The Heart Sutra

Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sutra —

The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom



Drawn from Seong Sang, the Dalai Lama & Thich Nhat Hanh

Presented by: Paul Poore

Chanting as Meditation

Together action

Sound and you are not separate

A time of no like and no dislike.

Heightened awareness and receptivity—preparation for seated meditation

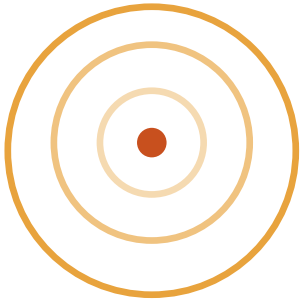
Sutra

The words of the Buddha or of masters.

Dharani

Extended mantras: rhythmic sounds expressing the truth beyond duality.

- Chanting from the hara bypasses the intellect and awakens understanding
- Suffering disappears; happiness appears



“Don’t strike the instrument; let it be struck.”

The Maha Prajna Paramita Hrydaya Sutra: Heart of Great Wisdom

Maha

Great.

Prajñā Pāramitā

Perfect understanding: direct realization of emptiness and the aspiration to free all beings.

See what is happening without adding a story: “Don’t know mind!”

Hṛdaya

The heart or essence: the sutra lies at the core of the Perfection of Wisdom.

- Among the shortest Mahāyāna scriptures, yet the essence of Buddhist teaching for 2000 years
- Contains the meaning of all 84,000 sutras
- Chanted daily in Zen, Tibetan, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese traditions

Structure of the Sutra

1. Insight

Avalokiteśvara sees the five aggregates are empty and is freed from suffering.

2. Form & Emptiness

“Form is emptiness, emptiness is form” applied to all five aggregates.

3. Negations

Nothing to attain: no aggregates, senses, Four Noble Truths, or wisdom.

4. Mantra

Wisdom is the path of all Buddhas; the mantra seals the teaching.



Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva

Avalokiteśvara

The bodhisattva who hears the cries of the world and comes to help.

Embodies non-fear, and wisdom giving rise to compassion.

Śāriputra

Foremost disciple in wisdom among the Buddha's followers; the one being taught in the Heart Sutra.

The Buddha's role

In many versions the Buddha silently approves, and the teaching is spoken through Avalokiteśvara.

When practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita perceives that all five skjandas are empty and is saved from all suffering and distress

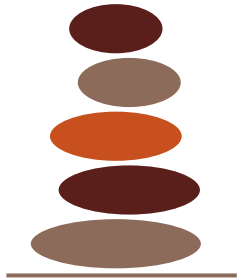
1. Form	2. Feeling	3. Perception	4. Mental formations (Impulses)	5. Consciousness
The body, material experience	Pleasant, unpleasant, neutral	Recognizing and labeling	Thoughts, habits, intentions, volition	Awareness of it all

The “person” is a bundle of changing processes. If the five aggregates are empty, so is the “me” made of them.

And is saved from all suffering and distress

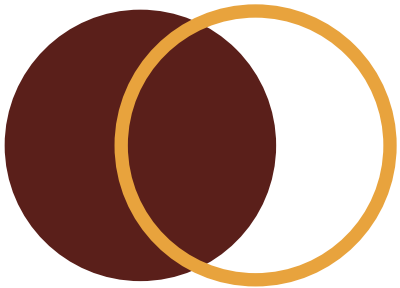
Suffering arises from clinging to our own existence and self-centeredness

“One who completely understands the true nature of emptiness will be liberated, released completely from suffering.” --Dalai Lama



Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. That which is form is emptiness, that which is emptiness form.

- **Form** is everything that appears, arising from many causes and conditions; emptiness is its lack of independent, permanent essence (dependent origination)
- Not nihilism: empty of a separate self, yet full of life and the whole cosmos
- Emptiness is the basis of form: A table is a table, but it depends on wood, trees, sunlight, rain, tools, people, etc. Dependent origination
- **Emptiness does not differ from form**
- Everything is always changing: because things are empty, they can appear, change and interact



The same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness.

A meditator realizes emptiness directly

Shariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness; they do not appear or disappear, are not tainted or pure, do not increase or decrease.

Not arising, not ceasing

Interpenetration: everything contains everything else

Beyond birth and death as fixed events.

Not defiled, not pure

Beyond the dualism of impure and pure.

Concepts that divide the world into opposites are conventional labels, not ultimate truth

Not increasing, not decreasing

Everything is infinite in time and space.

Beyond gain and loss.

Therefore, in emptiness no form, no feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness

The Negations

- 6 sense organs/their functions: **No eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind; no color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind**
- **No realm of eyes:** No realms of perception, from the eye-realm to the mind-consciousness realm: the 18 realms only “inter-be”, and none stands alone
- **And so forth until no realm of mind consciousness:** The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination: ignorance, habits, consciousness, body and mind, senses, contact, feelings, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, aging, death
- **No Ignorance and also no extinction of it**: ignorance is the failure to see reality clearly
- When ignorance ceases, thoughts cease
- **until no old age and death:** None of these has a fixed, self-existing essence
- When ignorance ceases, formations cease; when formations cease, consciousness and eventually aging and death cease
- **And also no extinction of them:** everything always is

No suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path, no cognition,
also no attainment with nothing to attain

Everything is already perfect!



The Bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita and the mind is no hindrance; without any hindrance no fears exist. Far apart from every deluded view one dwells in Nirvana.

- Bodhisattvas rely on the perfection of wisdom, so the mind has no hindrance
- **And the mind is no hindrance**: without hindrance there is no fear; they go beyond distorted views and reach nirvana
- Fear and suffering come from attachment: they fall away as we let go of a fixed self and fixed things
- **One dwells in Nirvana**: Nirvana: "the state beyond sorrows"
- **In the three worlds all Buddhas depend on Prajna Paramita and attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi:** All Buddhas of the three worlds (past, present and future) awaken (Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi) through this same wisdom
- Wisdom (prajñā) is realized through compassion (karuṇā)
- A reminder to also not cling to Buddhism!!

Therefore, know that Prajna Paramita
is the great transcendent mantra
is the great bright manta,
is the utmost mantra, is the supreme mantra,
which is able to relive all suffering
and is true, not false.
So proclaim the Prajna Paramita mantra,
proclaim the mantra which says:

Mantra means “to protect the mind”

Is able to relieve all suffering and is true, not false: the perfection of wisdom is the ultimate truth, thus the statement is true

Gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā

Gate	Pāragate	Pārasaṃgate	Bodhi	Svāhā
gone, go beyond	all the way to the other shore	everyone, the whole sangha	awakening, the light inside	a cry of joy!

- Commonly interpreted as: “Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond — awakening, Hurrah!”
- The great, unsurpassed mantra, able to relieve all suffering; to be recited and embodied, not only understood
- When Avalokiteshvara saw the nature of interbeing and the emptiness of the skandas, he was liberated
- Everything you experience is real as experience, but nothing exists independently. Stop clinging, even to your idea of yourself, and you are free.

Go beyond attachment to form

Go beyond attachment to emptiness

Go beyond distinctions between form and emptiness

Go beyond duality to non-duality

Go beyond forgetfulness to mindfulness

Go beyond suffering to liberation!



Heart Sutra Summarized in One Sentence

Everything you experience is real as experience, but nothing exists independently or permanently; when you stop clinging to things—including your idea of yourself—you become free to experience reality without the suffering created by attachment.

