

Nirvana Is Samsara

Did you look back, O Prajnaparamita, as the strand
Sloped to its foamy edge to greet you
And your foot felt for its sandy landfall -
Did you look back and know, hand hard at your lip,
The journey needless;
That from there, looking back across the laboring waters -
Arrival mirroring the setting-forth -
This is the Other Shore?

“Samsara” is this world we experience with our senses, the constantly changing world of birth and death. “Nirvana” is the “blowing out” of all misery; it is the experience of perfect peace, the goal of life. Going from Samsara to Nirvana is metaphorically described as crossing the ebbing and flowing waters of experience to the “Other Shore.” “Prajnaparamita” is the highest wisdom, here personified as one who possesses that supreme wisdom. The point of the poem is that our experience of this world determines whether it is Samsara or Nirvana, which are not places, but states of consciousness that we can experience anywhere and at any time. That is also the point of the *Mary Poppins* books and is the insight that Mary Poppins tries to bring the children of the Banks family to realize - and, of course, what all readers of the *Mary Poppins* books should also realize as the theme of those books.