

𑖀 The Heart Sūtra ¹

Avalokiteśvara,
while practicing deeply with the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,
suddenly discovered that
all of the Five Skandhas² are equally empty,
and with this realization
he overcame all ill-being.

“Listen, Śāriputra,
this Body [*rūpa*]³ itself is Emptiness, and Emptiness itself is this Body.
This Body is not other than Emptiness, Emptiness is not other than this Body.
The same is true with Feelings,
Perceptions, Mental Formations,
and Consciousness.

“Listen, Śāriputra,
all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness:
their true nature is the nature of
no Birth no Death,
no Being no Nonbeing,
no Defilement no Purity,
no Increasing no Decreasing.

This is why in Emptiness,
Body, Feelings, Perceptions,
Mental Formations, and Consciousness
are not separate self-entities.

“The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena,
which are the six Sense Organs,⁴
the six Sense Objects,
and the six Consciousnesses,
are also not separate self-entities.
The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising⁵

¹ Translated by Thich Nhat Hanh (2017), *The Other Shore: A New Translation of the Heart Sūtra*. Parallax Press. ‘Heart Sūtra’ is a common, albeit misleading title, for the complete title may be translated as “the heart of the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore.”

² The five *skandhas* (Pāli: *khandhas*; lit. “groups” or “aggregates”) are the five elements discussed later in the sūtra: bodily form, feeling, perception, mental reactions (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness.

³ ‘*Rūpa*’ is often translated as “form” (as Hanh himself did in an earlier translation). This makes lines 2 and 3 of this stanza seem more overtly paradoxical: “Form is Emptiness; Emptiness itself is Form...”

⁴ The mind is considered a sense organ, besides the usual five. Similarly, the objects of the senses include not only sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes, but also the objects of introspection. These also co-occur with six “consciousnesses” or six different experiences of these different objects.

⁵ This is a reference to a key teaching of the Buddha, “dependent origination.” See *Saṃyutta-nikāya* 12.1.

and their Extinction
are also not separate self-entities.

“Ill-being, the Causes of Ill-being,
the End of Ill-being, the Path,
insight, and attainment
are also not separate self-entities.

“Whoever can see this,
no longer needs anything to attain.

“Bodhisattvas who practice
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,
see no more obstacles in their mind,
and because there are no more obstacles in their mind,
they can overcome all fear,
destroy all wrong perceptions,
and realize Perfect Nirvāṇa.

All Buddhas in the past, present, and future,
by practicing
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,
are all capable of attaining
Authentic and Perfect Enlightenment.

“Therefore Śāriputra,
it should be known that
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
is a Great Mantra,
the most illuminating mantra,
the highest mantra,
a mantra beyond compare,
the True Wisdom that has the power
to put an end to all kinds of suffering.

Therefore let us proclaim a mantra to praise
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore:

Gate, gate, pāragate, pārasaṃgate, bodhi svāhā!”⁶

⁶ “Gone, gone, gone all the way over, everyone gone to the Other Shore, enlightenment Hallelujah!”