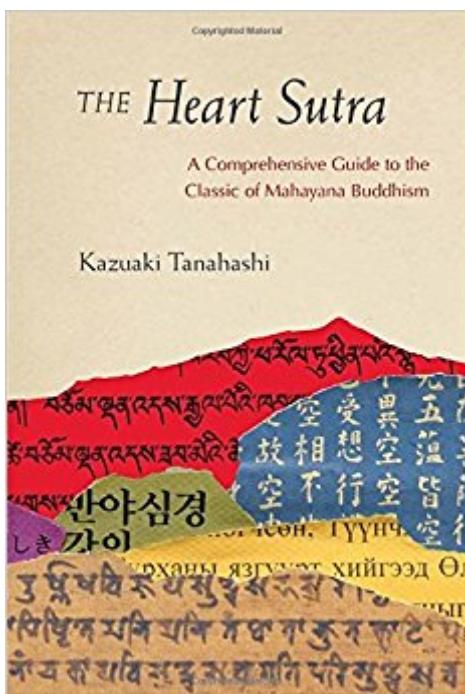


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# The Heart Sutra: A Comprehensive Guide To The Classic Of Mahayana Buddhism



## Synopsis

An illuminating in-depth study of one of the most well-known and recited of all the Buddhist texts—by the renowned modern translator. Now in paperback. The first-century classic Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra may be the best known of all the Buddhist scriptures. It's a key Zen text, chanted daily by many, but it is studied extensively in the Tibetan tradition too. In just forty-two lines, it expresses the truth of impermanence and the release of suffering that results from the understanding of that truth with a breathtaking economy of language. Kazuaki Tanahashi's guide to the Heart Sutra is the result of a life spent working with it and living it. He outlines the history and meaning and then analyzes the text line by line in its various forms (Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, Mongolian, and various key English translations), providing a deeper understanding of the history and etymology of the elusive words than is generally available to the nonspecialist, yet with a clear emphasis on the relevance of the text to practice. It includes a fresh, modern translation of the text by the author and Roshi Joan Halifax.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Kazuaki Tanahashi's *Heart Sutra: A Comprehensive Guide to the Classic of Mahayana Buddhism* delivers exactly what its subtitle promises—and much more. Most books on the sutra provide expositions of the by now well-known emptiness teachings (however much those teachings continue to resist our understanding). But such exposition, though lucidly present here, is the least of what this book offers. In addition, it traces the history of the text, its translation, and its

dissemination throughout Asia and the West in ancient and modern times, and it includes a discussion of important and ground-breaking contemporary scholarship. It includes a biography of Xuanzhang, the sutra's most famous Chinese translator, who famously journeyed to India to find it, as well as the recounting of a contemporary pilgrimage to a Korean monastery to see the oldest existing woodblock prints of the text. Its longest section is a line-by-line comparison of versions of the text in English and several Asian languages, full of useful nuance. In short, this astonishing work of loving scholarship, written with Kaz's usual deft touch, is a must-have for any serious Dharma student.

•Zoketsu Norman Fischer, poet and Zen priest, author of *Escape This Crazy Life* of Tears and Training in Compassion: Zen Teachings on the Practice of Lojong

"For all who love the Dharma, Kaz's study of the Heart Sutra is a true boon. •it serves us as introduction, history, toolbox, and treasure chest of teachings. It reads as a love story, a detective story, and yet it is a stunning scholarly resource. As inspiration, as reference, as deep study, this work is unsurpassable!"

•Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, author of *Most Intimate: A Zen Approach to Life*'s Challenges --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

KAZUAKI TANAHASHI is the translator and editor of numerous works by the great Japanese Zen master Eihei Dogen. He is also a renowned calligrapher, a pioneer of the genre of "one-stroke painting," and the creator of multicolor enso (Zen circles). His brushwork has been shown in solo exhibitions in galleries, museums, and universities all over the world.

Tanahashi's fine book detailing the genesis, development and spread of the Heart Sutra's deep, concise message around the world is first and foremost a scholarly effort with an exceptional attention to detail. Yet it is clear that the author has cultivated his own personal relationship to and love with the Heart Sutra and for me, that's what is most compelling about wading my way through its pages. It is filled with so many substantial historical, archaeological and linguistic factoids that it is certainly hard to commit them to memory in a single reading. But when a special gem appears, either by footnote or otherwise, that really helps those interested in unlocking the meaning behind the text, it makes the effort of navigating this text worthwhile. Certain instances come to mind:- In the chapter entitled "Scientific Thinking", there is a wonderful summary of the author's private conversation with astrophysicist Piet Hut in 2013 that outlines what science, modern and otherwise, knows today about the objective nature of Reality and how a new science taking into account "subjects" and "interactions between subjects and objects" is needed in order to start

approaching the levels discovered by spiritual seekers.- All of the etymological gems throughout the "Terms and Concepts" chapter, allowing for multiple and layered interpretations of the text.- Bernie Glassman's explanation of "doing" and "being" prajnaparamita.- The conversation regarding back-translation to Sanskrit, which potentially grounds the foundation of the Chinese Xuanzang translation now spread all over most of the world as the preeminent translation.- Correspondences with Nepalese monks, one of a kind. For me, there is a lot of Zen in Red Pine's translation and it might be all one would ever need on the proverbial desert island. But without Tanahashi's effort, placing this miracle of a text into a human context, there might be some lingering doubts about whether or not The Heart Sutra is the desert island pick for everyone. I am much more inspired in my practice having read it.

I have enjoyed this introduction to the Heart Sutra. Primarily because of the research that went into it. Kazuaki definitely inspires practitioners to recite portions of the sutra, especially the mantra which is already popular in US sanghas.

Kazuaki Tanahashi is a fine scholar and translator, and this work exemplifies the care and attention he has given to this. The Heart Sutra, as we know, is the most widely revered and practiced text of Mahayana Buddhism. It captures the heart of the Wisdom realizing emptiness, and is spoken through Avolokitishvara, Bodhisattva of compassion, so the union of wisdom and compassion at the core of Mahayana is expressed. It seems I have heard this sutra chanted by so many different lineages, in many differing forms for the years I have been around Buddhists. In recent years many excellent teachers have brought out commentaries on this sutra. Here Kaz, as he is known, adds his thorough research to this mix, as well as his own translation. What I missed was the imagination and fervour I've found in many of these other commentaries. This is certainly a work of love for them all, but some, to me, rise above scholarship and historical precision to wrap the chanting heart in the flames of this powerful acclamation of perfect understanding. Just before his recent stroke Thich Nhat Hanh composed a beautiful new version, full of heart. I missed that in this book. But the scholarship is part of a more holistic view of where this incantation of joy and love rise in the history of developing buddhism in China and India as the mahayana rolled like a great wave through the region in the early centuries of the common era. This is a living tradition, we ride the wave still. So cheers to Master Tanahashi, superb calligrapher and linguist. Not as heart touching, but adding historical clarity and precision. Well spent is the time given to reading the fruits of his own loving work.

This is a fresh translation of this, probably the most valued and famous of all Buddhist texts. There are significant changes, with phrases such as 'Wisdom beyond wisdom' in the title; 'boundlessness; for 'emptiness;' While I still prefer the more traditional translations, this one provides a new perspective and thus to my mind is essential reading for all interested in the Hridaya Prajna Paramita Sutra. Given the koan-like obscurity of this sutra, new ways of reading it are always of value. For me, its value is as a stimulus to concentration and the sense that the essential core of Buddhist teaching - 'Hinayana' as much as Mahayana can be found by this contemplation..This edition also contains extensive commentary, including the discussion of Buddhologist Jan Nattier's theory that the original was in Chinese rather than Sanskrit. An appendix includes many other translations, as well as versions in Chinese and other languages.This is not the definitive work on the Heart Sutra, because its truth is boundless and no work can fully expound its essence.For those unfamiliar with the Heart Sutra, i would suggest reading one of the standard translations first, conveniently available in the appendix, then the new one for additional perspectives.

A great trip through the history and the soul of this beloved and famous Sutra. I particularly like the new versions provided by the author and RJH. For this with a deep interest in the subject, or perhaps a love for language, this is a gem.

Wonderful book!

One of the best books I've read on the Heart Sutra. It answered many questions I've had about the sutra's history in India and China, as well as explicated the meaning of the words used.

Superb so far, but as the reading is slow in order to understand some conceptual expositions, it is very much worth the effort and enriching for this "closet Buddhist."

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