

The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra

With Standless Verse Commentary and Explanation

by Tripitaka Master Hua

SUTRA:

THERE IS NO SUFFERING, NO ACCUMULATING, NO EXTINCTION, NO WAY.

Verse:

*Each of the sufferings exerts pressure, and all attack together,
Accumulating is feelings which beckon each unlike the other.
Only through extinction can the ultimate joy be attained.
Therefore, this is the Way that should be practiced to awaken to the
emptiness of dharmas.
Through three turnings of the Four Truths the Dharma-Wheel
revolves,
Seven shares in enlightenment, the eight-fold upright path, intention,
mindfulness, and diligence.
One day connect right through and ripen the fruit of sagehood;
Partial truth with residue is just a conjured city.*

諸苦逼迫各相攻	聚集招感自不同
惟滅可證究竟樂	是道應修悟法空
三轉四諦法輪運	七覺八正意念勤
一旦貫通成聖果	偏真有餘乃化城

Commentary:

This passage of the Sutra empties the Four Truths: SUFFERING, ACCUMULATING, EXTINCTION, and the WAY. Those are the Dharmas cultivated by the Hearers (Shravakas). Why are they called Hearers? "Upon hearing the sound of the Buddha, they were enlightened to the Way. "At the very beginning, the Buddha taught living beings who had causal connections with the kind of opportunity for change which is offered by the small vehicle.

When Shakyamuni Buddha first realized Buddhahood, he spoke the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. Though they had eyes, those of the two vehicles did not see; though they had ears, they did not hear. Why didn't they see? Because that kind of Dharma was too wonderful, too high, and too great. Because it is so wonderful, those of the two vehicles basically don't

understand it. They don't know what is called the inconceivable. They were all like little children, and the ten-thousand-foot high *nisyanda* body which was manifested by Shakyamuni Buddha was too high for them to see. So it was said:

The more I strain my gaze up towards it, the higher it soars. The deeper I bore down into it, the harder it becomes. I see it in front, but suddenly it is behind.

You see something in front of you, and suddenly it is behind you. For instance, one of my disciples is now about to obtain the psychic power of the heavenly eye. He sometimes sees things before him which suddenly run around behind him, and he thinks, "At first the light was coming from behind, but now it is coming from in front. There was a light coming from the left, but then it went to the right." It is like when Shakyamuni Buddha emitted light to the left, and Ananda looked to the left; he emitted light to the right, and Ananda looked to the right, as the *Shurangama Sutra* relates. Because this Dharma is inconceivable, those of the two vehicles have no way to deal with it and no way to understand it fully. Although they have ears, they do not hear the perfect, sudden teaching. Because it is too profound, they do not understand it.

Thereupon, Shakyamuni Buddha, concealing the great and revealing the small, appeared in the body of a sixteen-foot-tall old bhikshu and spoke the Dharma of the Four Truths (*catur-arya-satyani*): suffering (*duhkha*), accumulating (*samudaya*), extinction (*nirodha*), and the Way (*marga*).

There are three turnings of the Dharma-wheel of the Four Truths, so called because they are like the revolving backwards and forwards of the wheel of the six paths. The first turning of the Dharma-wheel of the Four Truths is the turning by manifestation; the second is the turning by exhortation, which urges you to study this Dharma, and the third is the turning by verification.

The turning by manifestation runs this way: "This is suffering; its nature is oppression. This is accumulating; its nature is feeling which beckons. This is extinction; its nature is that it can be verified. This is the Way; its nature is that it can be cultivated."

The turning by exhortation runs as follows: "This is suffering; you should know about it. This is accumulating; you should cut it off. This is extinction; you should verify it. This is the Way; you should cultivate it."

The turning verification runs as follows: "This is suffering; you should know about it. I already know about suffering and have no need to know more about it. In other words, now it is you who should know about suffering. For me to know about it again would be to add a head on top of a head. Second, this is accumulating; you should cut it off. I have already cut it off and need not cut it off again. Now it is I who am telling you to cut it off, and I am just waiting for you to do so. Third, this is extinction; you should verify it. I have already verified extinction, that is, the happiness of nirvana. I am just waiting for you to verify it. Fourth, this is the Way; you should cultivate it. I have already cultivated it and need not cultivate it further." The turning by verification attests that he himself has

already reached attainment, and he tells you to cultivate. If he had no attainment, there would be no need for him to teach you to cultivate.

You say, "What suffering should I know about?" SUFFERING is the first of the Four Truths. Would you say that it is real? Suffering is real, as one of my disciples told her "guest-defiler" -- her boyfriend. "Hurry up and go away, guest-defiler! I am suffering too much! If you don't go, I will suffer too much." "Guest-defiler" is a way of referring to an object of perception, and so this is a case of appearing in a body to speak the Dharma. This kind of phenomenon really exists. If the guest-defiler doesn't go you will suffer. Wouldn't you say that's strange? The guest-defiler goes, making it possible for the suffering to decrease.

There are three kinds of suffering: the suffering of suffering itself; the suffering of decay; and the suffering of the activity of the five skandhas. There are also the eight kinds of suffering, of which the first four are produced from your own body: the suffering of birth, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of old age, and the suffering of death. The second four kinds of suffering are caused by external situations: the suffering of being apart from those you love, the suffering of not obtaining what you seek, and the suffering of the flourishing of the five skandhas. Then there are all the infinite kinds of suffering. The truth of suffering includes a lot of suffering.

Sufferings oppress people until they can't breathe. The sufferings press down and cut off the breath (Chinese *ch'i*, 氣) until it is unbearable. "Guest-defiler, go away fast, fast! I am suffering too much." That is the truth of suffering. I have spoken about it a good deal before, so I need not speak about it in detail now.

Suffering is piled upon suffering: this is the truth of accumulating. *Each of the sufferings exerts pressure, and all attack together.* The three sufferings, the eight sufferings, and all the infinite sufferings press down on you so that you can't breathe, all attacking you at once as if they were fighting with you. The guest-defiler comes, everything comes, grabbing a little here, grabbing a little there. The six consciousnesses and the six objects of perception and every kind of situation come from outside to attack you. Therefore, the verse says, "Each of the sufferings exerts pressure, and all attack together." Each kind of suffering is added upon suffering.

Accumulating is feelings which beckon, each unlike the other. What accumulates is affliction. Afflictions are even more terrible than guest-defilers. Guest-defilers can only give you a little external provocation, but they also make afflictions attack from the inside. When the attack of the guest-defilers is carried to the inside, afflictions are generated.

Why is there affliction? The host-defiler moves at will. At first you were the host, that is, the one in charge, but now you are shaken so badly by the guest-defilers that you no longer know that you are the host. Then you lose your temper, and there is affliction, you can tell a guest-defiler to go away and you can push it aside, but you can't push the host-

defiler anywhere, because it is already in your home. It is extremely fierce, much fiercer than the guest-defilers.

Affliction is the thing I want to talk about least, because I'm afraid that by talking about it, I will make you have even more afflictions. Before I say anything, you won't know how many afflictions there are and you can still not understand them. You can be afflicted without caring about it; unknowing and unaware, you let them go by. If I speak about them clearly, you will ask, "Which affliction is this, and which one is that?" Then you will add affliction to affliction. This is why I have lectured on Sutras for such a long time without talking about how many afflictions there are.

You say, "Oh, I've heard you talk about them. Haven't you said that there are 84,000 kinds of affliction?" Not bad. Yes, there are 84,000 kinds of affliction; still, 84,000 kinds of affliction are too many to name one by one. I want to tell you the names of the afflictions now. The time has come.

The twenty subsidiary afflictions (*sui fan nao* 隨煩惱 "afflictions that follow") derive their name from the fact that they follow you and me. If you have afflictions, they go along with you; if I have them, they go along with me; if others have them, they go along with others. Among the twenty subsidiary afflictions are ten small afflictions, two middle-sized afflictions, and eight large afflictions .