

The Heart Sutra

from *The Fragrance of Emptiness:
A Commentary on the Heart Sutra*

by Anam Thubten Rinpoche

Thus have I heard:

Once the Blessed One was dwelling in Rajagriha at Vulture Peak Mountain with a great gathering of monks, nuns, and bodhisattvas. At that time, the Blessed One entered the samadhi that expresses the Dharma called “Profound Illumination.”

At the same time, noble Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, while engaging in the profound transcendent wisdom, clearly saw the five skandhas to be empty of nature.

Then, through the inspiration of the Buddha, venerable Shariputra said to noble Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, “How should a son or daughter of noble family train, who wishes to follow the profound path of transcendent wisdom?”

Then noble Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, said to venerable Shariputra: “O Shariputra, a son or daughter of noble family who wishes to follow the profound path of transcendent wisdom should see in this way: See the five skandhas to be empty of nature.

“Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is no other than form; form is no other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness are emptiness.

“Thus, Shariputra, all phenomena are emptiness. They have no characteristics. There is no birth and no cessation. There is no impurity and no purity. There is no decrease and no increase.

“Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness, there is
no form, no feeling, no perception, no formation, no consciousness;
no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;
no appearance, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no phenomena;
no quality of sight and so on, until no quality of thought and no quality of mind-
consciousness;
no ignorance, no end of ignorance up to no old age and death, no end of old age and
death;
no suffering, no cause of suffering, no cessation of suffering, and no path;
no wisdom, no attainment, and no non-attainment.

“Therefore, Shariputra, since the bodhisattvas have no attainment, they abide
by means of transcendent wisdom. Since there is no obscuration of mind, there is no
fear. They transcend falsity and attain complete nirvana, passing beyond the bounds
of sorrow.

“All the buddhas of the three times, by means of transcendent wisdom, fully
and clearly awoken to unsurpassable, true, complete enlightenment.

“Therefore, the great mantra of transcendent wisdom, the mantra of great
insight, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra that equals the unequaled, the mantra
that calms all suffering, should be known as truth, since there is no deception.

“The mantra of transcendent wisdom is said in this way:

Om Gaté Gaté Paragaté Parasamgaté Bodhi Svaha

“Thus, Shariputra, the Bodhisattva Mahasattvas should train in the profound
transcendent wisdom.”

Then the Blessed One arose from that samadhi and praised noble
Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, saying, “Good, good. Thus it is, O son
of noble family, thus it is. One should practice the profound transcendent wisdom
just as you have taught, and all the Tathagatas will rejoice.”

When the Blessed One had said this, venerable Shariputra and noble
Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva Mahasattva, that whole assembly, and the world
with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised the words of the
Blessed One.