

Koans for the Heart Sutra

The Heart Sutra

Ananda said, “Though I have become the Buddha’s disciple, my heart is not yet absorbed in awakening. I now see that, in spite of my learning, if I am not able to put it into practice, it’s like someone who talks about food but never eats, and so is never satisfied.”

... transforming all suffering and distress

The ogre outside shoves the door,
The ogre inside holds it fast.
Dripping sweat from head to tail
Battling for their very lives,
They keep it up throughout the night
Until at last when the dawn appears
Their laughter fills the early light—
They were friends from the first.

Hakuin

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form

Bassui used to say that awakening is seeing the wordless sutra.

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind ...

One day, a young monk asked his teacher after they had chanted the Prajnaparamita together, “I have a nose, ears, eyes; why does the Prajnaparamita say, No eyes, ears, nose?”

His teacher replied, “Your question is too deep for me. I shall have to introduce you to a Zen master.”

A child said, “It’s not God I want, it’s someone in skin!”

Since there is nothing to attain, the bodhisattva lives by Prajna Paramita, with no hindrance in the mind; no hindrance, and therefore no fear; far beyond delusive thinking, right here is Nirvana.

A teacher said to his student, “You must be full of this realization not only in meditation, but in daily life. It’s like filling a sieve with water.”

After she had thought about this for some time, he gave her a sieve and a cup and they went to the nearby seashore, where they stood on a rock with the waves breaking around them.

“Show me how you fill the sieve with water,” he said. She bent down and scooped the water into it with the cup. It barely appeared at the bottom of the sieve before it was gone.

“How would you do it?” she asked.

He took the sieve from her hand and threw it far out into the sea, where it floated momentarily and then sank. “Now it’s full of water,” he said.