

**Dependent Origination/
Dependent Arising**



All external & internal things are empty of inherent existence
Because they are dependently arisen

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Dependent Arising

- Dependent on causes and conditions
- Dependent on parts
- Interdependent
- Dependent on labels / designation



When we say things are empty, we are not saying things do not exist. Things do exist. We are saying that things do not have independent identities. In other words, things do not exist inherently. So, when we say things do not exist inherently, we are simply saying things do not exist independently of causes and conditions. That is why we say “All external and internal things are empty of inherent existence because they are dependently arisen”. The rationale is that if things exist inherently, then they must exist on their own and independent of causes and conditions. However, that is not the case. Things appear/arise due to causes and conditions. Therefore, they lack inherent/intrinsic nature.

There are various types of dependent arising. The common one is that of dependence on causes and conditions. For example, plants depend on many causes such as seeds and conditions such as water, nutrients etc. All causes and effects fall into this category. Another type of dependent arising is dependent on parts. For instance, a car is dependent on its parts. Without the parts like wheels, engine etc, there is no car. Third type of dependent arising is called interdependence. This is where the existence of one thing is dependent or relative to another’s existence. For instance, short and tall exist due to their relation to each other. When we say something is short, we are comparing it to something else. Same goes for big and small. Finally, there is another type of dependent arising known as dependent on labels or conceptual thoughts. For example, the alphabet **A** exists because we are taught to call it that when we see a specific formation of lines. If we show the letter “A” to someone who does not know the alphabet, that person won’t see the letter “A” but will only see 3 lines put together. This illustrates the role of mental imputation or labeling of things we observe. In the absence of mental imputation, the letter A will not exist. Its existence is dependent on a base (the 3 lines) and the mental imputation of “alphabet A”. The above are the various types of dependent arising and all go toward supporting the view that things do not have inherent nature but arise in dependence on others. Hence, everything is empty of inherent existence.



Four main Headings

- I. Introduction
- II. The main body
- III. Conclusion

Heart Sutra is explained under three main headings: Introduction, the main body and the conclusion. Under Introduction, there are three sub-headings: The title of the sutra, homage and the context.

Introduction

- The title of the text
Arya bhagavati prajnaparamita hridaya. *(The essence of the Sacred Mother: the Perfection of Wisdom)*
- Homage by translator
I prostrate to the Arya Triple Gem
- Context (Background)
Common & Uncommon



All Sutras translated into Tibetan have their titles in Sanskrit. One reason is to show the authenticity of the sutra. Since Buddhism started in India, India is considered a pure source of dharma. In order to show that this is an authentic teaching from India, the title of the sutra is purposely left in Sanskrit. Another reason is to gain familiarity with the Sanskrit language and to leave mental imprints to enable easier Dharma learning in future lives as it is said that all Buddhas will teach Mahayana teachings in Sanskrit. For this reason, Sanskrit is referred to as Deva's (Buddha) language.

Homage is composed by the translators at the time of translating the sutra from Sanskrit to Tibetan. One reason is to remove obstacles to the successful translation of the sutra. Another reason is to help indicate which of the three baskets of teachings, i.e. Sutra, Abhidharma and Vinaya categories, the Sutra belongs to. From the homage, a reader can tell the main topic of a sutra. If the homage is made to the Omniscient Mind, the main content of the sutra is Vinaya (ethics). Homage to Manjushri indicates the main content of the sutra to be on wisdom. The sutras containing topics relating to concentration bear the homage to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. So, the homage stanza has its purpose.

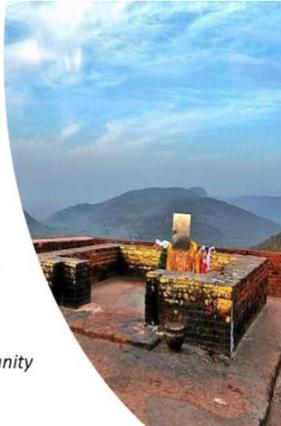
Context is about laying the background. There are two contexts: Common and uncommon context.

Common Context:

The perfect conditions:

- The perfect time: **Once**
- The perfect teacher: **Shakyamuni Buddha**
- The perfect congregation of listeners: **community of monks & Bodhisattvas**
- The perfect location: **Vulture Peak, Rajgir**

"Thus have I once heard: The Blessed....and great community of bodhisattvas..."



Where the text begins with “**Thus have I once heard -and great community of bodhisattvas**”, it is called the common context because all sutras begins with this kind of background providing information about the location where the teaching was given, the teacher, the time and the audience. In the case of the Heart Sutra, four perfect conditions are listed. Firstly, the perfect timing. The sutra says, “**Thus have I once heard..**” this suggests the rarity of the teaching. Ananda who compiled this

sutra is saying that although Buddha taught many teachings, the Heart sutra was taught only one time. So, this shows how precious and rare this teaching is. Another way to read this line is that Ananda heard it only once but was able to memorize it completely. Thus, suggesting the power of memory Ananda possessed.

“... the Bhagavan was staying in Rajgriha at Vulture Peak along with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas” .. The Bhagavan refers to the second condition (the perfect teacher). Bhagavan literally means “the one who destroyed all negativities and perfected all the qualities”. In this case, Bhagavan refers to Shakyamuni Buddha. **Vulture peak** refers to the location, the place where this teaching was given. The hill on which Buddha gave this teaching is called Vulture Peak because of its shape resembling a vulture. There are different versions of the origin of its name, but all involve a resemblance of the peak’s shape to that of a vulture or its head or a gathering of a flock of vultures. **Great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas** refers to the perfect congregation. This tells us who were present during the teaching. As the sutra reads, there was a huge gathering consisting of many monks and many bodhisattvas, as well as beings from other realms.

Uncommon Context:

- Buddha entered into meditative absorption
- Avalokiteshvara also entered into meditation absorption
- How the dialogue came about

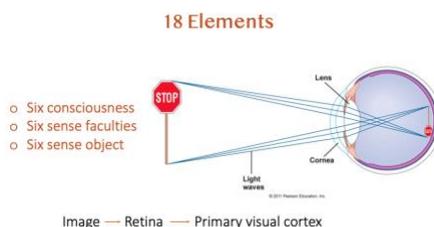
The Blessed One entered the meditative absorption on the varieties of phenomena called the appearance of the profound. At that time as well, the noble Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, clearly beheld the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom itself and saw that even the five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence.



To inform the readers of the uncommon context, the text reads; “**The Blessed one entered the meditative absorption even the five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence**”. This is called uncommon context because this is unique to this teaching only. The uncommon context informs us two things:

- (1) Buddha entered into meditative absorption: Technically, Buddha is always in meditative absorption. There is no period or time where Buddha is not in a meditative absorption. This is one of the many qualities of Buddha. Buddha can see the two truths simultaneously. However, during Buddha’s time in India, the practice was that after lunch, the Buddha would sometimes be in meditation and at other times, the Buddha would teach or give opportunity for the followers to ask questions. At the time of this teaching, Buddha chose to remain in meditation. There are numerous types of concentrations that Buddha has achieved. During this time, the Buddha entered into meditation on Profound Appearance or otherwise known as emptiness. Emptiness is commonly referred to as profound because it is ineffable – too profound to be explained or described in words.
- (2) Avalokiteshvara also entered into meditation: At that time, Avalokiteshvara also entered into the meditation on emptiness and saw that five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence. So, what are the five aggregates?

Five Aggregates	
Aggregate of form	4 elements, 5 sense organs & sense objects
Aggregate of feeling	Pleasant, unpleasant & neutral
Aggregate of perception	Ability to discern, recognize and categorize
Aggregate of mental formation	Wholesome or unwholesome mental factors
Aggregate of consciousness	Six consciousness



The five aggregates are one way of classifying all the composite phenomena. Each aggregate has its unique function. Let's say, I saw a latest iPhone and I want to buy one. In this scenario, we can see the work of all the five aggregates. First my eye sense organ (eye faculty) has to come in contact with the iPhone (visible form). These two fall under the **aggregate of form**. The iPhone coming in contact with my eye faculty is not enough. It cannot make any sense of it. I need my eye consciousness to make sense of the object and hence the role of eye consciousness which falls under **the aggregate of consciousness**. They are five other consciousness. This is similar to how science explains that we need an object, retina and the brain to work together to generate a vision. As my eye consciousness makes me see the phone, at the same time, there develops other mental factors that enables me to discern/identify the object as an iPhone, as well as give rise to certain feeling (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral) towards that phone. That discerning mind and the feeling are **the aggregate of discrimination and aggregate of feeling** respectively. As a result of whatever feelings I develop upon seeing and recognizing the object, I also develop other mental attitudes such as liking, aversion or indifference. This mental state is known as **the aggregate of mental formation**. This is how our five aggregates function within us. Understanding the emptiness of the five aggregates i.e. how they arise in dependence of various factors and are not inherently existing, are crucial in developing the perfection of wisdom.

Sutras: What are they?

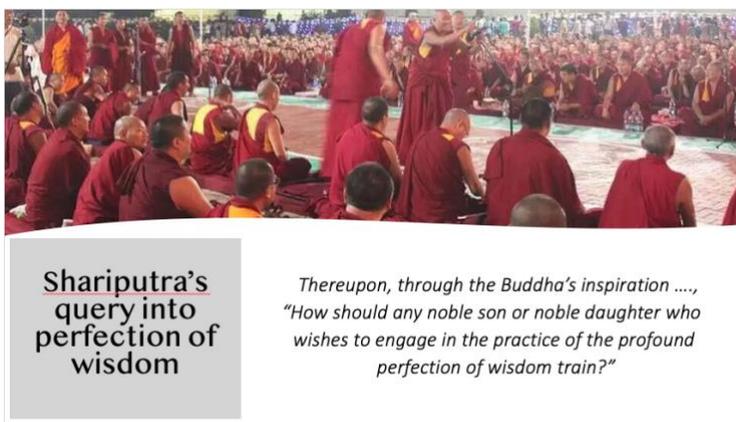
- Words or speech of Buddha
 - Words spoken by Buddha himself
 - Words spoken with the permission of Buddha
 - Words that originated from Buddha's blessing



The text reads; “Thereupon, through the Buddha’s inspiration, the venerable Shariputra spoke to...engage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom train?” The first part informs the reader how the dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara came about. In order to understand this, we need to look at the types of Buddha’s teachings or sutras (Kaa). Buddha’s teaching is defined as words or speech by Buddha. However, when we say speech by Buddha, it does not necessarily mean that the Buddha himself has spoken those words. Hence there are three types of Buddha’s words.

1. **Words spoken by the Buddha himself:** These are words of teachings spoken by the Buddha himself. The words were uttered by Buddha himself. An example of this type of Buddha’s word appears toward the end of the Heart sutra when Buddha commends Avalokiteshvara for an excellence presentation of the perfection of wisdom which reads “Excellent! Excellent! O Noble child, it is just so; it should be just so...”

2. **Words spoken with the permission of the Buddha:** These are not spoken directly by the Buddha himself but instructed by the Buddha to do so. These are included by the compilers. For instance, the context of the Heart Sutra (Thus have I once heard...) which lays the background of the teaching falls under this category.
3. **The words that originated from Buddha's blessing:** These teachings are also not spoken by the Buddha himself but the Buddha silently inspired or blessed persons to utter the teachings. In the case of Heart Sutra, the dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara did not stem from their own free will. The Buddha inspired them to engage in a particular dialogue and brought forth the teaching intended by the Buddha. Most parts of the Heart Sutra falls under this category.



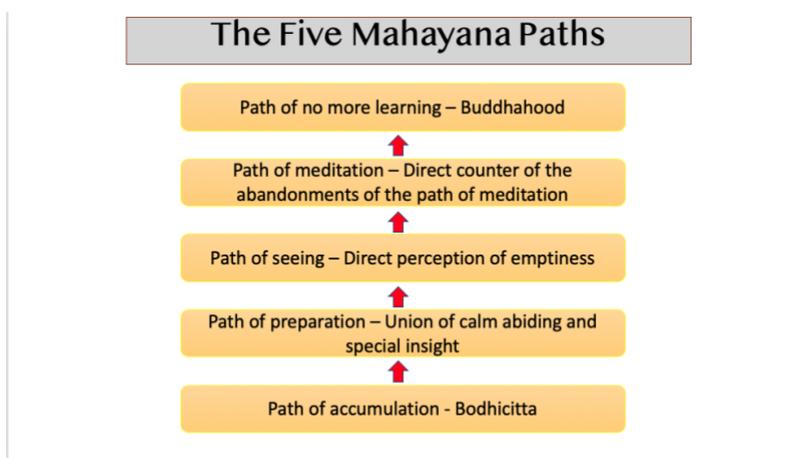
The question Shariputra put forth to Avalokiteshvara was: How should a noble son and a noble daughter should train in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom? There is a reason behind the term noble son and noble daughter. From the Buddhist perspective, everyone, including tiny insects and serial killers, have the Buddha nature, the seed of pure potential to become enlightened. However, the seeds need to be nurtured and ripen in order to embark on the journey to enlightenment. So here noble son and noble daughter refers to those in whom the Buddha nature has ripened. Those who were able to develop great compassion are considered to have ripened their Buddha nature.

There is another way to understand the term "noble son and noble daughter". Emptiness is not everyone's cup of tea. Not everyone is a suitable vessel to receive teachings on emptiness. Some develop extreme anxiety upon hearing emptiness. In that sense, noble son and noble daughter refers to those who are suited for the teachings on emptiness. Using both son and daughter clearly suggests that there is no discrimination or gender bias when it comes to the training in the perfection of wisdom and achieving enlightenment. During Buddha's time in India, there existed a strong gender bias and yet the Buddha made a clear statement that anyone whether male or female can be trained in the practice of the perfection of wisdom and become a Buddha.

Avalokiteshvara's presentation of the perfection of wisdom:

When this had been said, the holy Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, spoke to the venerable Shariputra and said, "Shariputra ... Shariputra, the bodhisattvas, the great beings, should train in the perfection of wisdom in this way.

From here onwards Avalokiteshvara presents the method of engaging in the perfection of wisdom in two different ways: a detailed presentation for those whose aptitude for wisdom is exceptional and a concise presentation to those who are extremely intelligent. The detailed presentation covers the specific practices based on the stages of five paths. What are the five paths?



For a person to become buddha, one needs to climb the ladder of five Mahayana paths. They are like milestones of attainments as one progresses towards enlightenment: The path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation and path of no more leaning.

(1) **The path of accumulation:** When a Mahayana practitioner first generates spontaneous, continuous bodhicitta, one enters the path of accumulation. By generating bodhicitta, one has begun to accumulate a mass of merits as from that moment, every practice will be motivated by bodhicitta thereby rendering every virtue enormously powerful. Hence this path is called the path of accumulation. However, at this stage, the practitioner may or may not have realized emptiness.

(2) **The path of preparation:** The practitioner who is at the path of accumulation, then engages in both single pointed meditation and insight meditation. Eventually, the person will achieve samadhi (calm abiding) and vipassana (insight into emptiness). The moment one gains the union of Samadhi and Vipassana, the practitioner arrives at the path of preparation. The practitioner can now “see” emptiness at a conceptual level. This however, is not a direct perception and thereby it lacks clarity. It is like seeing emptiness through a veil. Repeated engagement in the meditation on emptiness with single pointed concentration prepares the person to see emptiness directly and that’s why this path is called the path of preparation.

(3) **The path of seeing:** A practitioner at the path of preparation repeatedly engages in meditation on emptiness and reaches the point where one’s understanding and realization of emptiness become

so clear that it seems as though there is no distinction between emptiness and the mind that is cognizing it. When one finally gains such insight, one achieves the direct perception of emptiness and at this stage, attains the path of seeing and becomes an arya being.

(4) **The path of meditation:** Now equipped with direct perception into emptiness, the practitioner in the path of meditation continues to engage in meditation of emptiness to uproot the ignorance and its stains (grasping at inherent existence/grasp at the “I”/grasp at phenomena). These are the specific obscurations that the path of meditation has to counter and these are known as the abandonments of the path of meditation. The moment one’s meditation becomes a direct antidote against the abandonments of the path of meditation, one reaches the path of meditation.

(5) The path of no more learning: This is where one becomes buddha. At this stage, one has abandoned all gross and subtle negativities and perfected all the qualities. This is the stage of omniscience or all knowing and hence it is called the path of no more learning.

Training in the path of Accumulation and path of Preparation

HEART SUTRA 2

When this had been said, the holy Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, spoke to the venerable Shariputra and said, “Shariputra, any noble son or noble daughter who so wishes to engage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom should clearly see this way:

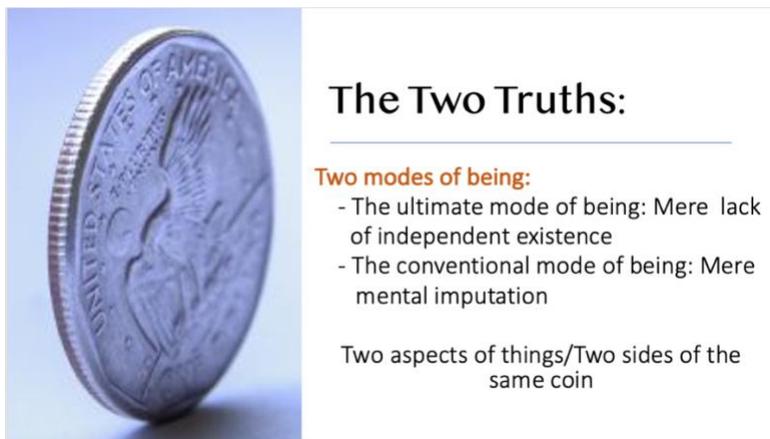
HEART SUTRA 3

they should see perfectly that even the five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence.” Form is empty, emptiness is form; emptiness is not other than form, form too is not other than emptiness. Likewise, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are all empty.

Avalokiteshvara begins his response by saying that whoever wishes to engage in the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom should clearly see **even** the five aggregates are empty of intrinsic existence. The word “even” emphasizes the importance of realizing the selflessness of the person (“person” refers to the concept or label “I”) and as well as the selflessness of phenomena (“phenomena” refers to the aggregates). The rationale is that although we may intellectually understand or even perceive the emptiness of the person, as long as we hold onto the idea that the aggregates have an independent identity, the fault of self-grasping will exist. The belief in inherent existence is ignorance and living a life on that basis will inevitably leads to creating karma and thereby resulting in samsaric birth. Hence, realizing the selflessness of the person alone is not enough to escape samsara, let alone achieving the state of enlightenment. To elaborate his answer, Avalokiteshvara then says, “Form is empty, emptiness is form; emptiness is not other than form, form too is not other than emptiness.”

Let’s try to understand these four statements which is the core of Heart Sutra and known as the Fourfold approach to understanding emptiness. Since we have discussed in our first session, it is relatively easy to understand the first statement that form is emptiness. We have discussed how all things exist in dependence upon causes and conditions, component parts and mental imputation. If one’s existence is dependent on something, by inference, it negates independent existence. This applies to form as well. So, Avalokiteshvara is saying that like everything else, form too is dependent on its causes and conditions and therefore it does not have independent existence. As such, form is

empty of inherent existence. The form's mere lack of inherent existence is its emptiness. This applies to all phenomena. For example, a car lacks inherent nature and that is the car's emptiness. The car appears or exists as a ***dependent arising*** (based on its parts, causes and conditions and mental labels) and does not exist as an independently, inherently existing car. The emptiness of car is nothing other than the car's ultimate nature. So, the mere absence of intrinsic nature of car is the car's ultimate nature or ultimate mode of being. In other words, the emptiness of car is one of the characteristics or one aspect of car.



There is another aspect of form – its conventional mode of being. Although form does not exist inherently, it still exists. This existence is due to mental imputation. The form that is merely an imputation of the mind is the form's conventional truth or conventional mode of being. All things have these two modes of beings and it is commonly known as the two truths. The two modes of beings of form appear to be distinct but in reality they are the same.



The second statement says, “emptiness is form.” What is form? Form is a mere imputation of mind – a label imputed on an aggregation of certain parts. A car for instance, is a label given to a combination of specific parts. This labeling or imputation is only tenable due to the fact that the car does not have independent existence. If a car had its own independent nature or identity, imputation by mind is not possible. In that sense, emptiness is the basis for the existence of car. Look at the string knots in the picture. From one string, we can make all kinds of knots. This is only possible because of the string's malleability. If the string is hard and inflexible, making various shapes of knot is impossible. String's malleability serves as basis for all the conceivable types of knots. In that sense,

all the various knots are like a manifestation of the string. Likewise, form is a manifestation of emptiness. Because things do not have inherent existence from their own side, varieties of forms can be perceived. In fact, all conventional things are manifestations or expressions of emptiness. Form being empty enables the existence of its convention aspect. Hence emptiness is form.

The third and fourth statement emphasizes the relationship between the two modes of being of a particular thing. These two modes of being appear to be distinct but in reality, they are the same. They are like the two sides of the coin. For instance, the ultimate nature of a car is emptiness which is the absence of intrinsic existence. Its conventional existence is nothing more than a label imputed on a base/phenomena which is devoid of intrinsic existence. Hence the two statements.

The above fourfold approach to understanding emptiness should be applied to the remaining four aggregates. Hence the text reads; “**likewise, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are all empty**”.

The three doors of liberation:



- On the conventional level, the eight characteristics do exist.
- On the ultimate level, there is only the absence of these characteristics:
 - Defining characteristics - **the door of emptiness(thing itself)**
 - Origination - **The door of signlessness** (its cause)
 - Cessation - **The door of signlessness** (its cause)
 - Defilement - **The door of signlessness** (its cause)
 - Non-defilement - **The door of signlessness** (its causes)
 - Decrease – **The door of wishlessness** (its effect)
 - Increase – **The door of wishlessness** (its effect)
- They do not exist as ultimate nature of things

The text reads; “**Therefore, Shariputra, all phenomena are emptiness; they are without defining characteristics; they not born, they do not cease; they are not defiled, they are not undefiled, they are not deficient, and they are not complete**”. This is to show how a person at the path of seeing should engage in the practice of perfection of wisdom. Avalokiteshvara advises that the person at this stage should engage in what is called the three doors of liberation, a way of examining emptiness from three different angles or perspectives.

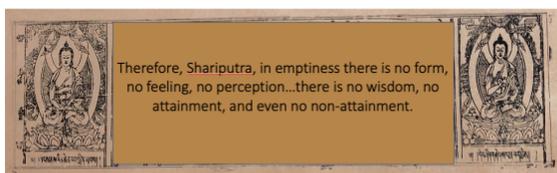
The door of emptiness: The first way is examining emptiness from the point of view of thing itself. Avalokiteshvara says that as one has examined the five aggregates through the fourfold analysis, one should examine all phenomena in this way. When we do that, we will come to conclusion that all phenomena are emptiness. Even the defining characteristics of things are empty of inherent existence. At the conventional level, there exists defining characteristics - individual and common characteristics. However, at the ultimate level, there is no defining characteristics.

The door of signlessness: The second way of examining is looking at emptiness from the point of view of its cause. At the conventional level, the rise and fall of things exists. There are origins of things and an end to things (again due to mental imputations of causes and conditions and parts coming together). However, at the ultimate level, there is no origin nor cessation. Nothing is born inherently, and nothing ceases inherently. Likewise, the defilements that need to be abandoned and

qualities that needs to be cultivated (such as liberation and Buddhahood) exist only as conventional reality. There is no inherent abandonment of defilements and cultivation of undefiled qualities.

The door of wishlessness: The third way is to examine emptiness from the point of view of its effect. At the conventional level, when we apply antidotes to afflictive emotions such as anger, attachment and ignorance, these afflictions will gradually diminished. Likewise, qualities such as compassion, kindness, patience can be developed and fully realized. As such, deficiency (diminution/decrease) in negativities and increasement in positive qualities exist. However, when we put them to ultimate analysis, they are not found. Thus, nothing stands ultimate analysis and therefore, all phenomena are empty of inherent existence.

Training in the path of Meditation

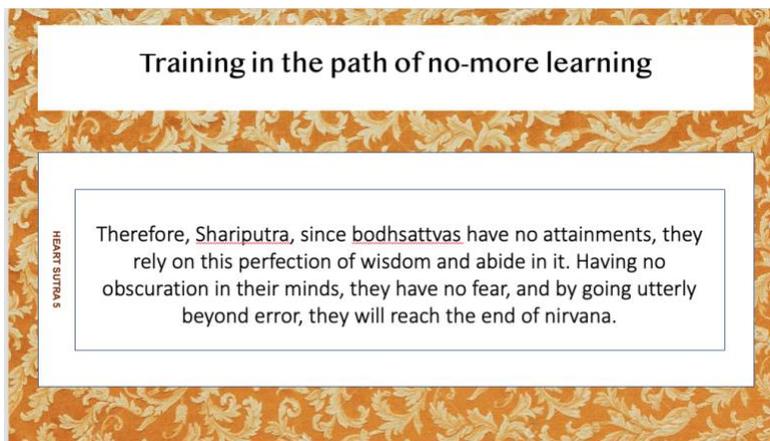


12 Links of Dependent Origination

CATEGORY	LINK
Projecting Factors	(1) Ignorance (2) Compounded Karma (3) Consciousness
Actualizing Factors	(8) Craving (9) Grasping (10) Existence
Results	(4) Name & Form (5) Six sources (6) Contact (7) Feeling (11) Birth (12) Aging & death

To show how to train in the path of meditation, Avalokiteshvara continues; “Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no mental formations there is no wisdom, no attainment, and even no non-attainment.” In this statement, there are numerous categories that are abbreviated and hence we need to first unpack those. It begins with the five aggregates and negate each of them by saying there is no form, no feeling etc. The five aggregates do exist but what is being negated here is that it does not exist in the eyes of a practitioner at the path of meditation who is immersed in the meditation of emptiness. As practitioners at this level have already gained direct realization of emptiness, when they are in their meditative state, nothing other than emptiness (mere absence of intrinsic nature) appears in their perceptions. Hence, in the eyes of such meditators, there are no forms, no feelings etc.

Following this, the text list what is called the 18 elements, namely, the six elements of perceptual objects (visible forms, sound, smell, taste, tactile and phenomena), six elements of the sense faculties (eye sense faculty to mental sense faculty), and six elements of consciousness (eye consciousness to mental consciousness). Avalokiteshvara says that all these 18 elements do not appear in the perception of such meditators who are absorbed in the meditation of emptiness. Twelve links of dependent origination, four noble truths, wisdom, and attainments are another set of categories that are listed by Avalokiteshvara. Conventionally, 12 links, four noble truths and attainments exist but they are non-existent to the eyes of a person who is immersed in a direct realization of emptiness. That's one way to read these lines as a way of training in the path of meditation. As the path of meditation is a lengthy process, it requires constant and repeated engagement in the meditation of emptiness. To signify that, Avalokiteshvara listed numerous examples or objects to examine their ultimate nature/emptiness. Another way to read the above line is to understand that all the above categories do exist, but they do not exist inherently. The five aggregates, 18 elements, 12 links of dependent origination and attainments are dependent on their causes and conditions and therefore they lack intrinsic or independent nature.



The text then reads: “Therefore, Shariputra, since bodhisattvas have no attainments, ... they will reach the end of nirvana.” This segment falls under the training in the path of no more learning. In the first segment that reads; “Therefore, Shariputra, since bodhisattvas have no attainments, they rely on this perfection of wisdom and abide in it”, Avalokiteshvara says that the Bodhisattvas who have cognized the emptiness of all phenomena, including the final attainments, should immerse themselves in this direct realization of emptiness. This is the way to engage in the profound perfection of wisdom and hence they should abide in it. Avalokiteshvara then goes on to say that engaging in such way will eventually extirpate the self-grasping ignorance i.e. the grasping at the inherent existence of the person and of phenomena, and thereby eradicate the two obscurations. As a result, there will be no more fear born out of self-grasping and instead go beyond the net of mistaken apprehension and reach the end of nirvana (Buddhahood). As states in the text, “All the buddhas too who abide in the three times attained the full awakening of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment by relying on the profound perfection of wisdom”- this is how all the Buddhas, the Buddhas of three times (past, present and future) achieve enlightenment, by engaging in and relying on the practice of the profound perfection of wisdom.

Concise presentation in the form of mantra

HEART SUTRA 6
Therefore, one should know that the mantra of the perfection of wisdom-the mantra of great knowledge, the unexcelled mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, the mantra that quells all suffering-is true because it is not deceptive.

HEART SUTRA 7
The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is proclaimed: **Tadyatha gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha!** Shariputra, the bodhsattvas, the great beings, should train in the perfection of wisdom in this way.

Up to this point, Avalokiteshvara presents the explanation of emptiness in a detailed manner mainly for those practitioners who are of unexceptional aptitude. Now Avalokiteshvara turns to those who are of highest aptitude and makes a concise presentation in the form of mantra. It first extolls the perfection of wisdom. The text reads; “Therefore, one should know that the mantra of the perfection of wisdom - the mantra of great knowledge ... because it is not deceptive.” The

perfection of wisdom is called the mantra because it enables a person to cross the ocean of samsara. This also aligns with the etymological meaning of mantra which is “to protect the mind”. Wisdom realizing emptiness safeguards one from self-grasping ignorance. It is called the mantra of great knowledge because it overcomes all forms of ignorance and resultant afflictive emotions. It is also known as unexcelled mantra because there is no other path that excels the perfection of wisdom in terms of leading to the state of enlightenment. It is called the mantra equal to the unequal because the perfection of wisdom enables one to achieve the state equal to Buddha state which is unequalled. The perfection of wisdom is like a panacea to all sufferings and its causes and thereby it is called the mantra that quells all suffering. The perfection of wisdom perceives the ultimate reality of things and there is no disparity between appearance and reality. Therefore, it is true and not deceptive.

The actual mantra is TADYATHA GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI
SVAHA

The above mantra is in Sanskrit. *Tadyatha* means “it is thus” or “it is like this”. *Gate Gate* means “go, go”; *Paragate* means “go beyond”; *Parasamagate* means “go totally beyond”; and *Bodhi Svaha* means “be rooted in the ground of enlightenment.” Put all this together becomes “Go, go, go beyond, go totally beyond, be rooted in the ground of enlightenment.” This may still not make much sense. However, if we bring in the five stages of the path, it will make more sense. Avalokiteshvara urges practitioner to engage in the five stages of the path: The first and the second “Go”, calls for the trainee to enter the path of accumulation and path of preparation respectively. “Go beyond” and “Go totally beyond” are exhortation to enter the path of seeing and path of meditation respectively. Finally, “Bodhi Svaha” is an exhortation to enter the final stage, the state of enlightenment. This lays the stages of paths that one gradually needs to ascend in order to reach Buddhahood, the full emancipation. Avalokiteshvara affirms to Shariputra that this is the way to engage in the practice of perfection of wisdom as the text reads; “*Shariputra, the bodhisattvas, the great beings, should train in the perfection of wisdom in this way.*” This concludes Avalokiteshvara’s answer to the question put forth by Shariputra.



The text then reads; “*Thereupon, the Blessed One arose from that meditative absorption ... For then even the tathagatas will rejoice*”. Up to this point, throughout the dialogue between Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, Buddha was absorbed in meditation. At this point, Buddha arose from his meditative state and commended and affirmed Avalokiteshvara’s presentation on the perfection of wisdom by saying “*Excellent! Excellent! O noble child, it is just so; it should be just so. One must practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have revealed. For then even the tathagatas will rejoice.*” This segment of the Heart Sutra falls under the category of teachings that are spoken by the Buddha himself.

Affirmation & expression of rejoicing

As the Blessed One uttered these words, the venerable Shariputra, the holy Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva, the great being, along with the entire assembly, including the worlds of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, all rejoiced and hailed what the Blessed One had said.

The final part of the Heart Sutra is about how the audience expressed their rejoicing. The text reads; “As the Blessed One uttered these words, the venerable Shariputra, ... all rejoiced and hailed what the Blessed One had said.” Thereafter Buddha gave his compliments to Avalokiteshvara, all who were present at the gathering including the worlds of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas, expressed their rejoice and hailed the Buddha for giving this precious teaching.

Due to this virtue, may all beings
 Complete the merits of virtue and wisdom,
 And attain the two holy bodies
 That arise from [the merits of] virtue and wisdom.