



COURSE VI  
The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

*Answer Key, Class One*

1) Give the Sanskrit and Tibetan names for the *Diamond-Cutter Sutra*. (Tibetan track give Tibetan in Tibetan; English track give Tibetan in phonetics.)

**Sanskrit: Vajra Chedika**

**Tibetan: Dorje Chupa** དོར་ཇེ་གཙོང་པ།  
*dorje chupa*

2) Name the authors of the two Indian commentaries to this sutra, and give their dates.

a) Master Vasubandhu ~350 AD

ལོཔུན་ཡིག་ལྷན་པ།  
*loppun yik-nyen*

[note: in some previous classes this was incorrectly attributed to his brother, Master Asanga]

b) Master Kamalashila ~750 AD

ལོཔོན་ཀམ་ལའ་ལྷོ་ལ།  
*lopon kamalashila*

3) Give the name of the only known native Tibetan commentary to this work; state its author, his dates, and his home monastery.

**The only known native Tibetan commentary to the *Diamond-Cutter Sutra* called *Sunlight on the Path to Freedom*, was written by Choney Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748) of Sera Mey Monastery.**

ཐར་ལམ་གསལ་བའི་ཉི་མ།

*tarlam selway nyima*

ཙོ་ནེ་བྲགཔ་ཤེད་རུཔ།

*choney drakpa shedrup*

4) Explain the three meanings of the word "diamond" in the title.

**The diamond in this sutra is a metaphor for emptiness, in three senses:**

- a) Most importantly, diamond is the closest thing in our physical world to something which is truly ultimate, or the most of anything (in this case, the hardest thing in the universe)—and a person who sees emptiness directly realizes this fact very strongly.
- b) Diamond is a totally clear physical substance: if there were a diamond wall between ourselves and some object we were looking at, we would not be able to see the diamond; just so, every object around us possesses its own emptiness, but we are unable to see it.
- c) When a diamond is broken into pieces, every piece is pure, perfect diamond, down to the molecule. Just so, every instance of emptiness is equally the sheer, 100% absence of a self-existent object.

5) Why is it important to include the original word "cutter" in the title?

**A person who sees emptiness directly strongly realizes the metaphor of the diamond; and just as strongly, they realize that diamond is only a metaphor—it is only a "lesser" kind of ultimate, whereas the *real* ultimate is emptiness. That is, diamond is the closest object to emptiness in our normal reality, and it is—in actuality—not very close at all to being as ultimate as emptiness. In this sense, the diamond is "cut" or outdone by emptiness, and so it is *very important* to retain the word "cutter" in the title, and not refer to the sutra as the "Diamond Sutra."**

6) What question does Subhuti ask Lord Buddha at the beginning of the sutra?

**How should a bodhisattva live; how should a bodhisattva practice; and how should a bodhisattva think?**



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*Answer Key, Class Two*

1) Give the short definition of the wish for enlightenment spoken by Maitreya, the coming Buddha. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**The wish to become totally enlightened for the benefit of all living beings.**

སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པ་ནི་གཞན་དོན་ཕྱིར།  
ཡང་དག་ཚེ་གསུམ་པའི་བྱང་རྒྱལ་འདོད།  
*semkye pa ni shendun chir*  
*yangdak dzokpay jangchub du*

2) Explain the difference between the "deceptive" form of the wish, and the "ultimate" form. (Tibetan track also give Tibetan for the two.)

**The "deceptive" form of the wish for enlightenment is the one described above: the intention to reach total enlightenment for the sake of others. The word "deceptive" refers to deceptive reality. The "ultimate" form of the wish for enlightenment consists of the direct perception of emptiness, or ultimate reality.**

ཀུན་ཚོ་བ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད།  
*kundzob semkye*  
དོན་དམ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད།  
*dundam semkye*

3) What is the literal meaning of the Tibetan term for "nirvana"? What does each word of this term refer to? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

The Tibetan term for "nirvana" is "passing beyond sorrow." The "sorrow" here is described by Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup as the pair of karma and mental afflictions, as well as suffering itself. To "pass beyond" these means to eliminate them permanently within oneself.

སྤྱི་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།

*nya-ngen le depa*

4) Describe the object we deny when we speak of "emptiness." (Tibetan track give the Tibetan word for "object we deny.")

The word "emptiness" refers to the absence of something that—like a two-headed purple elephant that was 100 feet tall here rampaging through this room—could never exist anyway. We call this thing the "object we deny." It refers to anything that *does not* exist by virtue of our perceptions as forced upon us by our past deeds (karma). And this thing could never exist.

དགག་བྱ།

*gakja*

5) Why is it true that when we look for the thing we label with our names and concepts, we cannot find it? (Tibetan track also give Tibetan for this concept.)

There are only three possibilities for finding the thing that we labelled with names and concepts. Either it is one or some of the parts of the finished, labelled object; or it is the collection of these parts, the whole; or it is something outside of these two choices. The first and third choices are impossible even in an ordinary sense. The second is incorrect because the idea of this analysis hinges on locating an object which itself, as the basis of our labels, *existed without its own label*--that is, ultimately.

ཐ་སྐྱོད་བཏགས་པའི་བཏགས་དོན་བཅའ་བའི་ཚོན་མི་རྟེན།

*ta-nye takpay takdun tselway tse na mi-nye*



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*Answer Key, Class Three*

1) In the reading for this class, the Buddha first describes the limitless merit of a bodhisattva who performs the acts of giving and so on "without staying" in the belief of self-existence. Then He begins to discuss the marks and signs on the physical body of a Buddha. What is the connection between giving etc. and the physical body of a Buddha?

**The first three perfections (giving, an ethical way of life, and the art of not getting angry)—along with part of the fourth perfection (that of joyful effort) are the primary perfections involved in what is known as the "collection of merit." It is this collection which creates the two physical bodies of a Buddha.**

2) Name the four bodies of a Buddha, and describe each one briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) **The Essence Body: The emptiness of the other three "bodies" (or more properly "parts") of an enlightened being; this "body" is very important, since it provides the *potential* for the enlightened beings to perceive themselves as enlightened beings: the "movie screen" on which these people project their perception of being an enlightened being.**

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་སྐུ།

*ngowo nyiku*

b) **The Enjoyment Body: The perfect physical body which an enlightened being has in their own paradise: exquisite sheer light with no gross physical organs.**

ལོངས་སྐུ།

*longku*

- c) **The Emanation Body:** The physical forms which an enlightened being sends—automatically, without any conscious thought to do so—into suffering worlds, appearing to us in any way (as a living being or an inanimate object) which may be of benefit to us. The "classic" Emanation Body is a physical form such as that which Shakyamuni Buddha displayed on our planet.

ཏུལ་སྐྱེ།  
*trulku*

- d) **The Wisdom Body:** The omniscient mind of an enlightened being, which can perceive all things of all times—past, present, and future—in the universe, and both normal reality and ultimate reality, in every single moment.

ཡེ་ཤེས་ཚེས་སྐྱེ།  
*yeshe chuku*

- 3) Explain why the Buddha said that the marks of a Buddha are deceptive, and yet also true.

The marks of the Buddha are deceptive in that the way they are and the way they seem to be are not the same; that is, they do not appear to be projections forced upon us by our past karma, but they are. They are though true in the sense that they really exist and do mark a person as an Enlightened Being.

- 4) Explain why the Buddha says twice that the body of a Buddha has no marks.

The first time he says so, he is referring to the fact that the physical body of the Buddha is a projection, and is empty of any existence from its own side. The second time he says so, he is referring to the fact that the Dharma body (which means here mainly the essence body) is also empty, in the same way. The essence body, remember, is itself the emptiness of the Buddha's two physical forms, and omniscient mind.



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*Answer Key, Class Four*

1) Name and describe (according to the higher schools) the two types of the Buddha's teaching mentioned by Master Vasubandhu at the end of his *Treasure House of Wisdom (Abhidharmakosha)*, written around 350 AD. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) **The physical dharma: that is, the three collections or baskets of teachings, along with the other books and oral teachings of Buddhism.**

ལུང་གི་ཚོས།

*lung gi chu*

- b) **The dharma in the form of realizations: that is, the three extraordinary trainings described in the three collections of scripture; along with the five paths or stages of realizations; and the truth of cessation.**

ཏོགས་པའི་ཚོས།

*tokpay chu*

2) What is required, according to Master Vasubandhu, for each of these two kinds of teaching to still be here in the world? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) **The physical dharma remains in the world so long as there is someone teaching it correctly to others, with a good motivation.**

ལུང་བཞིན་དུ་གཞན་ལ་སྤྲོ་བ།

*lung shindu shen la marwa*



- b) The dharma of realization remains in the world so long as there is someone following the three extraordinary trainings, practicing the teachings that are conducive for reaching enlightenment.

བསྐྱབ་པ་གསུམ་ལ་སྣོན་པ།

*lappa sum la loppa*

3) There are many different positions on how long the Buddha's teachings will survive in this world. Name three of them and the works they come from, and then describe briefly the position accepted by Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup.

**Any three of the following positions is acceptable for the first part of the answer:**

- a) *The Sutra of the Golden Age*: The dharma will exist in its pure form for 500 years after Shakyamuni's passing; for another 1,500 years after this, the dharma will exist a shadow of its real self.
- b) *The Account of "String of Fingers" (Angulimala)*: The dharma will last for a thousand years after Lord Buddha passes.
- c) *The Sutra Requested by "Essence of the Moon"*: 2,000 years.
- d) *The Sutra of the White Lotus of Compassion*: 1,500 years.
- e) *The Sutra Requested by the Goddess of Flawless Light*: This sutra states that, 2,500 years after the passing of Lord Buddha, the dharma will spread to the "land of those with ruddy faces," referring to the West.

**Choney Lama's position:** The dharma will last in the world for 10 periods of 500 years each; that is, for 5,000 years. The other, shorter periods were stated to make students sad so they would appreciate the dharma; or refer to the period of high realizations; or to how long the dharma would thrive in India.

4) Explain how Master Kamalashila explains the following words as they appear in the Diamond-Cutter Sutra.

- a) *self*: Perceiving oneself as a "me" which exists in and of itself--that is, which is not a projection.
- b) *living being*: Perceiving everything about oneself as something "mine" and which exists in and of itself--meaning not a projection.
- c) *life*: Perceiving oneself as a "me" which exists in and of itself over the course of one's lifetime.
- d) *person*: Perceiving oneself as a "me" which exists in and of itself as it goes from rebirth to rebirth.



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*Answer Key, Class Five*

1) Describe the three orders of world systems. (Tibetan track name them in Tibetan.)

a) An "elementary" world system: A galaxy consisting of 1,000 inhabited planets.

སྟོང་ལྷི་ཕུད།

*tong chipu*

b) A "second-level" world system: A galaxy consisting of a thousand groups of a thousand inhabited planets (that is, a million inhabited planets).

སྟོང་བར་མ།

*tong barma*

c) A "third-level" world system: A galaxy consisting of a thousand groups of a thousand groups of a thousand inhabited planets (that is, a billion inhabited planets).

སྟོང་ཆེན་པོ།

*tong chenpo*

2) In what sense do past karma and its future consequences not exist? In what sense must they exist?

**Strictly speaking, past karma and future consequences do not exist in the present moment, since one is already gone and the other is yet to come. They do though exist in a broader sense, over time: a karma committed in the past normally leads to a future karmic result. In no case of course do they exist independent of our projections, forced upon us by our past karma.**

3) List the six perfections, in order. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) The perfection of giving.

ལྷོན་པ།  
*jinpa*

b) The perfection of morality.

ཚུལ་བྲིམ་ས།  
*tsultrim*

c) The perfection of patience (not getting angry when circumstances are ripe).

བཟོད་པ།  
*supa*

d) The perfection of joyous effort (feeling joy from doing virtue).

བརྩོན་འགྲུས།  
*tsundru*

e) The perfection of meditative concentration.

བསམ་གཏན།  
*samten*

f) The perfection of wisdom.

ཤེས་རབ།  
*sherab*

4) Name and explain the three elements of the act of giving, and what it means "not to see" them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) **The emptiness of the giver:** The fact that the person who is practicing the perfection of giving, I myself, am empty of any self-existence. That is, I exist as I do in the present situation through the perceptions forced upon me by my past actions or karma, and this same principle means that continued giving can help me perceive myself later as an enlightened being. If I understand this, then I "don't see" this element in an act of giving as being self-existent any more.

ལྷོ་རྩེ།  
*jinje*

- b) **The emptiness of the person receiving the gift:** The fact that the person receiving the gift is empty of any self-existence. That is, the person towards whom I am performing the act of giving also exists as they do through the perceptions forced upon me by my past actions, and this principle will help me perceive them later as high beings in my Buddha paradise. If I understand this, then I "don't see" this second element in an act of giving as being self-existent.

ལྷོ་ཡུལ།  
*jin-yul*

- c) **The emptiness of the giving itself:** The fact that this whole situation, of me giving something, is also empty of any self-existence. That is, this entire situation in general exists as it does through the perceptions forced upon me by my past actions, and this principle will help me perceive it later as the perfect and spontaneous activity of an enlightened being. If I understand this, then I "don't see" this third element in an act of giving as being self-existent.

ལྷོ་བ།  
*jinpa*

Please note that some commentaries replace different ones of the above with the emptiness of the thing being given, or the gift (*jinja*). That is, the thing I am giving exists as it does through the perceptions forced upon me by my past actions, and this principle will help me perceive the perfect objects in my Buddha paradise later. If I understand this, then I "don't see" this element in an act of giving as being self-existent.

ཇིན་ཇ།  
*jinja*

5) Explain why the Buddha said that the perfections done without wisdom did not deserve the name "perfection."

Technically speaking, one of the six actions of giving and the rest is called a "perfection" when you are doing it with the motivation of a bodhisattva; that is, with bodhichitta, or the wish to become enlightened so you can bring others there too. In many scriptures though it is stated that performing the first five perfections without wisdom is moving like a blind man, and doesn't deserve the name "perfection." This is because the understanding of emptiness involved with wisdom allows you to perform good deeds in such a way that they lead directly to Buddhahood.

6) Explain how the first five perfections and the last one act as causes for each other.

It takes an extraordinary amount of good karma to be able to understand the concepts of emptiness and karma acting out in emptiness. The first five perfections help you gain this amount of good karma. As wisdom thus grows, it helps you perform the first five perfections even better: you act like a man with eyes rather than a blind man. This mutual support is like an upwards spiral.



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*Answer Key, Class Six*

1) With respect to seeing emptiness directly, all living kind is divided into only two basic types. List them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**a) Ordinary beings, who have not yet perceived emptiness directly, and whose time remaining in this suffering life is still not defined.**

སོ་སོ་སྐྱེ་བོ།

*soso kyewo*

**b) Realized beings, called "aryas" in Sanskrit, who have perceived emptiness directly and whose time remaining in this suffering life is limited.**

འཕགས་པ།

*pakpa*

2) Give two meanings of the Tibetan word for "renunciation," and explain its role in the direct perception of emptiness. (Tibetan track give two meanings in Tibetan and explain role in English.)

**a) The Tibetan word for renunciation is "ngenjung," which translates as "definitely come out." In one sense this means "rabjung," or "come out of the worldly life."**

ངེས་འབྱུང་།

*ngenjung*

ངེས་པར་འབྱུང་བ།

*ngepar jungwa*

རབ་བྱུང་།

*rabjung*

རབ་ཏུ་བྱུང་བ།

*rabtu jungwa*

b) The second meaning of this same word is "definitely come out" of suffering, and in this sense it refers to nirvana: the end of suffering.

*role:* It is necessary to reach a true state of renunciation in order to attain the first of the five paths: the path of accumulation. Without reaching the first path, the third is impossible. In a practical sense, one has no physical or mental time to study sufficiently or attain a deep level of meditative concentration, both necessary to reach the direct perception of emptiness, unless he or she has given up a life focused on worldly goals.

ཚོགས་ལམ།

*tsok lam*

3) Name and describe the principle most important for reaching an intellectual understanding of emptiness at the path of preparation. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan, explain in English.)

This is the principle of "quality and characteristic" (*chi jedrak*), which is more roughly translated as "general and specific." There are four types of generals, three of which are especially relevant here. These are "type generals" (*rikchi*), "actual object generals" (*dunchi*), and "term generals" (*drachi*).

An example of a "type general" would be "car," which is a quality (*chi*) of a Chevrolet characteristic (*jedrak*). An example of an "actual object general" would be your mental image of a person whom you had actually met before. An example of a "term general" would be your mental imagination of a person whom you had heard someone talk about, but had never actually met.

The fourth type of general is a "collection general," which refers to the whole composed of its parts. An example here would be a person's body composed of a head, legs, arms, and torso.

མི་བྱེ་བྲག་

*chi jedrak*

རིགས་སྒྲི།

*rikchi*

དོན་སྒྲི།

*dunchi*

ལྟ་སྒྲི།

*drachi*



4) Describe the realization which occurs at the level of the path of preparation known as "highest dharma." (Tibetan track all in Tibetan.)

The level of "highest dharma" occurs at the very end of the second path, the path of preparation, shortly before (say on the same day a few hours before) a person goes to sit in deep meditation and perceive emptiness directly. At this level the person for the first time understands perfectly, directly, the process by which he is constantly perceiving indications of an object, then idealizing them as a "general" in his mind, and mistaking this idealization for the actual object. This process is the exact way in which deceptive reality operates. So although the person has been living in deceptive reality forever up to this moment, he has never seen directly what he is doing.

ཚུ་མཚོག

*chu chok*

ཀུན་ལྗོངས་བདེན་པ།

*kundzob denpa*

5) Explain two meanings of what is sometimes called the "non-duality" of subject and object at the path of seeing. And what IS NOT the meaning of this term? (Tibetan track also give the classic metaphor.)

a) "Non-duality of subject and object" in one sense refers to the fact that, during the direct perception of emptiness, one cannot be aware of himself or his own mind, since this is part of deceptive truth or reality, and not part of ultimate truth or reality. This means that, during the direct perception of emptiness, one cannot even think to himself, "I am finally perceiving emptiness directly!"

གཉིས་སྒྲུང་མེད་པ།

*nyinang mepa*

b) Subject and object are non-dual as well in general, in the sense that they are both equally void of self-existence. This is sometimes referred to as their "equality."

མཉམ་ཉིད།

*nyam-nyi*

- c) *not the meaning*: "Non-duality" does NOT mean that subject and object are somehow really the same thing, or that they do not exist as separate objects, or that I am somehow the world around me, or any other such wrong idea. Most of these ideas are classic forms of the extreme of nihilism, which is specifically and strongly refuted by the philosophy of the Middle Path as it goes between the two extremes.

The Tibetan term for the non-duality of subject and object during the direct perception of emptiness is "pouring water into water."

ཚུ་ལ་ཚུ་བཞག་པ།

*chu la chu shakpa*

- 6) Give the name of the state of mind following the direct perception of emptiness at the path of seeing, and list the four objects understood at this point. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

*name*: The state of mind following the direct perception of emptiness on the path of seeing is known as "subsequent wisdom"

ཇེ་ཏོཔ་ཡེ་ཤེས།

*jetop yeshe*

- a) For the first time, one perfectly understands that all life is suffering: this is the arya truth of suffering.

སྤུག་བསྐྱེད་བདེན་པ།

*dukngel denpa*

- b) One perfectly understands that this suffering has come through ignorance (especially in the form of the misperception of reality), the bad thoughts that it creates, and the karma inspired by them both. This is the arya truth of the origin of suffering.

ཀུན་འབྱུང་བདེན་པ།

*kunjung denpa*

- c) One sees directly that it is possible to end this suffering: this is the arya truth of cessation.

འགོག་བདེན།

*gokden*

- d) One sees how to reach the end of suffering, especially by use of the direct perception of emptiness; this is called the arya truth of the path

ལམ་བདེན།

*lamden*

- 7) Give at least two actual examples of the four objects listed in question six.

**Two or more of the choices are listed after each letter:**

- a) One perceives truly the fact that he or she is impermanent and must die. For about a day, one can read other people's minds and see directly the mental afflictions in them.
- b) One understands that he or she has never had a correct perception at all in any moment of his or her life so far. One understands that all of his or her actions are actually only selfish and self-serving: even religious studies, and rituals, and offerings, are constantly infected by self-interest, desire, and pride.
- c) One understands that the emptiness which he perceived directly was the essence body of the Buddha. One knows how many lifetimes it will be (for example, seven more) before his enlightenment. One realizes that he will not be called by his "name" at that time. One understands that representations of the Buddha and tantric deities such as paintings and statues originated with someone who actually saw them.

d) One understands perfectly that his perception was accurate and correct, not a delusion or hallucination. One has an almost physical sensation of bodhichitta, a love spreading out to the world from one's heart, and an intention to help the world. One for a time loses all desire for worldly objects such as food, understands that miracles like turning iron to gold are possible, and realizes that the contents of the scripture are all perfectly correct: that the Dharma is the absolutely correct way. One understands the meaning of the diamond. One understands truly the need to prostrate oneself.

8) Explain the meaning of the term "illusion" during the second half of the path of seeing and on. Explain what "illusion" DOES NOT mean. (Tibetan track give Tibetan term for "illusory.")

During the direct perception of reality, one stopped seeing objects as self-existent. After coming out, one sees them again, despite himself, as self-existent. He knows he is wrong but cannot stop himself, like Ulysses tied to the mast. Therefore objects are like an illusion for him. "Illusion" here does NOT mean that things don't exist, or that nothing really matters, especially in the observance of morality.

ལྷུ་མ་ལྷ་བྱ།  
*gyuma tabu*

9) List the two mental functions which are forever stopped because of the first direct perception of emptiness in the path of seeing. (Tibetan track in Tibetan, also giving the term for "abandoned at the path of seeing.")

a) The intellectual belief in self existence is forever stopped; no one could ever convince this person again that what he seems to see is correct.

བདེན་འཇིན་ཀུན་བརྟགས།  
*dendzin kuntak*

- b) Secondly, one can never again have doubt about the Buddhist teachings and path: he or she has seen directly their truth, and that they lead to escape from suffering, and to reaching perfect enlightenment.

ཐེ་ཚོམ།

*te-tsom*

The Tibetan term for a mental function abandoned at the path of seeing is *tong pang*.

མ་ཐོང་པང་།

*tong pang*

- 10) Explain the function of the first direct perception of emptiness during the following path, that of habituation.

During the path of habituation, one accustoms oneself to what he saw directly during the path of seeing. He or she uses their new understanding of emptiness to remove the rest of the mental afflictions, as well as the seed of seeing things as self-existent.

གོམ་ལམ།

*gom lam*



COURSE VI  
The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Seven*

- 1) Explain the emptiness of a Buddha's act of prediction in terms of the three elements. (Tibetan track also name the three elements here in Tibetan.)

**The predictor, the object, and the act are all empty of self-existence. The Buddha, the one making the prediction, is empty since for example he perceives himself as a Buddha not because he is so from his own side, but because his past deeds are forcing him to see his parts as making up a Buddha's mind and body. This also applies to the one receiving the prediction. The fact that the situation is occurring at all is also due to the projections or perceptions of the people present. Note that the enlightenment being predicted can also be said to be the third element here: it too is only a projection.**

ལུང་བསྟན་པ་པོ།

*lung tenpapo*

ལུང་བསྟན་པ།

*lung tenpa*

ལུང་བསྟན་པར་བྱ་བ།

*lung tenpar jawa*

- 2) Did the Buddha, in his former life, feel pain as his limbs were slowly cut off by the king of Kalinga, and he understood the emptiness of the three elements? Explain in some detail.

**He did feel pain, but he realized at that same time that the three elements of the situation (meaning here the king who was hurting him, himself being hurt by the king, and the fact that the whole situation was happening at all) each had its own emptiness, meaning each was a perception being forced upon him by his past deeds, or karma.**

3) Why didn't he feel any hatred at that moment?

**He didn't feel any hatred because he realized that the reason the situation was happening was that he himself had done harm to someone else in the past; and he understood that—if he did respond with hatred or any other negative action or karma—he would only be perpetuating the situation: that he would again be hurt himself in the future. He chose instead to break the cycle of violence, by applying his wisdom, his understanding of emptiness.**

4) Describe the emptiness of an arhat's mind.

**Just like us, an arhat hears thoughts going through his or her mind. Due to their extremely good past karma though, none of these thoughts is organized into a negative emotion by their past karma. In the way that a human is not forced to see a pen as something to chew on (the way a dog is), the arhat is never again forced to perceive their otherwise neutral (or blank or empty) thoughts as being negative.**



COURSE VI  
The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Eight*

1) Describe the way in which the bodhisattva Maitreya is said to reach his enlightenment. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Six different things happen simultaneously at the very instant when Maitreya (or any other being) reaches enlightenment in their paradise (which for Maitreya is called *Okmin*, or *Akanishta*, meaning "The Paradise Below No Other"):**

འོག་མིན།

*okmin*

- a) In what is known as the "final state of meditation," he perceives the "total amount of things," referring to all objects in deceptive reality, of all three times

ཇི་སྙེ་ཚུ་ཉེ་གས།

*ji-nye chutok*

- b) He achieves the "absolute end." This word can refer to emptiness itself, but here refers to the end of aging and death.

ཡང་དག་མཐའ།

*yangdak ta*



- c) He achieves the "Dharma body," referring mainly to the emptiness of the other three Buddha bodies.

ཚུ་སྐྱུ།

*chuku*

- d) He achieves "enlightenment towards all objects," which here refers primarily to the perception of the ultimate reality of all existing things.

སངས་རྒྱས་པ།

*sanggyepa*

- e) He achieves the Paradise Body, as the body he had during his final meditation transforms.

ལོངས་སྐྱུ།

*longku*

- f) He achieves what will cause the infinite emanations of a Buddha, which begin in the next moment after that.

སྐྱུ་སྐྱུ་རྒྱུ།

*trulkuy gyu*

- 2) Why doesn't the truth of suffering exist in a Buddha paradise?

There are no negative karmas or mental afflictions to drive or produce the suffering on a constant basis, as there are here producing the objects around us in the desire realm.

3) List the four forces for the purification of karma, and name an early source for them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) The force of the foundation

ཏེན་གྱི་སྟོབས།

*ten gyi top*

b) The force of destruction

ནུམ་པར་སུན་འབྱེན་པའི་སྟོབས།

*nampar sunjinpay top*

c) The force of restraining from the bad deed

ཉེས་པ་ལས་སྦྱང་བརྒྱུག་པའི་སྟོབས།

*nyepa le larndokpay top*

d) The force of applying an antidote

གཉེན་པོ་ཀུན་ཏུ་སྦྱོང་པའི་སྟོབས།

*nyenpo kuntu chupay top*

*Early source:* The teaching on the four forces of purification derives originally from the *Sutra on the Four Practices*, taught by Lord Buddha.

ཚུ་མི་བཞི་བསྟན་པའི་མདོ།

*chu shi tenpay do*

4) The *Diamond-Cutter Sutra* says that a person who reads or studies this sutra will suffer intensely. Why so?

**Because the study of emptiness is *the* most powerful antidote that one can apply to stop the power of past bad deeds, past bad karmas. As the *King of Concentration Sutra* also states, the power of a great good deed such as studying emptiness causes existing karmic seeds that would have taken you to a birth in the lower realms to ripen quickly, and with much less force—for example, as a headache.**

5) Which of the four forces is especially related to the subject matter of the *Diamond-Cutter Sutra*? Why so? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**Number four (make up activity), because the highest form of applying an antidote is the study of emptiness.**

གཉེན་པོ་ཀུན་ཏུ་སྤྱོད་པའི་སྣོབ་ས།

*nyenpo kuntu chupay top*



COURSE VI  
The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Nine*

1) Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup mentions that four different things are given the name "perfection of wisdom," although only one of them is the actual thing. List the four, explain each briefly and indicate which one is the actual perfection. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and explain in English.)

- a) **"Natural" perfection of wisdom: This is equivalent to "natural" nirvana, the "natural" Mother, and ultimate reality, or emptiness. It is so called because it has never, from time without beginning, ever had anything to do with the arising of those things that are involved with the mental afflictions.**

རང་བཞིན་ཤེར་སྤྱིན།

*rangshin sherchin*

- b) **"Textual" perfection of wisdom: This is defined as "The body of literature of the greater way which takes, as its principal subject matter, an unerring presentation of the path of the greater way, along with the result of this path."**

གཞུང་ཤེར་སྤྱིན།

*shung sherchin*

- c) **"Path" perfection of wisdom: This is defined as "The wisdom of a bodhisattva which is imbued with both an extraordinary form of the method, and an extraordinary form of wisdom."**

ལམ་ཤེར་སྤྱིན།

*lam sherchin*

- d) **"Resulting" perfection of wisdom: This is the actual perfection of wisdom, and is defined as "That ultimate form of wisdom which is distinguished by the three characteristics." The "three characteristics" are:**

འབྲས་བུ་ཤེར་ཕྱིན།

*drebu sherchin*

(1) a characteristic of the basis—this is only possessed in the minds of Buddha aryas;

ཏེན་གྱི་ཀླད་པར།

*ten gyi kyepar*

(2) a characteristic of essence—it consists of non-dual wisdom;

ངོ་བོའི་ཀླད་པར།

*ngowoy kyepar*

(3) a characteristic of being void of the object we deny—that is, it is empty of any true existence, and is like an illusion.

དགག་བྱ་དང་བྲལ་བའི་ཀླད་པར།

*gakja dang drelway kyepar*

2) Middle-Way philosophy runs a middle path through two different extremes. Explain the literal meaning of the word "extreme" here. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

Je Tsongkapa, in his *Illumination of the True Thought*, quotes Master Kamalashila's *Light of the Middle Way* and describes the "extreme" as being like an abyss that one falls into from atop a cliff. Anyone who falls off the cliff has wasted his life; anyone who grasps to these extremes will continue to suffer in cyclic life.

དེས་ན་འདིའི་མཐའ་ནི་ལྷུང་བའི་གནས་ཡིན་ཏེ། འཇིག་རྟེན་ན་བྲག་གཡང་ལ་  
མཐའ་དང་དེ་ལ་ལྷུང་བ་ལ་མཐའ་ལ་ལྷུང་ཞེས་སྒྲ་བ་ལྟར། གང་དུ་གཟུང་བས་  
འཇིག་པ་པོ་ལྷུང་བར་འགྱུར་བ་ལ་མཐར་ལྷུང་ཞེས་བཤད་པའོ།

*de na diy ta ni tungway ne yin te, jikten na drak-yang la ta dang de la  
tungwa la ta la hlung she mawa tar, gang du sungwe dzinpapo pungwar  
gyurwa la tar hlung she shepao*

3) There are two sets of extremes. Describe what it means to grasp to the extremes of "existence" and "non-existence." (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and explain in English.)

- a) *Grasping to the extreme of existence: Thinking to oneself that all objects exist independent of our projections. This is seeing something (independent existence) where there is actually nothing, and so the grasping to this extreme is a kind of over-estimation. A typical result of this extreme might be to think that lying could ever get one a profit in a business deal.*

ཡོད་པའི་མཐར་འཇིག་པ།

*yupay tar dzinpa*

སྒྲོ་འདོགས།

*drondok*

- b) *Grasping to the extreme of non-existence: Thinking to oneself that, if objects do not exist independent of our projections, then they cannot exist at all. This is seeing nothing where there is actually something (nominal existence), and so the grasping to this extreme is a kind of under-estimation. A typical result of this extreme might be to think that, because things are like an illusion, one does not have to honor the vows of morality.*

མེད་པའི་མཐར་འཇིག་པ།

*mepay tar dzinpa*

སྐྱར་འདོགས།

*kurndep*

4) In two of his most important lines, Je Tsongkapa (and the higher Middle-Way School) say that an understanding of dependent origination prevents one from grasping to one of these extremes, and an understanding of emptiness prevents one from grasping to the other. Quote the verse and explain what they mean. (Tibetan track quote in Tibetan and explain in English.)

In his *Three Principal Paths*, Je Tsongkapa says,

"In addition, the appearance prevents the existence extreme  
Emptiness that of non-existence..."

གཞན་ཡང་སྐྱང་བས་ཡོད་མཐའ་སེལ་བ་དང་།

སྐྱོང་པས་མིད་མཐའ་སེལ་ཞིང་སྐྱོང་པ་ཉིད།

སྐྱུ་དང་འབྲས་བུར་འཆར་བའི་རྒྱལ་ཤེས་ན།

མཐར་འཇིག་ལྷ་བས་འཕྲོག་པར་མི་འགྱུར་རོ།

*shen-yang nangwe yuta selwa dang  
tongpe meta sel shing tongpa nyi  
gyu dang drebur charway tsulshe na  
tarndzin tawe trokpar mingyur ro*

Understanding that no object has any true existence, aside from appearing this way, keeps one from the extreme of grasping to the extreme that things exist in an ultimate way. Yet the mere appearance cannot exist on its own, and so understanding emptiness prevents one from grasping to the extreme that things do not exist, in a conventional way.

5) State the four-fold distinction made by sages of the Middle-Way.

Pabongka Rinpoche says:

The real sages of the Middle Way school make a fourfold distinction: they say that nothing exists naturally, but not that nothing exists at all; everything exists merely by convention, but everything exists without existing naturally. The point of error for the Functionalists and those other schools is their failure to distinguish between these four: two kinds of "nothing exists" and two kinds of "everything exists."



COURSE VI  
The Diamond-Cutter Sutra

*Answer Key, Class Ten*

1) Why do things change, and why do some things in our world cause other things? (For example, why does medicine always work; or why are some investment strategies always successful?)

**Despite the fact that things are empty; no, because of the fact that things are empty, things work. Because for example medicine is empty, and has no inherent nature of being able to cure anything at all, aspirin works for some people and doesn't work for others, depending on their own past deeds or karma. And it's obvious that we can't say that risky investment strategies are more successful than conservative ones, or vice versa: either one is successful for a person who has made good karmic imprints on their mind in the past, and either one is unsuccessful for a person who has not.**

2) Explain why the higher part of the Madhyamika school does not accept the unqualified belief of the lower part in "wrong" and "right" deceptive objects. (Tibetan track give Tibetan for the two and explain in English.)

**The unqualified division into "wrong" and "right" deceptive objects is based on a belief that some objects have their own true nature. Those that function as expected are "right", and those that do not function as expected are "wrong." Such a distinction though is meaningless if both those that function as expected and those that do not so function, to the perceptions of a non-Arya, are evaluated relative to the ultimate truth which an Arya understands. That is, both objects which seem right and which seem wrong to a non-Arya are realized by an Arya to be wrong, ultimately. Without understanding the true nature of change as a simple projection, we misunderstand the nature of how anything works as expected.**

ཡང་དག་ཀུན་ཚོལ།

*yangdak kundzob*

ལོག་པའི་ཀུན་ཚོལ།

*lokpai kundzob*



3) Explain why the lower part of the Madhyamika school, those of the Independent group, believe that results have some nature of their own, come from causes which are something other than the results, and which also have some nature of their own. (Tibetan track give Tibetan for the belief and explain in English.)

**The Independent group believes in results which have some nature of their own and which come from causes which are something other than the results and which also have some nature of their own. They are forced to say this because they cannot accept the idea that cause and effect is all nothing but labelled through a projection; that is, they do not see how causation, and change itself, can be simply a mental idealization. This is the root of almost all their differences with the higher Madhyamika school.**

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་རྒྱ་གཞན་ལས་རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་གྲུབ་  
པའི་འབྲས་བུ་གཞན་སྐྱེ་བ།

*rang gi tsennyi kyi druppay gyu shen le rang gi tsennyi kyi druppay drebu  
shen kyewa*

4) Explain why the Mind-Only school believes that there must be a basis consciousness, where certain seeds created by karma are stored and then later give their results.

**Again the problem is based on an inability to accept the idea that causation itself can be simply a product of our projections. In this case it applies to causation in the form of karma and its results. Unable to accept that the ripening of a karma is a mental idealization of the process from commission of the deed until its result is experienced, this school is forced to create the concept of a "basis consciousness."**

5) Explain why the viewpoint expressed by Hwashang and others, that morality is unnecessary because things are empty, is totally mistaken.

**All objects in the world are like empty screens; what we see on them is totally a projection caused by the imprints in our own minds, placed there when we did something either good or bad in the past. Therefore—because things are empty—we *must* be good and moral in our personal lives, if we want to be forced by our karma to see the world as a tantric paradise in the future.**