

THE SUTRA OF THE HEART OF TRANSCENDENT WISDOM

Thus I have heard. At one time the Lord was sitting on Vulture's Peak near the city of Rajgir. He was accompanied by a large community of monks as well as a large community of bodhisattvas. On that occasion the Blessed One was absorbed in a particular concentration called the profound appearance. Meanwhile the bodhisattva, the great being, the noble Avalokiteshvara was contemplating the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom. He came to see that the five aggregates were empty of any inherent nature of their own.

Through the power of the Buddha, the venerable Shariputra approached the noble Avalokiteshvara and asked him, "How should a son or daughter of the noble lineage proceed when he wants to train in the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom? "

The noble Avalokiteshvara replied to the venerable Shariputra, "Whatever son or daughter of the noble lineage wants to train in the profound discipline of the perfection of wisdom should consider things in the following way. First, he or she should clearly and thoroughly comprehend that the five aggregates are empty of their own inherent nature.

Form is empty; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form and form is not other than emptiness. Similarly, feeling, discernment, compositional factors and consciousness are also empty. Likewise, Shariputra, are all phenomena empty. They have no defining characteristics; they are unproduced; they do not cease; they are undefiled, yet they are not separate from defilement. They do not decrease, yet they do not increase. This being the case, Shariputra, in terms of emptiness there exist no forms, no feelings, no discernments, no formative elements, no consciousness; no eyes, no ears, no noses, no tongues, no bodies, no minds; no visual-forms, no sounds, no smells, no tastes, no tactile sensations, no mental-objects. There exist no visual elements, no mental elements, and no elements of mental consciousness.

There exist no ignorance and no exhaustion of ignorance, no aging and death and no exhaustion of aging and death. In the same way there exist no suffering, no origin of suffering, no cessation, no path, no wisdom, no attainment and no lack of attainment. "Therefore, Shariputra, since bodhisattvas have no attainment, they depend upon and dwell in the perfection of wisdom; their minds are unobstructed and unafraid.

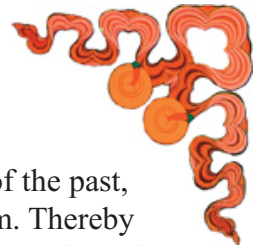
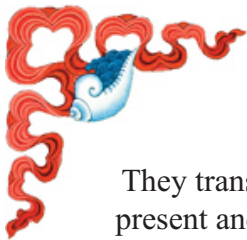


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They transcend all error and finally reach the end-point: nirvana. "All the buddhas of the past, present and future have depended, do and will depend upon the perfection of wisdom. Thereby they became, are becoming and will become unsurpassably, perfectly and completely awakened buddhas. "Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom is a mantra of great knowledge; it is an unsurpassable mantra; it is a mantra that is comparable to the incomparable; it is a mantra that totally pacifies all suffering. It will not deceive you, therefore know it is true!

I proclaim the mantra of the perfection of wisdom:

TAYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

Shariputra, it is in this way that the great bodhisattvas train themselves in the profound perfection of wisdom.”

At that moment the Lord arose from his concentration and said to the noble Avalokiteshvara, "Well said, well said. That is just how it is, my son, just how it is. The profound perfection of wisdom should be practiced exactly as you have explained it. Then the Ones Gone Thus will be truly delighted.”

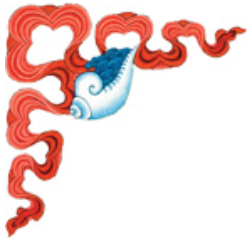
When the Lord had spoken these words, the venerable Shariputra and the bodhisattva, the great being, the noble Avalokiteshvara, and the entire gathering of gods, humans, asuras and gandharvas were overjoyed, and they praised what the Lord had said.



About this translation: A small group of us in Dharamsala edited some existing translations of the Heart Sutra to make it more suitable for recitation after being invited to recite the Heart Sutra in English at the beginning of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's annual teaching. This has now become a tradition. As we are the newest language to conceptualize the Buddhist wisdom, we follow Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Mongolian, and other languages. Ideally this conceptualization of the Buddhist wisdom points to a deeper nonconceptual reality that we can taste and experience in order to enhance our compassion.

- Barry Kerzin (Ven. Tenzin Choerab) Aug. 19, 2013, Dharamsala, India





HEART SUTRA

The Buddha taught three collections of teachings over 46 years. The second focused on the understanding of no self. The shortest teaching was, Ah. For those who did not understand, he taught the slightly more elaborate two page Heart (of Wisdom) Sutra (Tib. *sherap nyingpo*). More elaborate still are the 8,000, 25,000, and 100,000 verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. The setting of the Heart Sutra teaching is on top of Vulture's Peak in Bihar, India. The Buddha and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara are meditating on the profound emptiness. The Buddha sees that Avalokiteshvara's meditation is profound, and thus mentally prompts Shariputra to inquire how to achieve this understanding. He then mentally prompts Avalokiteshvara how to answer. At the end Buddha congratulates Avalokiteshvara for his accuracy. This is the skillful way the Buddha taught.

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara answers that everything is empty. Even qualities of things are empty. Moreover things have never been produced. Here emptiness means lacking a quality of existence known as intrinsic, inherent, independent, or objective existence. These are synonyms. This is existence solely from the side of the object, independent of the mind conceiving or designating the object. It is how we normally see things, but is utterly false.

Avalokiteshvara lists all the categories of phenomena: 5 aggregates; 6 sense faculties, 6 sensory objects, 6 consciousnesses (these are the 18 constituents of all things); 12 links of interdependent origination; 4 Noble Truths; Wisdom; Attainment; and lack of Attainment. They are all false. For everything is empty of intrinsic, objective, and independent existence. Nothing exists from its own side independent of the mind.

Wisdom is the mother of all the Buddhas. Thus the wisdom mantra is most precious. There are two truths – ultimate and conventional. The ultimate view of emptiness is presented here. Thus from this perspective nothing exists. From the conventional view there are things and events as mentioned in the previous paragraph. This suggests that reality, as we know it is created or fabricated by our mental concepts. But from the ultimate perspective even these are not true.

- Barry Kerzin (Ven. Tenzin Choerab) Aug. 12, 2013, Dharamsala, India



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