

# The Heart Sutra

## The Perfection of Wisdom



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Sariputra was in Dhyana and saw that everything was marked with emptiness. He thought to himself, “Form is the same as emptiness. Emptiness is the same as form. When I see, that seeing is in a field of emptiness, and that emptiness is the same as seeing, and all my perceptions are just emptiness, even my thoughts are just emptiness, and that emptiness is the same as my thoughts. There is no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind consciousness. They are all just emptiness, and emptiness is the same as those consciousnesses. How profound. I have arrived at the ultimate understanding, which Siddartha, the Buddha has spoken of. Thus I am liberated from all hindrances, an Arahant.”

Avalokiteshvara, the great Bodhisattva, upon witnessing this event, was moved by great compassion for Sariputra, and penetrated his dreamworld with form to speak to him thusly:

“Sariputra, my son in search of wisdom, you have done well to see this vision, but what is this vision? It is just the vision of your consciousness. You are seeing the space and depth generated by your mind in which all things conscious appear, and you are mistakenly calling this "emptiness". Do you understand?”

When you see, your mind creates a field of depth

perception, a field of space and distance, in which what you see exists. This space and distance created by your mind is not “emptiness” and is not liberation as you are thinking and hoping. When you have a thought, you see the space and depth of that thought, but the mind created that space, which is the content of that thought. Therefore, you think that this thought is identical to “emptiness”, and “emptiness” to be identical to thought, but your “emptiness” is just a mind generated depth, spatiality, and distance. The experience of the depth and spatiality within your consciousness is not “emptiness” and not liberation, Sariputra. You are seeing the reality of your mind, and you confusing the empty space and depth created by your mind with true emptiness. Think carefully, my son. If you see a field of emptiness within which images or thoughts appear, who is seeing this? In what context does this experience reside? Do you know? You are seeing the truth of your mind, but you are not free from the experience of the mind. Do you understand?

Sariputra, you should know that this experience is just the third Dhyana, and is just the awareness of the the three dimensional dreamworld created by your mind. See for yourself, Sariputra, what are the limits of this field of “emptiness” created by your mind? How far can your “emptiness” extend? When you extend the field of

your “emptiness”, it is contained in a small space. How can this be Emptiness? It is contained in the container of the space and depth created by your mind. You are seeing the truth of the mind, which is the source of suffering, but you are not beyond that dreamworld of suffering. Do you understand?

Sariputra, the truth of the perfection of wisdom is not seeing the space and depth of the dreamworld, and glorifying yourself with false attainments of Arhatship and making false statements such as “Form is Emptiness, and Emptiness is Form”, therefore I am Enlightened. You have deceived your self and have deceived others with this nonsense, and people have been hurt and misled. This is just compassion for the world, my friend, and we must move forward, beyond this foolishness, if you are to be of help to this suffering world. Do you understand?

Sariputra responded, “I am shocked and humbled by your words, but I do not fully understand what more there can be. This is all I have found after so many years. I am truly sorry now that I have spoken as if I were a great teacher with great understanding. Help me understand what you are saying. Help me see what more there is?”

“Sariputra, when you use your eyes to see, what is happening?”

“There is an empty space created in front of me. It begins inside of me and extends out to the object. The space makes contact with the object, then the empty space quickly fills in with me moving to the the object, and the object moving towards me. We unite in that empty space, then I have the knowledge that I am seeing. When I have this knowledge, the object and I are united together in this space. I see the space, I know it is an empty space, and I have knowledge of seeing within this space, so I know that I and the world are One, and all dharmas are emptiness, seeing is also emptiness, and emptiness is the same thing as seeing. They are all one thing.”

“And where is this seeing, my son?”

“Seeing is in front of me. It is a space in front of me.”

“And where is the ME feeling?”

“Let me look at that for a second...I am sometimes at

my heart and sometimes at my head. This is strange. The ME feeling in my head is different. The ME at the heart is in the space of seeing, but the ME at my head is different. There is no space there, and it is just many, many quick flashes of ME feeling. I have never seen this before.”

“Yes, my son. You have two ME feelings. The one ME feeling, which is inside the space of seeing, is it a permanent, constant ME feeling or does it come and go quickly?”

“Uh-oh! I have never seen this before. I had always assumed it was permanent, but as I experience it now, it is not constant. The ME at the heart, the space of seeing, the dharma world quickly comes and goes, it is like a drumbeat, and it is not permanent. I had assumed it was all permanent, because it kept reoccurring.”

“My son, with this insight, do you think this Me at the heart, this space of seeing, and this dharma world are Nirvana, the ultimate experience of an Arhat, Liberation.”

“Now that you have lead me to this insight, I am

ashamed at all my assumptions. This drumbeat of “form is emptiness, and emptiness is form”, which I am witnessing, can not be liberation. It is as if I have done nothing, and assumed everything. What a fool I have been. I want to laugh, but I only feel like I could cry.”

“My son, your efforts have not been wasted. You have gone far. Many people also have done nothing, and assume everything. They have a small insight or experience, and immediately assume they have done everything. They are so hungry for enlightenment, they grasp at any experience as proof of their attainment. In reality they are just beginning. You at least now know you are just beginning, and have assumed everything, so let's continue. My son, seeing the drumbeat of this dharma world, what do you think it is?

“My Lord, I don't know. I try to know, and my 'trying to know' is just part of drumbeat of the dharma world. This is like a maze from which there is no escape. There is no way to know what this is, because knowing is inside the maze. I have heard of puzzles like this, and I have always said there is no way out, there is no solution, it is not possible to solve such a puzzle.”

“Yes, this is exactly right. If you don't know you are in prison, how can you escape? If you know you are in a prison, and see there is no escape, what do you do? You now know you are in a prison, so you want to escape, but you see there is no escape. What do you do?”

“This is the same puzzle I am in, and there is no way out! Maybe I don't completely understand the prison clearly, because there must be a way out. You are not inside a prison.”

“Yes, correct. I am not in the prison, and you don't fully understand the prison. Let me ask you a question and consider it carefully. You saw the ME at the heart, and you saw the ME's in your head. Were those ME's inside the prison?”

“Yes, they were inside the prison.”

“Is it possible for those Me's to find liberation, to escape the prison? Consider this carefully, my son.”

“OK. I will take it slowly. Firstly, when I hear you say “Me's finding liberation”, it sounds crazy, but let me

consider this in meditation. I see the space of seeing, then the space of the dharma world, and it seems like the feeling of Me at the heart is united with the dharma world and it can't be separated. They are the same thing. The Me's flashing around my head are a hundred Me's causing confusion. Each lasts only a fraction of a second and are like a hundred flickering stars in the night sky each saying Me, me, me. So this is a puzzle. The hundred flashing Me's are meaningless, and the Me at my heart is the same as the dharma realm, so I am confused. Neither the flickering Me at my heart, or the hundred Me's around my head have any meaning. They are like flickering stars. Just thinking logically about what you have shown me gives me the understanding of the maze, the prison, from which there is no escape. It is like seeing a painting of a man on a wall in a cave, and asking me if that man can leave that painting on the wall, and go outside the cave and find freedom. I would say that is impossible. I see it logically that it is impossible. I see all these Me's as a dream, and one part of the dream is not going to leave the dream. If I dream of myself being a wealthy king, when I wake up I must leave my kingdom of dreams, and be who I am, and I lose the crown on my head.”

“Very good, Sariputra. You have described this well.

The dream Me's are like the flickering stars in the night sky. They are part of that sky and will not be able to leave that sky. The painting of the man on the wall of the cave is not going to walk out of the cave and become free of the cave. Let me ask you Sariputra, and consider this carefully. What is the painting of a man on a wall going to do? What are the flickering stars to do?"

"I have no answer. This is the same question, but more difficult, more exact. I have no answer. Nothing can be done."

"What do you mean by "nothing can be done"?"

"The painting on the wall can do nothing."

"Then why do you continue to do something!"

"What! I am doing nothing with it!"

"You are seeing it. You are listening to it. You are believing it. You are loving the Me, Me, Me dreamworld. You are making it the basis of your existence. This is what you are doing."

“I see no other way. It keeps on going no matter what I do. Help me!”

“It goes on without you? Then why do you need to participate in it? You see emptiness of dharmas, and you see the Me, Me, Me at the heart. It is like a flickering star. It is like the painting of a man on the wall of a cave. Why are you still participating? Do you really think the painting is going to leave the cave?”

“When I hear you say these words, tears come to my eyes. This is truth. I am still participating, waiting for the painting to leave the cave, and it can't. Even the one who is waiting is the ME at the heart. The painting is waiting for the painting to leave the cave. This is absurd. How do I stop participating, when everything I can know is the prison?”

“Consider this question carefully. You become aware of the heart ME. You become aware of the head ME's. You become aware of the “emptiness is all dharmas. Look closely at what allows visibility of each of these things, and tell me what it is? What creates visibility?”

“OK. let me examine carefully. There is a movement that goes to those locations, pauses and visibility happens. When I want to see the heart ME, there is a movement to that location, a pausing, and visibility of the heart ME occurs. When I was to examine the emptiness of eye consciousness, I can feel a movement to the eye consciousness, a pause, and the emptiness of eye consciousness becomes visible.”

“Is this movement, and pausing, waiting for knowledge, your participation?”

“Yes, I see that incredible truth! I unknowingly create this prison for myself. I can see myself doing it over and over again. Moving to a known location in the dharma realm, pausing and waiting for the prison to become visible. This is astounding!”

“Watch closely. Answer carefully. Is that which moves and pauses inside of the prison. When it moves and pauses, is it in any way obstructed by the prison? Is it obstructed by dharmas?”

“No. It is not in the prison at all.”

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