

The Heart Sutra

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When the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara [Guanyin] was meditating on the profound prajna-paramita, he perceived that all the five aggregates* are void and empty, and was thereupon freed from all sufferings and calamities. [He addresses Sariputra, an early chief disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha]: Sariputra, matter is not different from voidness and voidness is not different from matter: matter is voidness and voidness is matter [form is emptiness and emptiness is form]. Such is also the case with sensation, perception, discrimination and consciousness. Sariputra, all these things are void in nature, having neither beginning nor end, being neither pure nor impure, and having neither increase nor decrease. Therefore, in voidness there is no matter, no sensation, no perception, no discrimination and no consciousness; there is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body and no mind; there is no sight, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch and no mental process; there is no category of eye nor is there a category of consciousness; no ignorance nor the cessation of ignorance; no old age and death, nor the cessation of old age and death; there is no suffering, no causes of suffering, no cessation of suffering, and no way leading to the cessation of suffering; and there is no wisdom, nor anything to be gained. As nothing is to be gained, a Bodhisattva depending on prajna-paramita becomes free in his mind, and as he is free in his mind he has no fear and is rid of dreamlike thoughts of unreality and enjoys ultimate Nirvana. By means of prajna-paramita, all Buddhas of the past, the present and the future realize anuttara-samyak-sambodhi [utmost, right and perfect enlightenment]. Therefore, we know prajna-paramita is a great, divine spell, a great enlightening spell, a supreme spell, and a spell without a parallel, that can do away with all sufferings without fail. Thus we recite the Prajna-paramita Spell and say: Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi, svaha! [Gone, Gone, Gone beyond, Gone completely beyond, O what an awakening, All Hail!] (454-55).

**Pañcaskandha*: the five aggregates or constitutive elements of the human being. They are (1) *rūpa*, physical phenomena related to the five senses; (2) *vedanā*, sensation or reception of stimuli from events and things; (3) *sañjñā*, discernment or perception; (4) *sainskāra*, decision or volition; and (5) *vijñāna*, cognition and consciousness. (Anthony C. Yu, trans. and ed. *The Journey to the West*. 4 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977, 527, note 36)