



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

### THE YOGA OF DEVOTION

#### ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS FIVE

1. Arjuna complains that Krishna is confusing him with so many “seemingly inconsistent teachings.” First off, what are the three main methods to determine whether our Teacher (who is, we should remember, a totally enlightened and omniscient Buddha) is giving us correct teachings?

**a) The teachings cannot be disproved by any direct valid perception that we have or have had. b) The teachings cannot be disproved by any airtight reasoning. c) The teachings themselves are free of any internal inconsistency: nothing that Lord Buddha said at one time contradicts what He said at another time.**

2. Name and describe briefly the three "ground rules" for interpreting our Teacher, that is, for deciding what our Teacher says was meant only figuratively, and not literally.

**a) True intent: Our Teacher must have had something else specific in mind when he said something which was not literal. b) Contradiction: The statement that our Teacher made must contradict what we know to be actually true. c) Need: There must be some compelling need or purpose served by the Buddha saying something which is not technically true.**

3. Describe three different levels of the terms "literal" and "figurative."

**a) On the level of expression: do the words a person speaks and their intended meaning match each other (literal), or not (figurative)? b) On the level of reality: does the way which an object appears to be and the way the object is match each other (literal), or not (figurative)? c) On the level of understanding: do we understand the two realities with an accurate state of perception (*pramana*) that sees what they are (literal), or do we understand them with only an approximate understanding that only has a rough understanding of what they are (figurative)?**



4. Je Tsongkapa points out that—if what our Teacher says must be divided into what He or She says that is figurative and what He or She says that was literal—then the Teacher's own statements about when He or She is being figurative and when He or She is being literal cannot necessarily be taken literally. Rather, we must in the end rely on what is logical and makes sense to us. Describe the three logical tests recommended by Lord Buddha, and state the source for them.

**Lord Buddha advises us to accept his words only after we've finished a careful examination of them, testing them like gold—in the fire, by cutting, and by using a touchstone. These three tests refer, respectively, to checking whether the particular statement or belief in question contradicts our own direct, accurate experience; our own deductive, accurate perceptions; or the words of a being whom we have established correctly as being infallible.**

5. How can the principle of "figurative and literal" be useful to us in our daily lives?

**We can come to a better understanding that—if the Buddha himself spoke figuratively when it was helpful to students to do so—then we must be very careful in judging the people around us, who could well be special beings who are trying to bring us and others further along in our thinking.**

6. Name the three levels of reality, and give one example of each.

**a) That which is evident; for example, colors or shapes. b) That which is hidden; for example, hearing a sound around the corner and deducing who has made it, without directly seeing them. c) That which is deeply hidden; for example, the subtle workings of karma.**

7. What are the three kinds of “valid perception” (*pramana*), and which levels of reality are each one directed towards?

**The first kind of valid perception is called “direct” (*pratyaksha*) and is used to evaluate the “evident” level of reality. The second kind of valid perception is “inferential reasoning” (*anumana*) and third is “authority” (*agama*). They are used for the second and third levels of reality – that which is “hidden” and “deeply hidden.”**

8. Krishna says that “Stupid people, not knowing of My higher existence as the Great Lord of all beings and seeing only the human body I have assumed, treat Me contemptuously.” What proof is there that our Teacher, who sometimes or often appears to ourselves and others as just another ordinary human being, is in fact a Buddha? In your answer, review the four reasons Pabongka Rinpoche lists for



## DIAMOND MOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY

gaining an understanding, based on reasoning and scriptural authority, that our Teacher is in fact a Buddha or Enlightened Being, and especially explain the Gita verse in light of the fourth of these reasons.

**Pabongka Rinpoche's four reasons for proving our Teacher is the Buddha are:**

- 1) **Vajradhara affirmed that our guru is a Buddha when he declared in scripture that he would return to us in our Teacher's form.**
- 2) **A guru is the agent for all Buddhas' activities**
- 3) **Even nowadays Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are acting on behalf of all sentient beings.**
- 4) **Our perceptions are unreliable.**

**It is due to the fourth reason that others and we ourselves sometimes do not see our Teacher as an Enlightened Being. As Geshe Lhundrub Sopa says in his commentary on Je Tsongkapa's *Lam Rim Chenmo*, "Circumstances may arise which lead to a lot of negative feelings about your teacher. Your teacher has come into the world as an ordinary human being who acts in an ordinary way. When you live in close proximity, work together, and have a close relationship you may not be able to avoid seeing faults in your teacher. But in fact, these faults are projected by your own mind and its negativities. Because of your own obscurations you may see many things that are not even there. This negative attitude toward your spiritual teacher is one of the biggest, most damaging, and powerful obstacles to your inner development. An effective way of dealing with this obstacle is simply not to grasp onto the validity of your own perceptions.**

9. If the Teacher is an Enlightened Being, why would He or She take the form of human, and not appear to us directly in an unrecognizably holy form?

**As Pabongka Rinpoche says, "The reason that Buddhas manifest themselves to us as ordinary spiritual teachers is because this form suits our merit. Indeed, they have no other means by which they could bring about our deliverance. It would serve no purpose if they tried to reveal themselves to us in some form higher than that of an ordinary spiritual teacher – for instance, in the form of a Buddha's enjoyment body – because we would not be able to perceive them . . . we lack the karmic fortune to perceive them [in that form]. On the other hand, if they revealed themselves to us in a lower form – such as a bird or a wild animal – it would not benefit us, since we would not entrust ourselves spiritually to such a being."**

10. What does Lord Krishna say about practitioners who fail in their practice; who, for example, cannot maintain pure view about their Teacher all the time?



## DIAMOND MOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY

**In Bhagavad Gita 6.40ff., Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that “no one who acts virtuously. . . ever comes to a bad end.” No honest attempt at goodness or service to the Teacher goes for naught. Even if one cannot reach the highest goal in this life, due to the karma of their attempts they will have a good rebirth and in the next life “renew his efforts to gain perfection.” “Perfected over the course of many lives, [he or she] goes to the highest destiny.”**

11. Why, according to Bhagavad Gita 17.3, is it so crucial for us to try to see our Teacher in the most perfect light we are capable of?

**Because “a person is what he or she has faith in. As his faith, so he is.” We are mirroring our Teacher and are what we see in Him and Her. If we can see perfection, we will become perfect.**