

# The Heart Sutra

Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hua

*Wonderful wisdom can reach the other shore right now;  
The true mind itself can merge with enlightenment's source.  
Dharma and analogy comprise its title, which transcends the relative.  
Empty of the characteristics of all dharmas is this substance beyond words.  
Fundamental non-attainment is its purpose and intent,  
And by using its power of eradication, the three obstacles are cleansed away.  
The "butter division" is determined to be the meaning of this teaching.  
A Maha turning around: this is the prajna boat.*

妙智方可達彼岸	真心自能契覺源
法喻立名超對待	空諸法相體絕言
宗趣原來無所得	力用驅除三障礙
熟酥判作斯教義	摩訶逆轉般若船

Reciting Sutras is a great help to one's own nature in developing wisdom. Reciting the *Diamond Sutra* develops wisdom; reciting the *Heart Sutra* develops even more wisdom. You say that there aren't any benefits gained from reciting Sutras, yet the benefits are very great. It's just that you don't see them. You don't see them? Then they are real benefits. Anything that you can see is just the skin.

The word "Sutra" has four other meanings:

1. That which strings together;
2. That which attracts;
3. That which is permanent;and
4. A method.

"Stringing together" refers to the connecting of all the meanings which were spoken to make a Sutra, as if a piece of thread were used to string them together.

A Sutra "attracts" in that it can make use of opportunities for the transformation of sentient beings. This particular Sutra is capable of responding to the causal opportunities of all sentient beings and of giving each a medicine to cure that being's own particular disease. Just as a strong magnet can attract iron from a great distance, a Sutra, like a magnet, draws in all sentient beings. We sentient beings are like iron, hard and stubborn, with large tempers and many faults. But as soon as we are pulled into the magnet, we begin to be slowly softened so that our faults fall away. That is the meaning of "that which attracts."

A Sutra is "permanent" because it is eternally unchanging Dharma, and has neither beginning nor end. Not one word can be omitted from or added to a Sutra; thus it is eternal. In ancient times and in the present, living beings have cultivated and will continue to cultivate according to this Sutra.

A Sutra is a "method" followed in cultivation of the Way. In the three periods of time--past, present, and future--one cultivates according to this Dharma. What is honored in the three periods of time alike is called the method. What is unchanging in the past and present is called the permanent.

Sutra also has the meaning of a marking-line. In ancient China carpenters used a tool called the ink-cup and line. It consisted of a string which was inked black. When the carpenters wanted to be sure that their construction was straight and true, they would stretch the string out, pull it back, and snap it to, in order to make a straight black guideline.

To sum it up, a Sutra is a set of rules. To recite Sutras is to follow the rules. If you don't recite Sutras, then you don't follow the rules. Since you are now studying prajna, you certainly should respect the rules of prajna. If you do, you will certainly develop your wisdom.

I have spoken in general about the title of the Sutra, and now I will talk about the translator. For everything we understand of this Sutra, we should give great thanks to the translator. If he had never existed, we should be unable to see the Sutra or even to hear its name. If that were the case, how would we be able to cultivate according to the methods prescribed in it? It would be impossible to find its path of cultivation. Therefore, we should thank the person who translated the Sutra, since from that time up to the present moment, every generation has benefited from his compassionate teaching and transforming. It follows that the merit derived from translating Sutras is inconceivably great.

The text says that *The Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra* was TRANSLATED BY TANG DHARMA MASTER OF THE TRIPITAKA SYWAN DZANG ON IMPERIAL COMMAND.

TANG refers to the Tang Dynasty of China (618-907 A.D.). TRIPITAKA is Sanskrit for "three storehouses"--the three storehouses of the Buddhist canon. They are the Sutras, which teach samadhi, the Vinaya, which contains the precepts, or rules of moral conduct, and the Shastras, which contain discussions of doctrine. A DHARMA MASTER is one who takes the Buddhadharma as his master and also one who uses the Buddhadharma to teach and transform living beings. This Dharma Master, SYWAN-DZANG, took the Dharma as his master, and he also used it to transform sentient beings. He was perfect on both counts, so either way you use the title Dharma Master, it applies to him.

Dharma Master Sywan-dzang's roots were especially deep, thick, and wonderful. The state of his existence was inconceivable. From his own time up to the present he is Buddhism's greatest Dharma Master. One might ask, "How can you say that he is the greatest?" When he went to India during the Tang Dynasty to bring back the texts of Sutras to China, the great modern transportation network of buses, planes, boats and trains did not exist. What did Dharma Master Sywan-dzang use for transportation? He went from China through Siberia across the Himalayas to India on horseback. Such a journey is extremely long and involves much suffering, for no others had made the trip before him. Even though there were no mountains where he lived, Tang Master Sywan Dzang, before he left to bring back the Sutras, practiced running and mountain climbing every day. How did he do it? He piled up a lot of chairs and tables and jumped from one to the next, from table to chair back and forth. By practicing at home before undertaking the extremely long journey, he was able to attain his aim and reach India. He lived there for fourteen years and collected many Sutras which he brought back to China.

When he returned from India, he received an IMPERIAL COMMAND to translate the Sutras into Chinese from their original language of India. Now it is up to you Westerners to translate the Sutras into the languages of the West. The merit derived by the people who undertake this work will be without limit, for it will benefit not only their own lives, but will be cause for the gratitude of generations of people in the West. Everyone can be included in the work of translation; no one should fall behind in Learning Chinese. You Westerners should make an offering to the people of the West.

Now it can be said that the world has gone bad. Only if people understand the Buddhadharma can the evil age be turned back. If people don't understand the Buddhadharma, then I am afraid this world will

arrive at the time when it will be destroyed. The Christians talked about Judgment Day--the Last Day. If the Buddhadharmā is translated into English, if everyone understands the Buddhadharmā, if everyone knows better than to be lazy, and if people come forward to cultivate the Way with open hearts and minds, then the Last Day will be very far away in the future; it will be hard to say how many great ages away.

Basically there isn't any "Last Day." Why? Because the turning of the great Dharma Wheel of the Buddhadharmā will even pull in the sun, which then will be unable to set on a Last Day. There won't be any final day. All such matters are living; they're not fixed, certain, and dead. Don't think that what is called the Last Day is the Last Day, for then there will in fact be a final day. Now, which is more probable: that there will be a final day or won't be one? If everyone studies the Buddhadharmā, then the day of destruction won't come. It's all very alive, so don't see it as fixed and dead.

For instance, from time to time people have spread the rumor that there is going to be an earthquake in San Francisco that will cause it to fall into the sea. For several years now people have been talking about this, and a lot of wealthy people who are afraid of dying have moved away.

I spoke about this last year, too, and at that time one of my disciples in San Francisco sent another disciple in Seattle a letter saying that I couldn't go to Seattle, because if I did, San Francisco would fall into the sea. I was unable to buy a plane ticket, and even though they were going to give me a plane ticket, I couldn't go. At that time I told everyone, "If you really study the Buddhadharmā, San Francisco won't be allowed to move, because I haven't lived here long enough." Why did I say that? Well, this year I said to everyone, "Relax, all you have to do is recite the Shurangama Mantra and study the Buddhadharmā with a sincere mind, and I will guarantee that San Francisco won't budge." I said that.

Why hasn't San Francisco moved up until now? Because there are some people who have changed a little. Everybody recites the Shurangama Mantra and studies the Buddhadharmā with a very sincere mind. So the gods, dragons, and the rest of the Eightfold Division of gods and ghosts are here to protect our Bodhimanda (a platform or seat of enlightenment), our place of cultivation, to see that there are no disruptions. The meaning is the same as for the Last Day. If it is possible for the Last Day not to be the Last Day, it is even more possible that San Francisco won't move, even if it wants to. It can't find some other suitable place to rent, and it already has such a good place that it isn't moving.

SUTRA:

WHEN AVALOKITESHVARA BODHISATTVA.

*Verse:*

*Reversing the light to shine within, Avalokiteshvara  
Enlightens all the sentient beings; thus he is a Bodhisattva.  
His mind is thus, thus, unmoving, a superior one at peace;  
With total understanding of the ever-shining he is host and master.  
Six types of spiritual power are an ordinary matter,  
And even less can the winds and rains of the eight directions cause alarm.  
He rolls it up and secretly hides it away;  
And lets it go to fill the entire world.*

回光返照觀自在	覺諸有情即薩埵
如如不動心君泰	了了常明主人公
六種神通渾閒事	八方風雨更無驚

COMMENTARY:

The name AVALOKITESHVARA is Sanskrit. In Chinese it is rendered Gwan Dz Dzai ( 觀自在 ), "Contemplating Ease." To be at ease is to be happy about everything and to be without worries or obstacles. To be unimpeded is to contemplate ease. *Reversing the light to shine within* is contemplating ease. If you don't reverse the light to shine within, you're not contemplating ease.

What is meant by "reversing the light to shine within?" Regardless of what the situation is, examine yourself. If someone has wronged you, you should think to yourself, "Basically, I was wrong."

If you say, "When people don't act properly toward me, I don't look to see whether I'm right myself; I just smash them right away, smash their heads in so that blood flows"—then you haven't won a victory, but have only shown your complete lack of principles and wisdom. To reverse the light to shine within is to have principles and wisdom. Reverse the light and contemplate whether or not you are at ease.

I will explain the two characters *dz dzai*. ( 自在 ), which together mean "ease." The *dz* is oneself, and the *dzai* is where one is. I'll say it word for word. Are you right here ( *dzai* ), or aren't you? In other words, do you have false thoughts, or not? If one has false thoughts, then one ( *dz* ) is not right here. It's very simple. To reverse the light to shine within is simply to see whether you have false thoughts. If you have false thoughts, then you aren't at ease. If you don't have false thoughts, then you are at ease. That's how wonderful it is.

*Avalokiteshvara enlightens all the sentient beings; thus he is a Bodhisattva.* What is a Bodhisattva? A Bodhisattva is somebody who wants to enlighten sentient beings. The Chinese word for "enlighten" is pronounced *jyau* and to understand. It isn't the character *jyau* that means to stir up trouble. To stir up trouble is not to enlighten sentient beings, but to make them stupid and to try to turn what is good in their lives into what is evil. But here in the verse, "enlighten" means to bring understanding to all sentient beings.

What is meant by "sentient?" Be careful not to misunderstand the text here by hastily assuming that the word "sentient"

What is a Bodhisattva? A Bodhisattva is somebody who wants to enlighten sentient beings. The Chinese word for "enlighten" is *jyau* ( 覺 ), to make people understand. It isn't the *jyau* ( 攪 ) which means to stir up trouble. Add the element "hand" ( 手 ) to the character meaning "to enlighten" ( 覺 ) » and it becomes ( 攪 ): it turns into a lot of trouble. The stirring-up-trouble *jyau* is not to enlighten sentient beings, but to make them stupid and to try to turn what is good in their lives into what is evil. But here in the verse, *jyau*. means to bring understanding to all sentient beings.

What is meant by "sentient?" Be careful not to misunderstand the text here by hastily assuming that the word "sentient" (*you ching* 有情) means emotional love (*ching ai* 情愛) as the Chinese characters can be interpreted in another context. No, to enlighten sentient beings is to empty yourself of love. You must see love as empty. That is to be a Bodhisattva.

Therefore, the verse says, *His mind is thus, thus unmoving, a superior one at peace.* "Thus, thus unmoving" means there is no dharma that is not thus. All dharmas are thusness-Dharma and all afflictions and troubles have disappeared. To be unmoved is to have the power of samadhi. Doesn't the

*Lotus Sutra* say, "His mind is at peace"? To be "at peace" this way is to be very happy and to possess great tranquility.

*With total understanding of the ever-shining, he is host and master.* You should have the total understanding of the ever-shining prajna wisdom. If you don't understand, then you do not shine; if you are not shining, then you don't understand. Therefore, you should understand and then understand even more, shine and shine even more. You should shine brightly in your total comprehension and totally comprehend in your shining brightness--that is understanding. You should be very clear.

What is being very clear? Being very clear is not being muddled and stupid. If you understand that to do a certain thing is wrong and you still go ahead and do it, that is piling stupidity on top of stupidity. You are doubly stupid. That is because you are not equal to being host. Being "host and master" is being able to be in control.

"I am master and I am host," someone says. "I tell everyone else to do anything I think they should be doing. I am not controlled by other people, but I myself control others. I won't do anything, so I just tell people to help me do my work, but I won't help them do theirs." No, being host and master is not like that. To be host and master is to be free of confusion and never to do anything confused. To be in control at all times is to have genuine wisdom. You are without prejudice, and you don't act on the basis of deviant knowledge and deviant views. You don't take drugs or do anything improper or disruptive. If you act improperly, then you get a chance to take a look at stupidity.

*Six types of psychic powers are an ordinary matter.* If you can be in control, you will naturally have the six psychic powers. They are:

- 1) the psychic power of the heavenly eye;
- 2) the psychic power of the heavenly ear;
- 3) the psychic power with regard to past lives;
- 4) the psychic power with regard to the minds of others;
- 5) the spiritually based psychic powers;
- 6) the psychic power of the extinction of outflows.

If you do not have the six types of psychic powers, it is because you are not in control, because you are influenced by all the external circumstances you find yourself in. You are influenced by people and have no influence yourself to affect the situations that confront you. When you are able to turn situations around, then no matter what comes you will be unmoved. Don't be bold and say that you already know how, because to be unmoved means that even in a dream you are not affected by states of consciousness. That is to be host and master. If you are not affected by internal or external states, and if you have real wisdom and the six psychic powers, then you have a very ordinary talent working for you--nothing spectacular, just something very ordinary.

*And even less can the winds and rains of the eight directions cause alarm.* "The winds and rains of the eight directions" refers to the last two lines of the famous poem by Su Dung-po (1037-1101):

I vow to the god among gods;  
His hair-light illuminates the world.  
Unmoved when the eight winds blow,  
Upright I sit in a purple-golden lotus.

Su Dung-po sent the poem to the Great Master Fo-yin (1011-1086), and the Master's reply was two words: "Fart, fart." As soon as Su Dung-po saw Great Master Fo-yin's criticism, he couldn't get it out of

his mind, and he rushed across the Yangtze—he lived on the south side of the river and Great Master Fo-yin lived on the north side—to find the Master and scold him. He wanted to tell the Master that he had written an enlightened poem, so how could the Master possibly have replied, "Fart, fart"?

In fact, when Great Master Fo-yin criticized him, not only did Su Dung-po fart, he blazed forth and wanted to scorch Master Yin to death. The poet rushed across the river and burst into the Master's quarters without ceremony and shouted, "How could you possibly scold someone and slander him that way by writing 'fart,fart'?"

Master Fo-yin replied, "Who was I slandering? You said that you were unmoved by the winds of the eight directions, but just by letting two small farts I've blown you all the way across the Yangtze. And you still say that the winds of the eight directions don't move you? You don't have to talk about eight winds; just my two farts bounced you all the way up here."

Then Su Dung-po thought, "That's right, I said that I'm unmoved by the eight winds, but two words have been enough to make me burn with anger." Realizing that he still didn't have what it takes, he bowed to the Master and sought repentance.

What are the winds of the eight directions?

1) Praise. For example: "Upasaka, you are really a good person, you really understand the Buddhadharma, and your wisdom really shines. Furthermore, your genius is unlimited and your eloquence unobstructed."

2) Ridicule. For instance: "It's the scientific age now, and you are studying Buddhism. Why do you study that old superstitious rubbish?" Really ridiculous ridicule, and yet you think, "You're right. How can I study Buddhism now in the scientific age? Cause and effect, no me and no you—how can such metaphysical theories be worth anything in the age of science? I am I, and people are people." You become confused and are moved by the blowing of the wind.

3) Suffering. The wind of suffering makes you suffer. To be unmoved while ceaselessly performing ascetic practices is an example of being unmoved by the wind of suffering.

4) Happiness. To eat well, to wear good clothes, to have a good place to live, and to be especially happy all day long, thinking, "This certainly is good," is to be moved by this wind.

5) Benefit. You think, "All I do is go to a lot of trouble cultivating. I don't even have any false thoughts. Consequently, people come to me and make an offering of a million dollars to build a temple, and they are very, very happy." That is to be moved by the wind of benefit.

6) Destruction. Perhaps the wind of benefit blew yesterday, but tomorrow people may come and ruin everything. They'll tell people, "That monk is no good. Don't believe in him; he will do anything. Believe in me instead."

7) Gain.

8) Loss.

Those are the eight winds. The verse says, "And even less can the winds and rains of the eight directions cause alarm." It means that the eight winds blow, but I don't move.

*He rolls it up and secretly hides it away.* When you close this Sutra, you should store it in a good place, not a place that indicates your lack of respect. You should respect it.

*And lets it go to fill the entire world.* When you open it, the wisdom of prajna fills the sixfold union--that is, north, south, east, west, above, and below, which together represent the world. This prajna Dharma-door is very wonderful.

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## *Calendar of Buddhist Holidays*

*SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY will be celebrated on Sunday, May 22nd at the City of 10,000 Buddhas at the culmination of the month-long Ten Thousand Buddhas Repentance. (The actual day, 4/8 of the lunar calendar, is Monday, May 23rd.)*

*FORTHCOMING HOLIDAYS:*

*June 12, 1988: MEDICINE KING BODHISATTVA'S BIRTHDAY*

*July 4, 1988: RECITATION FOR THE WELFARE OF THE NATION*