



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

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

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

## MEDITATIONS ON EMPTINESS

### ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS ONE

1. Master Shantideva begins the ninth chapter of his text by saying that the teachings that came before were all just preparing us for the sixth “perfection,” that of wisdom. Name the other five perfections that lead up to the sixth.

**The first five perfections are generosity, ethics, patience, joyful effort, and meditation.**

2. Give three reasons why it is not necessary for the perfections of generosity and the other four to come before one has a realization of emptiness.

**a) As Master Shantarakshita has pointed out, the first five perfections do not need to come before one can have a realization of emptiness of the type that comes through either learning about it or simply contemplating upon it.**

**b) These five perfections do not have to come before one gains a deep experience and spiritual conviction about emptiness, because if this were the case then they would also have to come before one gained a deep experience and conviction about the fact of impermanence.**

**c) They don't have to come before one gains special insight which comes from meditation, because persons of the two lower-way tracks (Listener and Self-Made Buddhas) are able to realize thusness without them coming first.**

3. What makes the “perfections” perfect?

**There are several possible answers here. One could say that it is when the perfection is accompanied by bodhicitta – the wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings – that it is made perfect. Another way in which the perfections are made perfect is by doing them with an understanding of how and why they work, that is, by understanding their emptiness.**

4. In what way are the first five perfections the preconditions for the perfection of wisdom?

**The principal topic of the *Guide* is how to achieve full enlightenment, which involves removing the obstacles to omniscience. Reaching this requires that one be "enriched with limitless masses of merit," which can only be done if the other five perfections**



**come first.**

5. Name the two truths. Are they actually two different kinds of truth? If not, then why are they called "truths"? What object is divided into the two truths

**The two truths are "deceptive truth" and "ultimate truth." They are not two different kinds of truth. Deceptive truth is called a "truth" only because ignorance takes its object to exist "in truth," which means selfexistantly. Ultimate truth is an ultimate reality, and this is why it is called a "truth." Deceptive truth and ultimate truth are two broad and all-inclusive divisions of reality itself, and so they are more accurately described as the "two realities."**

6. Give a special quality of ultimate truth, as described by the great Gyaltzab Je.

**It is "That object which is such that, if you realize it directly, this functions to allow you to finish off every impurity," and reach nirvana and enlightenment within a specified time of this direct perception.**

7. What does it mean (and what *doesn't* it mean) to say that ultimate reality is "inaccessible to the intellect"?

**What it doesn't mean is that there is no point studying and thinking about ultimate reality. But what it does mean is that the transformative experience of the direct perception of ultimate reality in deep meditation is non-conceptual – unmediated by concepts and language.**

8. People who seek to establish the meaning of the two truths, or realities, can broadly be divided into two types. Name them and briefly describe what they believe.

**a) The group which believes that things which work normally, which perform a function, exist truly. This is a combination of the Detailist, Sutrist, and Mind-Only Schools. They say that a thing is real or true when it can do something, and thereafter cannot ever be said to be untrue or unreal.**

**b) Those of the Middle-Way school, who say that no object has any nature of its own: things are blank, without any quality or characteristics of their own, and we only see in them what our past karma forces us to see.**

9. Name and describe the extremely essential division into two kinds of persons who result from these two viewpoints.

**It is very important to realize that there are only two types of beings in the entire universe:**

**a) "Realized" or "extraordinary" beings (*aryas*, in Sanskrit; *pakpa* in Tibetan) who**



have seen emptiness directly. They are definitely on their way out of this suffering life and are therefore called "stream enterers" (*gyunshuk*) from that moment.

b) "Ordinary" beings (*so so keywo* in Tibetan; *pirthak jana* in Sanskrit ), also known as "children" (*jipa/bala*) or "nearsighted" (Tibetan *tsurtong*) -- those who have not yet seen emptiness directly.

10. The text says that "worldly ones see and conceptualize things as if they were real and not illusory." Aren't things real? What does it mean to say things are "illusory."

**Things are "real" in the sense that they work and function. They are only "illusory" in that they appear to exist in a way different from how they really exist. They seem to an ordinary person to exist "out there" – independently and objectively – instead of as a projection coming from us instead of at us.**

11. State the basic misconception behind the wrong idea that, if things do something, then they must be real as we see them.

**It is the idea that the two truths cannot coexist: thinking that if functional things have no nature of their own, then they must not exist at all; and that if these things do exist, then they must exist with some nature of their own.**