

The Wisdom Eye Of Prajnaparamita

A Brief Talk on the Right View of Prajna

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Entering Samadhi from Samantabhadra's Vows

Everyone is sitting here in the meditation hall making an effort. Due to the influence of the Japanese, this is called sitting meditation, and in ordinary terms we call this sitting quietly. So we sit here quietly doing Dharma practice, but what Dharma are we actually practicing? The practice of dhyana. Why else would you just sit there without moving, like a log? If you are sitting there holding onto a comfortable feeling, or to a feeling of being pure or if you are escaping reality, all of these are wrong.

I would like to tell everyone about the practice of the Dharma Door of Samantabhadra's Vows. The first practice of Samantabhadra is repentance. Each time you sit down for a meditation session, once you have adjusted your position, first quiet your mind for a moment. Then visualize that space is instantly filled with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three times and the ten directions as well as one's respected Dharma transmission teacher. Continue to visualize yourself in front of each one doing prostrations and repenting. Recite the verses of repentance, bringing all of the feelings up to the surface. Do not just merely recite the verses, you must think about the meaning of each word, you must bring everything you have got into the

recitation. "All evil karma created by me throughout the past;/ from beginningless greed, anger and ignorance;/ arising within actions of body, speech and mind;/ each and every self now fully repents." Merely reciting the verses does not count. Your mind must follow along and you need to reflect on your habits and thoughts. Enter into a clear and thorough state of remorse and resolve—it does not matter if you visualize or not at this point. With the pure thought of remorse and resolve, you are thoroughly practicing this Dharma Door.

The next step is to make great vows. I have created a four-line verse of great vows. Each time you sit for a session of meditation, you need to first give rise to remorse and resolve and then make the great vows or else it will be very difficult for you to align yourself with them. "May the virtuous dharmas which have not yet arisen now arise;/ May the negative karma which has not yet been extinguished, now be extinguished." May all of the virtuous dharmas, virtuous thoughts, within your mind all arise and may all of the negative karma, impurity and vexation from beginningless time, be cut off and never arise again. This vow should not be merely recited. You need to have the true intention in your heart to live up to this vow.

Next you need to visualize, "May the Buddhas and protectors of the three times and ten directions,/ Bless me to quickly achieve the mind of Bodhi." Imagine the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Triratna (Triple Gem), and so on of the past, present and future

and the ten directions (cardinal, intercardinal, zenith and nadir) filling up all of the dharmakaya from the past to the present to the future times and compassionately protecting and blessing me so that I may quickly give rise to the ultimate Bodhi mind.

We normally have the class on Yogacara and Madyamika, but now I will talk about the right view of Prajna and Madyamika. Not long ago, before the winter break meditation retreat, we read in the Vimalakirti-Nirdesa Sutra, in Chapter 11 about the bodhisattvas' practice, Shakyamuni Buddha gave a Dharma talk to the great Bodhisattvas of Sarvaghandasugandha. In this talk, the Buddha spoke of a Dharma door which all of the mahasattvas must learn and practice, the Dharma Door of the Exhaustible and the Inexhaustible.

The Dharma Door of the Exhaustible and the Inexhaustible

Exhaustible, there is a start and an end. Inexhaustible, there is no beginning and no end, immeasurable and infinite. What did the Buddha mean by the “exhaustible?” All conditioned phenomena come to an end. And what is meant by the “inexhaustible?” The unconditioned, the unlimited, the infinite is inexhaustible, having no beginning and no end. We need to know that any cultivation, any realization, be it mundane or supramundane, be it of the orthodox school or any of the esoteric schools, are compounded phenomena. Among these compounded phenomena, some are Buddhist and some are the same in both Buddhist and outside paths. The uncompounded is the true Dharma of Buddhism. There is no cultivation, no realization of the uncompounded Dharma. It is Thusness and the original nature of all sentient beings is Buddha.

But is there really no Dharma practice, no cultivation, no attainment? Not exactly. The Inexhaustible is, in and of itself, the Dharma practice, the cultivation, the attainment. The attainment of the uncompounded Dharma is the attainment of the fruit of nirvana, buddhahood. And nirvana has no fruit nor Buddha. This uncompounded Dharma is truly the great Dharma, the supreme

Buddhadharma. In speaking of the uncompounded Dharma one has already fallen into the realm of compounded dharma. Speaking of it is wrong, not to speak of it is also wrong; samadhi is wrong, no samadhi is also wrong. The original nature is uncompounded Dharma.

If one attains prajna wisdom, truly attains it, in other words, if one awakens, has sudden enlightenment, one awakens to Bodhi. The true nature of all phenomena is originally uncompounded Dharma and upon use, it is then compounded dharma. According to esoteric Buddhism, putting it in such straightforward terms is a Dharma transmission. But most people, in accordance with their habit energy, prefer a Dharma transmission to be very mysterious and they cannot understand that this teaching is a Dharma transmission. There are those foolish people who absolutely must have a ceremony in order for there to be a transmission—light lots of incense, recite lots of sutras, make all kinds of offerings, all kinds of noise, beseech the transmission and then the scented water gets splashed on the top of the head. Abracadabra! The transmission is complete! Of course, this is a kind of transmission, a convenient means for encouragement on the path, as part of the path of preparation.

The Heart Sutra is the Marrow of Prajna

Let us go back and retrace our steps. We were talking about prajna wisdom and the right view of prajna. We all know the word prajna and can recite the Heart Sutra; today I will transmit the Dharma door of practicing and attaining perfect understanding of the Heart Sutra. You must listen with a pure and respectful mind, focus on the Dharma, not on me. What you get out of this depends on your merit, good roots and wisdom.

A person who is constantly centered in sila, samadhi and prajna will surely succeed. Just picking up a notebook or a pen, one can enter samadhi. When one uses the mind, one practices; when not, one is quiet. If one can practice like this, it is excellent. However, if, when not practicing, corrupt thoughts arise, this is wrong.

The Heart Sutra's Dharma Door of Prajna is the last of the six paramitas to be achieved on the Mahayana path. As it says the Buddhas of the three times, relying on the prajna paramita, attain perfect enlightenment.¹ Without cultivating prajna, one cannot succeed in enlightenment. Buddhism is not based on blind faith

¹ Annutara samyaksambodhi

like ordinary religions. To practice Buddhism, you need doubt and you need to question; for example, question birth and death, question what the “self” is, and so forth. One needs to observe thoroughly and clearly to achieve wisdom. It is not the achievement of muddled faith. One must rely on prajna wisdom and this Dharma Door of Prajna is the heart of Buddhism. From this Vijñaptimātratā-vāda Yogacara arose, it was the extension of prajna. The Dharma Door of Prajna, with the help of Nagarjuna, became resplendent, shining in all directions. The Chinese school of Chan, for example, was sometimes called the Prajna School, or even the Mind-Heart School meaning the Heart Dharma of all the Buddhas. Within the teaching of the Dharma Door of Prajna, there are 600 fascicles of the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra. All these tell sentient beings how to use wisdom to achieve liberation of the dharmakaya. The Diamond Sutra is a concentrated version of these 600 fascicles. The Heart Sutra is the heart of the heart of these teachings, the marrow of this Dharma door. In Chinese the whole sutra is 260 characters long, plus the title, in total 270 characters.

The title is the Prajnaparamitahrdaya Sutra (Perfection of Wisdom Heart Sutra). How is it that we have this sutra? One of the Buddha’s great disciples, Sariputra, was asking for the method to practice the Dharma Door of Prajna. The Buddha asked Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to answer his question. Sariputra’s question and Avalokitesvara’s answer became the sutra. I have

spoken about it many times before but this time I will teach everyone the prajna method of vipassana in order to “quickly achieve the mind of Bodhi.”

In the first sentence of the sutra, it says, “Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, during the practice of deep prajnaparamita, illuminated and perceived the emptiness of the five aggregates, overcoming all suffering and evil.” Take note of the very last part, “...overcoming all suffering and evil.” If we study the Buddha’s teachings, there are two paths of practice, one of them is the hinayana path with the Four Noble Truths as the basis. Everything in this world is suffering. Vexation and frustration are suffering. Birth and death are the great suffering. Birth is always followed by death. Birth, aging, illness and death, none of these are free from suffering. How can we stop the suffering? How can we become liberated? If we cannot become liberated, how can we withstand it? It is only through finding the Way that we can destroy the illusion of suffering, destroy the power of karma and finally become liberated from all suffering, leave it behind and attain happiness. But all ordinary beings take this suffering to be happiness and accrue every sort of suffering. They will make every effort to create suffering while believing themselves to be amassing happiness. This is why the Buddha says that sentient beings are upside-down.