

# The Heart Sutra: Two Versions

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## The Heart Sutra

Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, meditating deeply on Perfection of Wisdom, saw clearly that the five aspects of human existence are empty\*, and so released himself from suffering. Answering the monk Sariputra, he said this:

Body is nothing more than emptiness,  
emptiness is nothing more than body.  
The body is exactly empty,  
and emptiness is exactly body.

The other four aspects of human existence --  
feeling, thought, will, and consciousness --  
are likewise nothing more than emptiness,  
and emptiness nothing more than they.

All things are empty:  
Nothing is born, nothing dies,  
nothing is pure, nothing is stained,  
nothing increases and nothing decreases.

So, in emptiness, there is no body,  
no feeling, no thought,  
no will, no consciousness.  
There are no eyes, no ears,  
no nose, no tongue,  
no body, no mind.  
There is no seeing, no hearing,  
no smelling, no tasting,  
no touching, no imagining.  
There is nothing seen, nor heard,  
nor smelled, nor tasted,  
nor touched, nor imagined.

There is no ignorance,  
and no end to ignorance.  
There is no old age and death,  
and no end to old age and death.  
There is no suffering, no cause of suffering,  
no end to suffering, no path to follow.

There is no attainment of wisdom,  
and no wisdom to attain.

The Bodhisattvas rely on the Perfection of Wisdom,  
and so with no delusions,  
they feel no fear,  
and have Nirvana here and now.

All the Buddhas,  
past, present, and future,  
rely on the Perfection of Wisdom,  
and live in full enlightenment.

The Perfection of Wisdom is the greatest mantra.  
It is the clearest mantra,  
the highest mantra,  
the mantra that removes all suffering.

This is truth that cannot be doubted.  
Say it so:

Gaté,  
gaté,  
paragaté,  
parasamgaté.  
Bodhi!  
Svaha! Which means...

Gone,  
gone,  
gone over,  
gone fully over.  
Awakened!  
So be it!

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\* Emptiness is the usual translation for the Buddhist term Sunyata (or Shunyata). It refers to the fact that no thing -- including human existence -- has ultimate substantiality, which in turn means that no thing is permanent and no thing is totally independent of everything else. In other words, everything in this world is interconnected and in constant flux. A deep appreciation of this idea of emptiness thus saves us from the suffering caused by our egos, our attachments, and our resistance to change and loss.

Note: Perfection of Wisdom is a translation of Prajnaparamita. The full title of this sutra is The Heart of Prajnaparamita Sutra.

[This is an interpretation based on many others by George Boeree.]

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# THE HEART SUTRA

## **Om Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom the Lovely, the Holy !**

Avalokita, the Holy Lord and Bodhisattva, was moving in the deep course of the Wisdom which has gone beyond.

He looked down from on high, He beheld but five heaps, and He saw that in their own-being they were empty.

Here, O Sariputra,

form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form ;

emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form,

the same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness.

Here, O Sariputra,

all dharmas are marked with emptiness ;

they are not produced or stopped, not defiled or immaculate, not deficient or complete.

Therefore, O Sariputra,

in emptiness there is no form nor feeling, nor perception, nor impulse, nor consciousness ;

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind ; No forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables or objects of mind ; No sight-organ element, and so forth, until we come to :

No mind-consciousness element ; There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so forth, until we come to : There is no decay and death, no extinction of decay and death. There is no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path.

There is no cognition, no attainment and no non-attainment.

Therefore, O Sariputra,

it is because of his non-attainmentness that a Bodhisattva, through having relied on the Perfection of Wisdom, dwells without thought-coverings. In the absence of thought-coverings he has not been made to tremble,

he has overcome what can upset, and in the end he attains to Nirvana.

All those who appear as Buddhas in the three periods of time fully awake to the utmost, right and perfect Enlightenment because they have relied on the Perfection of Wisdom.

Therefore one should know the prajnaparamita as the great spell, the spell of great knowledge, the utmost spell, the unequalled spell, allayer of all suffering, in truth -- for what could go wrong ? By the prajnaparamita has this spell been delivered. It runs like this :

gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha.

( Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O what an awakening, all-hail ! -- )

This completes the Heart of perfect Wisdom.

(Translated by E. Conze)

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