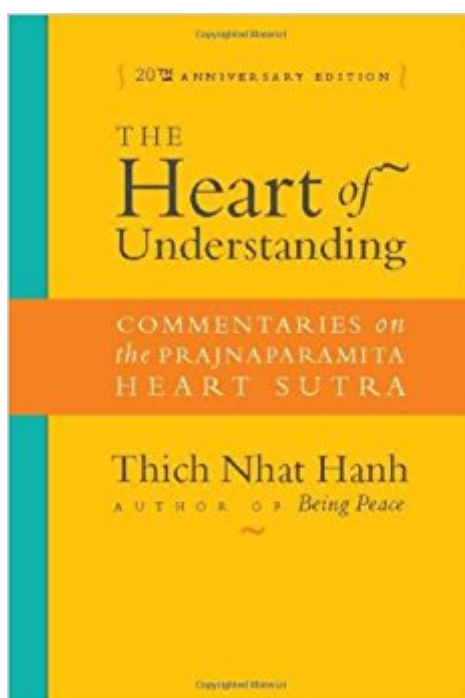


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# The Heart Of Understanding: Commentaries On The Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra



## Synopsis

The heart of the Prajñāpāramitā Sutra is regarded as the essence of Buddhist teaching, offering subtle and profound teachings on non-duality and the letting go of all preconceived notions, opinions, and attachments, and so becoming open to all the wonders of our life. The Heart Sutra is recited daily in Mahayana temples and practice centers throughout the world. Thich Nhat Hanh's translation and commentary are the fruit of the author's more than sixty years of monastic study and practice. He describes the sutra as "a precious gift to us, the gift of fearlessness." Based on a historic lecture at the Green Gulch Zen Center, Muir Beach, California on April 19, 1987, this is one of the most simple, clear, concise, and understandable commentaries on this very important Buddhist sutra. In the Heart Sutra, the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara describes how to train in the perfection of wisdom by seeing through the illusory nature of all things. The Heart Sutra is Buddhism in a nutshell, containing only 632 characters in the traditional Chinese translation. Despite its brevity, it covers more of the Buddha's teachings than any other scripture and has had the most profound and wide-reaching influence of any text in Buddhism. This revised edition celebrates the 20th anniversary of the initial release and features a new introduction by Peter Levitt and a new afterword by Thich Nhat Hanh. Edited by poet and Zen teacher Peter Levitt, author of *Fingerpainting on the Moon*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the most revered Zen teachers in the world today. His best-selling books

include Happiness and Peace Is Every Step. He lives in Plum Village in southwest France, where he teaches the art of mindful living. Edited by poet and Zen teacher Peter Levitt, author of *Fingerpainting on the Moon*.

This is a marvelous text which with simple but direct language explains some of the most baffling riddles of Buddhism: "form is emptiness, emptiness is form. ... all dharmas are marked with emptiness; they are neither produced nor destroyed, neither defiled nor immaculate, neither increasing nor decreasing." Many who read such writings proclaim that Buddhism is incoherent, but Thich Nhat Hanh beautifully and simply -- and briefly -- explains the truth of these apparently irreconcilable statements. The accessibility of his writing is remarkable. Although the book is short -- a mere 54 pages -- it should be read slowly and with a thoughtful and contemplative attitude. Thich Nhat Hanh is explaining some of the core tenets of Buddhist thought, and one should not rush through his exegesis. Every sentence is to be savored and rolled around in the mind a bit, just as the Heart Sutra itself is. This is the text I send others to who want to know more about Buddhism. The elements can be found in this slim, easy-to-read volume,

I realized early on this is not a book to be read at one sitting (even though it is not large). Nor is it a book that can be read and then laid on the shelf, allowed to collect dust. To gain the knowledge it contains, one must be willing to consider the teachings until assimilated. I learned that many chant or recite the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra on a daily basis. I was amazed at the number of highlights I had created by the time I reached the last page. Normally I quickly devour a book, but this was a book I read slowly, repeating passages until I felt I had at least a layman's grasp of what author Thich Nhat Hanh was instructing. "Buddhism is a clever way to enjoy life," he says early on, and I found myself smiling. I understood him to mean this was not a trick, but learning a different way of thinking. The book breaks the Heart Sutra into small sections. The author first offers an overview of the lines to be taught before giving examples to enable understanding. While the examples are clear, one is forced to suspend reading and think in order to assimilate the knowledge before moving on. There are concepts presented that are counter to what most of us have been taught. The author talks of obstacles, which I likened to getting out of our own way in order to discover something new. The last chapter talks about meditation, advising the Buddhist meditation is practiced to bring about immediate results. "If we sit for twenty minutes, these twenty minutes should bring us joy, life. Meditation is meant to bring about understanding, and peace and happiness in your daily life means peace and happiness in the

world. 5.0 out of 5 stars. Recommended for all. Five stars.

If you are vaguely familiar with the concepts of buddhism, and want to really dive into the body of scripture, this is a great start. Well written, great translations, and the commentary is easy to understand and beautifully laid out. He also dives into the history of each scripture and provides alternate translations and texts to dive through. If you have even a passing interest in buddhist teaching and want to get a better understanding of the source material and history of the religion/philosophy, I can't recommend enough.

This 54-page book is compiled from a series of talks that Thich Nhat Hanh presented to large groups of Americans at retreats and lectures in the United States. A master and enlightened communicator the author explains the aphorisms of the famous ancient Buddhist teacher, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and his five elements that comprise a human being--form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Thich simplifies would-be difficult topics in a flowing easy to follow manner. He takes the time to translate and define foreign terms and provides vivid examples to help the reader visualize concepts. He skillfully shows how all things, life, and thought are part and parcel to one another. While this book was short, it was well-worth the price. It's not often that a truly enlightened person has the ability to transcend culture and relay the essence of such great works in such a succinct and enjoyable manner. I recommend this book to all people who want to better understand themselves and their relationship to their environment, life and death. For an equally enlightening book by this author, I recommend *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. Buy this book now. You will not be sorry.

A must read for people who find it very difficult to understand the Heart Sutra, a very important sutra of Mahayana Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh explains the sutra in a way that makes good sense and is easier to understand, particularly the notion of "emptiness". After reading his book I think I understand a bit more about what "emptiness" is: it doesn't mean nothingness; it means empty of intrinsic or inherent nature. And what does this imply? Read the book and find out. It's short and succinct.

In the depths of my heart, there is a field where we know we are all one: he writes that we "inter are." Thich Naht Hanh comes from this space in every sentence, and invites us into that field, encouraging us to live from there and invite others into it.

I had to read this very slowly and let it sink in. It lends insight into how emptiness is the key to our inter-connectiveness. We are not alone.

Be ready for an amazing experience! This book is a foundational treatment of the nature of Emptiness, and thus the nature of the Universe! Thich Nhat Hanh explains Buddha's Bodhisattva Sutra (teaching). Thich Nhat Hanh is the MASTER of providing the most simple and understandable explanations of what could be very complex Buddhist precepts.

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