

Introduction

This file contains six diverse translations of the Heart Sutra, including some by Soto Zen teachers: a selection, because each throws a subtly different light on the text ,and allows us to examine a range of nuanced interpretations

The final item includes a short commentary by the Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn (1927-2004). There's a touching memorial essay in his honour at :

<https://www.lionsroar.com/spring-comes-the-grass-grows-by-itself-remembering-zen-master-seung-sahn-1927-2004/>

Our key text

I'd propose to take the latest Thich Nhat Hahn reworking (No. 1 below) as our main text. Those who can afford to, might like to obtain a copy of *'The Other Shore'* book, containing his own detailed commentary. *Thay*, as he was called, was a Vietnamese Zen Master of international renown.

Thich Nhat Hahn, *'The Other Shore'* (Parallax Press 2017). It's also available as an e-book

His earlier study *'The Heart of Understanding'* (Parallax Press 1988, which shares some content with the *'The Other Shore'* revision) is available as a free PDF download at :

<https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/Thich%20Nhat%20Hanh%20-%20The%20Heart%20of%20Understanding.pdf>

1. The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore

** Thich Nhat Hanh (2014)

Avalokiteshvara
while practising deeply with
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,
suddenly discovered that
all of the five Skandhas are equally empty,
and with this realisation
he overcame all ill-being.

"Listen Sariputra,
this Body itself is Emptiness
and Emptiness itself is this Body.
This Body is not other than Emptiness
and Emptiness is not other than this Body.
The same is true of Feelings,
Perceptions, Mental Formations,
and Consciousness.

"Listen Sariputra,
all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness;
their true nature is the nature of
no Birth no Death,
no Being no Non-being,
no Defilement no Purity,
no Increasing no Decreasing.

“That 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,
the six Sense Objects,
and the six Consciousnesses
are also not separate self entities.

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising
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 practise
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 realise Perfect Nirvana.

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

“Therefore Sariputra,
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, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!”

2. Hannya Haramita Shingyo

** Literal translation by Shunryu Suzuki

<http://www.cuke.com/Cucumber%20Project/other/heart-sutra/heart-sutra-card-2.html>

MA KA HAN NYA HA RA MIT TA SHIN GYO
Great Prajna Paramita Sutra

KAN JI ZAI BO SATSU GYO JIN HAN NYA HA RA MIT TA JI SHO KEN GO
Avalokitesvara bodhisattva practise deep prajna paramita when perceive five

UN KAI KU DO ISSAI KU YAKU
skandas all empty. relieve every suffering.

SHA RI SHI SHIKI FU I KU KU FU I SHIKI SHIKI
Sariputra, form not different (from) emptiness. Emptiness not different (from) form. Form

SOKU ZE KU KU SOKU ZE SHIKE JU SO GYO SHIKI YAKU
is the emptiness. Emptiness is the form. Sensation, thought, active substance, consciousness, also

BU NYO ZE
like this.

SHA RI SHI ZE SHO HO KU SO FU SHO FU METSU FU KU FU JO
Sariputra, this everything original character; not born, not annihilated not tainted, not pure,

FU ZO FU GEN ZE KO KU CHU MU SHIKI MU JU SO GYO
(does) not increase, (does) not decrease. Therefore in emptiness no form, no sensation, thought, active substance,

SHIKI MU GEN NI BI ZETS SHIN NI MU SHIKI SHO KO MI SOKU HO MU GEN
consciousness. No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind; no color, sound, smell, taste, touch, object; no eye,

KAI NAI SHI MU I SHIKI KAI MU MU MYO YAKU MU MU MYO
world of eyes until we come to also no world of consciousness; no ignorance, also no ignorance

JIN NAI SHI MU RO SHI YAKU MU RO SHI JIN MU KU SHU
annihilation, until we come to no old age, death, also no old age, death, also no old age, death, annihilation of no suffering, cause of suffering,

METSU DO MU CHI YAKU MU TOKU I MU SHO TOK KO BO DAI SAT TA E
nirvana, path; no wisdom, also no attainment because of no attainment. Bodhisattva depends on

HAN NYA HA RA MIT TA KO SHIN MU KE GE MU KE GE KO MU U KU FU ON RI
prajna paramita because mind no obstacle. Because of no obstacle no exist fear; go beyond

I SSAI TEN DO MU SO KU GYO NE HAN SAN ZE SHO BUTSU E HAN
all (topsy-turvy views) attain Nirvana. Past, present and future every Buddha depend on prajna

NYA HA RA MIT TA KO TOKU A NOKU TA RA SAN MYAKU SAN BO DAI
paramita therefore attain supreme, perfect, enlightenment.

KO CHI HAN NYA HA RA MIT TA ZE DAI JIN SHU ZE DAI MYO SHU
Therefore I know Prajna paramita (is) the great holy mantram, the great untainted mantram,

ZE MU JO SHU ZE MU TO DO SHU NO JO IS SAI KU SHIN JITSU FU KO

the supreme mantram, the incomparable mantram. Is capable of assuaging all suffering. True not false.

KO SETSU HAN NYA HA PA MIT TA SHU SOKU SETSU SHU WATSU

Therefore he proclaimed Prajna paramita mantram and proclaimed mantram says

GYA TE GYA TE HA RA GYA TE HA RA SO GYA TE BO DHI SO WA KA

gone, gone, to the other shore gone, reach (go) enlightenment accomplish.

HAN NYA SHIN GYO

NEGA WA KU WA KO NO KU DO KU O MOTTE A MA NE KU ISSAI NI OYO

What we pray, this merit with universally all existence pervade,

BO SHI WARE RA TO SHU JO TO MI NA TO MO NI BUTSUDO O JYO ZEN KO TO

ourselves and sentient beings all with Buddhism achieve this

JI HO SAN SHI I SHI HU SHI SON BU SA MO KO SA

Ten directions past, present and future all Buddhas The world honoured one. Bodhisattva, great Bodhisattva,

MO KO HO JA HO RO MI

great Prajna-paramita.

3. The Heart Sūtra: The Womb of the Buddhas

** Red Pine translation

from *The Heart Sutra: the Womb of Buddhas*. Washington: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2004

The noble Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva,
while practising the deep practice of Prajnaparamita,
looked upon the five skandhas
and seeing they were empty of self-existence,
said, "Here, Shariputra,
form is emptiness, emptiness is form;
emptiness is not separate from form, form is not separate from emptiness;
whatever is form is emptiness, whatever is emptiness is form.
The same holds for sensation and perception, memory and consciousness.
Here, Shariputra, all dharmas are defined by emptiness
not birth or destruction, purity or defilement, completeness or deficiency.
Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness there is no form,
no sensation, no perception, no memory and no consciousness;
no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body and no mind;
no shape, no sound, no smell, no taste, no feeling and no thought;
no element of perception, from eye to conceptual consciousness;
no causal link, from ignorance to old age and death,
and no end of causal link, from ignorance to old age and death;
no suffering, no source, no relief, no path;
no knowledge, no attainment and no non-attainment.
Therefore, Shariputra, without attainment,
bodhisattvas take refuge in Prajnaparamita
and live without walls of the mind.

Without walls of the mind and thus without fears,
they see through delusions and finally nirvana.
All buddhas past, present and future
also take refuge in Prajnaparamita
and realise unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.
You should therefore know the great mantra of Prajnaparamita,
the mantra of great magic,
the unexcelled mantra,
the mantra equal to the unequalled,
which heals all suffering and is true, not false,
the mantra in Prajnaparamita spoken thus:
'Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha.' "

4. Sutra on the Heart of Realising Wisdom Beyond Wisdom

** Kazuaki Tanahashi

Avalokiteshvara, who helps all to awaken,
moves in the deep course of
realising wisdom beyond wisdom,
sees that all five streams of
body, heart, and mind are without boundary,
and frees all from anguish.

O Shariputra, [who listens to the teachings of the Buddha],
form is not separate from boundlessness;
boundlessness is not separate from form.
Form is boundlessness; boundlessness is form.
The same is true of feelings, perceptions, inclinations, and
discernment.

O Shariputra,
boundlessness is the nature of all things.
Boundlessness neither arises nor perishes,
neither stains nor purifies,
neither increases nor decreases.
Boundlessness is not limited by form,
nor by feelings, perceptions, inclinations, or discernment.
It is free of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind;
free of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and any object of mind;
free of sensory realms, including the realm of the mind.
It is free of ignorance and the end of ignorance.
Boundlessness is free of old age and death,
and free of the end of old age and death.
It is free of suffering, arising, cessation, and path,
and free of wisdom and attainment.

Being free of attainment, those who help all to awaken
abide in the realisation of wisdom beyond wisdom
and live with an unhindered mind.
Without hindrance, the mind has no fear.
Free from confusion, those who lead all to liberation
embody profound serenity.

All those in the past, present, and future,
who realise wisdom beyond wisdom,
manifest unsurpassable and thorough awakening.

Know that realising wisdom beyond wisdom
is no other than this wondrous mantra,
luminous, unequalled, and supreme.
It relieves all suffering.
It is genuine, not illusory.

So set forth this mantra of realising wisdom beyond wisdom.
Set forth this mantra that says:

GATÉ, GATÉ, PARAGATÉ, PARASAMGATÉ, BODHI! SVAHĀ!

5. Heart of Great Perfect Wisdom Sutra Mahā Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra

** Sōtō Zen Text Project Version

Original: Tripitaka Dharma Master 玄奘 Xuanzang, c. 602-664 (Taisho Tripitaka 251),
translated from the Chinese version of Xuanzang by Sōtō Zen Text Project

摩訶般若波羅蜜多心經
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。
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。
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。

Mahā Prajñāpāramitā Heart Sūtra
Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva,
when deeply practising prajñā pāramitā,
clearly saw that all five aggregates are empty
and thus relieved all suffering.
Shāriputra, form does not differ from emptiness,
emptiness does not differ from form.
Form itself is emptiness, emptiness itself form.
Sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousness
are also like this.
Shāriputra, all dharmas are marked by emptiness;
they neither arise nor cease,
are neither defiled nor pure, neither increase nor decrease.
Therefore, given emptiness, there is no form,
no sensation, no perception, no formation, no consciousness;
no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;
no sight, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind;
no realm of sight ... no realm of mind consciousness.
There is neither ignorance nor extinction of ignorance ...
neither old age and death,
nor extinction of old age and death;
no suffering, no cause, no cessation, no path;
no knowledge and no attainment.
With nothing to attain, a bodhisattva
relies on prajñā pāramitā, and thus
the mind is without hindrance.
Without hindrance, there is no fear.
Far beyond all inverted views, one realises nirvana.
All buddhas of past, present, and future
rely on prajñā pāramitā and thereby
attain unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment.

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
揭帝 揭帝 般羅揭帝
般羅僧揭帝 菩提 僧莎訶
般若波羅蜜多心經

Therefore, know the prajñā pāramitā
as the great miraculous mantra,
the great bright mantra, the supreme mantra,
the incomparable mantra, which removes all suffering
and is true, not false.
Therefore we proclaim the prajñā pāramitā mantra,
the mantra that says:
"Gate Gate Pāragate
Pārasamgate Bodhi Svāhā."
(Prajñā Pāramitā Heart Sūtra)

6. The Heart Sutra Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra

** with Commentary by Zen Master Seung Sahn

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva
when practising deeply the Prajna Paramita
perceives that all five skandhas are empty
and is saved from all suffering and distress.
Shariputra,
form does not differ from emptiness,
emptiness does not differ from form.
That which is form is emptiness,
that which is emptiness form.
The same is true of feelings,
perceptions, impulses, consciousness.
Shariputra,
all dharmas are marked with emptiness;
they do not appear or disappear,
are not tainted or pure,
do not increase or decrease.
Therefore, in emptiness no form, no feelings,
perceptions, impulses, consciousness.
No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;
no colour, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch,
no object of mind;
no realm of eyes
and so forth... until no realm of mind consciousness.
No ignorance and also no extinction of it,
and so forth... until no old age and death
and also no extinction of them.
No suffering, no origination,
no stopping, no path, no cognition,
also no attainment with nothing to attain.
The Bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita
and the mind is no hindrance;
without any hindrance no fears exist.
Far apart from every perverted view one dwells in Nirvana.
In the three worlds
all Buddhas depend on Prajna Paramita
and attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi.

Therefore know that Prajna Paramita
is the great transcendent mantra,
is the great bright mantra,
is the utmost mantra,
is the supreme mantra
which is able to relieve all suffering
and is true, not false.
So proclaim the Prajna Paramita mantra,
proclaim the mantra which says:
gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha

Commentary

The Heart Sutra has only two hundred seventy Chinese characters, yet it contains all of Mahayana Buddhism's teaching. Inside this sutra is the essence of the Diamond Sutra, the Avatamsaka-sutra, and the Lotus Sutra. It contains the meaning of all the eighty-four thousand sutras. It is chanted in every Mahayana and Zen temple in the world. In Korean temples and in our Zen centres in the West, the Heart Sutra is chanted at least twice every day, in the morning and at night, and during retreats it is chanted more. Sometimes if you find that your mind is not clear, and meditation does not help so much, you must read this sutra. Then your mind will become clear.

Maha means big, great. *Prajna* means wisdom, and *paramita* means "going beyond," or perfecting. *Hridaya* means heart. And the Chinese characters for Heart Sutra are *shim gyong*, or "mind road." So this sutra is the "great path for the perfection of wisdom."

The word *maha* in the title of this sutra points to something of very great size. What is truly numberless in time and space? Someone may say that the ground is the biggest thing. When you really stop to think about it, the oceans seem to be the biggest thing — there is more water than land. Or is the sky the biggest thing? Maybe space is the greatest thing we know of. Perhaps sky and space together are the number one biggest thing! The universe is infinite in time and space, and contains infinite worlds — is that the biggest thing? Everybody probably thinks that this is so. But an eminent teacher said, "This whole universe covers my body, yet my mind can cover the whole universe." This is a very important point. The universe covers and surrounds our world and everything inside it, so it must be truly big. But in the instant that you think of the universe—"universe"—you have already covered the whole universe with your mind. Therefore our mind is bigger than the infinite time and infinite space of this universe. How wonderful! The Heart Sutra points to this biggest thing: mind. It shows how we can discover and cultivate the proper use of the biggest thing, so that is why this little sutra is called maha.

"Perceiving that all five skandhas are empty saves all beings from suffering and distress."

There is suffering everywhere we look in the world. All beings are in pain and distress. But where does suffering come from? People are struck with a hopeless love for somebody, or they pursue the desire to obtain some material things. People have ambition to become things that they feel will complete their life, or to be recognized and approved by others. But no matter how hard we struggle for these things, even when we get them, we cannot keep them. And this causes all our suffering. But originally this suffering does not exist. It all comes from our mind, as a mirage rises up from a hot road and appears real. If I am suffering over some matter, and then I die, my suffering also disappears. When we realise this - that suffering is merely the product of our minds, and does not have some independent existence - then there is no longer any suffering and distress.

So, what is this mind that is so great? If you are thinking, you cannot find your mind anywhere. If you cut off all thinking - which means if you cut off all attachment to your thinking - then your true nature appears everywhere. The Buddha first taught that what we call mind or "I" is only the five skandhas of form,

feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness. These skandhas, or aggregates, are constantly changing; they are only heaps of mental energy. Since human beings are attached to form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness, then when they inevitably change, we get suffering. We never get out of the suffering world. This is because we believe that these things are real, and that they are the real "I." This is a central teaching of Hinayana Buddhism.

However, the Heart Sutra's opening line shows that these skandhas are originally empty. Since that is so, where is suffering? What can possibly suffer? Here is a cup of orange juice. If you have "cup," then you can keep this orange juice here. But if this cup breaks, how can the orange juice remain? You cannot keep the juice there, yah? Suffering is the same as that. Where does suffering abide? If you are attached to the five skandhas of form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, or consciousness, then suffering has a place to stay. But the Heart Sutra shows the view that these five skandhas are empty. Mind is completely empty: where can suffering possibly stay? So this teaching about emptiness is very, very important to attain. When you practise the way of the perfection of wisdom, you attain the view that all five skandhas are actually empty. Attaining this view saves us from all suffering and distress. Merely understanding these views [intellectually] cannot help you — you must attain something [through practising zazen].

"Form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

The Heart Sutra teaches that "form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." Many people don't know what this means — even some long-time students of meditation. But there is a very easy way to see this in our everyday lives. For example, here is a wooden chair. It is brown. It is solid and heavy. It looks like it could last a long time. You sit in the chair, and it holds up your weight. You can place things on it. But then you light the chair on fire and leave. When you come back later, the chair is no longer there! This thing that seemed so solid and strong and real is now just a pile of cinder and ash which the wind blows around. This example shows how the chair is empty: it is not a permanent, abiding thing. It is always changing. It has no independent existence. Over a long or short time, the chair will eventually change and become something other than what it appears. So this brown chair is complete emptiness. But though it always has the quality of emptiness, this emptiness is form: you can sit in the chair, and it will still hold you up. "Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form."

But why is it necessary to understand this? The reason for this is that many human beings are attached to name and form, and this attachment to name and form is the cause of nearly all suffering. If we want to cure human beings of this attachment, then we must apply name-and-form medicine. We must begin by showing that names and forms are not real and permanent: they are always changing, changing, changing. If you are rich, you must see that the riches you covet are empty. If you are attached to fame and other people's approval, you must see that these things that you struggle and suffer for are empty. Most people treasure their bodies; they use a lot of money to make their bodies strong or beautiful. But someday, soon, when you die, this body will disappear. You cannot take this empty body with you, however much you treasure it. You cannot carry fame with you. You cannot carry money. You cannot carry sex. You cannot carry anything!

Nowadays, many people are very attached to these things. They treasure names and empty appearances above nearly all else, harming themselves and others just to protect them. They want to get money, or a good reputation, or a good relationship. They struggle desperately to get high positions. People always subject their minds to the worst kind of abuse and suffering just to try to get and then keep these empty, impermanent things. Nowadays many humans are very attached to sex. But none of that is necessary. All form is empty, so thinking that you can get anything or keep anything is a fundamental delusion. This line teaches that point.

The most important thing is, what do you want in your life, right now? What you want in this very moment makes your mind, and that mind makes your life. It determines this life and your next life. By perceiving that all things are originally empty, you can put it all down and just live, without suffering over these impermanent things.

"No appearing, no disappearing. No taint, no purity. No increase, no decrease"

The Heart Sutra is known for its very interesting way of describing our true nature. It uses "no" many times. When you attain true emptiness, there is no speech or words. Opening your mouth is already a big mistake. So words and speech cannot describe our original nature. But to teach people still caught in words-and-speech delusion, sometimes words-and-speech medicines are necessary. The Heart Sutra recognizes both these points. So it describes our true nature by completely describing what our true nature is not. You cannot say what it is, but you can give a sense of what our true nature is not like. "It's not this or this or this or this or this. It's not like that or that or that. Understand?" Ha ha ha ha! This is a very interesting technique. The Heart Sutra only says "no," because this is perhaps the best that words and speech can do.

This line points right to the fact that, in our original nature, nothing ever appears or disappears. There is no such thing as taint or purity, because these are merely qualities created by the thinking-mind. And in original nature there is neither increase nor decrease. Our true nature is completely still and empty. It is the universal substance of which everything else is composed. How, then, could it ever appear or disappear, or be tainted or pure? More importantly, since our true nature is the same as the universe, how could it ever increase or decrease? Infinite in time and space, it has none of the characteristics that apply to things we can describe with speech and words.

"All dharmas are marked with emptiness. No cognition, no attainment. Nirvana."

The Heart Sutra says, "All dharmas are marked with emptiness." But all dharmas are already empty and nonexistent even before you say this. Name and form are already empty. How can you even mention dharma, and then say it's empty? That is a big mistake! In the true experience of emptiness, there are no words and no speech, so there is also no dharma. When you open your mouth to say "All dharmas are marked with emptiness," that is already no longer emptiness. So be careful. The point of this is that if you just understand words and speech, and keep only an intellectual understanding, this sutra and any other sutra cannot help your life. Some actual attainment of what these words point to is necessary.

So when we say that everything is empty, we are saying that therefore there is also no cognition and no attainment. This point of emptiness is the Absolute. There is nothing, so what could you possibly attain? These words in the Heart Sutra are only wonderful speech and words. But however interesting or wonderful the speech and words are, if you just understand them conceptually, they cannot help your life. Again, you must truly attain something. You must attain that there is actually nothing to attain. Everything is already truth, exactly as it is. You are already complete. But be careful! Merely understanding these beautiful words is one thing, and attaining them is quite another.

The Heart Sutra begins with the Hinayana experience of emptiness and takes it one more step. The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Hinayana reflect a path which perceives that everything is suffering, and which then leads to stopping suffering, stopping birth and death. This is nirvana. There are no opposites: no coming or going, no high or low, good or bad, birth or death. So in the true experience of emptiness, you perceive that there is already no birth or death, no coming or going. How can you stop some thing that doesn't even exist? There is already no suffering: how can it have an origin, and how can it possibly be extinguished? That is why the Heart Sutra talks about "no suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path." It completely "hits" the opposites-thinking of the Four Noble Truths that there is suffering, and an origination of it, and a stopping of it, and a path. So Mahayana Buddhism teaches that there is one more step from Hinayana [Theravada] teaching. If you only stop at this point, at complete emptiness, you only attain nirvana. Mahayana Buddhism's view means taking another step.

"Unexcelled perfect enlightenment — anuttara samyak sambodhi."

Anuttara samyak sambodhi is a Sanskrit phrase meaning "unexcelled perfect enlightenment." It is simply another way of saying "truth." When you see, when you hear, when you smell, when you taste, when you

touch, when you think - everything, just-like-this, is the truth. Before, just at the point of nirvana, there is no cognition, and no attainment with nothing to attain. So the bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita, and attains nirvana. But then these three words appear: *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. Before, there is no attainment; now, all Buddhas attain *anuttara samyak sambodhi*. What does this mean?

If you just attain true emptiness, this is only nirvana. It is an experience of complete stillness and bliss: there is no subject or object, no good or bad, no coming or going, no life or death. There is nothing to attain. But Mahayana means your practice continues "beyond" this point, so that you attain no-attainment. You must find nirvana's function in the world. The name for that is unexcelled perfect enlightenment. If you attain no-attainment, then you attain truth. Your mind is empty and clear like space. This means your mind is clear like a mirror: If a mountain appears before the mirror, there is only mountain; water appears, and there is only water; red comes, red; white comes, white. The sky is blue. The tree is green. A dog is barking, "Woof! Woof!" Sugar is sweet. Everything that you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think is the truth, just as it is. Nirvana means attaining emptiness, which has nothing to attain. *Anuttara samyak sambodhi* means using the experience of emptiness to attain truth. With an empty mind, reflect this world, just as it is. That is Mahayana Buddhism and the Great Bodhisattva Way.

"Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha!"

So there is yet one more step. If you attain emptiness, and then attain truth, how does this world's truth function to help other beings? All Buddhas attain *anuttara samyak sambodhi*, or unexcelled perfect enlightenment. This means that they attain truth. They can see that the sky is blue, and the tree is green. At the end of the sutra we are told that there is a great transcendent mantra, a great bright mantra, an utmost mantra, a supreme mantra: *Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha*. It can be translated as "Gone, gone, gone to the other shore beyond." So this mantra at the end of the Heart Sutra means only action. Up until this point, everything is just speech and words about attaining emptiness and truth. It is all a lot of very interesting description. But this mantra means you must just do it. Some kind of action is necessary if you want to help this world. For the bodhisattva, there is only bodhisattva action. When you attain unexcelled perfect enlightenment, you must attain the function of this enlightenment in the world. That is what we call 'moment world'. From moment to moment, perceive suffering in this world and only help all beings. That is a very important point.

Attaining truth alone is not enough. If someone is thirsty, give them something to drink. If someone is hungry, give them food. When a suffering person appears before you, you only help, with no thinking or checking. The early part of this sutra has no "do-it," just good speech about attainment and no-attainment. But if you attain something, you must do it. That is the meaning behind *Gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate, bodhi svaha*. Step by step, we attain how to function compassionately for others, to use truth for others, spontaneously, from moment to moment. This is the whole point of the Heart Sutra.

From moment to moment, when you are doing something, just do it.
