

THE HEART SUTRA

Thus I have heard. At one time the Lord Buddha 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. 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 Thus Gone Ones 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.