

BP 2 Module 4: Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

Lesson 1

25 June 2013

Presentation of the Sutra Paths and Grounds as a preliminary to Heart Sutra:

To really understand the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, one necessarily needs a prior knowledge of the mode of progression along the paths according to the Consequent Middle Way School.
One needs to have a clear understanding of the presentation of the coarse and subtle selflessnesses according to this school.
One should be aware of its presentation of the main objects of abandonment: the afflictive obscurations and knowledge obscurations, as well as the illustrations posited for these two obscurations.
According to this school, with respect to the main object of meditation, there is no difference between the Hearer, Solitary Realizer or Bodhisattva vehicles. However, there is a difference with respect to their main object of abandonment.
Having such prior knowledge is essential in understanding the presentation of the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra.
The last paragraph of the tenets root text for the Consequent Middle Way School states:
<i>The [complete] abandonment of the afflictive obscurations occurs simultaneously with the attainment of the eighth ground, the [complete] abandonment of the obscurations to knowledge occurs simultaneously with the actualizing of the four bodies.</i>
To understand this statement, the presentation of the Paths and Grounds of the Consequent Middle Way School is now given.
There is the familiar mantra in the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra: TADYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA
Essentially, this mantra shows how the Bodhisattvas progress along the various Mahayana paths.
Therefore, the main subject matter of the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra essentially shows how, on the basis of realizing emptiness, Bodhisattvas progress along the various Mahayana paths to achieve full enlightenment.

How the assertions of Buddha by the Hinayana tenets are incoherent:

All the four Buddhist tenets assert the Three vehicles: Hearer, Solitary Realizer and Bodhisattva/ Mahayana vehicles.
All Three vehicles have presentation on the five paths: Five paths of the Hearers, five paths of the Solitary Realizers and five paths of the Bodhisattvas.
The five paths for all Three vehicles have the same name: path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation, path of no more learning.
The Hinayana tenets of the Great Exposition School and Sutra School assert that when the Hearers, Solitary Realizers and Bodhisattvas complete their respective five paths, the Hearers and Solitary Realizers achieve their respective arhathoods.
They do so by initially achieving a nirvana with remainder. When they pass away, they achieve a nirvana without remainder, which means their continua of body and mind are severed.
Even when a Buddha passes away and achieves the nirvana without remainder, his mental continuum is also severed.
The Hinayana tenets do not assert that the Buddha continue on in some ways to benefit sentient beings after passing away.
Therefore, for them, the Buddha literally disappears into nothingness as the mental continuum is severed after passing into the sorrowless state. They do not assert that Buddhas can benefit sentient beings in myriad ways.
When one analyzes this, this is actually quite difficult to accept.

How the assertions of Buddha by the Mahayana tenets are more reasonable:

Of the Four Buddhist tenets, two are Hinayana tenets while the other two are Mahayana tenets, the Mind Only School and the Middle Way School.
Even though there are three vehicles in general, some proponent of the Mind Only School assert that there are three <i>final</i> vehicles whereas there are also other divisions who assert that there is only one <i>final</i> vehicle.
For the Middle Way School, even though they assert three vehicles, all of them assert only one <i>final</i> vehicle.
The Mahayana tenets do not accept that, upon achieving nirvana without remainder, the mental continuum is severed, whether it is for the foe destroyers [in general] or for Buddha.
The Mahayana tenets assert that, upon achieving full enlightenment, the mental continuum is not severed. Rather, it is achieved simultaneously with the four bodies, which then work for the welfare of numberless sentient being equaling space until samsara is emptied.

Therefore, the Mahayana tenets' position is opposite that of the Hinayana tenets', which assert that when the persons of all three vehicles achieve the nirvana without remainder, their mental continua are severed.
Since there are these two opposing positions, the position that does not contradict logic and reasoning should be adopted.
The Mahayana tenets assert that, those who are on the Hearers' and Solitary Realizers' paths, who have completed their respective paths, become their respective Hearers' and Solitary Realizers' foe destroyers.
However, these foe destroyers do not stay that way forever, they have to eventually enter the Mahayana path, travel the various paths and achieve full enlightenment as well.
This is a very brief introduction to what happens to the persons of the Three vehicles after they have completed their respective paths, what they do after that.

How one cannot achieve enlightenment by relying on the Mahayana sutra path alone, one still needs to rely on tantra:

However, one needs to understand that this presentation is from the perspective of sutra.
From the perspective of Mahayana tantra, one cannot achieve full enlightenment by relying on the sutra path <i>alone</i> .
Even for someone who has traveled and completed the various Bodhisattva grounds all the way to the tenth ground, he cannot achieve full enlightenment without depending on the tantric path.
[For any sentient being,] there is still the need to enter the tantric path to achieve enlightenment.
Therefore, over and above the sutra path, there is also the presentation of the paths and grounds according to tantra.
It is by understanding the presentation of the tantric paths and grounds would one be able to understand the need to rely on tantric path on top of the sutric path.
According to the Mahayana tenets, to achieve full enlightenment/ Buddhahood, one needs to accumulate the collections over a period of three great countless eons.
However, according to tantra, it is possible to achieve enlightenment in one brief lifetime in one body.
The presentation of the Mahayana paths and grounds is according to the Consequent Middle Way School.

Assertions of the various paths for the accumulations of the collections:

The Consequent Middle Way School assert that to accumulate the collections, one does so over a period of three great countless eons:
The five paths can be condensed into two: path of an ordinary [Bodhisattva] and the path of a Superior being.
Accumulation of the collections during the <i>first great countless eon</i> occurs on the path of an ordinary [Bodhisattva].
The Accumulations of the collections during the <i>second</i> and <i>third great countless eons</i> occur on the path of a Superior/ <i>Arya</i> .
The Accumulation of the collections in the second great countless eon occur from the first to the seventh ground/ <i>bumi</i> .
These seven Bodhisattva grounds are also known as the seven <i>impure</i> grounds.
The Accumulation of the collections in the third great countless eon occur from the eight to the tenth ground.
These three Bodhisattva grounds are also known as the three <i>pure</i> grounds.
The impure grounds are so called because the Bodhisattvas on these grounds have yet to abandon/ purify the afflictive obscurations. The Bodhisattvas on the pure grounds, however, have abandoned/ purified the afflictive obscurations.
The attainment of the eighth ground is simultaneous with the abandonment of the afflictive obscurations, the Bodhisattva achieves the eighth ground simultaneously with the abandonment of all afflictive obscurations.
When the Bodhisattva completes the accumulation of the two collections [of method and wisdom at the end of] the third great countless eon, he achieves full enlightenment/ Mahayana path of no more learning.
All the paths before this, from the Mahayana paths of accumulation and preparation, the paths of ordinary [Bodhisattvas], to the paths of Superior Bodhisattvas, [the Mahayana paths of seeing and meditation], all the way to the end of the tenth ground, are paths of learning, where the person is still a sentient being.
Therefore, the difference between the paths of learning and the path of no more learning essentially highlights that when one is a Buddha, there is nothing more to learn/ know, whereas as a sentient being, one is still learning and progressing.

Why one has to generate the mindset of lifelong learning:

It is really up to oneself as an individual to choose whether one wishes to learn or not.
To be able to make such a decision, one really has to know where one is. Unless one is a Buddha, everyone else who is not obviously still has things to learn.

Even for those Superior Bodhisattvas who have reached the tenth ground, an unbelievable attainment, they still have not completed their trainings, have obscurations still to be abandoned and still have to joyously persevere in the trainings.
Therefore, from here, one should understand that, until one is a Buddha, there will always be things to learn and rooms for improvement. As a sentient being, there will always be many occasions that one does not understand the teachings.
Some do get discouraged due to that and lose heart. Rather than doing that, one should just continue to learn, keeping in mind that one is still a sentient being.

Various descriptions of a Bodhisattva:

A Bodhisattva who is traveling on these five Mahayana paths is either an ordinary Bodhisattva or a Superior Bodhisattva.
There are two Mahayana paths of the ordinary Bodhisattvas: Mahayana paths of accumulation and preparation.
When a person enters the Mahayana path of accumulation, one becomes an ordinary Bodhisattva and has entered the Mahayana path.
A Bodhisattva is one who has bodhicitta, the mind/ spirit of enlightenment.
Bodhicitta can be divided into contrived and uncontrived bodhicitta.
Contrived bodhicitta only arises when one has to put in <i>effort</i> to generate a fully qualified bodhicitta. Nevertheless, this does not qualify one as a Bodhisattva.
Due to familiarity with the generation of this mind, when bodhicitta arises spontaneously without any effort at all, then this becomes an uncontrived bodhicitta. One becomes a Bodhisattva and enters the Mahayana path (indicated as B in the chart).
Similarly, there can be two types of persons who trains in and subsequently generates bodhicitta/ enters the Mahayana path: those of sharp faculties and those of dull faculties.
Those who are of sharp faculties are said to be <i>followers of Dharma</i> , while those who of dull faculties are <i>followers of faith</i> .
Followers of faith follow [what they believe in], whereas the followers of Dharma means they are the <i>followers of reasoning</i> .

Why those of sharp faculties do not commit to bodhicitta until they realized emptiness:

Those who are of sharp faculties, before they generate bodhicitta, would investigate about the ultimate nature of reality.
Due to this, they are said to realize emptiness first. It is only on this basis would they then proceed on to generate uncontrived bodhicitta and thus become a Bodhisattva. This is the way of the sharp faculties.
Essentially, bodhicitta is the thought thinking, “I must achieve full enlightenment to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.” Before they undertake such a commitment, those of sharp faculties first investigate and analyze the need for full enlightenment, as well as whether such a state exist or not and whether it is possible to achieve such a state.
Therefore, until they have the conviction that enlightenment actually exists and is attainable, they would not undertake such a commitment to achieve that state.
To even generate such a conviction in the heart, such a person necessarily needs to have an understanding of emptiness first.
This is because, without having such a prior understanding, it is not possible to be fully convinced that a state where all obscurations are eliminated from the mind can be attained.
Therefore, for such a person, until they achieve an understanding of emptiness, they will not make the commitment. They will only do so after they have ascertained that enlightenment exists and that it is actually possible to achieve that.
However, to even be able to know whether enlightenment is possible and attainable, one necessarily needs to have the conviction and then realize that the obscurations can be eliminated no matter how enormous and difficult these may be.
To do so, one then has to know that antidotes to obscurations do exist. When one does not know that such antidotes exist, then one would not be convinced about how the obscurations can be removed.
With respect to the antidotes, in the final analysis, there is nothing else other than the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.
These understandings are not made in general, rather, such a person necessarily realizes in the heart that, “My enlightenment exists!” Such a person is fully convinced that the <i>obscurations within</i> are merely temporary and can be removed due to being able to <i>generate the antidote within</i> . Such an understanding is thus a very <i>personal conviction</i> .
This is a brief explanation of what A in the chart means: Inferential realization of emptiness (for a sharp faculty being).

Assertions of different valid cognizers realizing emptiness on the Mahayana path:

A mind realizing emptiness is either an inferential realization or a direct realization.
Between a non-conceptual and a conceptual consciousness, the mind realizing emptiness at A (in the chart) is a conceptual consciousness realizing emptiness.

Between a direct valid cognizer and an inferential valid cognizer, this conceptual consciousness realizing emptiness at A is an inferential cognizer realizing emptiness.
The direct valid cognizer [directly] apprehending emptiness/ wisdom directly realizing emptiness does not occur until the path of a Superior Bodhisattva is manifested, which only starts on the Mahayana path of seeing.
Therefore, all the realizations of emptiness that occur prior to G (in the chart), prior to entering as well as on the Mahayana paths of an ordinary Bodhisattva (Mahayana path of accumulation and Mahayana path of preparation) are either inferential cognizers or subsequent cognizers. This assertion is according to the view of the Consequent Middle Way School.

What are Bodhisattvas of dull faculties:

For persons of dull faculties, as opposed to those of sharp faculties, are mainly followers of faith. On the basis of some believe, they make the commitment to achieve enlightenment to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.
It is possible to generate bodhicitta without a prior understanding of emptiness. There are some who generate bodhicitta [without realizing emptiness] and thus actualize and enter the Mahayana path of accumulation and become Bodhisattvas.
From here, one can see easily that there are Bodhisattvas who do not have any understanding nor realization of emptiness.

The difference between those of sharp and dull faculties:

The Mahayana path of accumulation is divided into three: Small path of accumulation, Medium path of accumulation and Great path of accumulation.
As one progresses along the paths, the strength and quality of the antidotes increases correspondingly with time, [naturally,] the objects of abandonment also become weaker with time.
When one generates the antidotes on the Mahayana path of accumulation, one begins with the Small path of accumulation, the antidotes then strengthen as one progresses to the Medium path of accumulation and to the Great path of accumulation.
The entry into the first, the Mahayana Small path of accumulation is contingent on generating an uncontrived bodhicitta, which is necessarily the start of mind generation.
With respect to mind generation, there are many divisions. The mind generation at the point when one enters the Mahayana Small path of accumulation is called the mind generating that is likened to the ground.
The Bodhisattva on this stage has the full generation of bodhicitta which is uncontrived. However, such a bodhicitta in the continuum of this Bodhisattva on the Mahayana Small path of accumulation is subject to degeneration, which is not stable and can deteriorate.
There can be some Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana Small path of accumulation who get discouraged due to the difficulties [involved in pacifying] myriad sentient beings with myriad dispositions or due to meeting a Hinayana guru. They decide to give up bodhicitta, fall into the Hinayana paths, traverse that to achieve liberation from samsara and become Arhats instead.
Therefore, it is said that it is possible for Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana Small path of accumulation to be disheartened and give up the mind of enlightenment and fall into the Hinayana path. These are most likely Bodhisattvas of dull faculties.
It is quite unlikely that Bodhisattvas of sharp faculties would give up their bodhicitta. This is because, they have concluded in their own hearts that enlightenment is something that is needed, very beneficial and possible to be achieved.
The Bodhisattva on the Mahayana Small path of accumulation will progress to the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation.
When the Bodhisattva reaches the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation, the bodhicitta in his continuum becomes very stable. Thus, he will never give up bodhicitta, the thought of enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.
The bodhicitta on this stage is called the mind generation that is likened to gold. Just like the actual gold that will never change into something else other than gold, the bodhicitta in his continuum will never deteriorate.
This is the reason for C (on the chart), once the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation is achieved, it is not possible for the Bodhisattva to fall down into the Hinayana path. This is because, since his bodhicitta will thenceforth never degenerate, then it is not possible to fall into the Hinayana path.
Khenrinpoche: therefore, it is important to come to ABC to learn about the ABC , to examine what is A , what is B and what is C , this is why ABC exists! It would be good if one has a clear general idea of how one progresses along these paths.

Q & A:

SQ: Why does it take three great countless eons to attain enlightenment? When human species do not exist anymore, what would happen to the Bodhisattvas' accumulation of the collections?
Khenrinpoche: For example, it takes three months for the tourists to climb Mount Everest. You may then ask, "Why does it take three months?" Your question is similar to this example.
There may be a lot of reasons why it takes three months to climb Mount Everest. Similarly, enlightenment takes three great countless eons.
When you have all the merits, you take the helicopter and it merely takes you an hour to reach the top of Mount Everest.
Similarly, when you [have the merits to practice] tantra, you don't need to take three great countless eons.
Taking three great countless eons to finish the accumulation of the two collections to achieve enlightenment is according to sutra.
To eradicate and completely abandon the afflictive and knowledge obscurations, that means, to destroy the seeds of the afflictions together with their imprints, one needs to work very hard to accumulate the two collections.
As for the Bodhisattvas' accumulation of the two collections when humans are no longer around: there are numberless world systems. Earth is not the only [realm]. In fact, there are billions of universes.
The realms of existence consist of the desire realm, the form and the formless realms. Sentient beings can be born into the form and formless realms besides the desire realm in which we are in.
It is mentioned in the teachings that when this world of ours disintegrates, the sentient beings of the world can be reborn into the form and formless realms.
When any world system is formed again, then the sentient beings in these upper realms can be reborn into such a world again.
The world system such as ours comes and goes. When it does so, it does not mean that another world system will not come.
Essentially, it just comes and goes, when it is destroyed, it will come back again, then the sentient beings of the upper realms can be reborn into the desire realms. When it goes out of existence, sentient beings in that world system can be reborn in the form and formless realms.

Divisions of the Mahayana paths:

The five Mahayana paths can be divided into the paths of an ordinary Bodhisattva and the paths of an Superior Bodhisattva.
The paths of an ordinary Mahayana being consist of two: the Mahayana path of accumulation and the Mahayana path of preparation.
The paths of a Mahayana Superior consist of three: the Mahayana path of seeing, Mahayana path of meditation and the Mahayana path of no more learning.
If one is referring to the path of Bodhisattva Superior, then there are only two: the Mahayana path of seeing and the Mahayana path of meditation.
Therefore, there is a difference between a Mahayana Superior and a Bodhisattva Superior.
In the context of the Mahayana, these five paths are called the Five Mahayana Paths and not the five paths of the Bodhisattva.

The conditions needed to enter the Mahayana path:

Before someone becomes a Bodhisattva, he has to work very hard to accumulate merit. He can do that by training the mind to generate bodhicitta based on instructions such as the Seven-fold cause and effect instructions starting from:
1) recognizing all sentient beings as having been one's mother, 2) remembering their kindnesses, 3) generating the wish to repay their kindnesses, 4) generating a love considering them as beloved/ attractive/ precious, 5) generating great compassion, 6) generating wholehearted resolve, and finally, 7) generating the mind of enlightenment/ bodhicitta.
Through hard work and perseverance, by relying on an instruction such as the one here, he generates the actual effortless/ uncontrived mind of bodhicitta.
It is only then that he enters the Mahayana path of accumulation, becomes a Bodhisattva and a Mahayanist.

The Mahayana path of accumulation:

The path of accumulation is divided into three: the Small path of accumulation, Medium path of accumulation and the Great path of accumulation.

<p>Mahayana Small path of accumulation: When someone achieves the</p> <p>1) Mahayana Small path of accumulation, simultaneously, he 2) becomes a Bodhisattva 3) generates uncontrived/ effortless bodhicitta 3) becomes a Mahayanist</p>
<p>At this point, it is not necessary that the Bodhisattva has realized emptiness as there can be those who have or have yet to realize emptiness. Therefore, in general, there can be Bodhisattvas who have not realized emptiness.</p>
<p>When the Bodhisattva is on the Mahayana Small path of accumulation, he can still fall backwards in terms of mind generation in that his bodhicitta can degenerate if he was not careful.</p>
<p>It is possible that such Bodhisattvas could also fall into the lower realms even though they had bodhicitta at this point.</p>
<p>If one thinks about this carefully, then there is no doubt that falling into the lower realms in one's next life is almost certain.</p>
<p>Mahayana Medium path of accumulation: When the Bodhisattva reaches the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation, whatever mind generation he has achieved becomes very stable and will never degenerate.</p>
<p>Therefore, from this point onwards, it is not possible for him to fall into the Hinayana.</p>
<p>Mahayana Great path of accumulation: When a Bodhisattva achieves this stage, one of the qualities he gains will be a special concentration called the meditative stabilization of the stream of doctrine.</p>
<p>It is said that when he achieves this meditative stabilization, the coarse obscurations that hinder the hearing the teachings such as not wishing to hear the teachings and so on are purified.</p>
<p>He is able to listen to many teachings, even from representations of the Buddha such as statues and so forth. He is able to remember every single word and meaning of Buddha's teachings that he has heard.</p>
<p>Achieving this is therefore not easy as there are many requirements for that to happen: 1) He must be of the Mahayana lineage 2) He must have accumulated a vast collection of merit 3) He must have abided in pure morality/ ethics 4) He must have engaged in extensive hearing of the Buddha's teachings.</p>
<p>These are the features of the meditative stabilization of the stream of doctrine, a special quality that a Bodhisattva achieves on the Mahayana Great path of accumulation.</p>
<p>Bodhisattvas' main methods of accumulating the collections on the Mahayana path of accumulation: The Mahayana path of accumulation is the time when the Bodhisattvas are accumulating the collections. The main methods to do that on this path is through extensive hearing and reflection.</p>
<p>[The Bodhisattva then achieves the 'Wisdoms arisen from hearing and reflection'.]</p>

The Mahayana path of preparation:

<p>When the Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation complete the trainings on the Mahayana Great path of accumulation, they move on to the Mahayana path of preparation.</p>
<p>This is divided into four stages: Heat, Peak, Forbearance and Supreme Mundane Qualities.</p>
<p>On this path, the Bodhisattva is mainly focusing on meditation and achieves the 'Wisdom arisen from meditation'.</p>
<p>Meditation here, is referring to the threefold activity of hearing, reflection and meditation.</p>
<p>Even though meditation is the main activity on this path, it is not that they do not engage in hearing and reflection, but the main activity is meditation.</p>
<p>Heat Stage of the Mahayana path of preparation: It is so called because, just as when one is trying to start a fire, before one actually sees the fire, one would feel the <i>heat</i> first. This is a sign that the fire is about to start.</p>
<p>Likewise, the Heat Stage Mahayana path of preparation is like a sign that the Bodhisattva will soon perceive emptiness directly, that the Mahayana path of seeing is coming.</p>
<p>At the point of achieving this stage, the Bodhisattva achieves a special concentration which is a union of calm abiding and special insight focusing on emptiness (indicated by D).</p>
<p>Achieving this special concentration is simultaneous with achieving the Heat Stage Mahayana path of preparation.</p>
<p>However, the Bodhisattva must first achieve a calm abiding/ meditative serenity focusing on emptiness, which is a requirement before achieving the special concentration of union of calm abiding and special insight focusing on emptiness.</p>
<p>When a Bodhisattva necessarily realizes emptiness: Therefore, such a requirement must then occur on the Mahayana Great path of accumulation. This means that, a Bodhisattva must achieve the meditative serenity focusing on emptiness there.</p>
<p>One can say then, that the Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana Great path of accumulation have necessarily realized emptiness.</p>
<p>For the Bodhisattvas on Mahayana Small path of accumulation, some have realized emptiness while some have not.</p>

It is unsure whether Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation have necessarily realized emptiness or not.
When a Bodhisattva achieves this special concentration that is a union of calm abiding and special insight focusing on emptiness, he simultaneously achieves the Heat Stage Mahayana path of preparation.
Of the seven divisions of awarenesses, [this wisdom is an inferential valid cognizer.]
Peak Stage Mahayana path of preparation: Before reaching this stage, the Bodhisattva's roots of virtue can be severed. When he reaches this stage, his roots of virtue from here onwards can never be destroyed by wrong views.
Therefore, here, the Bodhisattva has reached the end of the possibility of his roots of virtue being severed.
Since he has reached the very peak of this possibility, therefore, it is called the Peak Stage Mahayana path of preparation.
Hence, he will never be reborn in the lower realms. Even though he still has to take rebirths under the power of his own karma and afflictions, these will only be good rebirths in cyclic existence.
When the Bodhisattva will never fall into the lower realms:
Forbearance Stage Mahayana path of preparation: Although the Bodhisattva on the Peak Stage Mahayana path of preparation will never be born in the lower realms, but he has not gain the confidence [of this certainty.]
At the Forbearance Stage [which can be defined as <i>avoidance</i>], he achieves this confidence that he will never be reborn in [that he will avoid] the lower realms from then on. (F)
Still, it is most likely that the Bodhisattvas who have achieved the Peak Stage Mahayana path of preparation will also not be reborn in the lower realms as their roots of virtue can never be severed. This means that this will only result in good rebirths.
There are also some texts that mentioned that the Bodhisattvas on the Heat Stage Mahayana path of preparation will also not fall into the lower realms as well.
When someone looks at C, he may ask, "The Bodhisattva on the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation will never fall into the Hinayana. Since that is the case, then he should also not fall into the lower realms as well."
Khenrinpoche: Are there Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation who can fall into the lower realms?
Khenrinpoche: Since the Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana Medium path of accumulation will not fall into the Hinayana, then how could they fall into the lower realms? Similarly, once bodhicitta is generated, is it possible to fall into the lower realms?
Supreme Mundane Qualities Stage Mahayana path of preparation:
Of all the paths of an ordinary Mahayana being, this is the highest the Bodhisattva can achieve, this is why it is called 'supreme'. [Since it is an ordinary Mahayana path, it is called 'mundane qualities'.]
The various manifest forms of conceptions of the path of preparation stated in the class notes are according to the Autonomy Middle Way School. This is because, the general study of the paths and grounds are presented according to this school.
One has to analyze whether everything in this section accords with the Consequent Middle Way School's assertions.
The four stages of the Mahayana path of preparation are paths of an ordinary Mahayana being. The Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path of preparation have already realized emptiness, but they are not able to do so directly.
By going through these four stages on the Mahayana path of preparation, the Bodhisattvas weaken the manifest conceptions of true existence by depending on the Wisdom arisen from meditation to suppress the manifest conceptions of true existence.
On the Heat and Peak Stages of the Mahayana path of preparation, while in meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, what appears to this perspective is <i>not</i> the subsidence/ vanishing of dualistic appearances.
This means that the Bodhisattvas at this point still have dualistic appearances and they are aware of that.
For the Bodhisattvas on the Forbearance and Supreme Mundane Qualities Stages of the Mahayana path of preparation, while they are in meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, dualistic appearances <i>appear to subside</i> while actually they have not.
But, they get these appearances as if dualistic appearances have subsided while in fact these have not. The Bodhisattvas are not aware of this fact. If these two stages are compared to the Heat and Peak Stages, the experiences are thus more subtle.
Essentially, the manifest conceptions of true existence gradually diminishes as the Bodhisattva progresses through the Mahayana path of preparation.
On the Supreme Mundane Qualities Stage of the Mahayana path of preparation, when the Bodhisattva is in meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, what appears <i>seems</i> to be the vanishing/ complete elimination of dualistic appearance.
In fact, there are still dualistic appearances, it is just that the Bodhisattva is unaware of that.
Even though they do have realizations of emptiness, but they have not realized that directly. Thus, such a realization is a conceptual consciousness realizing a meaning generality/ generic image/ mental image of the object, emptiness.
Since it is a realization through a meaning generality, then there has to be dualistic appearances.

Although there are dualistic appearances, the Bodhisattvas are unaware of that, it is *as if* all dualistic appearances have vanished. Thus, their minds have become very subtle here.

The mind that realizes emptiness here is a conceptual consciousness. When this transforms into the entity of a direct perceiver [directly] apprehending emptiness, the Bodhisattva achieves the path of a Superior.

The Mahayana path of seeing:

When the Bodhisattva first achieves the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, this is the very first moment when true path arises, which is what a Dharma Jewel is.

Such a particular wisdom directly realizing emptiness becomes the actual refuge, that which actually protects the person.

It is called an actual refuge because, since the root of cyclic existence is ignorance, which are the conceptions of persons and phenomena as inherently existent, then the only way to destroy this is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.

Therefore, when anyone generates this powerful wisdom directly realizing emptiness, this moment is the very birth of an actual refuge in the mind, the birth of true path and the Dharma Jewel.

This is the time when the Bodhisattva possesses in his own mind the actual refuge, the Dharma Jewel. Thus, such a person becomes a Superior Sangha, a Sangha Jewel.

Therefore, one becomes an actual refuge for oneself, one also becomes an actual refuge for other sentient beings as well.

It is only when the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is realized would one start to actually save oneself, thereby being the savior for others as well, as one would have the abilities and powers to do so.

This is because, if one is unable to save oneself, then it would be quite difficult to be an effective object of refuge for others.

Therefore, here, the Bodhisattva becomes a:
1) Mahayana Superior 2) Bodhisattva Superior 3) Person of the Mahayana path of seeing.

It is called the path of seeing because, it is the very first time that someone sees the truth directly. Before this, one would not be able to see the truth directly.

The path of preparation is so called because it prepares someone to see the truth directly. When one is prepared well to the point when one sees the truth directly, then one achieves the path of seeing the truth directly for the first time.

Here, while in meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness, nothing appears except emptiness to this perspective.

All dualistic appearances have subsided, only emptiness appears. There are no dualistic appearances of:
1) true existence 2) conventional phenomena [3) duality of subject and object as separate 4) meaning generality]

According to the Consequent Middle Way School, this is the [only] real unmistakable mind [among sentient beings' minds].

With the exception of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, all the minds in the continua of sentient beings are necessarily mistaken consciousnesses, because all these minds are necessarily pervaded by the appearances of true existence.

Therefore, there is something that is both a mistaken consciousness and valid cognizer.

When the Bodhisattva newly generates the wisdom directly realizing emptiness, this is a very powerful mind that becomes the actual direct antidote to the afflictions.

When the Bodhisattva enters the Mahayana path of seeing, such a mind is called the uninterrupted path in general, and specifically the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.

This is the direct antidote to the obscurations in general, and specifically the direct antidote to the afflictive obscurations, and more specifically, it is the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations.

This uninterrupted path cannot act as the direct antidote to the knowledge obscurations, which is only abandoned from the eighth ground onwards. It also cannot act as the direct antidote to the innate afflictions as well.

Once this realization is achieved, it will never degenerate. The Bodhisattva is confident to achieve enlightenment eventually.

The first ground is called 'Extremely Joyful' as he finally sees his own enlightenment that is definite to come.

Due to that, one can assert that the Superior Bodhisattva will never degenerate into a worldly being again, it is also impossible for him to lose this realization of emptiness.

This is stated very clearly by Chandrakirti in his auto commentary to his own text called '*Engaging in the Middle Way*'.

When the Bodhisattva enters the Mahayana path of seeing, he enters through the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing, which is a state of meditative equipoise focusing directly on emptiness.

But he does not remain in that state of meditative equipoise forever as he has to arise from that and enters into the post meditative equipoise to strive very hard to accumulate merit.

Q & A:

SQ: When the Hinayana foe destroyers enter the Mahayana path, where do they enter from?
Khenrinpoche: Prior to entering the Mahayana path, these Hinayana foe destroyers have not generate bodhicitta yet.
When they generate the uncontrived bodhicitta, they enter the Mahayana path [as like anyone who enters the Paramitayana], through the Mahayana Small path of accumulation.
Even though they possess the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, it is difficult to say that just because of having such realizations, they will travel faster along the various paths to enlightenment. These are not clearly stated in the great treatises.
What they still need to do is to accumulate the collections to achieve enlightenment, which in general takes three great countless eons.
While they are on the Mahayana paths of accumulation and preparation, they have to accumulate the collections over the first great countless eon.
The explanations given so far are from the perspective of someone who enters the Mahayana path from the very beginning, which is different from someone who completes the Hinayana path and then enters the Mahayana path later.
These foe destroyers' modes of progress [in terms of realizations] of course is different, [but the time it takes is the same.]

The Mahayana path of seeing:

The Mahayana Superior paths consist of the Mahayana paths of seeing, meditation and no more learning.
A person becomes a Superior Bodhisattva when he enters the Mahayana path of seeing. Before this, on the Mahayana path of preparation, the ordinary Bodhisattva meditates on emptiness via a meaning generality of emptiness.
When the Bodhisattva perceives emptiness directly for the first time, he: 1) enters the Mahayana path of seeing 2) becomes a [Mahayana] Superior 3) becomes an ultimate Sangha Jewel 4) possesses the Dharma Jewel in the mental continuum.
What are Dharma Jewels and Sangha Jewels: One who is an ultimate Sangha Jewel possesses the Dharma Jewel in the mental continuum. Conventionally, a Sangha is constituted by four fully ordained monks.
In the case of a Superior being, there is no need for four. So long as it is a Superior being, it is the ultimate Sangha Jewel.
Therefore, an ultimate Sangha Jewel need not be an ordained person. Even if a non-ordained person has the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, then such a person is an ultimate Sangha Jewel.
When the Bodhisattva realizes emptiness directly for the first time, this wisdom directly realizing emptiness becomes an actual antidote to the afflictions. This is because, it can actually counteract and destroy the afflictions.
Such a wisdom directly perceiving emptiness in the continuum of a Bodhisattva is the Dharma Jewel, also a true path.
What are uninterrupted paths, paths of release and how the afflictions are abandoned:
Simultaneous with the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness for the first time, the Bodhisattva achieves the first ground called <i>Very Joyful</i> . The Bodhisattva knows that his enlightenment is definite.
When the Bodhisattva enters the Mahayana path of seeing while in meditative equipoise directly perceiving emptiness, simultaneously, this wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is also powerful enough to act as the actual antidote to the afflictions. Such a mind is called an uninterrupted path.
An uninterrupted path must be these two: 1) wisdom directly perceiving emptiness , also 2) act as an actual antidote to the afflictions . The uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing thus acts as the actual antidote to the afflictions.
Afflictions are divided into two: 1) the afflictions that are abandoned by the Mahayana path of seeing, called <i>path of seeing abandonments</i> , and 2) the afflictions that are abandoned by the Mahayana path of meditation, called <i>path of meditation abandonments</i> .
Of these two, the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing acts as the actual antidote to path of seeing abandonment, which are the intellectually acquired afflictions. Such afflictions are coarser compared to the innate afflictions.
Such an uninterrupted path is a wisdom in meditative equipoise that abandons the intellectually acquired afflictions. When these are completely abandoned, this wisdom is given the name the <i>path of release</i> .
In the chart, for the sake of simplicity, it is shown that there is an uninterrupted path and a path of release that is associated to each ten Bodhisattva ground.
In general, the uninterrupted path refers to the 1) wisdom directly perceiving emptiness which acts as an 2) actual antidote to any of the afflictions, the path of release refers to that mind that has been freed from any of the afflictions.
Both the uninterrupted path and the path of release occur in the meditative equipoise directly perceiving emptiness.

During the time when the meditative equipoise acts as the actual antidote to the afflictions, it is called an uninterrupted path.
When the respective afflictions are abandoned, immediately from that moment on for the duration of the same meditative equipoise in the same session, such a meditative equipoise is called the path of release.
Therefore, both are primordial awarenesses/ wisdoms of meditative equipoise.
When the Bodhisattva arises from that meditative equipoise, he enters into the post meditative equipoise.
This is generally how the Bodhisattva progresses in terms of abandoning the afflictions: entering into meditative equipoise, which consists of the uninterrupted path and the path of release. Both of these are the wisdom of meditative equipoise.
When he arises from the meditative equipoise, he enters into the post meditative equipoise by actualizing the <i>wisdom of post meditative equipoise of the first ground</i> to [accumulate the collections].
He then enters again into the next meditative equipoise which consists of the uninterrupted path and the path of release, arise from that meditative equipoise into the post meditative equipoise.
This is how the Bodhisattva progresses through the ten grounds towards enlightenment by abandoning the afflictive and knowledge obscurations.
What is the wisdom of post meditative equipoise of the first ground:
When the Bodhisattva arises from meditative equipoise, he achieves the first ground post equipoise wisdom.
He then strives in amassing the huge collections of merit that [is powerful enough] to abandon the path of meditation abandonments, the innate afflictions that are to be abandoned by the path of meditation.

The Mahayana path of meditation:

The innate afflictions, which are abandoned by the Mahayana path of meditation, are categorized into three: 1) Big innate afflictions 2) Middling innate afflictions 3) Small innate afflictions.
Each of these three are further divided into another three, making a total of nine levels of innate afflictions to be abandoned by the Mahayana path of meditation. Innate afflictions that are:
1a) Big of the <i>big</i> 1b) Medium of the <i>big</i> 1c) Small of the <i>big</i> , 2a) Big of the <i>medium</i> 2b) Medium of the <i>medium</i> 2c) Small of the <i>medium</i> , 3a) Big of the <i>small</i> 3b) Medium of the <i>small</i> 3c) Small of the <i>small</i> .
Based on the chart: When the Bodhisattva abandons the intellectually acquired afflictions, he arises from meditative equipoise and enters into post meditative equipoise. Here, he accumulates vast merit so that he will be able to abandon the innate afflictions that are abandoned by the Mahayana path of meditation.
When the Bodhisattva's wisdom directly perceiving emptiness becomes powerful enough to as an actual antidote to abandon the big of the big innate affliction, then such a meditative equipoise of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness becomes the first ground uninterrupted path of meditation.
On the first ground, there are two uninterrupted paths, the second one is the first ground uninterrupted path of meditation.
This particular uninterrupted path is the actual antidote to the big of the big innate affliction.
When the big of the big innate affliction is abandoned, the Bodhisattva achieves the path of release, which becomes the second ground path of release, where the big of the big innate affliction has been abandoned.
According to the chart, the first ground uninterrupted path of meditation acts as an actual antidote to the big of the big innate afflictions.
By the time the Bodhisattva achieves the seventh ground path of release, he has abandoned all the three big and three middling innate afflictions [1abc + 2abc].
Chart: The seventh ground uninterrupted path acts as the direct antidote to all the three small innate afflictions [3abc].
When the Bodhisattva achieves the eighth ground path of release, he is completely liberated from all the afflictive obscurations, which have been eliminated from his mind. (H) The Bodhisattva becomes a foe destroyer.
Afflictive obscurations are not necessarily afflictions. [There can be seeds of the afflictions which are afflictive obscurations but not afflictions.]
Before abandoning the afflictive obscurations, the Bodhisattva is unable to abandon the knowledge obscurations.
When the Bodhisattva achieves the eighth ground path of release, he enters into post meditative equipoise of the eight ground
He again accumulates a vast collection of merit. When his wisdom directly perceiving emptiness becomes powerful enough to be the actual antidote to the knowledge obscurations, then such a wisdom becomes the eighth ground uninterrupted path.
It is only then that the abandonment of knowledge obscurations starts.

Based on this chart, it shows an uninterrupted path for the eighth, ninth and tenth ground, making three uninterrupted paths, which are the actual antidotes to the knowledge obscurations.
Here, the knowledge obscurations are divided into three: Big, Middling and Small knowledge obscurations.
Since there are three knowledge obscurations, then there are three uninterrupted paths which are the actual antidotes to these three levels of knowledge obscurations.
When the Small knowledge obscurations are abandoned, the Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha and achieves the Mahayana path of no more learning.
The explanations are based on the chart, which differs slightly from the notes.

Increasing qualities and powers of the Bodhisattva along the grounds:

Each of the ten grounds is associated with a particular perfection: Perfection of generosity, Perfection of ethics, Perfection of patience, Perfection of joyous perseverance, Perfection of concentration, Perfection of wisdom, Perfection of method, Perfection of prayer, Perfection of power and Perfection of exalted wisdom.
On each of the ground, the Bodhisattva acquires a special quality associated with these perfections.
On the first ground, the Bodhisattva achieves a special and elevated form of the practice of generosity.
On the second ground, he achieves the special qualities and practices associated with ethics and so forth.
On these ten grounds, the Bodhisattva achieves twelve special distinctive qualities:
For example, on the first ground, in just one moment, the Bodhisattva can enter into one hundred concentrations, see a hundred Buddhas, travel to a hundred pure lands and send out a hundred emanations [to benefit sentient beings.]
These qualities are further enhanced on the second ground. In one moment, the Bodhisattva can enter into a thousand concentrations, see a thousand Buddhas, travel to a thousand pure lands and manifest a thousand emanations.
On the third ground, the qualities are greatly enhanced. In a moment, the Bodhisattva enters into a hundred thousand concentrations, see a hundred thousand Buddhas, travel to a hundred thousand pure lands and manifest a hundred thousand emanations.
Such qualities are increased when the Bodhisattva progresses on the grounds. When he reaches the tenth ground, in a moment, he can enter into a numberless concentrations, see numberless Buddhas, go to numberless pure lands and manifest numberless emanations, all for the purpose of purifying obscurations, accumulate merit and work for sentient beings.

What it takes to become a Buddha:

When one sees how hard these Bodhisattva Superiors work to accumulate merit, then one can appreciate how important it is for one too to accumulate merit.
When one understands about the achievements of the Bodhisattvas, one now realizes that Buddha is nothing near to ordinary.
To become a Buddha, one necessarily needs to abandon these afflictive obscurations, knowledge obscurations and work very hard to accumulate the collections to be able to abandon these obscurations.

Summary of how the Bodhisattva progresses along the learners' paths:

1) Their work start from the moment they enter into the <i>Mahayana path of accumulation</i> : here the Bodhisattva focuses on accumulate the collections, which are mainly hearing and reflection to realize emptiness.
2) On the <i>Mahayana path of preparation</i> , whatever ascertainments and realizations achieved, these are meditated upon to gain the Wisdom arisen from meditation. Such a meditation is done mainly to counteract the manifest conceptions of true existence. But the Bodhisattva still does not have the actual antidote to the afflictive obscurations.
3) When the Bodhisattva sees emptiness directly for the first time, he enters into the <i>Mahayana path of seeing</i> . It is only then that he has the actual antidote to the afflictive obscurations. He uses it to abandon the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations.
4a) When these are abandoned, he begins to abandon the nine levels of innate afflictive obscurations [on the <i>Mahayana path of meditation</i> .] When these are completely abandoned, the Bodhisattva is then freed from all <i>afflictive obscurations</i> .
4b) It is only when the Bodhisattva has abandoned the afflictive obscurations does he start to abandon the <i>knowledge obscurations</i> .
By progressing on the eighth, ninth and tenth ground, the Bodhisattva gradually abandons the knowledge obscurations.
5) When the Small knowledge obscurations are abandoned, the Bodhisattva then becomes a fully enlightened Buddha [and achieves the <i>Mahayana path of no more learning</i> .]

Inconceivable qualities of Buddha:

It is already very difficult to imagine the qualities the Bodhisattva achieves from the first to the tenth ground. If one cannot imagine how the tenth ground Bodhisattva achieves those qualities, then one cannot really appreciate what a Buddha is.

This is beyond the scope of ordinary thought. The Buddha is therefore inconceivable. Even having a rough understanding of the progression on the paths and grounds to become a Buddha, one can have some idea that the Buddha is not ordinary.

Therefore, when one thinks of what Buddha is in terms of the qualities, how inconceivable he is, this is when one have conviction/ faith in Buddha.

Q & A:

SQ: When someone achieves the uncontrived bodhicitta [and enters the Mahayana,] why is there still aspiring bodhicitta?

Khenrinpoche: In the ritual for adopting bodhicitta, in terms of the order, one 1a) *generates aspirational mind generation*. This involves generating the thought: "I will achieve enlightenment to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings." This is done without any commitment, one merely generates this mind.

Next, one 1b) *generates the aspirational mind generation with commitment*, which involves the vow to never give up the aspiration to achieve full enlightenment for others. This is essentially the same, generating the thought to achieve enlightenment to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. But here, one makes an additional vow to never give this aspiration up.

It is only on this basis that one 2) *generates the engaged mind generation with commitment*, which comes with taking the Bodhisattva vows. On top of the earlier vow to never give up the aspiration to achieve full enlightenment for sentient beings' welfare, one makes the vows to practice accordingly the Six Perfections, the deeds of the Bodhisattva.

When one is training to generate bodhicitta, it is all effort, which is why it is contrived. But when the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings' welfare arises effortlessly/ innately, this is the time when one has uncontrived bodhicitta and becomes a Bodhisattva.

Such an uncontrived bodhicitta/ uncontrived mind generation has two: aspirational bodhicitta and engaged bodhicitta.

This [uncontrived mind generation] is not to be confused with the earlier explanation [of contrived mind generation/ contrived bodhicitta (1a, 1b and 2)].

If the question was about the difference between aspirational bodhicitta and engaged bodhicitta, then a different answer would be required.

SQ: Does the Bodhisattva accumulate the collection of merit on the ordinary Bodhisattva paths and accumulate the collection of wisdom on the Superior Bodhisattva paths?

Khenrinpoche: the accumulations of the two collections are not done separately but in unison right at the very beginning of the Mahayana path, the Mahayana path of accumulation all the way to the end of Mahayana path of meditation.

It is not that the ordinary Bodhisattva only accumulates the collection of merit and the Superior Bodhisattva accumulates the collection of wisdom.

Q & A:

SQ: How do the Superior Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana paths of seeing and meditation accumulate the collection of merit in post meditative equipoise?

Khenrinpoche: there are many ways to that. For example, the Superior Bodhisattvas on the first ground *Very Joyful* are able to travel in an instant to a hundred Buddha pure lands and send out a hundred emanations.

Traveling to the pure lands is to listen to the instructions and teachings from the Buddhas. Sending a hundred emanations is to work for sentient beings' welfare.

They also engage in the practices of the perfections of generosity, ethics, patience, joyous perseverance and so forth.

They also make tens of hundreds of thousands of strong and powerful aspirational prayers. These prayers can all be condensed into the *Prayer of Samantabhadra: The King of Prayers*.

When one recites and makes aspirational prayers using this prayer, it is very powerful due to the essence of all the numberless prayers made by the Bodhisattvas.

If one were to condense this King of Prayers, then the [essence would be] the common two verses found there:

*Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra, too, realized things as they are,
I, too, dedicate all these merits in the best way, that I may follow their perfect example.
I dedicate all these roots of virtue with the dedication praised as the best,
By the victorious ones thus gone of the three times, so I might perform the noble Bodhisattva deeds.*

Explanations on the Heart mantra of the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra:

In the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, there is the mantra of the *Perfection of Wisdom*:

TADYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

Since now one has some idea of the Mahayana paths and grounds, one can now look at how the five Mahayana paths can be condensed into this mantra.

Meaning of the first and second Gate:

Gate means 'go', the two *Gate* means 'go, go'. The *first Gate* means to go to the path of accumulation and the *second Gate* to go to the path of preparation. This means that one has to train in both the path of accumulation and path of preparation.

If one has some idea of these two paths, then it will make sense when I say that these two *Gate* means to train in the path of accumulation and the path of preparation.

To really appreciate the first two *Gate*, one really need to have some idea of what exactly is the path of accumulation, what happens on the path of accumulation, what kind of qualities are required.

Similarly, when one is told to go to the path of preparation, it is not going to make any sense unless one has some idea what the path of preparation is, what it involves, the training that is required, the qualities that are attained and so forth.

Explanations were given in the previous lesson on how the transition is made when the Bodhisattva moves from the path of accumulation to the path of preparation, the demarcation between these two paths.

Essentially, one has to gain a special concentration which is a *union of calm abiding and special insight*.

But this is not enough, merely by achieving such a concentration does not necessarily mean one is on the path of preparation.

If the Bodhisattva generates a special concentration which is a union of calm abiding and special insight *focusing on emptiness*, then he transitions from the path of accumulation to the path of preparation. This is very specific.

The Mahayana path of accumulation is divided into three: the Mahayana Small path of accumulation, Mahayana Medium path of accumulation and the Mahayana Great path of accumulation.

On the Mahayana Small and Medium path of accumulation, the Bodhisattva engages in education by hearing and reflection. They work very hard in the practice, the main goal being to generate the wisdom realizing emptiness.

On the Mahayana Great path of accumulation, the Bodhisattva realizes emptiness by generating the meditative serenity/ calm abiding focusing on emptiness.

When the Bodhisattva achieves the special insight focusing on emptiness, he makes a transition from the Mahayana Great path of accumulation to the Mahayana path of preparation.

That which enables the Bodhisattva on the Mahayana Great path of accumulation to make the transition into the Mahayana path of preparation is not bodhicitta but the gradual strengthening of the wisdom realizing emptiness in terms of its profundity and clarity.

As the quality of this wisdom realizing emptiness increases, this is how the Bodhisattva moves from one [path] to the next.

There is still the practices of the six perfections, but it is the development, realization and strengthening of the wisdom focusing on emptiness which enables the transition to higher paths.
The Bodhisattva on the Mahayana path of preparation is able to start harming his manifest conception of true existence.
The Great Lama Tsongkhapa stated in his <i>Three Principal Aspects of the Path</i> : <i>“If you do not have the wisdom realizing the way things are, even though you have developed the thought definitely to leave cyclic existence, as well as the altruistic intention, the root of cyclic existence cannot be cut.”</i>
Even if one has bodhicitta, but if one does not possess the wisdom realizing emptiness, one would not be able to do anything to damage one's ignorance, the root cause of cyclic existence.
Therefore, the wisdom realizing emptiness is of utmost importance: it is this that is the only antidote to the destructive afflictive emotions.
The different five Mahayana paths essentially highlight the positive development of this wisdom realizing emptiness through improvements in quality, strength and so forth.
The whole point of actualizing the paths and travel them to the end is to destroy the afflictions in one's mind.
To do so, one must have the antidote/ solution which is powerful enough to destroy these afflictions. The only antidote that can cut and destroy ignorance is wisdom realizing emptiness.
Meaning of Paragate: 'para' in general means the other side, therefore, <i>paragate</i> means to go over to the other side.
<i>Para</i> here means the path of seeing, therefore, <i>paragate</i> means 'to go over to the path of seeing.'
The Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path of accumulation and path of preparation are ordinary Bodhisattvas/ [Mahayana] ordinary beings. Once a Bodhisattva enters the Mahayana path of seeing, from then onwards he is a [Mahayana] Superior.
<i>Paragate</i> is therefore the demarcation between a [Mahayana] ordinary being and a Mahayana Superior being.
There is a vast difference between these two beings. At this point, the [Mahayana] ordinary being is crossing over/ going beyond the realm of a [Mahayana] ordinary being. When he crosses over, he becomes a [Mahayana] Superior.
This is the demarcation between a [Mahayana] ordinary being and a [Mahayana] Superior being, or one can also say between a [Mahayana] worldly being and a [Mahayana] transcendental being.
On the Mahayana path of preparation, which is divided into the four stages, the ordinary Bodhisattva meditates on emptiness to suppress the manifest conceptions of true existence. He does so with his wisdom realizing emptiness.
But, such a wisdom realizing emptiness is still a conceptual consciousness which realizes emptiness via a meaning generality.
As he progresses on this path, the object of emptiness becomes clearer. When he gains a clear appearance of/ sees emptiness directly for the first time without the need for any mental image on emptiness, he enters the Mahayana path of seeing.
This is how the Bodhisattva transitions from the Mahayana path of preparation to the Mahayana path of seeing.
This transition is gained, once again, on the development of the mind realizing emptiness and not based on bodhicitta.
Such a mind realizing emptiness transforms from a conceptual realization of emptiness into a direct realization of emptiness.
It is only on this point that any sentient being is able to finally acquire, for the first time in the stay in cyclic existence, an actual antidote that is strong enough to directly destroy the afflictions.
The afflictive obscurations that will be abandoned by this wisdom directly perceiving emptiness here is the Mahayana path of seeing abandonment. These are the afflictive obscurations that will be destroyed first.
The Mahayana path of seeing abandonment is the intellectually acquired afflictions together with their seeds. These are destroyed by the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing.
Although the intellectually acquired afflictions together with their seeds are destroyed, but these are still not the root of cyclic existence. The root of cyclic existence are the innate afflictions [together with their seeds.]
These innate afflictive obscurations are the final root that cause circling in cyclic existence. These involve only the innate forms of the apprehensions of a self of person and a self of phenomena.
The uninterrupted path of Mahayana path of seeing merely destroys the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations. It is only after that does the work of destroying the innate afflictive obscurations begin.
It is the same wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that is the direct antidote to both the intellectually acquired and innate afflictive obscurations.
In terms of the object, emptiness that is realized by this wisdom, is the same, it is not that the wisdom realizing emptiness that can act as an antidote to the innate afflictive obscurations have a slightly higher realization of emptiness.
But there is a difference in terms of the collection of merit that accompanies this wisdom. Depending on the strength of the collection of merit that accompanies this wisdom, this makes the wisdom stronger.

After abandoning the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, the Bodhisattva accumulates merit [in post meditative equipoise].
When such a collection of merit is powerful enough to enable his wisdom directly perceiving emptiness to act as a direct antidote to the innate afflictive obscurations, this will be the point where the Bodhisattva achieves the first ground uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of meditation.
This first ground uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of meditation acts as the direct antidote to the first of the innate afflictive obscurations.
Again, the transition from the path of seeing to the path of meditation is done when the Bodhisattva's wisdom directly perceiving emptiness becomes powerful enough to act as a direct antidote to the innate afflictive obscurations.
Meaning of Parasamgate: 'sam' here means perfectly/ thoroughly. This means, the Bodhisattva moves from <i>Paragate</i> to <i>Parasamgate</i> , from the path of seeing, perfectly or thoroughly go over to the path of meditation.
This shows that the Bodhisattva has to move on, from seeing the truth, emptiness directly. There is nothing more to see/ realize. Therefore, he is asked to move on to the path of meditation.
Here, he meditates on the emptiness that he has already seen/ realized [directly], by familiarizing (<i>Tib: Gom connotes familiarizing meditation</i>) with what was ascertained [directly] before.
Based on the chart, there are ten uninterrupted paths on the Mahayana path of meditation. Each of these ten uninterrupted paths is a meditation on emptiness.
After abandoning the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, the Bodhisattva meditates on emptiness and familiarizes himself with what has already been realized to counteract/ destroy the innate afflictive obscurations.
He does so with the meditation directly realizing emptiness.
The first uninterrupted path [of the Mahayana path of meditation] up to the uninterrupted path at the end of the seventh ground before entering the eighth ground uninterrupted paths are all meditations on emptiness.
Such meditations on emptiness are done to destroy the innate afflictive obscurations.
When the innate afflictions together with their seeds [innate afflictive obscurations] are destroyed, the Bodhisattva simultaneously achieves the eighth ground. Here, there are no more afflictions nor their seeds [left over].
But, there are still some obscurations that are left over that needs to be removed. These are the knowledge obscurations that prevents the attainment of omniscience.
On the eighth, ninth and tenth ground, the Bodhisattva continues with his meditation on emptiness, familiarizing that to destroy the knowledge obscurations. Therefore, the path of meditation has many tasks to accomplish.
The Mahayana path of seeing, relative to the Mahayana path of meditation, is very short.
Based on the chart, which represents what happens on the path, it is implying that the innate afflictive obscurations are much more difficult to overcome than all the myriad intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, which are abandoned by merely one uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing. Thus, there also merely one path of release of this uninterrupted path.
But the innate afflictive obscurations are divided into nine levels, and then there are also the knowledge obscurations, which are divided into three. All these make up the obscurations [that are to be abandoned by the Mahayana path of meditation.]
Merely to destroy the afflictive obscurations, so many uninterrupted paths are needed, from the first to the seventh ground.
Following that, another three uninterrupted paths are needed to overcome the imprints of the afflictions.
Meaning of Bodhi Svaha: 'Bodhi' means enlightenment; 'Svaha' generally means planting the base, here it means achieve enlightenment. This shows the Mahayana path of no more learning.
This mantra <i>TADYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA</i> is the essence of the <i>Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra</i> . When this sutra is condensed, it is condensed into this mantra.
When there is no time to recite the entire sutra, then merely accumulating the recitation of the mantra is sufficient.
If one thinks of the meaning of the mantra, one has an idea of the paths and grounds. Although the mantra itself is very short, but its meaning that is encompassed by this mantra is huge. There are so many things to think about when reciting this.
This presentation of the mode of progress of the paths and grounds is explained for those who have a heartfelt desire for liberation.
For one who is genuinely seeking real happiness and liberation, understanding and practicing these instructions are essential and indispensable.

How crucial it is to study Buddha's teachings on emptiness and how fortunate one is to be able do so:

The Buddha's teaching is twofold: scriptural Dharma and realizational Dharma. Within realizational Dharma, there are so many practices and realizations that one can do and achieve.
Of these practices and realizations, the most important is the view of reality, having the realization of emptiness, especially for one who is genuinely seeking peace and happiness (liberation).
An understanding and realization of the ultimate nature of reality, emptiness, is indispensable for such a person.
Therefore, the teachings on emptiness, especially the view/ realization of emptiness is likened to the very heart of the entire Buddha's teachings.
The view of emptiness is the very pinnacle, the crest/ heart/ essence of the entire Buddhadharma. To really understand and appreciate this from the heart, one necessarily needs to know why this is so, how important the view of emptiness is.
For example, based on the explanations on the paths and grounds, when someone moves from one path to the next on the way to enlightenment, one should understand the purpose is to counteract and destroy the cause of suffering, the afflictions.
The transition to every new path is made when the wisdom realizing emptiness progresses and develops.
From this point, one can appreciate how important and indispensable the view of emptiness is, without which, there is nothing that one can do to [destroy] one's afflictions.
In many great treatises, the correct view of emptiness is said to be the very heart and essence of the entire Buddhadharma.
1) Therefore, it is so important, from one's own side, to gain an understanding and conviction in one's heart, how crucial it is to have the correct view of emptiness.
2) It is so important to gain an appreciation in one's own heart, how holy and precious such a view is.
3) It is also important for one to gain a conviction and desire from the heart to want to understand and actualize this view.
To actualize this realizational Dharma, the correct view of reality, which is the pinnacle, heart essence of the entire Buddhadharma, one necessarily needs to rely on the great treatises, the valid texts that explain how to develop the view.
Thus, to realize the Dharma, one necessarily needs to rely on the scriptural Dharma. Of all the myriad types of scriptural Dharma, those great treatises and texts that show the unmistakable meaning of emptiness are the best of all.
1) Based on one's own learning and reflection, one comes to understand how one's own afflictions are the main causes of one's own misery. Among them, one sees that the ego-grasping, the incorrect sense of an 'I', is the source of all the afflictions and thus the source of all of one's sufferings and problems.
2) One then sees the importance of the view/ understanding of dependent arising that enables one to destroy one's root of all of one's past, present and future misery.
When one is able to connect these two points [1 + 2], one will definitely gain a very different appreciation for the teacher, the founder Buddha Shakyamuni, who taught the view of dependent arising.
One will see for oneself, how one's own refuge, the founder Buddha, stands out in the class of its own [as incomparable.]
From here, one will really develop a heartfelt faith and appreciation for Buddha.
From the discussions so far, one can see how it is not easy to gain a personal conviction in one's own object of refuge.
Even though one may consider Buddha to be one's object of refuge, but to really gain a personal conviction that one's founder is really incomparable to any other, one has to really gain a conviction in His speech/ teachings, especially on how the afflictions, the ego-grasping is the root of all of one's problems.
One also has to gain faith in how it is only His teachings on dependent arising that can destroy one's root of suffering. It is only when one sees that would one start to gain an appreciation on how inconceivable Buddha is.
Otherwise, it will be difficult. Many people may feel that Buddha has very little power when compared to say, Brahma, Shiva and other deities. As such, they would rather pray to them. This is a sign that they do not really understand.
When one compares Buddha to other objects of refuge, one has to think clearly: one goes to a refuge to solve one's problems.
There are two ways to solve problems: one is getting to the root and eliminating the problem once and for all. But, the usual way of correcting the problem is merely to address the symptoms and not the cure.
By relying on worldly gods, they may be of some help temporarily, but this does not really solve the problem.
One has to discover how one's own ignorance is the root of all of one's problems, how it is only the Buddha's presentation on emptiness, especially His teachings on dependent arising, is the only antidote to destroy the root of suffering.
When one combine these two understandings together, one will then begin to realize how precious Buddha is, how He is completely in the class of His own. One will then really generate a different kind of faith and trust in Buddha.

To develop such faith of conviction, it is really important to educate oneself. This is why I always encourage studying.
One must have faith in a specific goal before one can aspire for it. It is only with a strong aspiration for this goal would that translate into effort. When one puts in effort, one will achieve one's goal.
To achieve the goal, one needs joyous effort. Sustained effort can only come from a stable aspiration. Stable aspiration cannot arise without a stable faith. Among the different levels and qualities of faith, here it is that which arise from understanding.
To have such faith, one necessarily needs to investigate, learn and study to find out for oneself.
Whatever one is doing here [in the Basic Program], it becomes a supporting condition to move towards genuine faith, which helps to have stable aspiration, this will translate into stable effort, which will produce the result.
Therefore, one is actually very fortunate to have such opportunities to listen and reflect on the Buddha's teachings.
Even if one does not achieve anything spectacular/ realization from this, even merely having the opportunity to learn and gain some understanding of these texts is really very fortunate.
When one develops an actual faith of conviction in Buddha [and His teachings] that arises from understanding, one can say that one has made one's precious human rebirth meaningful.
Therefore, one should persevere and ensure that whatever one is doing here, learning and reflecting, becomes a supporting cause for one to move closer and closer towards generating a stable and unshakable faith of conviction.
Many great masters of the past have said that, of all the Dharma understanding anyone can have, the highest understanding is the understanding of dependent arising.
The heart of all the realizational Dharma is the wisdom realizing emptiness. The best of all the scriptural Dharma are the great treatises that show the meaning of dependent arising which points to emptiness.
Based on these scriptural Dharma, when one actually gains a correct understanding of emptiness, such an understanding that one possesses will be the highest of all the Dharma knowledge one can have.
All the four Buddhist tenets are the same in asserting that liberation can only be attained when one realizes selflessness. Even though they differ on what selflessness is, but they are all the same in saying that, without realizing selflessness, there is no way to progress towards liberation.
They are all the same in asserting that the way to progress towards liberation is mainly through the realization of selflessness.
All of them accept the Four Seals that attest any particular doctrine is Buddha's teachings:
1) All compounded phenomena are impermanent 2) All contaminated things are misery 3) All phenomena are empty and selfless 4) Nirvana is peace
The third seal: All phenomena are empty and selfless, is extremely important. It is only when one has the basis of the third seal would one have the fourth: Nirvana is peace.
Therefore, if one desires peace, this is only achieved on the basis of understanding the third seal, how all phenomena are empty and selfless.
One can relate the Four Seals to the Four Noble Truths:
1) <i>All composed phenomena are impermanent</i> can be related to <i>True Origins</i> . 2) <i>All contaminated things are misery</i> can be related to <i>True Suffering</i> . 3) <i>All phenomena are empty and selfless</i> can be related to <i>True Path</i> . 4) <i>Nirvana is peace</i> can be related to <i>True Cessation</i> .
Without understanding how all phenomena lack a self, one would not achieve a nirvana that is peace.
Therefore, the realization of selflessness is indispensable in achieving liberation and enlightenment.
This is why all the Buddhist tenets assert the Four Seals. This means they all assert that phenomena are empty and selfless.
But they have different view as to what empty and selfless mean. It is only the Consequent Middle Way School's explanation of emptiness that is the most profound and correct, that accords with reality.
They assert that all phenomena, persons and phenomena other than persons, are empty of existing inherently.
Even though this is the case, it is very natural for people to ask: "Why is it that I must learn the other tenets' assertions? I just need to learn the view of the highest school and that alone will be enough."
There are differing views of the various Buddhist schools with respect to the root of cyclic existence, grasping at a self. Due to this, there are thus these four different views of what cyclic existence is. Due to these four differing views, then when solutions are given, there would also be four. This is why, there are these different presentations of selflessnesses.

<p>It is the Consequent Middle Way School's explanation of what cyclic existence is that is the clearest, most profound and most subtle. Because this presentation is so precise, profound and subtle, this makes their presentation of selflessness the best.</p>
<p>This is because, since they have identified the problem correctly, then obviously the solution they propose, the view of selflessness, would be the most profound, correct and subtle.</p>
<p>It is mentioned in the teachings that there are extensive and great benefits of hearing and reflecting on the teachings of emptiness.</p>
<p>For example, according to the <i>Three Hundred Verses of the Perfection of Wisdom</i>, it gave an example of someone who makes offerings of the seven kinds of precious jewels.</p>
<p>He makes offering of these seven kinds of precious jewels enough to fill the entire space of cyclic existence and then offer them to all the Buddhas. The merit accumulated would thus be inconceivable.</p>
<p>But when this merit is compared to someone who merely takes a four line verse from this sutra, which teaches on the topic of emptiness and then teach that to others, the merit accumulated by this latter person is much greater.</p>
<p>In general, it is good and useful to remember the benefits of doing something as this can motivate one into doing so.</p>
<p>Therefore, based on this quotation, one can gain some understanding of the merit one can accumulate merely by learning and thinking about emptiness. Such merit accumulated is much more than filling the whole cyclic existence of precious offerings.</p>
<p>There are people who get discouraged in the course of studying, thinking: "What's the point of learning all these intellectual knowledge, it would be better if I went to do a hundred thousand prostrations or a hundred thousand mandala offerings as I want to accumulate merit!"</p>
<p>If one were to think about this quotation, one would understand that there is no comparison. This is assuming that the Buddha does not lie, and He probably does not.</p>
<p>If one were to think about the benefits as well as the merits of learning and reflecting on selflessness and ascertains for oneself that indeed there are these benefits and merits to be gained, then one will find one's effort on learning and reflecting on emptiness to be worthwhile. One would realize how fortunate one really is. One would then be able to truly rejoice.</p>
<p>If one has an overview of the importance of realizing emptiness: how the root of all of one's problem is ignorance, how the only antidote that can destroy that is the mind realizing emptiness, which has to come from understanding dependent origination, if one has a complete overview of all these perspectives and place them together, one would then really appreciate the benefits one can get that is mentioned in this sutra.</p>

Q & A:

SQ: Does the Bodhisattva practice only one perfection on each ground?

Khenrinpoche: There is a perfection associated with each of the ten grounds, but it is not that the Bodhisattva only practice, for example, generosity on the first ground and not the rest. On the first ground, the Bodhisattva practices all the perfections, it is just that this practice of generosity on the first ground becomes very developed and special. It exceeds the practice of ethics, for example, while on the first ground. When he moves onto the second ground, he achieves the perfection of ethics. Here his practice of the perfection of ethics becomes very developed compared to the practice of ethics on the first ground. When he reaches the sixth ground, the Bodhisattva's practice of wisdom becomes very developed and special. Taking the Superior Bodhisattva's practice of the Perfection of Wisdom as an example: from the first to the sixth ground, the Bodhisattva enters into meditative equipoise where he meditates on emptiness directly. On the first to the fifth ground, he does not have the ability to enter at will into meditative equipoise on emptiness and subsequently arise from that meditative equipoise in an instant of a finger snap. But on the sixth ground, the Bodhisattva achieves a special practice of the Perfection of Wisdom. Here, he can enter in an instant into meditative equipoise and in another instant, he can arise from that meditative equipoise. This is the explanation on how the Bodhisattva's practice of wisdom is extremely developed and special when he achieves the sixth ground. He can enter and arise from meditative equipoise repeatedly and easily. Before achieving this ground, the Bodhisattva finds it difficult to do that. The reason a particular perfection is related to each of the ten grounds is merely to show that, on those respective grounds, the Bodhisattva gains a very special practice that is related to the perfection of that ground. It is not that, for example, before reaching the first ground, the Bodhisattva is not practicing generosity and so forth.

The importance of learning about emptiness and the correct motivation of doing so:

As explained in previous module, all four Buddhist tenets hold the view of selflessness to be very important to understand and to realize. They are the same in asserting that one must actualize/ realize selflessness.
This is because, all of them assert that the root of cyclic existence/ all of one's problems lies in one's ignorance.
Even though they differ as to what this is, but they all assert that it is ignorance that is the root of cyclic existence/ all undesirable results/ all sufferings.
They are also the same in asserting that the only antidote to this ignorance is the wisdom realizing selflessness that can destroy one's apprehension of the self, the root of all of one's problems.
Therefore, this makes realizing selflessness so extremely important.
As mentioned before, one should understand for oneself from the heart, that the source of all of one's problems lies in one's ego-grasping, the apprehension of a self.
On this basis, one should understand that the only solution to this is the wisdom realizing selflessness.
One should also understand that it is only one's founder, Buddha Shakyamuni, who has revealed such a path of selflessness.
When one put all these understandings together, it is only then would one be able to develop an exceptional faith in Buddha.
One would then be able to see how different He is, how He is in the class of His own, unmatched with founders of any other religions/ philosophical systems.
It is only then that one would be able to differentiate between the Buddha and the founders of other philosophical views/ traditions/ religions.
Of all the available philosophical/ religious beliefs in this world, it is only in Buddhism that the view of selflessness is taught.
No other religious traditions ever teach about <i>no self</i> .
This is the reason why the Buddha explained about the great benefits of merely reading, writing or explaining to others the sutras/ treatises that have selflessness as the subject matter.
The reason there are such benefits is essentially the reasons that were explained: the view of selflessness is the only antidote to the root of one's problems, one's apprehension of a self.
There are also many different quotations from the sutras about the benefits of listening to the teachings on emptiness. There are so much merit one can accumulate merely from listening to the teachings.
Above this, if one were to reflect on the meaning on what one has heard, then the merit that one accumulates is even greater than merely listening to the teachings.
Better still, if one were to meditate/ familiarize oneself with what one has already ascertained from reflection, then the merit that comes from the meditation on emptiness will definitely be much greater.
The great master Aryadeva has said that, at the time of those who possess small merit, with respect to the Dharma teachings on selflessness, one does not generate profound doubt. However, even if one generates mere doubt, this will tear cyclic existence apart. This [mere] doubt is the doubt tending towards the factual.

Put aside the realization of emptiness, even merely having doubts about [the self], when one wonders and then generates such a doubt that tends towards the factual, this alone can allow one to start to shake one's entire [sense of] cyclic existence.
While there are so many benefits to be gained from and also important to learn and reflect on selflessness, one must remember to do so with a correct motivation as having that is extremely important.
The main reason Buddha gave teachings on emptiness and so forth is to help sentient beings achieve liberation from cyclic existence and full enlightenment. To do these, one has to destroy one's ignorance with the view of selflessness.
Without the view of/ understanding/ realizing selflessness, there is no way to destroy one's afflictions.
Since these are methods/ ways for one to tame/ destroy one's afflictions, therefore, one should keep this as the motivation whatever one has to opportunity to learn or merely reading, for example, the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra.
One's motivation should be the wish to gain an understanding/ realization of selflessness so that one can destroy the afflictions, through which, one can achieve liberation from cyclic existence and full enlightenment.
This is extremely important to have pure motivation and a very extensive and big mind when one is studying these texts.
The Buddha taught selflessness to give one the antidote to destroy one's ignorance, an apprehension of the self.
This is so that one can gain liberation from suffering and enlightenment. This is Buddha's main purpose [of teaching.]
Likewise, when one learns/ study/ reflect and so on on emptiness, it is extremely important to do so with a correct motivation
This has to be the wish to destroy one's afflictions with the view of selflessness so that one can achieve liberation from cyclic existence and full enlightenment. Therefore, it is important to have a correct motivation and a big goal.
If one's thinks small, if one's motivation/ mind/ perspective is small, the result would likewise be small as well.

Etymology of the title:

The sutra starts with stating the title/ name of the sutra: <i>Bhagavati-prajnaparamita-hridaya</i> .
Many great treatises and the Tibetan translations of the sutras, the title of the text is first stated in Sanskrit. There are different reasons for this. One is that, the Buddha taught the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Sanskrit.
By expressing the title in Sanskrit, it is expressing the preciousness of this language. This also place imprints in the readers' mind to know Sanskrit in the future. It is a cause for receiving blessings in the mind.
<i>Bhagavati</i> , when translated in Tibetan is <i>Chom Dān Dā</i> , in English, it is <i>The Destroyer Fully Endowed Gone Beyond</i> .
In terms of gender, generally, <i>Bhagavan</i> is male and <i>Bhagavati</i> is female. <i>Prajna</i> is Wisdom, <i>Paramita</i> is Perfection and <i>Hridaya</i> is the Heart Essence. Paramita is Perfection, it means <i>Gone to the other side</i> .
One can look at this meaning from the perspective of the act of going or the act of having arrived to the other side.
If it is from the perspective of the act of going, then it refers to a learner, one who is traveling towards full enlightenment.
It is from the perspective of the act of having arrived, then it refers to a Buddha.
On the learners' path, there is a discussion on whether the perfections exist or not.
From the perspective of the Consequent Middle Way School, they assert that the perfections exist in the learners' path.
In the presentation of paths and grounds, the perfections are explained starting from the first ground. For example, the Perfection of generosity are extensively explained.
There are different etymological divisions of the Perfection of Wisdom:
1) Natural Perfection of Wisdom 2) Textual Perfection of Wisdom 3) Path Perfection of Wisdom 4) Resultant Perfection of Wisdom.
1) The Natural Perfection of Wisdom is the emptiness of the mind, which can also be called <i>Natural nirvana</i> and <i>Tathagatagarbha/ Tathagata Essence</i> .
While this is a nominal/ etymological division of the Perfection of Wisdom, it is not an actual perfection of wisdom.
2) The texts that have emptiness as the main subject matter are called Textual Perfection of Wisdom.
3) The Exalted Knowers in the continua of Superior Bodhisattvas are the Path Perfection of Wisdom, which is an actual perfection of wisdom.
4) The Resultant Perfection of Wisdom is the Omniscient Wisdom.
I guess the very title of this sutra, the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, essentially derives from its main subject matter. This is because, its main subject matter is on <i>emptiness and the wisdom realizing emptiness</i> .
Of all the types of wisdom, the wisdom realizing emptiness is the most supreme.

Common prologue – the Four Perfect Factors:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas.</i></p>
<p>This is the prologue/ opening. In this section of the prologue, there are four perfect factors:</p>
<p>1) Perfect time 2) Perfect Teacher 3) Perfect place 4) Perfect retinue.</p>
<p>1) Perfect time is shown by the first sentence '<i>Thus did I hear at one time.</i>' <i>Did I hear</i> shows that the sutra was heard directly from Buddha Shakyamuni Himself and not through a third party. <i>At one time</i> shows that this teaching was heard only once. This shows how rare it was to be able to hear teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom.</p>
<p><i>At one time</i> could also mean that the listeners were of very sharp wisdom/ faculties. By merely hearing it once, they can remember everything. If one were to think who exactly is this <i>I</i> in <i>Thus did I hear</i>, this gets a bit complicated.</p>
<p>The '<i>I</i>' would refer to the person who compiled the teachings. Historically, after the Buddha passed into parinirvana, it is said that three councils were convened to compile/ collate and compose the Buddha's teachings from memory.</p>
<p>With respect to the compilation of Buddha's teachings, there were the compilation of Hinayana teachings as well as the Mahayana teachings.</p>
<p>What is commonly known now in the world about the compilation of Buddha's teachings was an event compiling the Hinayana teachings known as the <i>Pali Canon</i>.</p>
<p>The first compilation was done (by the first council) one year after the Buddha passed away into parinirvana.</p>
<p>King <i>Madgadha</i> sponsored this and many arhats came together to compile the teachings. The main ones being <i>Ananda</i> and <i>Kasyapa</i>.</p>
<p>Ananda was mainly responsible for compiling the Sutra Pitaka, while Kasyapa was mainly responsible for compiling the Abhidharma Pitaka and <i>Wakho (Tib)</i> was mainly responsible for compiling the Vinaya Pitaka.</p>
<p>The second compilation happened after a hundred years after Buddha's passing into parinirvana. The main sponsor for this was King <i>Ashoka</i>.</p>
<p>According to available explanations, there was also a compilation of the Mahayana teachings. This took place a week after Buddha's parinirvana. The main compilers were <i>Manjushri, Vajrapani and Maitreya</i>.</p>
<p>It was said that there was an assembly of a million Bodhisattvas when the Mahayana teachings were compiled.</p>
<p>Manjushri compiled the Mahayana Abhidharma Pitaka, Maitreya compiled the Mahayana Vinaya Pitaka, while Vajrapani compiled the Mahayana Sutra Pitaka.</p>
<p>Therefore, there are the three [Hinayana] scriptural collections, the three [Mahayana] scriptural collections.</p>
<p>How the scriptural collections are differentiated:</p>
<p>The three scriptural collections are differentiated through the main subject matter: the main subject matter of the Vinaya Pitaka is the higher training in ethics, the main subject matter of the Sutra Pitaka is the higher training in concentration and the main subject matter of the Abhidharma Pitaka is the higher training in wisdom.</p>
<p>The translators of the past devised a system to help readers identify the scriptural collection that any particular text fall into.</p>
<p>The distinction is made based on the object of homage:</p>
<p>a) If the translated text belonged to the Vinaya Pitaka, then at the beginning of the text, homage would be paid to <i>The Omniscient One</i>.</p>
<p>b) If the translated text belonged to the Sutra Pitaka, then at the beginning, homage would be paid to <i>Buddhas and Bodhisattvas</i>.</p>
<p>c) If the translated text belonged to the Abhidharma Pitaka, then at the beginning, homage would be paid to <i>Manjushri</i>.</p>
<p>Perhaps the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra could belong to the [Mahayana] sutra Pitaka. Since that is the case, then the compiler of this sutra would be Vajrapani.</p>
<p>2) Perfect Teacher is shown by the phrase '<i>The Bhagavan.</i>' The Tibetan translation of <i>Bhagavan</i> is <i>Chom Dän Dä</i>.</p>
<p><i>Chom</i> means to destroy, as a noun then it is <i>Destroyer</i>. This is because, the Buddha is someone who has destroyed the afflictive and knowledge obscurations.</p>
<p><i>Dän</i> literally means <i>to possess</i>. The Buddha is someone who has destroyed all the unfavorable, opposing factors, the afflictive and knowledge obscurations. Therefore, He is endowed with or possesses all the good qualities.</p>
<p><i>Dä</i> literally means to go beyond. This is not found in the Sanskrit word 'Bhagavan', but the meaning [of going beyond] is implied in the word. Therefore, the Tibetan tradition inserted <i>Dä</i> to show that Buddha has gone beyond the extremes of samsara and nirvana. It also means that the Buddha is superior to worldly gods.</p>

<p>3) Perfect Place is shown by '<i>was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain</i>'. There are many interpretations as to what <i>Mass of Vultures</i> mean.</p>
<p>One interpretation is that it is a place where many vultures gather. Another is that the shape of the mountain resembles the shape of the vulture's head. Some text mentioned that during the time when Buddha was giving this teaching, many Bodhisattvas came to listen to the teaching in the aspects of vultures. But this is a non-essential point.</p>
<p>4) Perfect Retinue is shown by '<i>together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas</i>'.</p>
<p>The <i>great community of monks</i> here refer to the Hearer and Solitary Realizer foe destroyers/ arhats. The <i>great community of bodhisattvas</i> refer to Bodhisattvas. This means that the disciples for this Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra are the Hearers, Solitary Realizers and Bodhisattvas.</p>
<p>This is the [common] prologue which shows when this sutra was taught, who the teacher was, where this teaching took place and those present.</p>

Uncommon prologue – The blessing and the condition that inspired the question:

<p><i>At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception.” Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.</i></p>
<p>Here, there is a discussion on Blessing: 1) Who was conferring the blessing 2) Who received the blessing 3) How the blessing was given.</p>
<p>1) The blessing was conferred by Buddha while He was in meditative equipoise/ remained in concentration, which is called <i>the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception.”</i></p>
<p>The object of observation Buddha was focusing on while in this meditative equipoise was emptiness. The mind that was placed in this meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness was the concentration called Profound Perception.</p>
<p>Essentially, this means that Buddha was in meditative equipoise focusing on emptiness.</p>
<p>The Buddha conferred blessings while in meditative equipoise, remaining in this concentration called Profound Perception.</p>
<p>2) The person that was blessed by Buddha was Shariputra. Essentially, the blessing caused Shariputra to engage in a question and answer session with <i>Avalokiteshvara</i>. Therefore, Shariputra was blessed by Buddha to ask the question.</p>
<p>3) <i>Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.</i></p>
<p>This was said to be the cause of the question that Shariputra would ask later.</p>
<p>While Buddha was in meditative equipoise, Avalokiteshvara was also in meditative equipoise where he <i>looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.</i></p>
<p>After that, Shariputra would begin to ask his questions. This shows the condition for Shariputra's question, the condition being Avalokiteshvara in meditative equipoise.</p>

Shariputra's question on the way to practice the Perfection of Wisdom:

<p>Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?” He said that</p>
<p><i>Through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara.</i> This shows that, Shariputra did not ask the question merely through his own volition. Rather, it was asked due to the power of Buddha.</p>
<p><i>How should any son of the lineage train.</i> Here, there is no mentioning of <i>daughter of the lineage</i>.</p>

SQ: What is the reason that the question from Shariputra is not through his own volition but through Buddha's blessings?
 Khenrinpoche: I not not exactly sure. Shariputra was abiding in the aspect of a Hearer, but the question that he asked was a question about the Perfection of Wisdom on the Bodhisattva's path. Since he was abiding in the aspect of a Hearer, then perhaps he could not have asked that question through his own volition since it was a question about the Bodhisattva's path.

Q & A:

SQ: Why does one need to take the engaged vow to gain enlightenment and not merely practice the six perfections alone?
Khenrinpoche: If one is able to practice the six perfections, then I personally think that it would not be necessary to take the engaged vow before one engages them.
But, before one engages in the six perfections, one must have the wish/ aspiration to engage in them.
Such a wish is somewhat like the vow/ commitment/ pledge.
Imagine that one is going to an important destination. Before one sets out, one must have an idea of going. One then has the wish to go and thus makes the commitment to go. Based on this, one then actually sets forth to go.
Of course, there are people who merely go wherever it takes them without thinking. Khenrinpoche: these people do not reach their [intended] place but reach different places [other than where they thought they were going.]
Therefore, if it is an important task, then that important task probably has to be preceded by a commitment to accomplish it.

How fortunate one is to be able to learn the teachings, thus one should joyously persevere in one's study:

Lama Tsongkhapa, in his praise to Shakyamuni Buddha [in the hymn entitled <i>Essence of Well-Uttered Insights</i>] for teaching dependent origination, uttered this verse:
<i>Nonetheless, before the stream of this life flowing towards death has come to cease, that I have found slight faith in you, even this I think is fortunate.</i>
Likewise, having the opportunity to look at the Buddha's teachings when one studies these philosophical teaching, even though they are challenging, but through this process, if one does gain some faith in Buddha, this makes one very fortunate.
Even if one does not achieve any experiences or realizations, but if one finds that has developed some faith in Buddha based on one's learning and reflection, then this makes one a very fortunate person. One should remember this and feel happy.
Particularly, one should understand that having an opportunity to study and learn the Buddha's teachings on emptiness is really so fortunate/ [blessed]. One should therefore keep this in mind constantly.
Now that one has an opportunity to learn with many others, the presence of others in the same class is a condition for one's [success in] study.
This is because, generally, if one is listening or studying alone, it is much more challenging than if one were to do the same with others around. The presence of others in the class is [a favorable] condition for one's own studies.
One should consider everyone in the class as precious and helpful. Therefore, it is good to have mutual consideration and respect for each other. Thinking in such a way is helpful.
In the great seats of learning of the monastery, students of the same class sharing the same teacher are generally very close and harmonious. They feel that "this is my class and these are my classmates, we are in this together."
Of course, at times there will be disagreement, but in general, they feel that they are all together in the same class and teacher.
Such feelings of unity are very strong and this is the culture in the great seats of learning in the monastery.
Likewise, here, one can also adopt the same thinking that all of us are in the same class [sharing the same teacher.] One should have the feeling of unity and practice pure perception with one another.
When there are such feelings [towards each other], then when it comes to such activities as discussions, due to this feeling of unity, then there should not be any problems having discussions and so forth.
Without [such thoughts of closeness], then it would be difficult to have discussions.
It is possible that at times there are disagreement between people, this is normal. But, one has to keep in mind to come together in unity and harmony.
Everybody here is studying the same thing. Therefore, when one is learning the materials, one should not have the idea that: "Oh, this is terrible, it is so difficult..." One should engage in learning happily and voluntarily.
It is the same with coming to class, which should be done willingly, voluntarily and happily. These must come on the basis of one knowing the benefits, for example, the benefits and merits of studying emptiness. Without which, this may be difficult.
One comes to class at the end of the day's work feeling tired, which is then compounded by not understanding while one fails to see the benefits and so forth. Of course, then it will be difficult.
Please keep in mind constantly that one is indeed very fortunate to be able to do even a little bit of learning despite living in such a busy country with such a busy life.

Prologue and Shariputra's question:

<i>Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas. At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called "Profound Perception."</i>
The beginning of the sutra up to this point is the [common] prologue.
Mostly, the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras are classified under the <i>Sutra Pitaka</i> . This would make the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra part of the Sutra Pitaka as well.
It starts with <i>Thus did I hear at one time</i> . The "I" shows the compiler. If the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra belongs to the Sutra Pitaka, this would make <i>Ananda</i> the compiler of the sutra.
From a common perspective, the teachings, which were compiled under three councils, are now commonly known as the Pali Canon, which consists of Hinayana teachings.
If one were to look at the Buddha's teachings from the Mahayana perspective, then <i>Vajrapani</i> would be the compiler of this sutra.
By reading this section, one gets an idea that the Buddha taught this very special teaching on the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra at a special place called <i>Mass of Vultures Mountain</i> .
The teachings were heard by <i>a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas</i> . This means that the listeners consisted of the persons of all three lineages/ vehicles.
<i>At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called "Profound Perception"</i>
While in this concentration, the Buddha blessed Shariputra so that he would initiate the series of questions which would be followed by answers from Avalokiteshvara.
<i>Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.</i>
This shows the cause/ condition for the question that Shariputra is going to ask next.
Shariputra's question on the modes of practicing the Perfection of Wisdom:
<i>Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: "How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?"</i>
In the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit version of the sutra, it says <i>How should any son of the lineage train</i> . However, in the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit version, <i>the daughter of the lineage</i> is also mentioned.
If only <i>the son of the lineage</i> is mentioned here, then this would refer to the person to whom the question is asked, this would mean Avalokiteshvara. In <i>who wishes to practice</i> , then the "who" would include both sons and daughters of the lineage.
If one were to read it this way, then this would be correct as the persons who are going to practice the Perfection of Wisdom would not merely be Avalokiteshvara. Any sons or daughters of the lineage can be included.

Avalokiteshvara's responses – Mode of training in the path for those of inferior faculties – Training on the paths of accumulation and preparation:

The transition:
<i>He said that and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra. "Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this,</i>
The above is the transition [between Shariputra's question and Avalokiteshvara's] actual explanation:
The mode of training in the ultimate nature of the aggregate of form:
Actual brief explanation: <i>correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.</i>
This is the actual explanation, which has two divisions, brief and extensive. This is the brief actual explanation which would be applied to the general procedure of the [Learners' paths]: Paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing and meditation.
Actual extensive explanation [starts from here all the way to before Buddha's affirmation of Avalokiteshvara]:
<i>"Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.</i>
This shows the way to meditate on emptiness while on the path of accumulation and path of preparation.
The meditation on emptiness on the path of accumulation and path of preparation is done via a meaning generality of emptiness. But on the path of seeing, emptiness is perceived directly. On the path of meditation, one meditates/ familiarizing with the emptiness that one has seen directly on the path of seeing.

Correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature. The “also” here shows that, it is not only forms and the rest of the aggregates are empty of inherent existence, even the collections of forms and so forth are empty of inherent existence.

How one must realize dependent arising first before one can have any chances of realizing emptiness:

According to the Consequent Middle Way School, emptiness of inherent existence is mutually inclusive with the emptiness of exist from its own side. There are no phenomena that exist from their sides.

All phenomena are posited as mere appearances of the mind. This means that, there are no phenomena that exist from their own sides, just like the appearance of a dream elephant to the dream consciousness.

In a dream, there is an appearance of a dream elephant. But the appearance of the elephant is not coming from the side of the object. This is because, there is no such object. Still, there is this appearance.

This appearance is an appearance to the perceiving consciousness, in this case, a dreaming consciousness.

What this dream elephant is, in the final analysis, is essentially that which is an appearance to this dream consciousness.

Likewise, all phenomena do not exist from their own sides, they are mere appearances of the mind.

Therefore, use this analogy of a dream elephant to think of the emptiness of inherent existence:

In a dream, when one has an appearance of a dream elephant, this appearance of a dream elephant does not exist from its own side, there is nothing from the side of the object but a mere projection of the mind.

It is an appearance to the dreaming consciousness, the creation of the dream consciousness. It is not as if there is a real functioning elephant there.

Likewise, all phenomena that exist, exist as a mere creation of the mind, something that is merely imputed by thought.

Phenomena do not exist in and of themselves, from their own sides.

One should use this analogy to understand how all phenomena do not exist from their own sides but rather, all phenomena are posited as mere appearances to the mind, merely imputed by thought, a creation of the mind.

This is because, there is [absolutely] nothing from the side of the object. One should understand this based on the analogy.

Phenomena do exist, they exist as mere appearances to a conventional mind/ consciousness. This is how phenomena exist, as mere appearances that appear to a conventional consciousness.

If one is not satisfied with this level of appearances and looked further, one would not be able to point to/ find the object.

Therefore, [phenomenon] exists. How does it exist? As mere appearances. If one were to look for the imputed object, one would not be able to find it. Yet [phenomenon] exists, how so? As mere appearance.

One therefore has to be satisfied with that. That is how things exist. If there is anything beyond that, then one would encounter problems, as when one tries to look for it, one would not be able to find it.

Yet, it exists, how does it exist? As mere appearances to the mind. One has to be satisfied with that.

One of the most important thing to understand first, before one can have any chances of understanding emptiness of inherent existence, is that phenomena are merely imputed by thought. This is the very first step.

The word “merely” eliminates inherent existence.

Mistaking a coil of rope to be a snake:

When the conditions are present, this can happen. One can mistake a coil of rope to be a snake.

Firstly, there is an appearance a snake from the side of the rope. Above this, one grasps at/ believes in/ assents to the appearance that there is a snake there.

There is a coil of rope appearing as a snake. One then assents to this appearance, one believes that it is a snake. This then induces fear and worry, without [such a believe], there is no fear. It is only when the mind assents to the appearance of snake would the fear arise.

The reality is that, it is merely a coil of rope. There is no snake there. When one looks at the coil of rope, from the beginning to the end, one would not be able to find a snake on the rope.

There is no snake [characteristic] about the rope: there is no snake in the rope, on the rope. The rope itself is not the snake.

This is very clear. But still, there is a mind believing that there is a snake. Therefore, this believe in a snake there on the coil of rope, is it made up/ imputed by mind?

From this, one can see that, the coil of rope appearing as a snake is the fabrication of the mind. The rope appearing as a snake is not coming from the side of the rope. The mind fabricates/ imputes “snake”.

This shows that, the coil of rope appearing as a snake is completely imputed by mind, nothing to do with the coil of rope.
Is the coil of rope appearing as a snake, a result of one's mind's fabrication, or is it due to the pollution or corruption from the side of the rope?
If one looks for the snake amongst the coil of rope, there will be nothing about the coil of snake which will be a snake, from any direction one looks at it.
But the coil of rope is appearing as a snake. Therefore, is this coil of rope appearing as a snake, a fabrication of one's mind?
If one thinks about this, the coil of rope appearing as a snake is a mere appearance of the mind.
Applying the understanding of the analogy to the actual object/ meaning:
Using the above to apply to the sense of 'I'/ the thought apprehending 'I', it is similar to the appearance of a coil of rope as a snake in that [the 'I'] is a mere appearance to the mind.
According to the Consequent Middle Way School, the 'I' is that which is merely imputed in dependence upon the basis of designation, the five aggregates of the body and mind: form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness
These five aggregate are the basis of designation of the person. In dependence upon the aggregates, the 'I' is merely imputed.
If one looks for an illustration of an 'I', something that one can point to as the 'I' amongst the five aggregates one by one, one would not be able to find the 'I'. The 'I' is not the aggregate of form, feeling, and so forth.
This is the same as the analogy of mistaking a coil of rope as a snake, when one looks for snake in/ on that coil of rope from its beginning to its end, from every direction, one would not be able to find anything that is snake.
Likewise, if one looks for the 'I' amongst the aggregates, which are the basis of designation for 'I', starting from form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and ending with consciousness, one would not be able to find anything that is 'I'.
In the final analysis, the 'I' is [none other than] that which is merely imputed by thought in dependence upon the aggregates which are [the 'I's] basis of designation.
Just as the snake which is merely imputed upon the coil of rope having no snake on/ in/ outside the coil of rope, likewise, there is no 'I' that can be found amongst the aggregates.
In the end, the 'I' is that which is merely imputed by thought in dependence upon the aggregates just as the way the snake is merely imputed [in dependence] upon the coil of rope.
Phenomena are merely imputed because, they cannot be found among their bases of designation. The basis of designation is not the phenomenon that is imputed. Therefore, phenomena are merely imputed by thought.
One can use various analogies to understand: 1) mistaking a coil of rope as a snake 2) dream elephant 3) mirage 4) echo etc.
If one looks for the 'I' amongst the basis of designation, the aggregate of form, feeling and so forth, the 'I' is not form, not feeling and so forth. The 'I' cannot be found amongst the basis of designation, the basis of designation is not the 'I'.
If the 'I' is not [one with] the aggregates, then is the 'I' a different entity from the aggregates?
If one were to look for an 'I' that is of a different entity from the aggregates, one would also not be able to find the 'I' as well.
The 'I' is not the aggregates, the 'I' is also not a different entity from the aggregates. Does this then mean that the 'I' does not exist? No, the 'I' does exist. How does the 'I' exist if it is not one with the aggregates and not different from the aggregates?
The 'I' has to exist. It will be ridiculous to say that the 'I' does not exist. It is commonly known in the world that the 'I' exists.
According to the Consequent Middle Way School, the 'I' does not exist from the side of the aggregates, phenomena do not exist from the side of the basis of designation, they are not the basis of designation. Yet phenomena exist. How so?
In the end, phenomena are that which are posited by conventional consciousness, there are nothing more and nothing less.
Phenomenon exists, but it does not exist from the side of the basis of designation, yet it exists, by being merely posited by mind. Specifically, it is posited by conventional consciousness.
The coil of rope appearing as a snake is essentially a fabrication of the mind/ imputed by the mind.
In the end, the self / I / person is none other than that which is imputed in dependence upon the aggregates.
Therefore, both are the same in being merely imputed by mind, but in the case of mistaking a coil of rope as a snake, although the idea of a snake is imputed, in reality the [snake does not exist].
However, in the case of the 'I', the 'I' does exist. Although both are the same in that [they came about by being] merely imputed by mind, there is a big difference as one exists while the other does not.
The mind apprehending a coil of rope as a snake is a wrong consciousness, because the coil of rope is [simply] not a snake.
There has never been a snake, there is no snake there anywhere on the coil of rope.

Although it is merely imputed by mind, but there is no snake there. The snake does not exist, that is a wrong consciousness.
But in the case of the thought conceiving/ apprehending 'I', this is a factually concordant thought because the 'I' does exist.
This is potentially complicated as one is comparing two things: an appearance of a coil of rope as a snake and the appearance of the self / I / person. Even though both are merely imputed by thought, yet, one does not exist while the other does.
If both are merely imputed by thought, then how does one account for why one exists while the other does not?
The essential point about settling the view of emptiness and completing it is that: while one sees that things and events do not exist inherently, yet at the same time, one can fully explain how it functions.
Therefore, one needs to conclude in one's heart about what it means when the Consequent Middle Way School says that all phenomena are merely imputed by mind.
One has to make use of all the analogies of dream elephant, mistaking a coil of rope as a snake, illusion, mirage, echoes etc. to figure out: are things merely imputed by mind? If so, how are they merely imputed by mind?
According to the Consequent Middle Way School, all phenomena are merely imputed by mind/ thought. Anything that is not merely imputed by thought but existing from its own side/ inherently would be the object of negation.
Therefore, if one has settled that all phenomena are merely imputed by mind, then anything that is not that would be the object of negation: inherent existence/ existence from its own side.
The mind assenting/ conceiving/ apprehending things to exist inherently from their own sides without being merely imputed by mind, such a mind is what we call an apprehension of true existence.
If things really did exist exactly in the way this mind views them, then this would prove that indeed, there is inherent existence, true existence, existence from its own side.
Therefore, the Consequent Middle Way School says that all phenomena do not exist inherently, do not exist from its own side, there is no single element of inherent existence, existence from its own side.
Everything is merely imputed by thought, this includes the self / I / person.
Therefore, as Nagajuna said in his <i>Precious Garland</i> : <i>A being is not earth, not water, not fire, not wind, not space, not consciousness, not all of them, and not other than them.</i> <i>What person is there other than these?</i>
A person is not each of these elements, not a collection of all these, [and also not other than them,] and since the person has to exist, then [the only way the person can exist] is that which is merely imputed in dependence upon the collections of the elements/ aggregates.
When one looks for the phenomenon amongst its basis of designation, taking the self / I / person as an example, when one looks for the 'I', one cannot mention the 'I' without mentioning the body and mind.
If the 'I' existed inherently, then it should exist amongst the basis of designation. One finds that the 'I' is not this or that aggregate and so forth. One does not find the 'I' when one looks for it amongst the aggregates.
But, this does not mean that one has found the non-existent of the 'I'.
The correct analysis would lead one in the direction where one would see that one is not finding the inherently existent 'I'.
It is not about finding the non-existent of the 'I'.
The analysis should conclude with the understanding that the 'I' is indeed not inherently existent. There is no inherently existent 'I'. The wrong conclusion would be that the 'I' does not exist.
Even though [one may intellectually know] that the inherently existent 'I' does not exist, but one needs to look for it amongst the aggregates to gain the conviction.
When one looks for it, in the end, the correct conclusion would be that one should find the non-existence of the inherently existent 'I', but finding the inherently existent 'I' to not exist is not the same as finding that the 'I' does not exist.
According to the Consequent Middle Way School, just because one finds that the object in question does not exist inherently, does not mean that one has found its non-existence.
When things do not exist inherently, this does not mean that things cannot exist. Because, all phenomena do not exist inherently, yet they do exist, as merely imputed by thought.
Therefore, existence and inherent existence are not the same. When things exist, it does not mean they exist inherently.
Things are dependently originated/ arisen. There are phenomena that come about by depending on causes and conditions, this is dependent arising at the level of causality.
Such phenomena that are the result of causes and conditions, that came about in dependence on causes and conditions.

Because things are dependently arisen/ originated, therefore, things do not exist inherently. This is the essence.
Things/ phenomena come into being/ are created in dependence on other factors. This makes such phenomenon dependently arisen. A dependently arisen phenomenon is not inherently existent.
Therefore, dependently arisen and inherent existence are mutually exclusive, they actually contradict each other.
If something exists by depending on something else, it cannot be inherently existent. One fact automatically cancels the other.
Therefore, one of the best method to gain understanding on emptiness of inherent existent is the logic of dependent arising.
Through this, one understands how things are empty of existing inherently. One can also account for things existing as merely imputed by thought/ mind.
Back to the analogy of mistaking a coil of rope as a snake: there is an <i>appearance</i> of a snake right there from the side of the rope. One has concluded that that appearance is a mere fabrication/ creation of the mind.
The appearance is not coming from the side of the rope, the snake is merely imputed by thought, this is the reality.
But, this is not how it appears. Although the snake is merely imputed by mind onto the coil of rope, the mind does not realize/ see that it is merely imputed by mind. There is an appearance of a snake right there projecting itself from the side of the rope.
Although this is not the reality, but this is how it appears. The reality is that it is merely imputed by mind, but there appears to be an appearance of a snake coming right there deeply from the side of the coil of rope.
Likewise, although in reality, the self / I / person is none other than that which is merely imputed in dependence upon the aggregates, the basis of designation, but when one has a sense of 'I', it does not appear as merely imputed.
The 'I' seems to exist amongst the body and mind, coming right there completely from the side of the body and/ or mind.
While there is this reality of the 'I' and other phenomena, which are merely imputed in dependence upon the basis of designation, in the case of an 'I', the body and mind, this is not how the 'I' and phenomena appear to one.
They do not appear as merely imputed, they appear as existing right there from the sides of their bases of imputation.
Even though there is appearance of inherent existence, this is actually not the real problem. When one completely assents to/ believe in the appearance that it exists in the way it appears, then this becomes the root cause of circling in cyclic existence.
When one mistakes the coil of rope as a snake, even though there is no snake from the side of the rope, that the snake is merely an imputation by mind, but there is the appearance of the snake right there from the side of the rope.
Not only is there an appearance, one assents to/ believes in the appearance, that there is actually a snake there.
Due to that believe, there comes fear. Although there is no snake there, but yet, one's belief that there is a snake there causes the fear to arise and other resultant problems that come with it.
Likewise, all of one's problems and sufferings come from assenting to the appearance of an inherently existent 'I', believing that the 'I' indeed is inherently existent.

Continuing with the root text:

The sentence in the sutra: <i>correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature</i> , is a brief explanation of the emptiness of inherent existence.
The extensive explanations come after this, starting with the four-fold emptinesses.

Training in the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation and preparation:

The transition: Shariputra begins by asking: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?”
Responding, Avalokiteshvara says: “Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this.”
Mode of training in the ultimate nature of the aggregate of form:
Brief explanation: “correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.”
The answers given by Avalokiteshvara essentially show how the perfection of wisdom is practiced on the Mahayana paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing and meditation.
Avalokiteshvara answers by giving a brief overview of how the perfection of wisdom on the paths, that one “correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.”
Detailed explanation: What follows is an expanded explanation of this brief statement:
<i>“Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.”</i>
This pertains to the training in the perfection of wisdom on the Mahayana paths of accumulation and preparation.

Fourfold emptiness, the profound endowed with the four aspects: Firstfold – Form is empty

Avalokiteshvara says that <i>Form is empty</i> . Form here should be taken to mean one's own form aggregate.
One's own form aggregate is empty. It is empty of inherent existence.
Essentially, the aggregate of form of a person is only an appearance to the perspective of a non-investigating and non-analyzing conventional consciousness.
When the mind that engages in ultimate analysis and looks for what form is, it does not find to be inherently existent.
When form is investigated by a mind engaging in ultimate analysis, an inherently existent form/ form that exists from its own side is not found.
What form is, is essentially none other than the appearance to the non-investigating, non-analyzing conventional consciousness. Therefore, this shows that form does not exist from its own side.
It is like a dream elephant: a dream elephant does not exist from its own side. What a dream elephant is, is merely an appearance to the dreaming consciousness, there is no real elephant anywhere there from its own side.
Likewise, form does not exist from its own side, what form is, is none other than a mere appearance to the consciousness.
Form is like a dream elephant, just like it, form does not exist from its own side. Therefore, form is in the nature emptiness.
Form is emptiness. Question: If form does not exist inherently, then does it mean that form is does not exist non-existent?
Does it mean that, form is non-existent because it does not exist inherently? No.
While form is empty of existing inherently, form can be posited as a mere appearance conventionally.
While it is true that the dream elephant is not established as an elephant, one still can posit the appearance of dream elephant.
The dream elephant is not established as elephant, it is empty of elephant/ being an elephant/ not an elephant.
But this fact does not eliminate/ refute dream elephant. Dream elephant still appears, one can posit a dream elephant.
Likewise, when this analogy is applied to the meaning, while form is empty of existing inherently, this does not refute the mere appearance of form conventionally, does not stop one from positing form as a mere appearance conventionally.
1) Is the dream elephant elephant? No. 2) Is it established as elephant? No. 3) Is the dream elephant empty of elephant? Yes.
These are the different ways of saying that dream elephant is not an elephant.
If the dream elephant is an elephant, then it would also follow that, when one dreams of oneself as a billionaire, one would be an actual billionaire.
Dream consciousness in general is a mistaken consciousness. While the dream elephant appears as an elephant, it is not an elephant. Therefore, it is a mistaken appearance and the dreaming consciousness is a mistaken consciousness.
A dream elephant is not an elephant; when stated in philosophical terms, dream elephant is not established as an elephant.

Therefore, a dream elephant is empty of being an elephant. While it is not established as an elephant/ empty of being an elephant, it does not negate the mere appearance of a dream elephant.
While a dream elephant is not a real elephant, one can conceive/ posit/ assert a dream elephant as it exists.
Likewise, while form is empty of existing, there is not contradiction in its existing as a mere appearance to a consciousness.
If one were asked, “Is dream elephant an elephant?” One would have to say no. Then if one were subsequently asked, “Does dream elephant exist, is there a dream elephant?” One would have to say yes.
There is a dream elephant, but a dream elephant is not an elephant. But dream elephant does exist.
If one were to pursue this and look for the nature of this dream elephant, then one would have to say that the dream elephant is essentially the mere appearance to the dreaming consciousness and nothing other than.
One cannot posit something else other than as a dream elephant. What it is, is a mere appearance of an elephant to the dreaming consciousness.
Since dream elephant exists, it is asserted as a phenomenon sourced form. It is merely an image/ an appearance of an elephant to the dreaming consciousness.
There are many other analogies: 1) an apparition of an illusory elephant conjured by an illusionist. Such an apparition/ illusion exists, but it is not an elephant.
2) The reflection of a moon in the water. The reflection of a moon in the water is not moon, but this reflection exists.
3) The reflection of an object in the mirror. The reflection of an object is not the object, but the reflection exists.
1) The illusory elephant conjured by an illusionist exists, but it is not an elephant. Therefore, since the illusory elephant exists, it is nothing other than the <i>appearance of an elephant</i> to the eye consciousnesses of the audience and the illusionist.
This analogy is very much the same as the analogy of the dream elephant.
This is explaining what <i>form is empty</i> means: just like a dream elephant is not an elephant, empty of being an elephant, this does not contradict/ stop a dream elephant from appearing.
Likewise, while form is empty of existing inherently, one can posit form as a mere appearance conventionally, which is not refuted/ contradicted by the fact that form is empty of existing inherently.
If form is empty of existing inherently, does this mean that form ceases to exist? No. While it is empty of existing inherently, it still exists.

Secondfold emptiness – *Emptiness is form*

This is shown in the next phrase: <i>Emptiness is form</i> .
The meaning is this: Although form is empty of existing inherently, one still can account for form's existence.
Qualm: If dream elephant is empty of elephant, then is form empty of form? No.
Even though dream elephant is empty of being an elephant, this should not be wrongly applied to the meaning.
This is a wrong way to apply the analogy: just as a dream elephant is empty of being an elephant, likewise, then form should also be empty of being form. This is not so.
The correct way of applying the analogy is this: just as a dream elephant is empty of elephant, form is empty of existing inherently.
The purpose of linking the analogy of a dream elephant to the meaning is to help one understanding by way of <i>an example that is known to the world</i> : that, although form appears to exist inherently, form does not exist inherently.
Such an example serves to allow anyone who has not realized emptiness to understand the meaning [of the phrase.]
Anybody should understand that, when one wakes up from the dream, one understands that the dream elephant is not an elephant. One does not need to have realized emptiness to realize that the dream elephant is not an elephant.
Therefore, this is something that any ordinary being can relate to and understand easily.
Therefore, the use of analogies that that is known to the world helps those who have not realized emptiness understand how phenomena such as form is empty of existing inherently.
The Consequent Middle Way School divides conventionalities into real and unreal <i>only</i> from the perspective of a worldly consciousness. In reality, there is actually no such thing.
But from the perspective of a worldly consciousness (one who has not realized emptiness), there is a division of real and unreal conventionalities.

While an ordinary person who has not realized emptiness is able to realize that the dream elephant is not an elephant, it is a different matter when it comes to form, because form is a real conventionality in the perspective of a worldly consciousness.
This is because, a worldly consciousness apprehends form to be truly existent/ inherently existent. One believes this is how it exists, to exist in the way it appears.
Form appears as inherently existent, [above this, one also] believes/ assent to that appearance, that this is how form exists.
In the perspective of a worldly consciousness, form is a real conventionality as [this consciousness believes] it to exist in the way it appears. To such a consciousness, there is no disparity between reality and appearance.
To a worldly consciousness, there is no way to see the disparity between how things exist and how they appear.
Everything that appears is taken at face value to exist in exactly in the way it appears to be truly existent.
It is only through the gradual process of investigation using logic and reasoning that one can come to see the disparity between reality and appearance, especially after realizing emptiness.
It is only then can one realize that form is not true but a falsity.
Form is empty, it is empty of inherent existence/ empty of existing inherently. While form is empty of existing inherently, form exists, as a mere appearance conventionally.
While it is empty, there is no contradiction, there is nothing that can stop the positing of form.
Therefore, this shows that, emptiness is form.
Think about these [twofold emptiness] of <i>Form is empty, emptiness is form</i> using the analogy of the dream elephant:
The very fact that the dream elephant is not an elephant does not stop the existence of dream elephant as one can account for dream elephant even though the dream elephant is not an elephant.
In fact, one [has to] account for a dream elephant while the dream elephant is not an elephant.
While form is empty of existing inherently, this does not necessarily mean that form does not exist. This is because, while form does not exist inherently, form exists.

Third and Fourthfold emptiness – *Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness*

Qualm: 1) Form is a compounded/ impermanent phenomenon, the emptiness of form is an uncompounded/ permanent phenomenon. 2) Form is a conventional truth while the emptiness of form is an ultimate truth.		
Since that is the case, do these two have separate/ different entities. No. They are not different entities. A form and its emptiness are one entity and not separate entities. Therefore, in the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, it says:		
<i>Emptiness is not other than form</i> , 'not other than form' means that emptiness (of form) is not of a different entity from form. Then, <i>form is also not other than emptiness</i> .		
When the secondfold emptiness says <i>Emptiness is form</i> , one cannot take that literally as it is clear that emptiness is not form.		
This is because, an uncompounded phenomenon cannot be a compounded phenomenon.		
What it means is, while form is empty of existing inherently, within this emptiness of form, one can still account for form.		
Form and form's emptiness are not different entities but one entity.		
A dream elephant and its being empty of elephant/ its emptiness of elephant are one entity.		
Just as a dream elephant and its emptiness of elephant are one entity, likewise, understand that form and form's emptiness of inherently existent are one entity.		
Therefore, the third and fourthfold emptiness show that form and form's emptiness are one entity.		
The entity of form is not separate/ different from form's emptiness of inherent existence.		
A dream elephant is empty of elephant/ not an elephant. Therefore, there is a dream elephant and its emptiness of elephant.		
One cannot talk about a dream elephant that is separate from its emptiness of elephant.		
This is because, when one separates the two, one cannot logically account for one and not the other.		
Form and form's emptiness of existing inherently are not the same, they are different.		
Although they are not the same, they are one entity, although they are one entity, they are not the same.		
	One entity	Different isolates
Form	One entity	Form is not the same as/ form is different from its emptiness
Emptiness of form	Not different entities	Emptiness of form is not the same as/ is different from form

Summary of the meaning of the fourfold emptiness:

Fourfold emptiness:	What it means:
1) Form is empty	Form does not exist inherently.
2) Emptiness is form	While form is empty of existing inherently, form exists
3) Emptiness is not other than form	The emptiness of form is not of a different entity from the basis of the emptiness, form
4) Form is also not other than emptiness	Form is also not of a different entity from its ultimate nature, its emptiness of existing inherently

Extending the same analysis to the remaining aggregates:

Similarly, one has to apply these fourfold emptiness to the rest of the aggregates: feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness: <i>In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.</i>
This paragraph shows the training in the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation and preparation through [listening and] reflecting on these fourfold emptiness.
The realization of emptiness on the paths of accumulation and preparation is a realization through a meaning generality of emptiness. It is not realized directly.

Training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of seeing:

<i>Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.</i>
' All phenomena ' here, when elaborated into categories, there are 1) the twelve sources and 2) the eighteen constituents.
1) Twelve sources: 1a) The six objects which are the objects of observation of 1b) The six consciousnesses.
2) Eighteen constituents/ elements:
2a) The six constituents which are objects [1a]– constituents of form, sound, odor, taste, tangible object and phenomena.
2b) The six inner constituents, essentially the sense powers which are the basis for generating the respective consciousnesses – inner constituents of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mental.
2c) The six consciousnesses. By depending on the six object and the six sense powers, the six consciousnesses are produced: consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mental.
These eighteen phenomena are collectively known as the eighteen constituents.
'All phenomena' here means that the eighteen constituents are emptiness [empty of existing inherently].
' Without characteristic ' would mean that all phenomena are not established by way of their characteristics.
' Unproduced ' means that all phenomena that are produced from causes and conditions, such as forms etc, are not produced inherently but merely produced conventionally. Therefore, they are unproduced.
' Unceased ' means that all phenomena that are produced from causes and conditions necessarily cease, but their cessation is not an inherent cessation but merely a conventional cessation. Therefore, they are unceased.
' Stainless ' means that, all the stains and defilements such as cyclic existence and its causes do not exist inherently, therefore, they are stainless.
' Not without stain ' means that, the state of abandonment of the stains, the state of <i>nirvana</i> , also does not exist inherently, therefore, it is without stains.
' Not deficient, not fulfilled ', these two are related to the class of the <i>thoroughly afflicted phenomena</i> and the class of the <i>thoroughly purified phenomena</i> .
The faults that are class of the thoroughly afflicted phenomena decreases as one progresses along the paths. But such a decrease does not occur inherently. Therefore, it is not deficient.
Similarly, the increase/ improvement of the different qualities that are the class of the thoroughly purified phenomena also does not exist inherently. Therefore, it is not fulfilled.
This short paragraph shows the training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of seeing. On this path, emptiness is perceived directly.

Q & A:

SQ: What is posited as the basis of designation of the aggregates?
Khenrinpoche: It is easier to use the person as an example. The basis of designation of the person is the aggregates.
A person is imputed in dependence upon the collections of aggregates/ body and mind. So, the collection of aggregates is the basis of imputation. The five aggregates are the basis of designation for person.
The basis of designation of one's form aggregate would have to be the collection of the limbs, hands, torso, head etc.
<i>Shantideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds</i> has quite an extensive explanation on, for example, what the basis of designation of the hand is: the palm, fingers, etc.
The fingers themselves [are the basis of designation] of the joints and so forth. Therefore, [whatever the basis of designation is, it has to] depend on what phenomenon it is.
Essentially, one [examines] each level from say, the body, to the individual parts of the body, when one looks at the individual parts of the body, these are also made up of their own parts.
Going all the way down to the particles level, even these are not established inherently, nothing is.
Such a line of investigation would reveal that the very concept of whole is dependent on its parts while the parts make up the whole.
Therefore, this is the uncommon feature of the Consequent Middle Way School that all phenomena are dependently originated/ dependently arisen.
There is not a single existent that is not dependently arisen. Therefore, dependently arisen phenomena are necessarily not inherently existent.
SQ: The selflessness of person is not explicitly taught in the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra. Where is it explicitly taught?
Khenrinpoche: This sutra mentions about forms and so forth but there does not seem to be any direct reference to the words 'self, I, person'.
If one looks at the second paragraph: <i>Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.</i>
The word 'also' here is very important. This is because, what it means is, not only is the person empty of existing inherently, the aggregates themselves, which are the basis of designation of the person, are <i>also</i> empty.
There is an explanation [commentary] of what the word 'also' means: not only is the person empty of existing inherently, the basis of designation of the person, the aggregates themselves are <i>also</i> empty of existing inherently.

Q & A:

SQ: How does one link the teachings on the path of seeing that the eighteen elements and so forth are empty of inherently existing to the objects of abandonment of the path of seeing that are presented on the Mahayana paths and grounds?
Khenrinpoche: The paragraph which states: <i>Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.</i>
This shows the training on the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation and preparation.
The paragraph: <i>Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.</i> This shows the eight features of the path of seeing.
In the commentary, ' <i>All phenomena</i> ' here explains that on the basis of the eighteen constituents.
There are therefore the discussion on the twelve sources and the eighteen constituents. These will be explained in detail in the next paragraph teaching on the Mahayana path of meditation.
The main objects of abandonment on the ten grounds are the two obscurations: the afflictive obscurations and the knowledge obscurations.
Afflictive obscurations are of two types: intellectually acquired and innate afflictive obscurations.
The intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations are abandoned on the path of seeing.
Before achieving the path of seeing, one is unable to realize/ see emptiness directly.
When one perceives emptiness directly, one achieves the path of seeing. It is only then that one starts to possess in one's hand the actual antidote to the / apprehension of true existence.
In the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, the paragraph that states <i>Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness</i> and so forth is explaining about the eight characteristics of emptiness.
Although this eight features of emptiness is mentioned in the commentary in the context of the path of seeing, it is difficult to explain why this is in relation to the path of seeing and not something else.
What is so common about these eight features that is related to the path of seeing? There does not seem to be any explanation for this.
It is the same with the fourfold emptiness. Using form as an example, the paragraph that states: <i>Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness.</i>
Why is it only explained in the context of the Mahayana path of accumulation and path of preparation and not somewhere else? This fourfold emptiness is applicable on all paths as it is explaining the nature of emptiness.
Likewise, when the Mahayana path of meditation is explained, there are the expanded discussions on the five aggregates into the twelve sources and the eighteen elements, the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Links of dependent origination and so forth
Why are these explained in the context of the Mahayana path of meditation.? This is something that is common to all paths.
There does not seem to be any explanations as to why these are explained in their respective contexts, just that it is presented like that in the commentaries.

What to reflect on when reciting '*Emptiness is form*':

In this paragraph of the sutra, form is used as an illustration: <i>Form is empty. Emptiness is form.</i>
This is not just about form. One also has to think about other illustrations like the 'I': <i>'I' is empty. Emptiness is 'I'. Emptiness is not other than 'I'; 'I' is also not other than emptiness.</i>
When one is thinking of: <i>Form is empty, emptiness is form</i> , what form essentially is, is the mere appearance to consciousness
Because it is a mere appearance to the consciousness, therefore form does not exist by its own nature/ inherently, [is empty].
Because form does not exist inherently/ is empty of existing inherently, therefore, what form is, is just a mere appearance to the consciousness. Therefore, emptiness is form.
<i>Emptiness is not other than form</i> : the very nature/ entity of this appearance as form is none other than emptiness of existing inherently. [The form's] nature as being empty of existing inherently is not of a separate nature from the appearance as form.
While form is empty of existing inherently, it exists as a form which is a mere appearance to the mind.
Therefore, what form is, the nature/ entity of form, is not something separate or different from its emptiness.

Even though form is used here as an illustration, one can substitute it with the 'self, I, person' and reflect on the ultimate nature of the 'T'.
In the final analysis, the essence is that, while the 'T' is empty of existing inherently, it functions/ exists within it being empty of existing inherently.
It is clear that when one looks for the 'T' on/ amongst the aggregates, its basis of designation, one would not be able to find the 'T'. What the 'T' is, in the final analysis, is none other than that which is merely imputed by a conventional valid cognizer in dependence upon the aggregates.
If the 'T' existed inherently, it should be found. One looks for the 'T' on the aggregates, the basis of designation of the 'T', to see if it exists on the aggregates, in the aggregates, any part of the aggregates.
It should be clear when one looks for [one's 'T'] on/ amongst the aggregates, the basis of designation, such an 'T' cannot be found. Because it cannot be found, therefore, 'T' is empty.
When one thinks/ conceives of how the 'T' exist/ appears, it appears that the 'T' <i>is</i> the aggregates, somewhere there, whether it is this aggregate or that aggregate or the collection of the body and mind.
One believes that it is this appearance somewhere there. Not only is there this appearance, one firmly believes that it is the case that the 'T' exist in the way it appears, as one with the aggregates.
This is how the 'self, I, person' appears to one and this is how one strongly believes how the 'T' to be/ exist.
What one has to check is this: even though this is how the 'T' appears and this is what one believes, but is that exactly how the 'T' exist? If it exists in the way one believes to be, then it should be findable upon detailed investigation/ analysis.
However, at the end of the analysis, it is said that it cannot be found.
The 'T' appears to one as oneness with one's body and mind. This composite of one's body and mind [is believed to be] the 'T'.
This is what one thinks/ feels/ believes: that how the 'T' appears is how it exist.
If it is there in the composite of one's body and mind, then it has to be found.
If the 'T' is in the composite of one's body, then if one engages a surgeon to look for it, cutting the parts individually, one would still not be able to find it. If it existed in the way one believes it to be, then it should be found.
When one searches in detail for the 'T', believing it to be oneness with one's body and mind, then it has to be found.
But when one looks for it, and yet not be able to find it, then this shows clearly that 'T' does not exist from the side of the basis of designation/ from the side of the body and mind, the aggregates.
If it does not exist from the side of the aggregates, then this would only mean that, what the 'T' is, is none other than that which is merely imputed in dependence on the aggregates (which is different from “merely imputed <i>on</i> the aggregates.”)
This is what one can reflect on when reciting the phrase: <i>Emptiness is form</i> , [replacing form with 'T'].
When one looks for the 'T', if it really existed in the way one believes it to be, it should be inside one's composite of body and mind. Yet,, when one looks for it, one would be able to find it.
If one cannot find, this clearly shows that the 'T' cannot exist from the side of the aggregates.
Although it does not exist from the side of the aggregates, it does not mean that the 'T' does not exist as it does exist.
Whether it is the 'T' or form, what these are, in the final analysis, are the mere appearances to the mind, that which are merely imputed in dependence on the aggregates.
When one looks for the inherently existent form, one cannot find it. While one cannot find such an inherently existent form, it does not mean that form does not exist as it does.
What form is, is essentially none other than which is a mere appearance to the mind.
This is what one can reflect on when one recites the phrase: <i>Emptiness is form</i>
The 'T' is empty of existing inherently, therefore, 'T' is in the nature/ entity of emptiness. While it is empty, it exists.
Therefore, form arises from emptiness
Of course, to understand this is extremely challenging, it is not something that can be understand quickly but requires constant and regular reflection.
One can start with this fourfold emptiness, using different objects of 'T', form and so forth to understand it through the basis of the analogies as mentioned before.

Training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of meditation – mode of training on this path in general:

<p><i>Shariputra, (1) therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness; (2) no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; (3) no visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon. (4) There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element. (5) There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. (6) Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path; (7) there is no exalted wisdom, (8) no attainment, and also no non attainment.</i></p>
<p>1) In the sentence: <i>Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness</i>, this is referring to the emptiness of inherent existence of the five aggregates.</p>
<p>2) In the sentence: <i>No eye (source), no ear (source), no nose (source), no tongue (source), no body (source), no mind (mental source)</i>, these are the [emptinesses of the] six sense powers.</p>
<p>3) <i>No visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon</i> refers to the [emptinesses of the] six objects of the respective consciousnesses.</p>
<p>These six sense powers and six objects constitutes the twelve sources.</p>
<p>4) <i>There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element</i>, the eye element and so forth refer to the [emptiness of the] six sense power, the six sources: eye source, ear source, nose source, tongue source, body source and mental source.</p>
<p>No mental consciousness element refer to the [emptinesses of the] six consciousnesses of the: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mental consciousness. These two sets are explicitly stated.</p>
<p>What are also implied in meaning in this sentence are also the six objects of the respective consciousnesses, the [external] constituents of: form, sound, odor, taste, tangible object and phenomenon constituents. These six meanings are implied here.</p>
<p>Altogether, the eighteen constituents are shown. These are collective called the [emptinesses of the] eighteen constituents.</p>
<p>Note: The twelve sources are not something separate from the eighteen constituents, but part of them.</p>
<p>5) <i>There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death</i> refer to the emptinesses of the twelve links of dependent origination in the forward and reverse process.</p>
<p>The [forward process of the] twelve links of dependent origination starts with: ignorance, compositional activity, consciousness, name and form, six sources, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, potential existence, birth, aging and death.</p>
<p>The twelve links of dependent origination can be explained in the forward process or the reverse order.</p>
<p>In this way, it is then linked to the discussion on the A) <i>class of the thoroughly afflicted phenomena</i> and the B) <i>class of the thoroughly purified phenomena</i>.</p>
<p>A1) In the forward process, the twelve links of dependent origination starts with ignorance. Because of ignorance, one accumulates throwing/ projecting/ propelling karma. The seed of an action is planted on the consciousness and so forth.</p>
<p>Due to this, there is that; due to that, then there is the next [process] all the way resulting in birth, due to birth, comes aging and death. This is the forward process [which is a meaning translation, literally, it is called arisen from scripture.]</p>
<p>A2) When this is examined from the perspective of the reverse process, if one were to ask: “From where did aging and death come from?”</p>
<p>These come from birth, which comes from potential existence, which comes from grasping, which comes from craving, which comes from craving, which comes from feeling, which comes from contact, which comes from six sources, which come from name and form, which come from consciousness, which comes from compositional activity, which comes from ignorance.</p>
<p>This shows how the class of the thoroughly afflicted phenomena arise, which is essentially how one circles in cyclic existence. One can understand this in the forward process or the reverse process.</p>
<p>In the same way, the class of the thoroughly purified phenomena is understood:</p>
<p>B1) In the forward process, when ignorance ceases, the link of compositional activity ceases, then the link of consciousness ceases, then the link of name and form cease, and so forth leading to the cessation of birth.</p>
<p>When birth ceases, then the link of aging and death also cease.</p>
<p>B2) The reverse process of the class of the thoroughly purified phenomena: aging and death do not exist if birth does not exist, birth would not exist when potential existence does not exist, potential existence does not exist when there is no grasping, grasping does not exist when there is no craving and so forth up to no projecting karma/ compositional activity.</p>
<p>To stop projecting karma, one has to stop ignorance. This is the reverse process of the thoroughly purified phenomena.</p>
<p>This shows that the forward and reverse process of the twelve links of dependent origination are empty of existing inherently.</p>

6) <i>Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path</i> shows that the Four Noble Truths do not exist inherently.
7) <i>There is no exalted wisdom</i> shows that the exalted wisdom directly perceiving emptiness also does not exist inherently.
8) <i>No attainment, and also no non attainment</i> show that the attainments and those objects that are to be obtained also do not exist inherently.
The entire paragraph [1) to 8)] shows that, while it is true that all the phenomena mentioned do not exist inherently, but when they are examined from another perspective, it is also saying that:
In the perspective of of the Superior's meditative equipoise directly focusing on emptiness, there are no form and so forth.
The very essence of this is, in the perspective of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, nothing appears/ exists except emptiness. Only emptiness appears/ exists 'in the face' of this wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.
Because nothing appears/ exists to this perspective other than emptiness, therefore, in this perspective, there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors and no consciousness, the five aggregates do not appear
The twelve sources do not appear. When elaborated, the eighteen constituents do not appear, the Four Noble Truths do not appear, at the very end, even that exalted wisdom itself does not appear. What appears is only emptiness.
Only emptiness appears in the perspective of the wisdom of meditative equipoise directly perceiving emptiness, nothing else.
All dualistic appearances have subsided/ vanished: conventional phenomena and so forth do not appear to this mind.
The wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is a mind in which all dualistic appearances have subsided.
[The vanishing of] dualistic appearances here, refer to no appearance of true existence, no appearance of conventional phenomena, no appearance of subject and object as separate entity/ perceiver here and the perceived over there.
In the perspective of this wisdom of meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, the Four Noble Truths do not appear.
Qualm: Does that not mean that true cessation also does not appear?
Of the four Buddhist tenet systems, only the Mind Only School and the Consequent Middle Way School assert that true cessations are emptiness. The Consequent Middle Way School assert that true cessations are necessarily emptiness.
According to this sutra, in the perspective of the wisdom of meditative equipoise directly perceiving emptiness, the Four Noble Truths do not exist/ appear. Then this would mean that true cessations also do not appear.
But since true cessation is emptiness, then would that not mean that emptiness also does not appear to this perspective?
In the commentary to the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra that explains about the training in the perfection of wisdom in the context of meditating on the path of meditation, one meditates on the five aggregates, twelve sources, the eighteen constituents, the Four Noble Truths, the twelve links of dependent origination and so forth.
By training in the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing and meditation, this is how one achieves enlightenment.

Mode of training on the path of meditation in the causal diamond-like meditative equipoise:

<i>Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, Bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana.</i>
By meditating and familiarizing on the emptiness of inherent existence of the above list of phenomena, 1) to 8), the mind becomes free of obscurations and is without fear, through passing completely beyond all errors.
In some commentaries, ' <i>without obscurations</i> ' here means that one is free of the obscurations of the apprehension of true existence, others refer this to two types of obscurations [to liberation and omniscience].
Some commentaries explain that ' <i>without fear</i> ' means that one does not fear emptiness, others explain this to mean that one becomes fearless by overcoming the four [distortions of the 1) intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, 2) innate afflictive obscuration, 3) the predispositions of all afflictions and 4) all dualistic appearances arising due to their powers.]

Training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of no more learning:

All the buddhas of the three times come about by depending on the practice of the perfection of wisdom, which is a direct perception of emptiness. Therefore,
<i>All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.</i>
By learning from the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra and tenets, one can conclude that, without realizing the ultimate nature of reality, emptiness, there is no way to achieve full enlightenment.
From the perspective of the Consequent Middle Way School, leaving aside full enlightenment, even to achieve liberation from cyclic existence, a state of Hearer or Solitary Realizer foe destroyer, one necessarily needs to realize emptiness.

What one must do:

One therefore has to analyze and reach one's own conclusion as to why even the Hearers and Solitary Realizers need to realize emptiness of inherent existence to achieve liberation from cyclic existence.

One must know why, according to the Consequent Middle Way School, that one must realize subtle emptiness/ selflessness to achieve even liberation from cyclic existence, that is it not sufficient merely to realize coarse emptiness/ selflessness.

One must be thoroughly convinced from one's own side that, realizing emptiness of inherent existence is [the only way] to achieve either liberation or full enlightenment.

Training on the path of all the Buddhas:

When it says: *All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awoken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom*, this means that anyone who has become a Buddha, did so by directly realizing subtle emptiness, the emptiness of inherent existence, the perfection of wisdom.

All the Buddhas of the future will also likewise have to achieve enlightenment by relying on the perfection of wisdom.

'Perfection of wisdom' here, refers to the *path perfection of wisdom*, which is a mind realizing emptiness. By depending on this, one achieve enlightenment.

Qualm: If it is a mind realizing emptiness, it is necessarily a perfection of wisdom? No.

Qualm: If it is a wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, it is necessarily a perfection of wisdom? No.

Reply: To be a perfection of wisdom, it has to be a mind realizing emptiness in the continuum of a Mahayanist.

The perfection of wisdom is a Bodhisattva deed/ conduct. For anything to be a Bodhisattva conduct, it has to be conjoined with the Mahayana mind generation.

Definition of perfection of wisdom:

Therefore, a perfection of wisdom is, *the mind realizing emptiness that is conjoined with a Mahayana mind generation*.

A perfection of wisdom is divided into four: natural, path, scriptural and resultant perfections of wisdom.

Of these four, the perfection of wisdom mentioned here is the path perfection of wisdom, which is the mind realizing emptiness that is conjoined with a Mahayana mind generation.

From lesson 10:

Khenrinpoche: Someone asked me to explain what *Bodhisattva mahasattva* means.

[As a phrase origin,] in 'Bodhisattva', 'bodhi' refers to great enlightenment. Therefore, a Bodhisattva is someone who aspires enlightenment. What this person is aspiring to, is the Dharmakaya/ Truth Body. This is the object to which this person sees as necessary to be obtained. [Therefore, the word means a person aspiring to achieve the Truth Body.]

'Mahasattva': because this person aspires to full enlightenment for the welfare/ benefit of all other sentient beings, therefore, he is a Mahasattva. 'Sattva' is loosely translated as 'a being'. So, this person is a great being, one who aspires the great enlightenment for others.

Due to aspiring to achieve the Dharmakaya to accomplish his own purpose, this person is a Bodhisattva; due to aspiring to achieve full enlightenment to accomplish the welfare of others, this person is called a Mahasattva.

Q & A:

SQ: Why does the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra belong to the sutra pitaka? Why does the Buddha choose this method of teaching this sutra?
Khenrinpoche: as mentioned before, it is said that the perfection of wisdom sutras are included in the sutra pitaka. Then is it alright to say that the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra also belong to the sutra pitaka?
In general, if the main subject matter of the sutra deals with the higher training in concentration, then it belongs to the sutra pitaka. But the subject matter of the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra is essentially explaining on the wisdom realizing emptiness. However, can one say that the subject matter of the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra is also concentration?
It is not certain that the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra belongs to the sutra pitaka.
This sutra involves a question and answer between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra. Both of them spoke due to the blessings of Buddha. Then one can wonder why would the Buddha himself teach this, rather than having that format.
This is not straight forward. It is possible that the Buddha did this here due to the dispositions and inclinations of the 'objects to be subdued', the disciples. This is solely to benefit them according to their dispositions and inclinations.
Therefore, it is possible, for whatever reasons that [only the Buddha Himself] knows, that it was perhaps more beneficial for the teaching to occur as a conversation between the two Superiors but inspired by Him.
Khenrinpoche: When people have problems, and when one tries to help to solve that, sometimes [it is better] to send the message to that person in another way to help solve the problem. This can be more effective compared to telling the message directly to him. This normally happens.
Sometimes, this can be the best method. One may know [the solution], but if one were to tell that directly to the person, then it may not become effective. But if one sends the message through another person/ means, then it can be much more effective
Perhaps this could have been the reason for the method of teaching in the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra.
I cannot say for sure. But [it is for sure] that the Buddha teaches on the basis of knowing the dispositions/ abilities and inclinations of the disciples.
It is possible that, due to Shariputra's adopting the aspect of a Hearer, he could not pose the question under his own power.
Avalokiteshvara was adopting the aspect of a Bodhisattva. Thus, there was a conversation between a Hearer and a Bodhisattva.
Perhaps, this could be to show that, to achieve any of the vehicle's enlightenment, including those of the Hinayana lineage, one necessarily needs to train in this wisdom [realizing the emptiness of inherent existence.]
From tenets, it is clear that the Buddha sometimes said that phenomena are truly existent/ exist by way of their own characters, at other times, He would say that phenomena are not truly existent/ does not exist by way of their own characters.
Since the Buddha knows exactly and teaches in the most beneficial manner according to the dispositions, abilities and inclinations of the disciples, then here, perhaps it was more beneficial to teach by inspiring Shariputra to ask the question.
In general, the Buddha's speech is divided into three: 1) Inspired speech 2) Permitted speech and 3) Uttered speech.
Most part of the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra is inspired speech, but permitted and uttered speeches are also found in the sutra.

Continuing the explanations on 'Training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of no more learning':

By depending and training on the Mahayana path of accumulation, preparation, seeing and meditation, one achieves enlightenment. As it is said in the sutra:
<i>All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awaken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.</i>
The ' <i>perfection of wisdom</i> ' here, refers the <i>Path</i> perfection of wisdom, this should be the wisdom realizing that is conjoined with Mahayana mind generation, bodhicitta. Some texts comment that it has to be the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that is conjoined with bodhicitta.
In the sutra, it says one trains in the perfection of wisdom to attain enlightenment. This training starts from the Mahayana path of accumulation and preparation.
To cater the training on these two ordinary paths, perhaps it would better to say that the path perfection of wisdom refers to the wisdom realizing emptiness that is conjoined with bodhicitta, instead of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that is conjoined with bodhicitta. To be a perfection of wisdom, the wisdom realizing emptiness has to be conjoined with method.

All the five paths of the three vehicles have their respective paths of seeing: The Hearer, Solitary Realizer and Bodhisattva paths of seeing. These persons who have achieved these paths do realize emptiness directly.
But the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness in the continua of the Hearers and Solitary Realizers is unable overcome the knowledge obscurations to achieve enlightenment, even though it is the same wisdom.
This is because, such a wisdom directly perceiving emptiness is not conjoined with method. This is because, for the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness to act as an antidote to the knowledge obscuration, it must be conjoined with method.
From here, one can see that, merely having the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness alone does not necessarily mean that one will eliminate all the obstructions. To do so, it must conjoined with method.
One needs a huge collection of merit, which is a support that enables the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness to act as an antidote to even the knowledge obscurations.
In essence, the perfection of wisdom in this sentence refers to the wisdom realizing emptiness that is conjoined with the Mahayana mind generation.
From here, one can see that, if it is a wisdom realizing emptiness, it is not necessarily a perfection of wisdom.

Showing through mere words of the mantra [of the perfection of wisdom] to those of superior faculties:

The mantra of the perfection of wisdom here, again refers to the path perfection of wisdom/ wisdom realizing emptiness.
What the text means, is that the path perfection of wisdom/ the wisdom realizing emptiness is a mantra.
'Mantra' is made of two syllabus, 'man' and 'tra'. In Sanskrit, it means 'protecting/ saving the mind' from fear.
<i>Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false.</i>
<i>'The mantra of the perfection of wisdom',</i> mantra here, is a perfection, literally, it means 'gone over/ cross over away/ out of cyclic existence'.
The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is the wisdom realizing emptiness. By depending on this wisdom realizing emptiness, one can be taken/ can cross over to the other shore of cyclic existence.
<i>'The mantra of great knowledge',</i> the wisdom realizing emptiness is the mantra of great knowledge because it destroys ignorance and the afflictions.
It is the <i>'the unsurpassed mantra'</i> because there is no higher path leading to liberation.
It is <i>'the mantra equal to the unequalled'</i> (or unsurpassable), unequal refers to Buddha. When one has the perfection of wisdom, the mind realizing emptiness, this makes one equal to the Buddhas.
It is <i>'the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering'</i> because it can pacify all the suffering and their causes.
It <i>'should be known as truth since it is not false'</i> , because the perfection of wisdom sees suchness, the reality as it is, therefore it is true and undeceiving/ not false.
Mantra in general, means to protect the mind. Here, the mantra is the path perfection of wisdom, the wisdom realizing emptiness. This wisdom realizing emptiness is that which protects the mind from the sufferings of cyclic existence and their causes. This wisdom realizing emptiness is the definitive mantra/ mantra of definitive meaning.
The real essence of mantra: Most people think of mantra as that which one recites. One should know that what it really means is to protect the mind from suffering and its causes.
When one analyzes carefully, the mantra that one recites cannot really save one from all the suffering. To protect one's mind from all the fears [found in cyclic existence], one necessarily needs to eliminate the causes, specifically the root cause.
One has repeatedly seen how the source of all of one's misery and problems come from one's ignorance, the apprehension of a self. The only antidote to one's ignorance is, has always been and will always be the wisdom realizing emptiness.
Without this, one cannot defeat ignorance, without defeating ignorance, one cannot stop all the problems in cyclic existence.
Therefore, the actual real definitive mantra that protects one from suffering is none other than the wisdom realizing emptiness, and actually not those mantras that one recites.
From here, one can see the big difference between someone who has learnt the Buddha's teachings as much as possible and someone who does not learn but is merely contented to recite mantras.
For someone who has not learnt, if one were to talk about mantra, the only idea that comes to mind would only be the syllabus the person recites.
For someone who has studied and thought about it well, their understanding of, for example, mantra is on a so much deeper, profound, extensive and wide-angled perspective. Someone who has not studied would not be able to see this.

How one's enlightenment is faster:

The only reason Buddha taught the Dharma was to help one overcome the root cause for one's suffering. When one analyzes and realizes this personally, one sees why it is so important to learn Buddha's teachings.
Many times, people wonder: "Why should I study so much? It is better to practice!"
It is really not easy to see the point of what Buddha is trying to say/ the core meaning of His teachings as this requires learning and thinking. Without these, one would not be able to see and gain ascertainment/ certain knowledge in the heart.
Through learning, reflection/ analysis, one comes to an ascertainment of what Buddha has said, that all of one's problem is this and that the solution is that, this makes a huge difference to one's practice. This really gives weight to one's practice.
When one really practices, then compared to others, one's enlightenment will definitely be quicker.
Khenrinpoche: "By studying [Buddha's teachings], your enlightenment is faster."

Showing the greatness of the mantra of the perfection of wisdom:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:</i> TADYATHA [OM] GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA</p>
Sometimes, an 'Om' is [inserted]. 'Gate' means 'to go'. There are two 'Gate', this means to go to the path of accumulation and the path of preparation. 'Para' means 'the other side'. 'Paragate' literally to go to the other side, it means to go onto the path of seeing. 'Parasamgate' means to go perfectly to the path of meditation. 'Bodhi' means go to the ground of Buddha.
One trains in the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation and preparation. On the path of seeing, one sees emptiness directly. On the path of meditation, one familiarizes oneself what one has seen on the path of seeing. Through that, one achieves the path of no more learning/ enlightenment.
In short, the mantra is an essence of how one progresses on the [learners'] paths by depending on the perfection of wisdom.
Some texts comment that explanation of the training in the perfection of wisdom starting from: "Form is empty, emptiness is form" and so forth including all the phenomena having no such and such, are explanations for trainees of dull faculties.
For the trainees of sharp faculties, the mantra alone is [sufficient explanation].
There are many perfection of wisdom sutras: extensive, middling and short perfection of wisdom sutras.
The extensive consists of twelve volumes in one hundred thousand verses, the middling three or four volumes in twenty thousand verses, the short perfection of wisdom sutra is a condensed one volume, commonly known as eight thousand verses.
The subject matter among them is the same, then why should there be such varying length? This is perhaps due to the capacity of the disciples.
Comparing the intended disciples for the perfection of wisdom sutra in one hundred thousand verses and eight thousand verse, who is of a sharper faculty?
For those who of dull faculties, perhaps there is no need [for such lengthy discourse]. For those who are of sharp faculties, they would understand whatever is explained so perhaps [they can understand more from the lengthy discourse.]
In some commentaries, it is mentioned that the condensed presentation of the perfection of wisdom in the form of mantra is meant for those of sharp faculties. All the explanations before that are for trainees of dull faculties.
For those of sharp faculties, one merely needs to explain 'path of accumulation', they will immediately understand.
For those of dull faculties, merely saying 'path of accumulation' will not enable them to understand. They need further explanations.
In general, if one were to explain the teaching and the recipient understands immediately, such a person would be known as 'sharp'. But if one needs to explain the same teaching to another ten times, then such a person would not be as sharp.
Therefore, in general, those of higher/ sharper capacities, one does not need to say much before that person understands; those who need more explanations are generally not as sharp.
If that is the case, then for those who could immediately understand the perfection of wisdom and the way of traversing the path merely by hearing the mantra, one could posit them to be trainees of sharp faculties, others would be of dull faculties.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that.</i></p>
This is a summary of how [a trainee] should [practice the perfection of wisdom.]

Exhortation to train by way of summarizing the subject matter:

<i>Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice.”</i>
The Buddhas do not need to arise from their meditative equipoise to work for the benefit of sentient beings.
It is the uncommon feature/ characteristic/ quality of the Buddhas to work for sentient beings while forever remaining absorbed in meditative equipoise.
Here, the Buddha is merely showing the aspect of arising from concentration to praise Avalokiteshvara for explaining well.
Qualm: why does Buddha need to show this aspect?
Buddha commends Avalokiteshvara by saying: “Well said well said” twice. This is emphasizing.
“Son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated.”: Buddha is saying that the way to train in the perfection of wisdom is exactly as what is said.
“Even the tathagatas rejoice”: Buddha says that He rejoices what Avalokiteshvara has said, not just Himself, all the Tathagatas, Buddhas of the past, present and future similarly also rejoice.

The retinue's rejoicing and pledging to uphold this teaching:

<i>The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the venerable Sharadvatiputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised that spoken by the Bhagavan.</i>
In general, there are three categories of the Buddha's speech: 1) Uttered speech 2) Inspired speech and 3) Permitted speech.
The prologue at the beginning and the last paragraph here is <i>Permitted speech</i> .
The question and answer [dialogue] between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara is <i>Inspired speech</i> .
The summary exhortation by Buddha: <i>Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice.”</i> This is <i>Uttered speech</i> .
In the permitted speech here in the prologue and last paragraph, perhaps the Buddha gave permission [and thus a precedent] such that, in the future, when the Buddha's teachings are compiled, the compilers could include a prologue and conclusion.

How the Perfection of Wisdom is also known as the Mother of the Buddhas:

Sometimes, the perfection of wisdom is referred to as the <i>Mother of the Buddhas – Bhagavati</i> .
Therefore, the Mother the Buddhas refer to the perfection of wisdom, the wisdom realizing emptiness.
Just as a child cannot be born without a mother, likewise, to become a Buddha, it is indispensable to generate the wisdom realizing emptiness [that will give birth to a Buddha.]

Q & A:

SQ: Is the wisdom realizing emptiness conjoined with mind generation during post meditative equipoise a [path] perfection of wisdom? **Khenrinpoche:** Yes.

SQ: Are the perfections practiced in the order shown in the teachings? How does the Bodhisattva know/ what signs are there that he has attained the path of release of that uninterrupted path? Since most of us are dull faculty students, can we not learn the Extensive perfection of wisdom sutra [to gain more understanding]?

Khenrinpoche: First we have to accept that we are dull faculty students, but nobody [would] accept that. Everybody would think that “I am sharp, I have to know [the teachings] within a short time. Within one lesson, I want to know the Heart sutra!” There is definitely an order in terms of the difficulty of each of the perfections. Each is progressively more difficult than the former. This is clearly stated in the Lam Rim Chen Mo, which explains a few reasons why the order is definite in terms of the practice. Training in the perfection of wisdom has to be preceded by training in the perfection of concentration. Without conception, there is no way to develop concentration. To have concentration, one necessarily needs to joyously persevere to develop concentration. Without joyous perseverance, there is no way to have concentration. To have joyous perseverance, one must have patience. To have that, one needs to train in ethics/ morality. The basis of morality is the mind of giving, generosity. The uninterrupted path and the path of release occur in a single meditative equipoise. The Bodhisattvas arise from that and then starts to breathe again. I am not sure whether they actually breathe during meditative equipoise.

How the uninterrupted path is beyond the ordinary scope of the mind:

SQ: Using the uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing, there can be many objects of abandonment. How does the Bodhisattva eliminate all these in one session without the need to eliminate them one by one?
Khenrinpoche: The uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing is said to be the direct antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, to which there are many variety.
How does one uninterrupted path in one meditative equipoise act as an antidote to all these variety of afflictive obscurations?
If you think about the practice of patience, if one has a good and stable practice of patience, one would be patient to all and not merely one. This is especially so when this practice of patience culminates in the perfection of patience.
The person who has achieved the perfection of patience is one who has conquered anger in relation to every single person [in cyclic existence.] It is not that he has to practice with one enemy and then goes to the next.
For example, in Shantideva's <i>Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds</i> , this great Bodhisattva mentions that, one can imagine the entire world covered with thorns and one has to walk across them.
It is not possible to eliminate every single thorn before one starts walking. But if one were to put on a pair of shoes, one can walk anywhere by stepping over the thorns.
The force/ power behind the first uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing, which acts as an antidote to the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, does not occur just suddenly.
This power has been built up from the beginning of the path of preparation, which has four stages: Heat, Peak, Forbearance and Supreme mundane qualities.
Here, the Bodhisattva works hard to gain the power/ strength of mind to overcome the manifest conception of true existence.
As he progresses through this path, the power of his mind becomes stronger and more powerful. As such, even the manifest conception of true existence that are suppressed along these four stages become increasingly subtler.
When the Bodhisattva gains a clear and direct realization of emptiness without any intervening mental image, this is the time when the mind becomes powerful enough to destroy the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations.
When this Bodhisattva realizes emptiness directly, this realization is completely free of all dualistic appearances, which have subsided/ vanished in the perspective of this wisdom.
When this Bodhisattva newly achieves the path of seeing and attains the path of release of the uninterrupted path on the first ground, at that time, he has completely abandoned the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations.
The uninterrupted path is that which has done the abandoning. This uninterrupted path is said to be the mind that has the power to destroy the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations.
The question then is: Since this uninterrupted path of the Mahayana path of seeing is a wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, then does it realize one emptiness related to a specific basis or does it realize the emptiness that pervades all phenomena?
One could only say that, on the path of release, this is what happens, that the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations are abandoned.
Other than saying that the uninterrupted path being a mind that is powerful enough to destroy the intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations, as to exactly what this is, it is something completely beyond the ordinary scope of the mind.
I would think that, one would not be able to tell merely by looking at the external appearance/ demeanor of the person in meditative equipoise.
In the teachings, they gave this analogy to describe an uninterrupted path and the path of release:
The uninterrupted path is likened to expelling the thief from the house. The path of release is likened to having closed the door on him. It is one thing to expel the thief, but it is another to keep him out.

Benefits of learning the perfection of wisdom:

All of us would consider the Buddha's teachings to be very sacred and precious.
His teachings consist of scriptural dharma and realizational dharma. Of the two, the more important one would be the realizational dharma. To have the realizational dharma, one necessarily has to first depend on the scriptural dharma.
Of all the many realizational dharma, the pinnacle/ peak/ top/ best/ highest/ supreme is said to be correct view of reality, the wisdom realizing emptiness.
One has gain conviction that this is so, why it is so. To reach such a conviction/ ascertainment, one has to analyze repeatedly.

There are many benefits of studying/ learning, reflecting and meditating on the perfection of wisdom.

It is stated that the merit of learning, reflecting and meditation on the perfection of wisdom far surpasses the merit of someone who fills the billion-fold world systems with the seven kinds of jewels and offering of that to the Buddhas.

Importance of the threefold activities of hearing, reflecting and meditating:

One has to think about this benefit over and over again. To understand the benefit, one has first see the point why hearing, reflecting and meditating on the perfection of wisdom has such benefits.

When one hears, study and reflect on the teachings of the perfection of wisdom, ultimately, one is also learning and thinking about dependent origination.

When one understands these benefits, thus realizing the importance of learning, hearing, reflecting and then practicing it the perfection of wisdom subsequently, then the aspiration and effort would arise [naturally] for one to actually study, learn, analyze and then meditate on the perfection of wisdom.

Motivation: Whenever one has the opportunity to read/ recite, think, reflect and meditate on the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, one should remember the reasons for doing so.

The motivation should be [one's personal wish] to destroy one's ignorance and apprehension of a self.

The Buddha gave such a [precious] teaching to enable oneself as an ordinary sentient being to destroy these.

Whenever one recites, learn, reflect or meditate on the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, one should conjoin this with the thought: "I am doing this to achieve full enlightenment for all sentient beings", then the benefits would be great/ extensive.

Therefore, one should always hold a virtuous motivation.

Whenever one recites or thinks about the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, one could also think that: "I am also doing this to plant some imprints of the [knowledge and experience] of emptiness in my mind."

Buddha spoke about the amazing benefits of hearing, reflecting and meditating on emptiness.

The benefits of mere hearing: Just merely hearing, learning and studying the teachings on emptiness, the perfection of wisdom, one accumulates so much merit.

The greater benefits of reflecting: On top of this, if one reflects, thinks and critically analyze [what one has learnt, heard or studied,] then this merit will [be even greater than] the merit from hearing the teachings on emptiness.

Based on one's analysis on thinking, if one does get some kind of real ascertainment on whatever understanding one has, then this becomes [the cause.]

The greatest benefits of familiarization/ meditation: By depending mindfulness and introspection, if one familiarizes one's mind with those ascertainment gained on emptiness, then this merit will definitely [be greater than] the merit from reflecting on perfection of wisdom.

The threefold activities of hearing, reflecting and meditating on emptiness will plant imprints on one's mind. But there is a difference in the quality and stability of these imprints.

Imprints based on hearing: The imprints planted on the mind through hearing alone is not long lasting and stable.

Imprints based on reflecting: The imprints planted on the mind, through reflection that produces certain knowledge, is comparatively more stable and longer-lasting.

Imprints based on familiarizing: The most important imprint planted on the mind, is the repeated familiarization in one's mind, of whatever ascertainment/ conviction one has gained.

Of the three [types of] imprints planted by these three activities, the imprint that is planted on the mind through familiarization is the imprint that moves from life to life, and that gives hopes in future lives.

Even though hearing, studying and learning is important, without which there is nothing to think about. If there is nothing to analyze, then there is nothing to familiarize oneself with eventually.

On the basis of the knowledge gained from hearing, one has to think, process and analyze them. One needs to familiarize repeatedly with whatever knowledge, understanding or conviction one has gained. This is where one needs to put effort in.

Therefore, please think about the merit and benefits one can accumulate from hearing, reflecting and meditating on the perfection of wisdom.

Summarizing the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

Prologue:

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas. At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called "Profound Perception."

When one recites and thinks about the prologue here, one can bring to mind the most special being of Buddha, and think about the qualities of His exalted Body, exalted Speech and exalted Mind.

It is this special [perfect] Being who gave this very special [perfect] teaching on the perfection of wisdom at this particular time to these particular retinue, which is said to be a perfect retinue, and at a perfect place.

Therefore, at this point, one should bring to mind the Buddha and generate devotion [dedicated to actualize His teachings.]

Subject matter of the actual sutra, the perfect factor of the teaching –

Shariputra's question on the way to practice the perfection of wisdom:

Next, Shariputra asks his question to Avalokiteshvara:

Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, this starts off the question from Shariputra:

"How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?"

Here, it is not as much as merely focusing on Shariputra's asking his question, but the main point is for one to be asking this very same question oneself.

One should also think about this qualm/ doubt/ query: "How is the perfection of wisdom supposed to be practiced?"

Khenrinpoche: here, you can be Shariputra or another 'putra'!

When this is recited, one should bring to one's mind the meaning of emptiness.

Before Shariputra asked his question, Avalokiteshvara, like the Buddha, was also in meditative equipoise [focusing] on the perfection of wisdom. This was the condition for Shariputra to pose his question.

Avalokiteshvara's responses, individual presentation of the way to train in the path to those of inferior faculties –

Presentation of the way to train in the perfection of wisdom on the paths accumulation and preparation:

He said that and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra. "Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

'Behold' in Tibetan, literally is 'to view/ see'. In this case to view *those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.*

Five aggregates here, are qualified by '*also*'. This means that, not only is the 'I' that is imputed in dependence on the basis of designation, the aggregates to be empty of existing inherently, the aggregates themselves are *also* empty of existing inherently. That said, what does it mean when the 'I' and the aggregates are said to be empty of existing inherently?

Correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature is the brief explanation.

The extensive explanation starts with:

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

The commentaries state that this is said to be the training in the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation and preparation.

Even though this starts with the *Form* aggregates, it would be easier if one uses the 'self, I, person' as one's subject instead.

Rather than starting with *Form*, one could reflect on: *'I is empty, emptiness is 'I'. Emptiness is not other than 'I'; 'I is also not other than emptiness.*

It is said to be easier to reflect on the Fourfold Emptiness on the basis of 'I' rather than starting with phenomena other than 'I'.

When this is done, one then moves on to the aggregates, starting with the aggregate of form to meditate on: Form is empty, emptiness is form and so forth.
When one has finished with form, one can move on to the next aggregate. This is where it says:
<i>In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.</i>
One then reflect on feeling, then discrimination, then compositional factors and then consciousness.

Extensive explanation on the emptiness of inherent existence of the 'self, I, person':

One starts with [reflecting or meditating on] the 'self, I, person': 'I' is empty; emptiness is 'I'.
One brings to mind/ recollect one's past experiences of the sense of 'I' that one has had.
This can be when one was feeling very depressed/ down/ useless/ hopeless. This is when one feels that the 'I' is so low.
There are also times when one feels that one's 'I' is so huge/ elevated/ [important], especially at times when there is manifest pride. This is when the sense of 'I' is so overwhelming.
Bring this recollection of the sense of 'I' and analyze this 'I' that one grasps at during those times.
Use this sense of 'I' one is [focusing on] to see how this 'I' is empty and that emptiness is 'I'.
If one can do this meditation, this would help to pacify the very disturbed mind.
At the point when it says that the 'I' is empty, what one has to reflect/ realize is this sense of 'I' that one has recollected, whether it is low or high, which one grasps at, does not exist from the side of the body and mind, one's aggregates, either individually or in its collection, that one can point to, to be the 'I'.
When one has this sense of an 'I', it obviously appears to one, one has to analyze how this sense of 'I' appears and one believes that it exists in a certain way.
How it appears is, that the 'I' appears to exist from the side of the body and mind. This means that the 'I' appears to be the body and mind, from somewhere there.
Not only is there such an appearance, one essentially believes that this is how the 'I' exists. One completely assents to/ grasps at/ apprehend the 'I' to be like that, to be true that it is somewhere inside there from the side of the body and mind.
What one has to understand and realize for oneself is that, the 'I' does not exist from the side of/ on the aggregates.
One can come to understand that there is no 'I' on the aggregates/ from the side of the aggregates by depending on analogies:
Mistaking a coil of rope to be a snake. There is an appearance of 'snake' on the coil of rope/ from the side of the coil of rope under certain weather conditions. This is how the snake appears.
The reality is that, when one looks for the snake on the coil of rope, one would not be able to find 'snake' on the coil of rope/ amongst the parts that make up the coil of rope.
The individual parts are not the 'snake', the collection together is also not the 'snake'.
Exactly in the same way, the 'I' cannot be found on the aggregates, the 'I' cannot be found amongst the aggregates, the 'I' does not exist from the side of the aggregates.
This is the [best] analogy to help one understand that the 'self, I, person' does not exist from the side of the aggregates, which is its basis of designation.
The point is, one is trying to discover how the 'I' does not exist inherently, exist from its own side.
One is trying to understand and see for oneself how, although there is an appearance and belief that the 'I' exists from the side of the aggregates, there is no such "I".
Another way to understand this is, how things that are dependently arisen based on causes and conditions, are themselves dependent and not independent/ not inherent.
Buddha and Nagarjuna made such statements as: <i>“Those [phenomena] that are produced from causes and conditions are not [inherently] produced.</i>

Manner of realizing emptiness on the ordinary paths:

The realization of emptiness on the path of preparation is not a direct realization in that, the mind realizing emptiness does not see emptiness directly.
Rather, even though it still realizes, it does so through an intervening image/ meaning generality of emptiness.
It is only on the path of seeing that the individual can realize emptiness directly without any intervening meaning generality.

Presentation of the way to train in the perfection of wisdom on the path of seeing:

<i>Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.</i>
This is known as the [profound endowed with the] eight characteristics/ features.
<i>All phenomena are emptiness:</i> this refers to the nature/ entity of all phenomena, which is emptiness.
On top of the nature of all phenomena being empty of inherent existence, the causes themselves also do not exist inherently.
The effects that are produced by the causes, are indeed produced, but these are not produced inherently as there are no inherent production.
In essence, not only are the ultimate nature of phenomena emptiness, the causes and effects themselves do not exist inherently as well.
This is reflecting on the emptiness of inherent existence of the entity, causes and results [of phenomena.]

Presentation of the way to train in the perfection of wisdom on the path of meditation:

<i>Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness</i>
This shows the emptiness of inherent existence of the aggregates. The five aggregates do not exist inherently.
<i>No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon.</i>
This shows the emptiness of inherent existence of the twelve sources.
<i>There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element.</i>
This shows the emptiness of inherent existence of the eighteen elements/ constituents.
What is manifestly shown are the six sense powers and six consciousnesses; what are implied are the six sense objects.
Therefore, altogether, these form the eighteen constituents.
<i>There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death</i>
This shows the emptiness of inherent existence of the twelve links of dependent origination in the forward and reverse process.
It also shows the twelve links of dependent origination in terms of of the class of the thoroughly afflicted phenomena as well as the class of the thoroughly purified phenomena.
<i>Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path</i>
This shows the emptiness of inherent existence of the Four Noble Truths.
<i>There is no exalted wisdom</i>
This shows the emptiness of inherent existence of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness itself, even this wisdom is empty of existing inherently.
<i>No attainment, and also no non attainment.</i>
This shows that the attainment themselves do not exist inherently; the attainments that are to be achieved are also empty of existing inherently.
The entire paragraph here shows the training in the perfection of wisdom on the path of meditation.
These long list of phenomena, the twelve sources, when expanded, the eighteen constituents, are stated to be empty of existing inherently.
It is also teaching that, none of these phenomena exist in the perspective of a Superior's meditative equipoise directly perceiving emptiness. In the face of such a wisdom, only emptiness appears/ exists and nothing else.
It is said that there is no dualistic appearance in the perspective of the Superior's meditative equipoise on emptiness. All dualistic appearances have subsided/ vanished.

The way of training in the causal diamond-like meditative absorption and the path of no more learning:

Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana. All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awoken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.

This shows how one achieves enlightenment through training in the perfection of wisdom on the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing and meditation.

Through depending on training on the perfection of wisdom on these paths, one achieves enlightenment.

This is how one has to achieve enlightenment, this is how the Buddhas of the past [present and future] have achieved, [is achieving and will achieve] enlightenment.

Presentation through mere words of the mantra to those of Superior faculties:

Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequaled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false.

This shows the greatness of the perfection of wisdom, here, the path perfection of wisdom, the wisdom realizing emptiness:

Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom: this is the mantra of definitive meaning, the actual real mantra, is this wisdom realizing emptiness.

'Mantra' is made up of two syllabus: 'man' and 'tra', which means protecting the mind from fears and sufferings. That which is actually doing the protecting is the wisdom perceiving emptiness. This shows how great the perfection of wisdom is.

Next is a declaration of the mantra, which is a condensed presentation of the five paths:

*The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:
TADYATHA [OM] GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA*

The next paragraph is like a summary and emphasis in brief of how one must train in the perfection of wisdom:

Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that.

Exhortation to train by way of summarizing the subject matter:

Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: "Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice."

The retinue's rejoicing and pledging to uphold the perfection of wisdom:

The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the venerable Sharadvatiputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised that spoken by the Bhagavan.

If one does gain some small insight/ understanding of the emptiness of inherent existence, this is cause for one to rejoice.

This is because, the benefits of learning the ultimate nature of reality [path perfection of wisdom] is similar to learning all the other teachings/ scriptures of the Buddha.

Just as the Buddha commended Avalokiteshvara [through showing the sign of] arising from meditative equipoise, saying: "Well said, well said," likewise, if one manages to get a little bit of understanding of the ultimate nature of reality, then this would really be a cause for the Buddhas to rejoice.

This is what really please the Buddhas and it is the most supreme/ best offering to the Buddhas.

Similarly, the gods, asuras and so forth will also feel happy [with oneself] and will assist and not [disrupt one's practice.]

How to be a suitable receptacle to receive Buddha's blessing:

Although the Buddhas are powerful, but for one to be able to receive blessings from them, one must firstly be a [suitable] receptacle. One must be a suitable basis for the blessings [to actualize.]

If one engages in the threefold activities of hearing, reflecting and meditating on emptiness, the perfection of wisdom, this would make one a [suitable] basis to receive the blessings.

As taught by Buddha, the benefits one can gain from hearing, reflecting and meditating, one can infer and understand that one has accumulated a vast store of merit. One should therefore rejoice in that.

This concludes the teachings on the Heart of Perfection of Wisdom Sutra.