

The Heart Sutra

The Essence of the Perfection of Wisdom

Thus, have I heard: At one time, the Blessed One dwelt in Rajagriha at Vulture Peak Mountain, together with a great sangha of fully ordained monks and a great sangha of bodhisattvas. As the Blessed One rested in the samadhi of the enumerations of phenomena called “perception of the profound,” noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, observed the practice of the profound Perfection of Wisdom and saw the five aggregates to be empty of nature.

Then, through the power of the Buddha, venerable Shariputra addressed noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva: “How should a son or daughter of noble family who wishes to practice the profound Perfection of Wisdom train?”

In response, noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, said to venerable Shariputra, “O Shariputra, sons and daughters of noble family who wish to practice the profound Perfection of Wisdom should see clearly in this way. They should see clearly that the five aggregates are empty of nature.

“Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is none other than form and form is none other than emptiness. Just so, feeling, discrimination, formation, and consciousness are empty. Thus, Shariputra, all phenomena are emptiness. They have no characteristics. They do not arise, nor do they cease. They are not impure, nor are they pure. They are not diminished, nor are they filled.

“O Shariputra, thus in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no formation, and no consciousness; no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, and no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomena; no eye element to no mind element, up to no mental consciousness element; no ignorance and no end of ignorance, up to no old age and death and no end of old age and death. Just so, there is no suffering, no source, no cessation, and no path; no wisdom, no attainment, and no nonattainment.

“Therefore, Shariputra, since bodhisattvas have nothing to attain, they abide by and dwell in the Perfection of Wisdom. Since their minds are unobscured, they have no fear. Completely transcending misconception, they reach complete nirvana. All the buddhas throughout the three times fully awakened to unsurpassed, perfect, complete enlightenment by relying on the Perfection of Wisdom.

“Therefore, the mantra of the Perfection of Wisdom, the mantra of great insight, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to that which has no equal, the mantra that completely calms all suffering should be known to be true, for it is not false. The Perfection of Wisdom mantra is spoken as follows:

TEYATA OM GATÉ GATÉ PARAGATÉ PARASAMGATÉ BODHI SOHA

“Shariputra, a bodhisattva mahasattva should practice the profound Perfection of Wisdom in this way.”

The Blessed One then arose from his samadhi and said to noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva: “Good, good, child of noble family. Thus it is, child of noble family. Thus it is. The profound Perfection of Wisdom should be practiced just as you have taught and all the tatagatas will rejoice.”

When the Blessed One said this, venerable Shariputra and noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva mahasattva, along with the entire retinue and the world with its gods, humans, demi-gods, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised the words of the Blessed One.

This concludes the noble Essence of the Perfection of Wisdom.

