is the constant action of the vow. Instead of being pushed by past force, you use that natural force to go a completely different way. The karma which appears without this consciousness, without this awakened vow, is called "white karma." It is very ethical discipline, doing things the "right way." In other words, everyone, everything, is constantly freed from karma. That is reality. So when someone asks you, "Give me the last moment before. . ." you answer, "I'm sorry, I cannot give it to you. It is gone!"

There are the five senses, and their aggregate, mind. In Sanskrit the subjective side of knowing, through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, is called *prajna*, and the objective side of knowing, e.g. color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object of mind, is called *vijnana*. Together these make twelve elements. When I hold up my teacup my eyes see form and color and my hand is feeling something, its shape and warmth. If I put it closer to my nose, there is smell, when I touch it there is warmth, and when I drink it, my tongue feels something. Smell and warmth and taste are examples of the objective side which causes your knowing. The sub-

jective side is maybe the path through which all elements of knowing come in and go out, like nose, body, tongue. When my skin senses the warm teacup in my hand, this warmth is called *vijnana*.

Alaya vijnana is the storehouse of all senses, all consciousness. It is phenomenal existence. So it is not God, and it is not something which never changes. It changes. It exists in time and space, very deep and very broad. Our mind covers it, and yet, when every knowledge, every understanding, every capacity, is oriented by your self, it is still blind. It can be compared to Plato's metaphor of the cave. You live in this kingdom alone. If the world is arranged from yourself, this *alaya vijnana* is the continuous growth of the kingdom in which only you are living. People appear, things appear, but they are not really understood.

Vi means “to divide.” *Jnana* means knowledge, knowing. Because of our senses, by touching the cup, we can feel it. This particular knowing is *vi, vijnana*. So to know is to discriminate. To not know is to not discriminate. But it is not ignorance. To not know is to accept the whole thing, to not ignore it. So not knowing is a kind of knowing. By discrimination you understand part of the whole. By no discrimination you cannot know in the sense of knowing, but you essentially know. This is why we have a little difficulty when someone approaches and wants to know, “What are you thinking? How are you living?” Finally I get angry. “Leave me alone!” I say.

“No ignorance and also no extinction of it, . . .”

There are twelve links of conditioned origination, from ignorance to knowledge, and so forth, so if there is no ignorance, there is no next one, etc. These twelve links of causation, *pratitya samutpada*, from ignorance to old age and death, present the *Abhidharma* theory of how existence follows this process. So when we say, “. . .No ignorance to no old age and death,” it allows us to retrace the reasons for our suffering back to ignorance, and there is no further place to reach. Historically, the original form of twelve causations was taught by Shakyamuni Buddha to his disciples not as a theory, but as a more psychological approach to each student. Thus, why do you say this cup exists? Because you are attached to it, because you sense it, you know it exists. If it is not in your realm of knowing (Kobun puts the cup behind him), you cannot say it exists.

Ignorance is the first of the twelve links of causation. *Avidya* is the original term. *Vidya* means “lightened.” *A* is “not,” or “no.” “Not-lightened.” In Chinese this *avidya* is translated “mu myo.” “Mu” is always “mu.” “Myo” is “sun” on one side of the character, and “moon” on the other side. Sun and

moon. So "Mu sun and moon" means "no light existence." It means the world of existence which has no light. "Mu myo." So, it's like a person who wakes up at midnight and has no light. His eyes are open, but he cannot see. There is nothing but darkness. Everything exists in the darkness, so it is not a state of nothing existing, but maybe he feels that it is. He cannot see where he is. He has no awareness of or communication with his surroundings. Darkness is inside and outside.

The Lotus Sutra and *Vimalakirti* Sutra are very famous for discussing "mu myo," or *avidya*. And in Zen practice this "mu myo" or *avidya* is one of the basic and most difficult hindrances to go over. Five hindrances hinder our *vidya*, our awakened state of mind and body. These are desires for property, sexual love, food and drink, fame, and sleep. In the Lotus Sutra blind desires are caused by "mu myo," or ignorance. In the darkness you cannot see your hand, you can feel only an extension of your body, so you wish to have it as your hand even though

There was a very heavy duty in the monastery: In monastic life, over twenty-four hours your action has to be exact, so when you do something in an uncertain way, you know at the same time what should be done. When you are a beginner, and hit the bells or drums, everyone hears the sounds you make. Even when the Abbot is way up the mountain (Many teachers are like an old fox on the mountain.) he hears you hitting that bell. I was always embarrassed, because, in the monastery, you live by your actions, you lay your body down in tradition. I always thought, "I must do a good job," and it was always a better job I must do. I knew reality very well, and I knew the ideal very well, so when I went from reality to the ideal, always a mistake appeared! For instance, after hitting the bell more times than needed, I had to say, "I'm sorry." Everybody said, "Somebody is hitting the bell a funny way!" But many people do not care when a mistake appears! (October 7, 1974)

you already have it. From the very beginning there is a split feeling. You desire to have something which seems to exist as a separate body in the external world: "I and you. I and that." And you desire to have "that," or the "other." This is "mu myo," *avidya*.

Awareness of ignorance is very basic to the arising of religions in this world. In Western history it appeared as original sin. I don't know what the actual situation was, but in Genesis you see this ignoring of the warning of the Absolute by a man. Genesis also explains the origin of science, of the scientific attitude of mind in humankind. So, in the one body of us, it may be that you see in the history of humankind your own self-consciousness. "That is how I was." Before that there was ignorance, of course. You didn't know you were ignorant before, since awareness of ignorance is different from ignorance. That is the secret of the origin of the religious mind.

*“No suff’ring, no origination,
no stopping, no path; . . . ”*

Buddha taught many individual followers and later on people made a very good theory to study: Suffering, origination of suffering, stopping of suffering, and a path to stop suffering. This is the famous four noble truths.

These truths are seen, in this sutra, in emptiness. Suffering is the reality of existence. Even if we don't feel suffering, to exist is suffering, and to not exist is also suffering. So this is not the ordinary sense of suffering, but it is a very natural word. For instance, to have big wealth is suffering because you have to take care of it. To have nothing seems very fantastic, but it is suffering, too. Buddha spoke about suffering, pointing out a very important point, that as far as something exists, it has to be responsible for itself. In the Buddhist way of thinking there is a kind of hell, the wish to exist forever. This is one reason for suffering. When you go into this hell, you cannot die, you cannot disappear. Even if you get very sick, you cannot die for a very long time. A man called, saying he had a bad pain and was planning to commit suicide. “That’s fantastic! When?” I said. “I don’t know!” On and on he spoke, “I am so weak. I am so tired. I must die!” Like a little baby

he was crying and crying to be noticed, and I knew that he didn't have such a strong sword in his hand. He just thought he wished to die, but he didn't know how to die. . . . So every existence has the basic misunderstanding: "I will exist forever," and at the same time, "I do not want to exist at all." It means one being is constantly dying, constantly appearing and constantly disappearing. In other words, it is an empty existence, like dew from the night into morning sunshine, it exists. As a form it appears between night and daytime, arising and falling between dark night and sunshine. Actually, dew doesn't exist. It's just night and day.

Dew exists. You're staring at dew. You see a blooming flower, even though you know it is empty. You stare at it, and it actually stares at you. Many times you experience, in this one life, very clear and very surprising sensations. You see no differentiation between particularities. We live in this world of impulses, consciousness, and if we skip this word, "no" that becomes our ordinary world. When we put in "no," intellectually we cannot understand "no feeling, no eyes, no color" but there is a very interesting taste in this word. This "no" has red color, the flower has really red color. This dew is really beautiful dew.

In other words, the world of feeling, the ordinary world, appears even though you come through this world of "no," world of "mu," world of emptiness. Still you exist, and your whole being becomes walking, breathing, eating, *prajna*. *Vijnana* turns to *prajna*. "No" is that gate which *vijnana* goes through and turns to *prajna*, knowledge becomes wisdom, passing through this gate, which is "no." The world of wisdom is advancing all the time. Color is not color, and yet it is color. A familiar teaching is: "Mountain is mountain. Mountain is not mountain. And mountain is mountain."

Mahayana Buddhism did not arise from a scholastic way of study. It is not just for monks and nuns, rather the body of Mahayana Buddhism is usual people. Inside of Buddhism there was revolution, change, and outside of Buddhism there was the vedantic way of life. So when I see this sutra, I see not only a Buddhist sutra, I see a very strong figure of Hinduism. In Hinduism, *hridaya* can be identified as the Atman and *shunyata*, emptiness, can be identified with Brahman, so it is impossible to know what this emptiness is. Only what someone can know is through faith. In the Hindu feeling, through faith you feel a blink of Atman, and then build a long ladder into the sky which you climb up and meet with Brahman. You never meet Brahman on this earth. *Shunyata* is a Buddhist term for this emptiness, longing for Brahman, which is a part of Indian peoples’ nature. The basic point, which we have to really understand, is what emptiness is. *Shunyata*. And when you understand emptiness, the historical problem of whether “I” exist or whether God exists, naturally will be solved for you.

An individual life is like a water current. The same water flows, but moment after moment it changes form and position. This current, life current, is suffering with constant change. Some say that because a bird cannot be air, that bird is suffering. Because a fish cannot be water, that is the fish’s suffering. The human cannot be something else, so that is human suffering. This was the Indian people’s idea about life in the form of suffering, so the arhat tried to evaporate out of this current into the air, like water evaporates, and never come back to the water, to the river. But bodhisattvas and buddhas are always willing to come back into the water, to be born as the water. This is called life of the vow. Life of the vow and life of karma are the same, but one is working and one is sleeping.

*“The Bodhisattva depends on
Prajna Paramita and his mind
is no hindrance. . . he dwells in
Nirvana.”*

From the work of Nagarjuna, we understand birth and death and many occasions of everyday life as *samsara*. We can personalize this *samsara*, understand it as a living thing, and also *nirvana*, the truth with which we live as an enlightened one. *Nirvana* can exist within this *samsara*, through this living thing, this living being, and also beyond people’s concern, too. A sentient being and an enlightened being, in other words, *samsara*, and *nirvana*, are no different from each other. Zen always speaks of this: Fool and wise person, deluded person and enlightened being, are the same. This is illogical talk, but we have to see something is going on. From one side we call it *samsara*, from the other side, *nirvana*.

At some point, people produced the word, “bodhisattva.” *Nirvana/samsara* is another word for “bodhisattva.” *Nirvana* has the sense of peace and freedom. Another word

for *nirvana* is "perfect innocence," or, maybe, "perfection." In Eastern religions, this opposite of *samsara* existed from the beginning. For a bodhisattva, always living in *nirvana* is always not abiding in *nirvana*. Always not abiding in *nirvana* is in *nirvana*. Otherwise the Bodhisattva is frozen in *nirvana*. Consider a person who is jogging in the street and suddenly stops. That's the end. Dwelling in *nirvana* is that frozen state. A bodhisattva doesn't "dwell in nirvana," and as bodhisattvas, we don't ignore or leave *samsara*. Yet, for a bodhisattva, the cycle of life is expanding.

Instinctive abilities are counted as the five hindrances, so these hindrances are not a bad thing. When we gaze at our own life, we have to claim it. We have these desires: The desire to eat, the desire to be known, not only fame, but maybe also to be known by others, to be understood, to not be alone. In this desire to be known, there is the awareness of friendship and family, the organic system of life. And eating maintains our life of today into tomorrow and promises more time, as well as the existence of consciousness of time. You look back and see the difference between yesterday and today. You are aware of space and time. You cannot live in the sky, in empty air. You settle to the ground, you have to have certain places to be, and so maintenance of life appears, desire for material possessions, and the desire to have generation. This is where man and woman come together. Physically and spiritually, we have to do that. These are all the basic work of instinct.

So the result of awareness of living is questioning ignorance; eating the apple becomes the opportunity to maintain life. If you don't eat, you are in perfect innocence. By picking this apple, you maintain individual life, you limit yourself in perfect innocence. This whole existence, the very instinctive ability of us, is spoken of as "karma," in Buddhist thought.

Karma is the cycle of life. It goes on and on, whether you are aware of it or not. Awareness of samsara was the origin of Eastern religions. From the very beginning this was the experience of awakening, because without enlightenment there is no opportunity to see ignorance. Therefore, what we have to know, is that the people who wrote Genesis, who knew the mistake which was the beginning of separation, were enlightened. In Eastern religions the origin of the awareness of samsara can be called the awakening of *avidya*, ignorance, that is, you see it and are aware of it. Your age of awakening, as a socially-formed religion, is about three thousand years old. Three thousand years ago, many, many people began to be aware of themselves.

Karma

The past can never be the same as the present, but in karma consciousness our mind always works, "That is how I was, this is how I'm supposed to be, how I will be." That is how our mind consciousness goes, supporting our "self". When you have separation, you might say, "I am bothered by you," you feel you are bothered by someone. But you are never bothered by someone. A red rose is not red, that is, it has no such red color. Separation is like that. In the twentieth century we seek perfect freedom, and there is perfect freedom, but we still think we are not free. That is a very strange thing. We see someone suffering, from the outside, so we feel we are not free. Actually, our karma consciousness is not free. When you see a dying person, they are not different from you, so you are not free from them. But if they die, they are freed from your karma consciousness.

If you're chased by ten people and you decide, "I'll never be captured," this is how you exist, actually. No one can cling to you. Even if a million people cling to you, you are always free from their clinging. If you say, "Oh, they are clinging to me!" that is your clinging to them!

Karma consciousness is very heavy, because the reality of our

life is so heavy. A woman saw her friend falling from a cliff. She carries this woman's life because she died in her sight, so she lives with her. She saw the fall, so she has to work on it. If she ignored it she would be ignoring herself. At this point, I, this body, has never had the experience of killing human life. But if you speak of a "murderer" I begin to feel I am that murderer. And I am that murderer's mother, too. What is difficult is how the people who are left perceive an occasion. If the mother can save the life of her dead son, the murder is over, it drops off. Murder continues because of the mother's attachment to her dead son, which means freed mind has to be in the mother's mind and not in the dead son. This is how the son and mother live together. The murderer's life bears the suffering, because one was born as an unusual human body and mind. He lives in a completely different world, staying among people.

But a murderer can become Buddha, too, if someone appears and makes him Buddha, sees him, sees what he is. This point is very important. Otherwise, if once in your life you hit a person with your car, you bear this your whole life long. Even if we have no feeling of hurting anyone, even if we live a life full of love, we can make this kind of problem, because of this occasion we can be burdened for our whole life. We may feel we have to be taken care of by someone else who is free from this action. But being taken care of by someone, I need to take care of myself. It's not like I drive and hit something, freely putting myself and him in Buddha's world. If I recognize something I've done, I have to express it, without discriminating. And actually, that is what we are expressing, in the same way, when we say, "This is my wife, my children, this is Buddha." Whether it is our innermost, deepest thinking, worry, or impression, we express it. If I speak an untruth and discover, "I spoke an untruth," I have to admit it was my mistake. "I misspoke." In this way we try not to

cause delusion by our mistake of ignorance or unclearness. By not expressing our mistake we waste our lives and waste others' lives. You cannot change a situation to make it the same as before, but if you realize it, you can say, "I did it. I killed it, so I cannot give life to it again." How to maintain the life which you killed is all your recognition and your responsibility.

If you are walking outside in the darkness and step on a spider, what is the difference between that spider and yourself? How hard it is to live in repentance, and how wonderful it is to repent! Every moment of this life is the complete death of everything so this being can continue to live. Even ghosts and past Buddhas cannot continue to live because you live. You take the place of all beings and exist in this way.

So karma consciousness appears as a full effort. That is our mind working. But even so, our life is always free from this karma consciousness.

Prajna Paramita

Prajna paramita is not newly gained by you, nor was it obtained by you before. *Prajna paramita* is selfless self, "selflessness." In other words, it is another name of enlightening in emptiness. Without selfless self there is no enlightening phenomenon.

Maybe a wallet is a good example. You have a wallet. Everyone has a wallet. In everyone's wallet there is something, some money, some dust, and there are many amounts of money outside of your wallet, too. This wallet is like our self. We say "it's mine," which is saying "I, I, I." Inside the wallet there is maybe 10, or 100, while outside of the wallet are millions and billions. Usually we think of the self as the internal content of our wallet. Selfless self is an empty wallet, not caring how much is inside, how much is outside, because holding \$10 in your wallet is holding the whole. If you become one hundred times a billionaire, your wallet is the same size, maybe an inside-out wallet! If you put your clothes on inside out and begin to speak, "I am Mary Kate," that means outside of the clothes is Mary Kate. Do you understand this? If you own \$10, it is like the little \$10 is completely opened, outside the surface of the wallet. But you feel that \$10 more is needed, and "Then I will have everything." It's the same

way if you put on your clothes inside out and say, "I am Mary Kate." It means you are everything, but the outside of the clothes is not "Mary Kate." It means the \$10 outside of the wallet is Mary Kate!

Selfless self means the wallet is actually always empty. In other words, you are always empty. The inside of the wallet, outside of the wallet, and you, yourself, are empty. But something extra appears on this empty occasion, which is that the inside is little and the outside is large. You have the sense of containing something inside, and an idea of something excluded, outside. But actually, when you contain something, you contain the whole and the container loses its meaning. That is what "selfless" means.

Annutara-samyaksambodhi

“...all Buddhas depend on Prajna Paramita and attain *Annutara-samyaksambodhi*.”

This translation is very poor; this “attain” is a poor word to put here. It’s like when a yell was enough to warn a primitive man from a big animal, and then this yelling sound became language. To communicate more was found to be necessary, so, in modern languages, words have become a more and more exact way of expression. In Sanskrit, “Depend on Prajna Paramita” is just one word. There is no separate verb, “depend on” or “attain.” Instead, a word is matched with another word. For example, this teacup sits still because the floor is flat. Their relation is *ashritya*, because the flatness of the floor and the flatness of the bottom of the cup matches. “Attain” is a very weak word at this point. “Fulfill” would be a good word. “All Buddhas based on Prajna Paramita fulfill *Anuttara-samyaksambodhi*.” Like a cocoon becomes a butterfly, it advances, like perfection advances.

Anuttara-samyaksambodhi is supreme and perfect awakening. Sounds marvelous! It’s the same as the blue sky. You want to swim in it. It has no end, and you don’t get to the blue, either. I’m so sorry! A more exact word for the experience is

that there is a man, a woman, or being, that is deeper than the sky. This is a very important point. The strange thing is that only humankind has this experience. Or, I don't know, maybe other beings have experienced this before. What is the virtue of life? How do we create virtue living on this earth, when we cannot measure people? The other day I went to renew my driver's license. I lost my wallet so I had to renew it. I filled out all the forms and the woman asked, "What is your weight?" I answered, "I don't know. I'm getting lighter and lighter." She said, "I'm a little heavier than you, so let's put a little lighter than me." I said, "That's fine." Many things begin from this *anuttara-samyaksambodhi*. You can measure your height and other people's height. The other day, at midnight, I saw a contest of the most beautiful girl in the U. S. A beauty contest. I had the feeling I was watching potatoes in the market! All of them were pretty, lively, and very beautiful. When they began to speak, I felt very discouraged. Their voices were fine but I felt that one girl had some different feeling from the others. And I was feeling the contest was not among those chosen people, but actually the contest was among the people choosing. It was a very hard place to be selected to choose what is a beautiful thing.

What makes people so different from other stages of life, living on the surface of the earth, like we are in some special, particular air on the earth which supports life? If we go to a higher place, we become like a balloon. If we go to a lower place we have to become a submarine, or beetle, with a hard skin, very strong to keep from exploding with the pressure inside. What makes people different from other stages of life is our sense that there is real virtue in being on this earth. We are not just like a rock or amoeba, or something. You can see the short history of this awareness, this questioning of what is the real virtue of life. Many plants, and races, died away in these many centuries. Many birds are disappearing, and

many strange beasts, fishes are disappearing too. When we become aware of the real virtue of what it is to be a human, many new animals and plants will appear, because to make a field of life a desert or forest depends on human awareness now. To make a place a ruin or lively, depends on a little change of your mind, the degree to which you increase your energy in some certain way. This is why people, nowadays, are trying to really see themselves, and really see what is cubic, not flat. We can be flat, a very flat, broad existence, and at the same time this energy to become flat can be gathered to the center and become a cubic existence. The nature of water is like that.

Our mind is like air and water, so depending on how we take care of our mind, our life changes, becomes flat or cubic, or still or very fast-moving. Our mind is very formless, like water, wind. We cannot see it unless we see the expression of it. We cannot see pure water. The river bed, big ocean, is the container. The mind is water. The container is the visible part of the water. Unless you see it this way, the container is just clay, or glass. It doesn't need to hold water, it can be empty, just another piece of furniture. We have to see what it is, get rid of our usual understanding of religion and see what it was that made the existence of the religious phenomenon on this earth possible during these several centuries. The size of your enlightenment, the size of your awareness or awakening, is as small as your faith, and it is a real way to measure people. How deeply you believe in yourself makes you or your world deep, or high, because of your faith. As you change, you find that your face changes, so possibly when your body changes, your mind changes also.

Body and mind are not different things, not different elements, just different emphases. It's like light. Mind may be the spiritual element of being and then there is the physical

element of being. This is the basic subject of all religions and philosophies: mind and body. Some religions and philosophies see the highest, deepest spiritual existence as one side, and the other side as myself. Opposite me is the one who is not me, and who is also me. Either I was projected by it, or I projected it. This is the very basic pattern of the religious mind. So this happened in India. Atman was conscious of the Brahman, he wanted something, and he became conscious of it. In darkness, light appeared. Similar to God's will. It's like being thirsty and imagining water, so water comes to you and you are no longer dry. This body is part of mind, and mind is part of body. You understand it in that way. So to work only on the body isn't the way.

When a very unhappy situation appears, for example when someone hurts another very badly, people judge that he is a very dangerous man so they put him in prison. It is seen as important to separate the elements of a situation which had come together, so to scatter the elements you put the man in jail. That is a tentative solution. It is not enough. In his mind something is maintained and in the space where he is not allowed to live a situation is maintained. This is what we call mind. It is a force of life, as well as body. So body and mind aren't a different thing at all. Like a red light and yellow light are symbols of something. If you ignore them, lots of things happen! The red is just a color, but facing it, you physically see something and mentally the symbolic meaning appears to you, which if you ignore it, something happens! Our sense of seeing is automatic, but very organic. The whole system of seeing is very, very penetrating action, very intuitive action. You can speak of super power at this point, when you really see. This is the nature of Prajna Paramita. Before it appears, you know it, because sound appears from it.

Prajna Paramita is actually everyone's nature, which everyone

is originally fully experiencing, reflecting each other, reflecting prajna in each other, in everything, penetrating. It's like the warmth of the body penetrates. (Kobun holds his hands apart from each other.) Before I touch, something goes from this hand to that hand. Even through clothes, you feel it. If I say it goes into "my" body, it's not so clear. If it is another's body, it's a very natural thing. If you go into the forest and go close to a tree, you feel the realm of the tree. The tree is not just the body of the tree, but a whole outer body of the tree exists. And when you break into this realm, you really feel "I am in the tree." It is the same coming into someone's house. "I am inside of Mary Kate, now." Everyone is like that. Every being has the visible part of the body and a very broad outer body. And a very interesting thing is, when you separate from them, communication goes between. By imagining, you can let others imagine you. . . .

Buddhas and *Prajna Paramita* and *Anuttara-samyaksambodhi* are actually identical, because *Anuttara-samyaksambodhi* is called "Buddha," and what he is, is totally *Prajna Paramita*, which is wisdom. So if you say there is something called "Prajna Paramita" we have to look around to see what it is. You can never find it, as you can never find the form of a living Buddha, so you touch something and say, "This is Buddha." If you really can say so, it is fantastic! You can say, "This is the bell. This is everything, too." Then you understand what you are holding!

Anuttara-samyaksambodhi is like one who feels the whole sky as his body and the whole ocean as his body. It sounds funny to say this, but the form of the ocean and this little form is actually I. The sky is I, and I am I, and the ocean is I. By breaking from the ocean and disappearing from the sky *anuttara-samyaksambodhi* doesn't change. Ocean is ocean, sky is sky, I am I. When many forms appear, you understand some go

away, and some just flow together. If a form reaches to this awareness, everything is it. The next form is the next form, but it is not different from him. She may say, "These are my sister and brother." *Anuttara-samyaksambodhi*, when it happened, was the morning the historical Buddha saw the morning star in the sky. Since that time all past Buddhas, before Shakyamuni, were confirmed in their existence, and all beings after him were confirmed in Buddha's world. This was the origin of Buddhism. If you say "*Anuttara-samyaksambodhi* is truth itself," *anuttara-samyaksambodhi* is Buddha himself.

Buddha Nature

Buddha nature is inside, outside, everywhere. The physical body is not something which has a little Buddha nature inside of it. Your whole body is Buddha nature, and yet, to have this particular form, at this particular time, in this particular place, that is a great matter.

The surprising thing is, we don't know how wonderful a world we are. The best way is to go out and ask everything which comes to you, "Tell me your thing." They will begin to tell you everything. And finally you will begin to feel, as they are talking, that it is their thing, but it is your thing. This is how the sutra is. At first you feel it is something totally different from you but the more you listen, you begin to feel, "This is me. The whole thing is me talking about myself." In this sense Dogen said, "To study and to practice Buddha's way is to practice yourself, to learn yourself. And to carry yourself among things and think that you understand things is illusion, whatever you understand, all are illusions. To let all things come to you and be awakened by them is enlightenment." So I have a difficult problem: How do I let things completely happen in me, exist in me? Constant practice is the only way. When I keep my practice pure and honest, at that time, I begin to hear a new sound - everything is talking

to me!

There are no different kinds of Buddha nature. Buddha nature is just one. But when Buddha nature takes form, all things appear. All existence appears. And without it there is no such Buddha nature which stays as Buddha nature. So we train ourselves to see the sameness, or oneness, of everything, without differentiation, without each individual existence. Maybe a good example is music. There are strings. If no one touches them, you may imagine there is rich music going on, or complete music is going on, and you are just picking out the sounds of music when you touch the strings. But what is happening is that, by themselves, the strings don't have any music, the instrument doesn't have any music. Only when the musician touches the strings does music appear. In the same way, complete communication among everything is happening when Buddha nature takes form. This is why Buddhism is also called a religion.

*“Gate - gate - paragate - parasam-
gate! Bodhi! Svaha!”*

This mantra is a very unusual sound for us. “Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate!” The advance of truth is expressed in these words. This mantra is the mantra which relieves all sufferings, which are caused by delusion. In this mantra, whatever we experience takes this form of “gate, gate. . .” When you listen to your heart, when you touch your body, you feel something going on. Each heartbeat is another sound of “gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate.” Whatever we experience, however we feel this experience, this is our perception of existence, itself, constantly changing, uttering in a silent voice, “gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate.” Like a dream, appearing and disappearing at the same time, constantly this mantra frees you from your dream. You dream, but you are freed from your dream. Each moment we sense something new, experiencing our existence in many phenomenal figures. It is the same situation as a dreaming person, whether awake or asleep, daydreaming or reaching a clear understanding of something. When you say, “enlightenment, awakening” it seems to refer to a substantial being which is experiencing this awakening. But if a substantial, permanent knower existed, awakening would never appear. There would be

nothing but continuous illusion.

Bodhi! Satori! Prajna! These are ourselves, our existence which has no self, which is no self. So this word, "no", is another term of *maha*. *Maha* means "boundless, limitless, measureless."

These words, "gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate," are like sounds of birds, high voices, low voices, sharp voices. If you wish to get the meaning, listen to birds, their sharp eyes and sounds, hear what they are saying, how they are feeling. Or "gate, gate. . ." can be heard as the sounds of violin strings, or the snoring of a sleeping man. If you know what it is, saying, "I, I am, you are," there is no dirt on the ground, no green in the leaves. You understand your mind is everything, which is yourself. And everything exists as it is, and there is no "knowing," no need to know, because you know it already.

If we try to know how we can be freed from things, how we can be free, we become so busy. But the experience of freedom cannot be known, because we are experiencing it constantly. This "gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate," is the sound of freedom and the sound of freedom from delusion, too. When leaves fall from the tree there is a sound. Maybe the branch makes the sound, or the stems of the leaves make the sound. You cannot tell which. But the sound tells you of freedom. Leaves fall. You may say they are freed from the oak, from the summer, showing the color of autumn. They are calling to the snowflake. The sound of falling leaves can be echoed in spring rain. It can appear in the middle of falling snow.

In English, you say, "go, let it go, let him go, let me go." This is why I talk about freedom, things being freed, an expression of "no permanence." By increasing speed, you cannot

reach to permanence, but humans try to reach permanence by increasing speed. This is suffering. By stopping, you cannot reach to permanence, because no permanence is there. It's like breaking out of a nightmare and going into a harder nightmare. Striving hard, you see you are advancing in the opposite direction. It's like trying to believe that all existences have Buddha nature. You say, “I have been taught that everyone has Buddha nature, but at this point I can't feel that everyone has Buddha nature.” So you try to believe it. This kind of “faith” exists.

And there is another kind of faith which appears from exact experience of Buddha nature. As ordinary knowledge you keep this faith. Whatever you see is the myriad forms of Buddha nature. Even in the eye of a blind man, you see Buddha nature. In one hundred repetitions of a lie, you see Buddha nature.