

The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra

With Standless Verse Commentary and Explanation

by Tripitaka Master Hua

Once you have vigor, you can obtain the dhyana bliss that is the share of enlightenment called *joy*. For instance, when you sit in meditation and develop a little spiritual skill, a little *kung fu*, you feel happier than you would be doing anything else. The attainment of that kind of happiness is the share of enlightenment called joy, a kind of clear, tranquil, and especially happy state that is attained in dhyana meditation.

Some experiences in meditation are real, but sometimes it is easy to "let the fire go so the demons can enter"--to become possessed and go crazy. That can happen when you get into a frame of mind in which you chase after experiences and get attached to them. You think to yourself, "Oh, what were those experiences like?" To always be thinking about how good they were is simply to be attached to them. Since you are attached, it is easy to become possessed and go crazy. The demon king comes to disturb you. If you don't have any attachments, the demon king can't do anything. If you are attached, then the demon king is in a good position. He makes appear whatever situation you are attached to. In response, you should make use of the share of enlightenment for vigor and also the share of enlightenment for rejecting.

Rejecting, the fourth share in enlightenment, means to look deeply into every evil, illuminating and contemplating what is not right, and rejecting it, while, of course, keeping and protecting what is right.

What is not right is whatever you are attached to. You should get rid of attachment, too. Letting attachment go is the share of enlightenment called *giving up*. Letting go teaches you to give up both your false thinking and your attachments. If you don't give them up, you won't be able to attain samadhi and will not obtain the share of enlightenment called giving up.

If you give up your attachment of false thinking, you will be able to guard a vigorous *mindfulness* in every thought. This is the vigor mentioned above. You should never forget it, and in thought after thought you should be mindful of the here and now. And if you cultivate vigorously that way, you will attain the *samadhi* share of enlightenment.

The Eightfold Upright Path consists of the following:

1) *Upright views*. "views" refers to your opinions. They have not yet become external; upright views are held in the mind. The meaning is that you should have a proper viewpoint. If your views are not upright, then it is easy to take a deviant road. If they are upright, then you take the right road. Which views are upright and which are deviant? An upright view would be: "I should study the Buddhadharma, because the Buddhadharma is upright." What is a deviant view? For instance, you gamble or do whatever is enjoyable

and leisurely; you are lazy or you harm people--these are all activities born of your deviant views. Therefore, upright views are very important.

2) *Upright consideration.* No sooner do your proper opinions come into being than you think, "Is it right or wrong?" An upright consideration would be: "I think that studying the Buddhadharma is the most genuine business of humanity, and there is nothing wrong with it."

Perhaps you have deviant considerations: "I am afraid that this business of studying the Buddhadharma isn't of any use. Now it is the scientific age. The Buddhadharma talks this way and that about teaching people to do good deeds and to be good people. Nowa-days, who is a good person? There aren't any. What everybody does is evil. I see that people commit all sorts of evil deeds, but at the same time these people have money to spend and liquor to drink." Since they have everything, they think that studying the Buddha-dharma is not that good, so they run off down a deviant road. If your consideration is upright, you won't.

3) *Upright speech.* If you have upright thought, you are capable of upright speech. What you say doesn't induce people to take deviant paths; it isn't drunken or mad, but is always very precise and correct. You make everybody listen and like to listen and like acting in accordance with what you say.

4) *Upright occupation.* Upright speech leads you to an upright occupation, which is to say, one which most people think is wholesome and not one which is against the law.

5) *Upright Living.* If your occupation is upright, then your lifestyle will be upright, also.

6) *Upright vigor.* You should be vigorous in doing what is upright, not in doing what is improper.

7) *Upright mindfulness.*

8) *Upright samadhi.*

The *Four Bases of Psychic Power* are:

- 1) The *desire-basis.* This desire is wholesome, a hoping for good things.
- 2) The *vigor-basis.*
- 3) The *mind-basis.*
- 4) The *volitional basis.*

The *Four Dwellings in Mindfulness* concern the body, feeling, mind, and dharmas:

- 1) *Contemplate the body as impure.*
- 2) *Contemplate feelings as suffering.*

- 3) *Contemplate the mind as impermanent.*
- 4) *Contemplate dharmas having no self.*

The *Four Types of Upright Diligence* are:

- 1) *Good roots which have not yet grown, are caused to grow.*
- 2) *Good roots which are already growing are caused to grow further.*
- 3) *Evil which has not yet been done is kept from being done.*
- 4) *Evil thoughts which have already been generated are cut off.*

The *Five Faculties* are:

- 1) *The faculty of faith.*
- 2) *The faculty of vigor.*
- 3) *The faculty of mindfulness.*
- 4) *The faculty of samadhi..*
- 5) *The faculty of wisdom.*

The *Five powers* are:

- 1) *Faith has the power of faith.*
- 2) *Vigor has the power of vigor.*
- 3) *Mindfulness has the power of mindfulness.*
- 4) *Samadhi has the power of samadhi.*
- 5) *Wisdom has the power of wisdom.*

Together, the five faculties, the five powers, the four types of upright diligence, the four dwellings in mindfulness, the four bases of psychic power, the seven shares in enlightenment, and the eightfold upright path make the thirty-seven categories of the Way.

One day connect right through and ripen the fruit of sagehood. If you cultivate the thirty-seven categories of the Way, then one day you will "suddenly connect right through" and become certified as having attained the fruition of sagehood.

Partial truth with residue is just a conjured city. You shouldn't dwell in the kind of nirvana which is a one-sided truth and has residue. That nirvana is a city which has been conjured up. It is not a genuine city. When your attainment of that kind of non-ultimate nirvana has been certified, you must still go forward and cultivate.

SUTRA:

AND NO UNDERSTANDING AND NO ATTAINING.

Verse:

The Storehouse Teaching Bodhisattva: six phenomenal paramitas.

*The Perfect cultivates to the point of wonderful enlightenment where
noumenon is suddenly clarified.
Without any wisdom, he destroys attachment and empties every
characteristic;
Without attainment, he has no verification and comprehends the
fusion of dharmas.
He makes a jeweled realm appear on the tip of a single hair.
And he turns the Dharma-wheel while sitting on a speck of dust.
These words are spoken, yet few have faith;
I do not know how many know my sound.*

藏教菩薩事六度 圓修妙覺理頓明
無智破執空諸相 不得非證了法融
於一毫端現寶刹 坐微塵裏轉法輪
此語說出鮮誠信 未悉知音有幾人

COMMENTARY:

UNDERSTANDING means wisdom. ATTAINING refers to the certification to the attainment of a particular fruition of enlightenment. When you reach this state, you do not want wisdom, and you do not have a fruition which is verified. There isn't any hope at all. Most people who study the Buddhadharma suppose that they should first study wisdom, and that only after they have learned to be wise will they realize the fruition of Buddhahood. This Sutra says that the wisdom of prajna does not exist. There isn't any attainment either. All is empty. It isn't that there isn't any wisdom or attainment; but there isn't any attachment to wisdom, and there isn't any attachment to the place one has attained.

The Bodhisattvas of the Storehouse or Tripitaka Teaching practice the Dharma doors of having wisdom and having attainment. These Dharma doors are called the phenomenal paramitas. Thus the verse says, *The Storehouse Teaching Bodhisattva: phenomenal paramitas.*

There are six phenomenal paramitas and six noumenal paramitas. The six noumenal paramitas have no phenomenal characteristics and are without attachment to anything. On the other hand, the six phenomenal paramitas entail attachments. To what? There is attachment to living beings who can be saved, and to the Way of the Buddha which can be realized. To be attached to living beings who can be saved is to have wisdom. To be attached to the Buddha-fruition which can be realized is to have attainment. Now the Sutra says, AND NO UNDERSTANDING AND NO ATTAINING which indicates that there is no longer an attachment to the six phenomenal paramitas.

The six phenomenal paramitas are:

1) Giving, which crosses you beyond miserliness and greed. If you cultivate the paramita of giving, you will not be miserly and greedy. If you are miserly and greedy, you will not give. As soon as you give, you cross beyond the mind of miserly greed.

2) Maintaining the precepts, which crosses you beyond defilement and damaging transgressions. When you cultivate and maintain the precepts, you become extremely pure and clear, like a bright pearl. To maintain the precepts is to be without defilement. If you do not maintain the precepts, you will become dark and dirty from your defilements. Maintaining precepts crosses you beyond defilements. If you do not maintain the precepts, you will become a white piece of paper smudged with black ink: the more stain, the blacker. If you maintain the precepts, the white piece of paper retains the original purity.

3) Patience under insult, which crosses you beyond anger. If you cultivate patience, you won't have any temper. If you have a temper, then you don't have patience.

4) Vigor, which crosses you beyond laziness. You should be vigorous and courageous every day. To the extent that you are vigorous, you won't be lazy.

5) Dhyana samadhi, which crosses you beyond distraction. If you wish to cultivate dhyana samadhi, you must first sit for a long time until you acquire the ability to enter samadhi. When you have entered samadhi, you will no longer be distracted; you will have samadhi-power.

6) Prajna, which crosses you beyond stupidity.

The Chinese Character tu (度), "to cross beyond," or "to take across," that is, to save, is used to translate "paramita," but the crossing beyond refers to the six phenomenal paramitas, not to the noumenal ones. The six phenomenal paramitas have perceptible characteristics which can be ascertained in one's behavior. For instance, though you are generous and not miserly, you are still attached to the thought, "Oh, I can give and am not miserly." If you practiced the six noumenal paramitas, your giving would be the same as your not having given. You shouldn't be attached.

The six noumenal paramitas are characterized by there being no attachment anywhere. There are many different levels of the six paramitas, which are cultivated by the perfectly enlightened. Basically, there is no attachment whatever to what is done; it is equivalent to not having done anything. You say, "When I haven't done something, then, can I say that I have done it? If you can say that my giving is like non-giving, then can we say that non-giving is like giving?" If you give, it is all right to think that is like not having given, but you cannot say that your not having given is equivalent to your having given.

The Perfect cultivates to the point of wonderful enlightenment, where noumenon is suddenly clarified. The Bodhisattvas of the Perfect Teaching, who are just the same as the wonderful enlightenment Bodhisattvas, cultivate the six noumenal paramitas, along with the Bodhisattvas of the Special Teaching. They completely understand that giving is the

same as not giving and that crossing beyond is the same as not crossing beyond. Therefore, the Sutra says, AND NO UNDERSTANDING AND NO ATTAINING.

Attachment to the six phenomenal paramitas fundamentally does not exist, so the verse says, *Without any wisdom, he destroys attachment and empties every characteristic.* There had been an attachment to prajna, but now all characteristics have been emptied. Therefore, the Sutra says, AND NO UNDERSTANDING AND NO ATTAINING.

Without attaining, he has no versification, and comprehends the fusion of all dharmas. There is no attainment to be reached, and there is no attachment to the verification of the fruition of Buddhahood. In other words,

Above, there is no Buddha Way which can be realized.

Below, there are no living beings who can be taken across.

That is not to say that there aren't any living beings to take across. But, although they are taken across, they are not taken across, "Although all living beings have been taken across to extinction, there is not a single living being who has been taken across to extinction." It isn't that there aren't living beings to be taken across, but that there is no attachment. There is no understanding or attaining. This enlightenment is the great, perfect mirror wisdom, in which there is no attachment at all. Thus the verse says, he "comprehends the fusion of dharmas."