

The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

Thus have I once heard:

The Blessed One was staying in Rajgriha at Vulture Peak along with a great community of monks and a great community of Bodhisattvas, and at that time, the Blessed One entered the meditative absorption on the varieties of phenomena called the appearance of the profound. At that time as well, the noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, clearly beheld the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom itself and saw that even the five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence.

Thereupon, through the Buddha's inspiration, the venerable Shariputra spoke to the noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, and said: "how should any noble son or daughter who wishes to engage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom train?"

When this had been said, the holy Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, spoke to the venerable Shariputra and said: "Shariputra, any noble son or noble daughter who so wishes to engage in the practice of the profound of perfection of wisdom should clearly see this way: they should see perfectly that even the five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, emptiness is not other than form, form too is not other than emptiness. Likewise, feeling, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are all empty.

Therefore, Shariputra, all phenomena are emptiness; they are without defining characteristics; they are not born, they do not cease, they are not defiled, they are not undefiled, they are not deficient, and they are not complete.

Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness there is no form, no feelings, no perceptions, no mental formations, and no consciousness. There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, and no mind. There is no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no texture, and no mental objects. There is no eye-element, and so on up to no mind-element including up to no element of metal consciousness. There is no ignorance, there is no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death. Likewise,

there is no suffering, origin, cessation, or path; there is no wisdom, no attainment, and even no non-attainment.

“Therefore, Shariputra, since bodhisattvas have no attainments, they rely on this perfection of wisdom and abide in it. Having no obscuration in their minds, they have no fear and by going utterly beyond error, they will reach the end of nirvana. All the Buddhas too who abide in the three times attained the full awakening of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment by relying on this profound perfection of wisdom.

“Therefore, one should know that the mantra of the perfection of wisdom – the mantra of great knowledge, the unexcelled mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that quells all suffering – is true because it is not deceptive. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is proclaimed:

TADYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA

Shariputra, the Bodhisattvas, the great beings, should train in the perfection of wisdom in this way”

Thereupon, the Blessed One arose from that meditative absorption and commended the holy Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great beings, saying this is excellent.

“Excellent! Excellent! O noble child, it is just so, it should be just so. One must practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have revealed. For then even the Tathagatas will rejoice”

As the Blessed One uttered these words, the venerable Shariputra, the holy Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva, the great beings, along with the entire assembly, including the worlds of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, all rejoiced and hailed what the Blessed One had said.

English translation by Geshe Thubten Jinpa

Extracted from: the Essence of the Heart Sutra – The Dalai Lama’s Heard of Wisdom Teachings