

Green Mountain Zen Center Newsletter

5014 Sunset Bluff Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35803 www.gmzc.us

Sundays Newcomers' Session 6:00 pm

Contact: Jim Gordon (256) 882-0513, home / (256) 426-3344, mobile

Sundays Regular GMZC Zazen Service 7:00 pm

Fourth Sundays Dharma Discussion and Teleconference 7:00 pm

Wednesdays (starting again on 4 May 2005) 7:30 pm

Since the GMZC is currently studying Red Pine's translation and commentary of The Heart Sutra, I thought it might be helpful to provide a few nuggets from another of the Mahayana wisdom Sutras for additional balance and background. Following are some excerpts from the book "Mother of the Buddhas: Meditation on the Prajnaparamita Sutra", copyright 1993 by Lex Hixon. This is a "contemplative expansion" of forty passages from the *Prajnaparamita Sutra in 8,000 Lines*. From the back cover, "Through dramatic conversations between the Buddha and his disciples Shariputra, Subhuti, and Ananda, the Bodhisattva path to enlightenment is revealed."

From the Foreword, by Robert A. F. Thurman, PhD:

"The Prajnaparamita is considered the originating text of the Mahayana, or Universal ... vehicle of Buddhism... [the *Great Mother: the Prajnaparamita of 100,000 Lines*] purports to record the full audience given by Shakyamuni Buddha on Vulture Peak... Over the centuries various abridged versions have emerged, including the very short *One Letter Sutra* (the letter A), the short *Heart Sutra*, the concise *Diamond-cutting Sutra*, the *8,000 Line*, the *18,000* or *20,000 Line*, and the *25,000 Line Sutras*, from a total of eighteen Sutras. These are all considered the same Sutra, differing only in length and detail, never in basic import. Among them, the *8,000 Line* version, on which Lex Hixon's meditations are based, is very highly regarded in all Mahayana traditions, although traditional Buddhist scholars do not consider it the oldest or 'Ur' text, as some modern scholars do."

From the Introduction, by Lex Hixon, PhD:

"To immerse oneself in this Sutra is to swim in an ocean which is sometimes awesomely calm and other times filled with thunderous waves. These are the Sutra's two principle themes: its stillness is transcendent insight and its turbulence, a flood of overwhelming compassion. Wandering through the realmless realm of Prajnaparamita, we remain always surprised, even awestruck. Tears of joy gather in our eyes and other profound emotions stir the depth of our being."

Hixon continues, "One of the more recent Chariots of Dharma who has valiantly and creatively carried on the line of Nagarjuna and his successors is Lama Tsongkhapa, a monastic yogi and teacher who lived in Tibet during the fourteenth century." About Tsongkhapa's "consummating insight," Hixon states it "reestablished the primary role of loving compassion on all levels of Buddhist practice and, by extension, the primary role of the relative existence of suffering beings. All living beings suffer, teaches the Buddha. Sentient beings are, therefore, the inspirers and recipients of heartfelt compassion and are, in this sense, benefactors or even mothers of the bodhisattvas who vow to liberate them from suffering. Blissfully awakened bodhisattvas come forth from the ranks of sentient beings who are immersed in the terrible dream of suffering."

"At issue here is the root principle of Mahayana. The relative truth of existence is that it is an expanse of suffering beings, a condition which is the motivation for the precious Mahayana commitment to universal conscious awakening. This relative truth of suffering must not be swallowed up, even subtly, by the absolute truth that Reality is an inherently selfless expanse, an infinite, empty space, intrinsically peaceful and blissful. Relative truth and absolute truth must remain in subtle balance or even in perfect unison." (Gary Beard) ❀

April 15 - tax day. Inevitable, as the saying goes. We've probably all dealt recently with this duty. And the other inevitability; death -- this past month has provided all of us with an abundance of cause to contemplate the transience of life. Human beings who have had both great and small impact on the world have passed quite conspicuously from the life we cling to. Let this confluence of events strengthen our realization.

Gassho -- Jim ❀



Though it has no thought of keeping watch, it's not for naught the scarecrow stands in the grain field.

-- Dogen Zenji ❁

Archaic Torso of Apollo -- Rainer Maria Rilke

We cannot know his legendary head
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,
burst like a star: for here there is no place
that does not see you. You must change your life.



Upcoming Events at GMZC and area:

- ◇ 1 May: Dharma Discussion: Red Pine's *The Heart Sutra Prajnaṣaramita* (continued, pp. 56 - 96), GMZC Sunday evening sesshin
- ◇ 14 May: Buddha-Day Meditation Retreat, Giac Lam Temple 8:00am – 5:00pm (tentative)
- ◇ 15 May: Buddha-Day Ceremonies & Picnic, Giac Lam Temple 10:00am
- ◇ 22 & 23 July: Zazenkai/Meditation Retreat, GMZC Friday evening 7:30 - 9:30 & Saturday 7:00am – 7:00pm
- ◇ 2 - 4 September: Sesshin, Eric & Jim leading, ASZC Friday pm – 12:00 noon Sunday
- ◇ October TBD: Weekend sesshin with Sensei, GMZC Friday evening – Sunday noon

Serving Others

A Sufi teaching story tells of a man who prayed continually for the awareness to succeed in life. Then one night he dreamed of going into the forest to attain understanding. The next morning he went into the woods and wandered for several hours looking for some sign that would provide answers. When he finally stopped to rest, he saw a fox with no legs lying between two rocks in a cool place. Curious as to how a legless fox could survive, he waited until sunset when he observed a lion come and lay meat before the fox. "Ah, I understand," the man thought. "The secret to success in life is to trust that God will take care of all my needs. I don't need to provide for myself. All I have to do is totally surrender to my all-sustaining God." Two weeks later, weakened and starving, the man had another dream. In it he heard a voice say, "Fool. Be like the lion, not like the fox."



Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal?*

* **His goal: transcendental medication.

