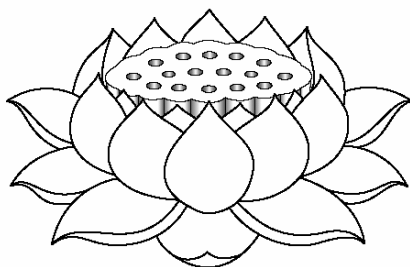


**THE HEART OF  
PRAJNA PARAMITA  
SUTRA**

般若波羅蜜多心經



Translated by the Chung Tai Translation Committee

June 2002

From the Chinese translation by  
Tripitaka Master Xuan Zang, 7th Century

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Prior English translations of the sutra by many others were used as references.

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Namo Fundamental Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

南 無 本 師 釋 迦 牟 尼 佛

**SUTRA OPENING GATHA**

開 經 偈

The Dharma, infinitely profound and subtle,  
Is rarely encountered even in a million kalpas.  
Now we are able to hear, study, and follow it,  
May we fully realize the Tathagata's true meaning.

無上甚深微妙法      百千萬劫難遭遇  
我今見聞得受持      願解如來真實義

## **THE HEART OF PRAJNA PARAMITA SUTRA**

Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara,  
While deeply immersed in prajna paramita,  
Clearly perceived the empty nature of the five skandhas,  
And transcended all suffering.  
Shariputra! Form is not different from emptiness,  
Emptiness is not different from form.  
Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.  
So it is with feeling, conception, volition, and  
    consciousness.  
Shariputra! All dharmas are empty in character;  
Neither arising nor ceasing,  
Neither impure nor pure,  
Neither increasing nor decreasing.  
Therefore, in emptiness, there is no form;  
There is no feeling, conception, volition, or consciousness;  
No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind;  
No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas;  
No realm of vision, and so forth,  
Up to no realm of mind-consciousness;

No ignorance or ending of ignorance, and so forth,  
Up to no aging and death or ending of aging and death.  
There is no suffering, no cause, no extinction, no path.  
There is no wisdom and no attainment.  
There is nothing to be attained.  
By way of prajna paramita,  
The bodhisattva's mind is free from hindrances.  
With no hindrances, there is no fear;  
Freed from all distortion and delusion,  
Ultimate nirvana is reached.  
By way of prajna paramita,  
Buddhas of the past, present, and future  
Attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.  
Therefore, prajna paramita  
Is the great powerful mantra,  
The great enlightening mantra,  
The supreme and peerless mantra.  
It can remove all suffering.  
This is the truth beyond all doubt.  
And the prajna paramita mantra is spoken thus:  
*Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha.*

## THE HEART<sup>1</sup> OF PRAJNA<sup>3</sup> PARAMITA<sup>4</sup> SUTRA<sup>2</sup>

### 般若波羅蜜多心經

Bodhisattva<sup>5</sup> Avalokiteshvara<sup>6</sup>,  
While deeply immersed<sup>7</sup> in prajna paramita,  
Clearly perceived the empty nature<sup>8</sup> of the five  
skandhas<sup>9</sup>,  
And transcended all suffering.  
Shariputra<sup>10</sup>! Form is not different from emptiness,  
Emptiness is not different from form.  
Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.  
So it is with feeling, conception, volition, and  
consciousness.

觀自在菩薩。行深般若波羅蜜多時。  
照見五蘊皆空。度一切苦厄。舍利子。  
色不異空。空不異色。色即是空。空  
即是色。受想行識。亦復如是。

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<sup>1</sup> **Heart Sutra.** The short title of this most popular and important sutra. It contains the very essence of the vast body of wisdom teachings (prajna-paramita sutras) in Buddhism.

<sup>2</sup> **sutra 佛經.** A Buddhist scripture containing the dialogues or discourses of the Buddha.

- <sup>3</sup> **prajna 般若**. Great transcendental wisdom; wisdom from understanding the truth; wisdom of understanding the empty nature of the 'self' and all phenomena; wisdom that can overcome birth-and-death and all suffering, and enlighten all beings.
- <sup>4</sup> **paramita 波羅蜜多**. Perfection, the practice that can bring one to liberation. Literally, "to the other shore." To become a buddha, the bodhisattva practices the six *paramitas*: perfection of charity (*dana*), moral conduct (*sila*), tolerance (*ksanti*), diligence (*virya*), meditation (*dhyana*), and, most important of all, wisdom (*prajna*).
- <sup>5</sup> **bodhisattva 菩薩**. One who, with infinite compassion, vows to become a buddha and to liberate countless sentient beings. A bodhisattva practices all six paramitas (perfections), but it is the prajna paramita that ultimately brings true liberation. **Bodhi**: enlightenment, to awaken. **Sattva**: sentient beings, beings with consciousness.
- <sup>6</sup> **Avalokitesvara 觀自在, 觀世音**. This bodhisattva is considered the embodiment of the Buddhist virtue of compassion. Known as Guanyin in Chinese, this is the most beloved bodhisattva in Asia. The name means "perceiver of cries of the world" and "unhindered perceiver of the truth." Thus this bodhisattva is able to help all sentient beings.
- <sup>7</sup> **deeply immersed**. Deep in the practice and understanding of the profound prajna paramita. It is not enough to understand prajna intellectually; one must practice it with the whole body and mind. Here 'deeply' means the understanding of not only the empty nature of the 'self' but also of all phenomena.
- <sup>8</sup> **empty nature 空**. Both the self and all phenomena are without independent existence or inherent, fixed characteristics. They are impermanent, mutable and mutually dependent; their individuality is in appearance only.
- Buddhism provides us with several classifications of phenomena to help us understand how ordinary people perceive the world. They are: the five skandhas, the twelve bases, and the eighteen spheres (see below). However, our perceptions of the world are founded on ignorance; therefore, these constructions are ultimately empty.
- <sup>9</sup> **five skandhas 五蘊**. Five aggregates—**form, feeling, conception, volition, and consciousness** (色受想行識). Form refers to our body or the physical world, the other four are of the mind. Ordinary beings see themselves as composed of these aggregates. When we analyze them deeper, we find no real substance.
- <sup>10</sup> **Sariputra 舍利子, 舍利弗**. (Pronounced Shariputra). A senior disciple of the Buddha, known for his wisdom.
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Shariputra! All dharmas<sup>11</sup> are empty in character;  
Neither arising nor ceasing<sup>12</sup>,  
Neither impure nor pure,  
Neither increasing nor decreasing.  
Therefore, in emptiness, there is no form;  
There is no feeling, conception, volition, or  
consciousness<sup>13</sup>;  
No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind;  
No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas<sup>14</sup>;  
No realm of vision, and so forth,  
Up to no realm of mind-consciousness<sup>15</sup>;  
No ignorance or ending of ignorance, and so forth,  
Up to no aging and death or ending of aging and death<sup>16</sup>.  
There is no suffering, no cause, no extinction, no path<sup>17</sup>.

舍利子。是諸法空相。不生不滅。不  
垢不淨。不增不減。是故空中無色。  
無受想行識。無眼耳鼻舌身意。無色  
聲香味觸法。無眼界。乃至無意識界。  
無無明。亦無無明盡。乃至無老死。  
亦無老死盡。無苦集滅道。



- <sup>11</sup> **dharmas 法.** “Dharma” (capitalized) means the Buddha's teaching, the Law, the Truth; “dharmas” means things, phenomena.
- <sup>12</sup> **neither arising ... nor decreasing.** By understanding the mutual dependencies and inter-connections of all things, one realizes that all creation and destruction, birth-and-death, good and bad, more and less, etc., exist in appearance only.
- <sup>13</sup> **no form, feeling ...** This negation of the five skandhas is to point out that the superficial appearance and characters we are familiar with actually have no intrinsic substance. Form (physical matter) is energy, its appearance is an illusion of the perceiver; feelings are subjective; conceptions are mind-made; volition (will or intent which leads to action); and what we call consciousness are streams of thought based on deluded understanding of reality. There is no “self” to be found in form, feeling, conception, volition, or consciousness.
- <sup>14</sup> **no eye, ear...or dharmas.** Negation of the twelve bases (of consciousness) (十二處) which include six senses (六根) and six sense objects (六塵). The six senses are used to perceive the six sense objects and the result is our conception of the world. The six sense objects are also known as six dusts in Buddhism.
- <sup>15</sup> **no realm of vision ... no realm of mind-consciousness.** Negation of the eighteen spheres (十八界), six senses, six sense objects, and six types of consciousness, that of vision, hearing, olfaction, taste, touch, and mind-consciousness. The eighteen spheres represent the way the deluded mind perceives and divides the world, and prevents us from seeing the unity and equality of all things.
- <sup>16</sup> **no ignorance ... no ending of aging and death.** The twelve links of dependent origination (十二因緣) explain the process of the rebirth cycle. They are ignorance→ intentional action→ consciousness→ mind and form→ six senses→ contact→ feeling→ craving→ grasping→ being→ birth→ old age and death. However, from the view of absolute reality, the twelve links and their elimination (ending of ..., which is needed to gain liberation from rebirth), are also empty. In fact, what we perceive as birth-and-deaths are actually delusions, so suffering is also empty.
- <sup>17</sup> **no suffering, no cause, no extinction, no path.** Since suffering is produced by ignorance and delusion, it is empty. The emptiness of suffering, cause of suffering, extinction of suffering, and the path is a higher understanding of the Four Noble Truths.
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There is no wisdom and no attainment<sup>18</sup>.  
There is nothing to be attained.  
By way of prajna paramita<sup>19</sup>,  
The bodhisattva's mind is free from hindrances.  
With no hindrances, there is no fear<sup>20</sup>;  
Freed from all distortion and delusion,  
Ultimate nirvana is reached.  
By way of prajna paramita,  
Buddhas<sup>21</sup> of the past, present, and future  
Attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi<sup>22</sup>.  
Therefore, prajna paramita is the great powerful mantra,  
The great enlightening<sup>23</sup>mantra<sup>24</sup>,  
The supreme and peerless mantra.  
It can remove all suffering.  
This is the truth beyond all doubt.  
And the prajna paramita mantra is spoken thus:  
*Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha*<sup>25</sup>.

無智亦無得。以無所得故。菩提薩埵。  
依般若波羅蜜多故。心無罣礙。無罣  
礙故。無有恐怖。遠離顛倒夢想。究  
竟涅槃。三世諸佛。依般若波羅蜜多  
故。得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。故知般  
若波羅蜜多。是大神咒。是大明咒。是  
無上咒。是無等等咒。能除一切苦。真  
實不虛。故說般若波羅蜜多咒。即說  
咒曰。揭諦揭諦。波羅揭諦。波羅僧  
揭諦。菩提薩婆訶。

- <sup>18</sup> **no wisdom and no attainment.** Negation of the bodhisattva's practice, in this specific case, wisdom. Wisdom overcomes ignorance and delusion. Since delusions are empty, so is wisdom. Nothing (which we do not already have) is gained by liberation.
- Buddha teaches that once we get to the other shore, there is no need to carry around the raft (the teaching) that got us there. The preceding three annotations are about letting go of the "rafts" of the "Three Vehicles".
- <sup>19</sup> **by way of prajna paramita....** By the practice and profound understanding of the empty/interconnected/equal nature of all dharmas, which is prajna wisdom, one's mind becomes freed from all delusions and abides in absolute peace and absolute bliss. This is called attaining nirvana.
- <sup>20</sup> **there is no fear.** Fear comes from misunderstanding and ignorance. With prajna wisdom, all fear is removed.
- <sup>21</sup> **buddhas.** "The enlightened one." There are many buddhas in the past, present, and future; all sentient beings can become buddhas by practicing prajna paramita.
- <sup>22</sup> **anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.** *Anuttara*: unsurpassed. *Samyak sambodhi*: right and comprehensive understanding (complete enlightenment). Unsurpassed complete enlightenment is the state of a buddha.
- <sup>23</sup> **powerful, enlightening....** True wisdom liberates and empowers us. There is no higher wisdom than prajna, nothing can compare to it. There is no higher bliss than what prajna can bring.
- <sup>24</sup> **mantra.** "True words", also a short phrase that contains much meaning. Mantras are usually left untranslated.
- <sup>25</sup> **gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha.** This mantra basically means: go, go, go beyond, go completely beyond to complete enlightenment.

## THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

1. Suffering exists in everyone's life.
2. The causes of suffering are greed, anger, and ignorance.
3. Nirvana, the extinction of suffering, is possible for everyone.
4. Nirvana is achieved by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

### 四聖諦

苦，集，滅，道。

## THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech,  
Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort,  
Right Mindfulness, and Right Samadhi.

### 八正道

正見，正思惟，正語，正業，  
正命，正精進，正念，正定。

## FOUR TENETS OF CHUNG TAI

To our elders be respectful,  
To our juniors be kind,  
With all humanity be harmonious,  
In all endeavors be true.

### 中台四箴行

對上以敬，對下以慈，  
對人以和，對事以真。

## ACTION AND NON-ACTION

When in action, perfect all actions.  
When at rest, rest all thought.  
Action and non-action are both illusory;  
All we need in life are already present.

動則萬善圓彰  
靜則一念不生  
動靜原是虛妄  
日用一切現成

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## THREE REFUGES

### 三 皈 依

I take refuge in the Buddha, may all sentient beings  
Understand the Great Way profoundly,  
and bring forth the bodhi mind.

I take refuge in the Dharma, may all sentient beings  
Deeply enter the sutra treasury, and have wisdom vast as  
the sea.

I take refuge in the Sangha, may all sentient beings  
Form together a great assembly, one and all in harmony.

|      |      |      |      |
|------|------|------|------|
| 自皈依佛 | 當願眾生 | 體解大道 | 發無上心 |
| 自皈依法 | 當願眾生 | 深入經藏 | 智慧如海 |
| 自皈依僧 | 當願眾生 | 統理大眾 | 一切無礙 |
| 自皈依僧 | 當願眾生 | 統理大眾 | 一切無礙 |
| 和南聖眾 |      |      |      |

## FOUR GREAT VOWS

### 四 弘 誓 願

Countless are sentient beings, I vow to liberate;  
Endless are afflictions, I vow to eradicate;  
Measureless are the Dharmas, I vow to master;  
Supreme is the Buddha Way, I vow to attain.

|         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 眾生無邊誓願度 | 煩惱無盡誓願斷 |
| 法門無量誓願學 | 佛道無上誓願成 |

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## REPENTANCE

### 懺悔偈

All the harm I have ever done, since time immemorial,  
Are caused by greed, anger, and ignorance,  
And produced through my body, speech, and will,  
Now I confess and amend all.

往昔所造諸惡業      皆由無始貪瞋痴  
從身語意之所生      一切罪障皆懺悔

## DEDICATION OF MERITS

### 回向偈

May the merits of our deeds  
Reach every part of the world;  
Sentient beings large and small  
all attain enlightenment.  
Maha-Prajna-Paramita

願以此功德 普及於一切  
我等與眾生 皆共成佛道  
摩訶般若波羅蜜



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