



Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

THE YOGA OF WISDOM

ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS SIX

1. Give the usual Sanskrit term for the “withdrawal of the senses” and its meaning, and then also discuss the related English words. What is the highest form of withdrawing the senses?

The usual Sanskrit term is *pratyahara*, the fifth of the eight “limbs” or parts of yoga according to the *Yoga Sutra*. This simply means to avoid burdening our minds with excess sense stimulation, such as too much food, music that we are not really listening to, news, talk, and the like. The three parts of this word are *prati*, *a*, and *hara*. The prefix *prati* means “individually,” or “one by one.” The prefix *a* here means “in,” or “near.” *Hara* comes from the root \sqrt{hir} meaning “to take.” This itself comes from the root \sqrt{bhir} , meaning “to carry or bear.” Related English words are *bear* (in the senses of carrying, enduring and giving children), *bring*, and *offer*. Together, all these parts mean “to withdraw” or “pull back” the senses, one by one, from their objects. When you reach a high degree of withdrawal of the senses, then the mind can be focused easily. This then leads to the “highest control of the senses,” the direct communion with ultimate reality.

2. Name and describe the first of the five “paths” of a spiritual life. What are the two components of that path according to the *Yoga Sutra*?

The first of the five paths is called the Path of Accumulation. You have reached this path when your daily practice has brought you to a level of pure sadness about this life, and a desire to find freedom from the pattern of decay and loss of everything we hold dear. The path is known as “accumulation” since you are accumulating the good karma needed to see ultimate reality directly, and to attain enlightenment. The two components are *vairagya* or detachment from those elements of life not related to the spiritual path, and *abhyasa* -- regular, committed practice.

3. Is it wrong to desire or to be attached to nice things?

It is not wrong to want nice things, or to be attached to them in a healthy way. There is nothing wrong with Ben and Jerry’s “Cinnamon Bun” ice cream, or the lovely face of a child or a sunset. Certainly the mandala or enlightened paradise which we all seek to create with our practice will be



filled with lovely and beautiful experiences. Buddhas, enlightened beings, certainly *want* to see us freed from all of our pain; they are *quite attached* to the idea of seeing us reach ultimate happiness. And no matter what anyone may say to the opposite, every one of us seeks—from the moment we step out of bed in the morning—to get what we want, and be happy. A spiritual practice of is not meant to convince us somehow that *we shouldn't want anything*; rather, it is a practice to attain everything we could ever wish for, and more, through ways which at the same time also lead to the temporary and ultimate benefit of every other living being. To state it in a negative way, wanting or being attached is fine, *unless it ever involves hurting another being*.

4. What are some kinds of attachment that we might want to give up?

We can and should attain all the pleasures and happiness that our heart tells us are ultimately possible. This may involve rejecting lesser pleasures that create in us a distracted state of mind: what Master Shantideva (in his *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*) calls “our craving for experiences.” At the most basic level, this craving would be—for example—wasting our time with newspapers or magazines or small talk with other people, because we resist going to the silence and deeper part of our mind, which is the only place where we can find the ultimate form of freedom from attachment.

5. What is the second of the five paths? What are the “five powers” one develops on this path according to the *Yoga Sutra*?

The second of the five paths is called the Path of Preparation. The first of the “five powers” that are associated with this path according to the *Yoga Sutra* is *shraddha* -- “confidence,” “belief,” or faith. This does not refer to a blind acceptance of spiritual doctrines, but rather to an intelligent attraction towards a spiritual goal because one has carefully thought out how desirable this goal is. *Virya* or “joyful effort is the second of the five powers. It does not refer to the common idea of working hard, but rather to enjoying doing spiritually meaningful things; in this sense, someone could be working very hard and not be displaying any effort at all. The third of the five powers is *smirti* or “mindfulness,” “awareness” -- the ability to keep certain things in mind as you travel the spiritual path. These things to keep in mind would include the benefits of the goal that are the basis of your belief in this goal; remembering to undertake only actions that take care of other people; recalling how your mind is turning things around, despite yourself: making them seem as if they come from the outside, and not from our own perceptions, forced upon us by our past actions. The fourth power is *samadhi* or meditation, which can be described as the capacity of keeping the mind on a single meaningful object, free of the two extremes of dullness and agitation. The fifth of the five powers on the Path of Preparation is *prajna* or wisdom: the ability to analyze reality and come to both



intellectual and direct perceptions of high spiritual truths such as emptiness, and karma and its consequences.

6. Lord Krishna says that all ignorant longing for sense objects ends for “someone who has seen the ultimate.” Give the Sanskrit name for such a person and identify which of the five paths that person has reached. Finally, which of the “cessations” that kind of a person has explains why ignorant longing for sense objects would end.

A person who has “seen the ultimate” or had the direct perception of ultimate reality is known as an “Arya” and has reach the third of the five paths: the Path of Seeing. Anyone who has undergone this experience is extremely close to becoming an angel with a body of light and an all-knowing and compassionate mind; they even see ahead into the future and know *when* this transformation will take place with them. By tradition then these people are considered a completely different and higher being in the evolutionary scale: all living creatures in the universe can be divided into two types, those who have had this experience and those who have not, and by reaching the Path of Seeing these people are now “realized beings” (although not yet enlightened). People like this have certain “cessations” – certain wrong ideas about things permanently stop – including a cessation of the intellectual belief that things exist the way they seem (“out there,” independently, on their own, apart from the projection of them by the perceiver). It is this cessation that would end the ignorant longing for sense objects. One would thoroughly know that desirable things come only from having made efforts in the past to give others things they desire.

7. Describe the “chain of pain” as it is delineated in Bhagavad Gita 2.62-63. Why is renunciation, self-restraint, and wisdom important for breaking the chain?

Clinging or attachment arises in people who think about sense objects all the time. Form this comes desire, and from desire comes anger. From anger comes delusion, which leads to the wavering of one’s mindfulness which, in turn, destroys the intelligence. Renunciation breaks this chain at the beginning, since it implies turning away from obsessing about sense ojects all the time. Self-restraint helps engender and strengthen that renunciation, and wisdom about where happiness really comes from underlies the entire process of breaking the chain of pain.

8. What is the role of meditative concentration in achieving “tranquility” (*prasada*) or “perfect peace” (*shanti*), and what, in turn, is required for achieving meditative concentration?

According to the Bhagavad Gita 2.66, there can be no true peace and happiness (which is the ultimate fruit of wisdom) for a person who hasn’t learned to calm his or her mind through meditation. And the achievement of such meditative



concentration in turn requires discipline, including the disciplining of one's ethical life. These three interdependent qualities are known in Buddhism as the "extraordinary trainings" -- ethics, meditative concentration, and wisdom.

9. According to the Gita 2.69, a "man of restraint" is completely different from ordinary people, "awake in what is night for ordinary beings" and "when other beings are awake the sage perceives night." Give a possible reason why advanced spiritual practitioners would see the world so differently – indeed, in a completely opposite manner -- from other ordinary people, and relate this to the fourth of the five paths of a spiritual life.

After having the transformative communion with ultimate reality on the Path of Seeing, one then spends years, and even lifetimes—seven lifetimes is very typical—processing the experience of seeing ultimate reality directly, and the spiritual truths seen just after this experience. This is known as the Path of Habituation. One familiarizes oneself—habituates oneself—with the transformative, mystical experience, and is thus able, in time, to eliminate all of one's negative emotions, and eventually become an enlightened angel. A person like this sees the world the same way ordinary people do – as if things had some independent, self-existence – but the Arya knows they cannot truly exist that way. He or she has begun the process of permanently stopping the way the mind "turns things around." When even the subtlest seeds for seeing things wrong are finally destroyed, the practitioner reaches the fifth of the five paths.

10. The Gita speaks of someone who achieves perfect peace, a "sacred state" called the "nirvana which is ultimate reality" when they no longer think there is "me" or "mine." Explain and name the fifth of the five paths these verses are referring to.

The fifth of the five paths is the Path of No More Learning. This is no longer a "path" in the sense of traveling to the goal, but is actually the goal itself. At this point, the *kleshas* are permanently stopped. The most serious and underlying of all the mental afflictions are the tendency to see the subject ("me") and the objects in the world the subject encounters ("mine") as if they had some self-existence. Even the subtlest seeds for seeing things ignorantly are stopped upon reaching the fifth path.