

## **INTRODUCTION November 2020**

*Dear Friends of Tenbôrin,*

*We are still, it appears, kept apart from each other by the constraints of lockdowns, in France, England, Italy, Switzerland ... and deprived of much of the help that practice together in a dojo brings.*

*But in the Buddha's reality, we are always and forever one nature in the multiplicity of our appearances. So there is no need to worry, we are in a continuous relationship, whether we're aware of it or not. On the other hand it is necessary to make some effort to maintain the right attention and a flexible, but sustained, discipline. It is the practice of the paramitas that helps us on a daily basis.*

*Since March you've received a work on the first five paramitas, taken from the translated volumes of Prajnaparamita, a rather "learned" text and sometimes perhaps even rather impenetrable for some, but which you can read quietly, returning to it from time to time. Keep them carefully.*

*Tenbôrin will soon be setting up ways to practice together online, at certain times and we hope that you will be able to enjoy some kusen live.*

*While waiting for these meetings, here is the sixth paramita: Wisdom.*

*Good luck to all and good practice.*

*Guy Mokuhô*

## The sixth paramita, virtue of perfection: The Great Wisdom



It is called **Prajñāpāramitā**

« The bodhisattvas, since the appearance of the mind of Awakening, seek the Knowledge of all aspects in the course of which they know the true characteristics of the dharmas (of both phenomena and also beings.) This wisdom is *Prajnaparamita - Maka Hannya* in Japanese.

The only true virtue is wisdom obtained by the Buddha. But because of this virtue, the efforts of bodhisattvas are also called virtues, as the effect is included in the cause (*the fact of mobilising the mind of awakening leads the bodhisattva automatically to the realisation of Great Wisdom, sooner or later.*)

Since it lives in the thoughts of Buddha, and since Buddha has already reached the opposite shore, this virtue of wisdom changes its name and is called “Knowledge of all aspects” (*The Buddha has already gained omniscience and He knows*). But when the bodhisattva, exercising this wisdom, seeks to reach the opposite shore, it is called ‘virtue’ (*thus paramita, a practice to reach the opposite shore.*)

To grasp the true character of the dharmas, which are the foundation of the practice of meditation and the other paramitas, one must have destroyed all passions and karmic traces (which oppose themselves to freedom). For the bodhisattva who has not destroyed all the impurities and whose wisdom eye is impure, how can he grasp the true characteristics of the dharmas?

The question which therefore arises is: “What is the true character of the dharmas?”

“Every being defines this true character of the dharmas and holds to the truth of his own definition. But the true character of the dharmas is to be indestructible, existing eternally, unalterable, without components and finally, incapable of definition.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti “The bodhisattva sees all the dharmas as being neither eternal nor transitory, neither happy nor sad, personal nor impersonal, neither existing nor non-existing, neither this nor that... and abstaining from this point of view is the Prajnaparamita of the bodhisattva.”

*It is the practice which advises not to grasp any dualist point of view, which is the intuitive and fundamental teaching that is born from the practice of zazen.*

“This subject escapes all points of view, destroys all discourse (*as what can be said of what is ‘empty’ of definition?*) avoids all functioning of thought (*which is dualist and discriminating, and gives rise to the obligation to choose*). Since the beginning the dharmas are unborn, undestroyed, the same as Nirvana : and all their characteristics are of the same nature : that is the true character of the dharmas.”

A series of stanzas in relation to Prajna is attributed to Rahulabhadra (a master or a disciple of Nagarjuna according to the sources):

Prajnaparamita, True Dharma, exempt from error.

Thoughts, notions and opinions are avoided, the elements of discourse are destroyed.

Immeasurable, free from all faults, pure thought, always unified,

This is how the Venerable One sees Prajna.

*Homage to you, inconceivable, immense Prajnaparamita! With your irreproachable aspects, those who are Irreproachable contemplate you.*

Immaculate like space, free from discourse and definition.

To see Prajna like this is also to see the Buddha.

*Immaculate like space, free from discourse and definition, the one who truly sees you, he sees the Tathagata.*

Looking at them according to the rules, the Buddha, Prajna and Nirvana are three identical things.

Between these realities there is no difference.

*Between you, rich in saintly qualities, and the Buddha, who is master of the world, good people see no difference, just as they see no difference between the moon and the light of the moon.*

The Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas who do good to all beings

Prajna is their mother: she brings them into the world and feeds them.

*You are the nourisher and the tender mother of all the heroes who are dedicated to the good of others.*

The Buddha is the father of beings, and Prajna is the mother of Buddha.

So Prajna is the grandmother of all beings.

*Since the Buddhas, the compassionate masters of the world, are your children, you are, oh Virtuous one, the grandmother of all beings.*

Prajna is a unique Dharma that was given various names by the Buddha.

According to the individual capacities of beings, He offers different names.

*One, although taking many forms, you are invoked everywhere under different names by the Tathagatha, in the presence of beings to be converted.*

For the one who has grasped Prajna, discourse and thoughts evaporate.

As at the rising of the sun the morning dew suddenly evaporates.

*Like dewdrops in contact with the sudden burst of the flaming rays of the sun, faults and opinions of theorists dissolve when they come into contact with you.*

Prajna has this wonderful power to stimulate two sorts of beings,

Ignorant ones through fear and wise ones through joy.

*In your terrifying aspect, you generate fear in idiots, in your benevolent aspect, you generate trust in the wise.*

Whoever possesses Prajna is the king of Prajna.

He does not attach himself to Prajna and even less to other Dharmas.

*If the one who presses against you is not recognised as your spouse, how, O mother, can he experience love or hate for anything else?*

Prajna comes from nowhere and goes nowhere.

The wise man looks for it everywhere, but doesn't find it.

*You come from nowhere and you go nowhere: nowhere are you seen by the wise.*

The one who doesn't see Prajna is hindered and finds deliverance.

The one who sees it is also hindered and also finds deliverance.

The one who sees Prajna finds deliverance.

The one who doesn't see Prajna also finds deliverance.

*The one who sees you is hindered, the one who does not is also hindered. The one who sees you is liberated, the one who doesn't see you is also liberated.*

Prajna is astonishing, very deep and glorious.

Just like a magical object, it is seen without being visible.

*Oh, you are astonishing. You are deep and glorious. You are very difficult to know. Like a magical object, you are seen and you are not seen.*

The Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, the Shravakas, and the Pratyekabuddhas  
All draw their deliverance and their Nirvana from Prajna.

*You are cultivated by the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Shravakas.*

*You are the only path to salvation, there is no other, that is certain.*

Their language is conventional: having compassion for all beings

They speak of Dharma in metaphors. When they speak of Prajna, they say nothing.

*Turning to ordinary language in order to be understood by beings, the masters of the world, by compassion, speak of you and do not speak of you.*

Prajna is like the flame of a great fire.

Ungraspable from four sides, eluding grasping, and not-grasping.

Escaping every grip. It is called ungraspable,

Catching hold of it when it is ungraspable, that is what its capture consists of.

Prajna is unalterable and beyond any discussion.

It goes and never stops. Who could praise its qualities?

*Who here is capable of praising you, when you are without marks or characteristics? You go totally beyond the domain of words, you who rest nowhere.*

Although Prajna cannot be praised, I can praise it now.

Even without escaping from this land of death, I have already discovered the way out.

*But since conventional language exists, having praised you through oral means, you who are beyond all language, we are satisfied and fully reassured.*



&& The state of Prajna is taken as synonymous with emptiness, with the Real, and the fundamental Consciousness. ( Lankavatara Sutra)

Although it impregnates everything that Is, nothing can be said of it. Nevertheless, according to the Buddha, it is possible to know It in a dimension where It is and it is not, and it is pure concentration of the mind turned inward during zazen, Samadhi . Wanting to seize Prajna is an illusion created in the thinking mind in order to respond to the question of the origin of existence, a question which the Buddha himself did not want to answer. The practice, as the Bodhisattva Vimalakirti declares, is *“to resort to that which cannot be found, as in what cannot be found there is no dualism.”* This is the heart of the meditative practice of zazen : to become One with Great Wisdom, Prajna.

We can thus understand that to chant the Hannya Shingyo, is nothing other than finally praising Great Wisdom, Prajna, as if it were a person or an imaginable entity, which It is not. The praise is therefore not destined for anything: our chant simply spreads out to all beings who are the emanation of Prajna.

The word Prajna, as a generic, nonetheless carries different meanings in the texts and teachings. Beings always seek rational explanations for what they don't understand, like the origin of the world, or what happens after death. They imagine a creator, or causes for things which are by nature unconditioned, and create opinions and beliefs which they attach themselves to, and by this attachment create their own suffering. Buddha, in his teachings, seeks to dismantle these false views and to show that nothing has its own nature in the conditioned world. This is the teaching of emptiness, summarised in the Hannya Shingyo sutra.

## **The types of Prajna.**

### **1. The “Great Prajna”**

The question to be asked is : why do we call this one Great when the other 5 paramitas are not. It is because It takes us to the other shore of the ocean of wisdom and perfects itself at the end of all wisdom and reaches the summit. It is called Great because it gives birth to all the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas, the Pratyekabuddhas (the individually Awakened Ones) the Shravakas (those who are disciples and who listened to the Buddha). It gives to beings a great outcome, eternal and unalterable, which is to know Nirvana.

### **2. Prajna and the prajnas**

Prajna comprises all the wisdoms and the Bodhisattva should practise them or know them all for what they are:

- The Prajna of the Shravakas: (the Auditors, disciples of the historical Buddha):

To practice attention on the breath, attention on the world of forms, sensations, perceptions, mental creations; overcome heat and cold, cultivate the habit of patience, all the way to the prajna of the diamond concentration and many other fields of knowledge concerning the nature of things (how they appear and disappear). It is also the wisdom that allows correct discernment to unfold, so that one can acquire the capacity to

distinguish between what is real (or The Real) and what is not, between what is true and what is illusory, what is Permanent and what is impermanent.

- The Prajna of the Pratyeka Buddhas: Without having heard it from others, they produce Wisdom spontaneously on their own and obtain the Way by knowledge which is theirs alone. They cultivate all kinds of recollection and enjoy solitude. They awaken as a result of some incidental event, or by themselves with no assistance from others.
- The Prajna of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: They make the vow to become Buddha, to save all beings, to obtain all the attributes of Buddhas, to practice all the paramitas, to destroy Mara's army and all passions, to obtain omniscience and achieve the state of Buddha. They ceaselessly observe the initial vow right up to the time they enter into Nirvana.
- The Prajna of the Heretics: (or non-buddhists) They make up part of the false wisdoms. Although they also come from the Great Wisdom, the Bodhisattva knows they are false and does not cultivate them. They may appear excellent, but finally reveal themselves as harmful. All the moral systems of the heretics (non-buddhists) are founded on the notion of 'me.' They therefore think and say, that since the 'me' is illusory, there is no problem in killing the 'me' of another (since it doesn't really exist) and there is not any merit in saving it either. One can neither avoid pain, nor obtain lasting happiness, is what the non-buddhists think. The 'me' being transitory, it escapes from sin or merit, which may give rise to the thought that the act of killing doesn't carry any fault (so what merit would there be in not killing?). All these are wrong views!

Non-buddhists pursue the idea of happiness and awakening from the point of view of their own mental perceptions (those of the 'me') and are full of desires, do not see the nature (emptiness) of all dharmas, and even in contemplating emptiness, they give it characteristics. When they practice meditation, they believe that taking oneself away from thought allows one to access Great Wisdom, which is an additional illusion. On the other hand, there are heretics who give themselves rights which run counter to morality and the precepts, for reasons which suit themselves alone (killing, stealing, bad sexuality, lying, intoxication with wine or alcohol). All these are wrong views!



### 3. Prajna and the teaching of the Law

- Buddha's law is immense, comparable to an ocean, and it has been taught in different ways. Sometimes it talks of existence and sometimes of no-existence, of eternity and impermanence, of pain and happiness, of the 'me' and the 'not-me'. And sometimes, it teaches how to diligently practice the triple activity of body, speech and thought, and sometimes it teaches that all dharmas (phenomena), are essentially inactive. Ignorant people think these teachings are useless, or even perverse but the wise person knows that all the Buddha's words are the true Law and do not contradict each other. Each of the Buddha's teachings is adapted to the circumstances or to the recipient, and cannot be rejected because there are different formulations. In the same way, a partially formulated law is not in opposition to all others.
- The **Abhidharma** assembles all the teachings of Buddha where he has defined the meaning of the Dharmas in giving them a name and a meaning. In seeing, understanding and analysing the cause and effect and the outcome of retribution of each of these dharmas, the monk or nun can obtain liberation.
- **The teaching on emptiness** is that which demonstrates the emptiness of beings and that of the dharmas.

**How does the Buddha in the Prajnaparamita explain the emptiness of dharmas?** The explanations are hard to understand, but together they explain to us the meaning of the Sutra of Great Wisdom, the Hannya Shingyo which we chant each morning.



To start with, it is useful to sum up in a few words what the word 'dharma' means. With a small 'd' the word means the manifestations of reality, beings, things, phenomena, thoughts and ideas which are reflected in the mind, existential factors and circumstances.

When it is about the type of dharma, it is a question of what defines them, gives them their aspects, gives them a name, a significance and allows them to be categorized, compared in relation to other dharmas.

With a capital 'D', it is firstly the fundamental concept of Buddhism, the cosmic Law, the "Great Order" of the universe to which our world is subject by the law of karma, the law of causality, of cause and effect. It is also the name given to the teachings of Buddha, who was first to realize this Law and formulate it. His doctrine explains universal Truth and the buddhist practioner takes refuge in this Dharma. It is also the collection of ethical rules and norms of conduct (shila) which the disciple of Buddha must respect.

- The emptiness of beings: the Buddha declared to his friend , King Bimbisara :  
*"When matter comes into existence, or any form whatsoever, the only thing that arises is emptiness : when matter perishes , only emptiness perishes. There is no soul, or entity, or mind. There is no individual who goes from a present existence to a future one. There is only one being, from name or convention, resulting from a complex of causes and conditions. Profane people and fools pursue a name whilst searching for a reality."*
- The emptiness of dharmas: The 'me' is formed from birth to death according to the 12 causes of conditioned production (Samsara). Nothing, at any moment, exists because of a 'me.'  
The Buddha said: *"To say that 'me' and the world are eternal or non- eternal, or simultaneously eternal and non- eternal , or neither eternal nor non-eternal, this is all a false view, which is why we know that all the dharmas are empty and that is where the truth lies."*  
To insist on the eternity of 'me' is a false view. Why? Because the 'Me' (the Self) has no independent existence. To insist on the eternity of the world is also a false view because the world is certainly non-eternal and it is by misunderstanding that we describe it as eternal. In the same way, insisting on the non- eternity of "me "is a false view, because since the 'me' doesn't have any real existence, we cannot describe it as non -eternal. On the other hand, to insist on the non-eternity of the world is not a false view because all the conditioned dharmas, from their true nature, are non-eternal.  
The contemplation of the nature of the dharmas as non-eternal, painful, empty and impersonal allows a human being to understand and realise the Way.

The Buddha preaches the Law according to the needs of beings.

To destroy the misconception which places an eternal principle on 'me' or on the world, he preaches non-eternity. On the other hand, to beings who do not know or do not accept rebirth, he teaches that *"thoughts go to new existences and are reborn high in the sky"* or else that acts don't perish, even after billions of cosmic periods. These are therapeutic points of view and not an absolute point of view. In the emptiness of the dharmas, there is

no non-eternity: this is why we can also say that insisting on the non-eternity of the world is a false view!

*“For me and my disciples, said Buddha, there is no error nor truth. Each one speaks of an Absolute and passionately attaches himself to it. Each one agrees with this and not that, experiencing in turn sorrow or joy. But nothing of this is the Absolute. The wise do not pursue these controversies, as purity does not come from there.”*



- **The teaching of emptiness according to the Mahayana.**

The dharmas are not empty because of an artificial philosophical point of view, but because, by nature and eternally, they are empty of any intrinsic nature (that is the theme of conditioned production, where no thing or being can exist without causes and conditions ; all being interdependent.)

The Buddha declared: *“The man with a false view comes to emptiness by suppressing all dharmas, whilst the Buddha holds the dharmas empty of all reality, indestructible and unalterable.”*

The being with a false view doesn't see that everything that exists in him and outside him is empty of true nature. He wants to seize emptiness with the help of speculations, analyses and false notions. He commits faults and omits to do good actions. He is like a man who does not know the taste of salt, so fills his mouth with it and hurts himself. Simply wanting to obtain emptiness is a false view that destroys all the roots of good.

On the contrary, the proponent of emptiness, even if he doesn't want to do good, wants even less to do harm. He possesses qualities of giving, morality, and meditation, his thoughts are tender and soft.

*“The proponent of emptiness knows the emptiness of dharmas, but does not seize its characteristics and does not discuss it. For the disciple of Buddha who truly knows emptiness, thought remains unchangeable, obstacles and attachments do not arise where they normally do.*

*In the same way that space cannot be soiled by fire, or made wet by a flood, so it is with the disciple of emptiness, no kind of passion can attach to his thought.”*

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The one who possesses all the teachings on the Law, the Abhidharma, the emptiness of Mahayana, knows that the Buddha’s teachings do not contradict one another. To understand this is the strength of Prajna, which facing the Buddha’s teachings does not encounter any obstacle. Whoever does not understand what Prajnaparamita is, will collide with innumerable contradictions on the Way.

**Some examples of the way in which the emptiness of the dharmas can be made accessible to the disciple.**

Every dharma has a characteristic existence, that is to say it is different from any other dharma. (The characteristics of a cow do not exist in a sheep.) Because of this existence, an idea (or a name) arises for each dharma (it’s a cow, or a sheep, but not both at once.) Because the difference exists, there is non-existence of this dharma in so far as it is independent from others. This dharma, being impermanent and non-existent, is emptiness.

The bodhisattva, inspired by Prajna, sees a unity in each dharma and so each dharma individually possesses this characteristic of unity. Adding the different dharmas, we get numbers, (two, three...). Only unity is real, the numbers are conventions. Unity is emptiness.

The bodhisattva also sees that the dharmas exist because they have a cause. They are impermanent like the human body, subject to birth and destruction. But they also exist without a cause, because the cause in its turn would need a cause and if we go back into infinity, there is actually no cause (no original cause). So, whether they are caused or not caused, the dharmas are impermanent and the cause is not really a cause. That is why we can say they are emptiness.



Each dharma has a specific characteristic: the earth has the characteristic of solidity and heaviness; water has liquidity and wetness; fire's characteristic is heat and light; wind has lightness and movement; space's characteristic is to contain everything and time has the characteristic of distinguishing between now and past times; sin has the characteristic of a stupid disposition and wickedness towards others; being chained has the characteristic of attachment to the dharmas; deliverance has the characteristic of detachment from the dharmas... So, each dharma has its own character.

But the bodhisattva also sees that all the dharmas are devoid of any specific characteristic. Each dharma is made up of the coming together of several dharmas. For example, the earth is made up of several dharmas, whose four characteristics are colour, smell, taste and touch, but not one of these four is the dharma of the earth. Also, how could these four dharmas together become only one, the earth? And how could this unique dharma, the earth, in fact be four? This is why it is not possible that the four dharmas could be the earth, nor that the earth could exist outside the four dharmas. That is why we can say they are emptiness.

If the earth is the product of the four dharmas and if the earth is different from the four dharmas, it's the same as when a son, the child of his parents, is different from his parents. In the same way, the eye perceives colours, the nose smells scents, the tongue tastes flavours, the body touches objects. If the earth, then is different from the four dharmas that characterise it, there would have to be a special organ and special knowledge to know it. But since there is no special organ or special knowledge to know it, there is no earth. It is emptiness.

If the earth does not exist and if the specific nature of the earth doesn't exist, the nature of the other dharmas that compose it is also non-existent. Thus all the dharmas have this 'absence of characteristics' as an identical characteristic.

The person who practises samadhi, pure concentration of the mind, destroys all the marks ( the reference to the characteristics of the dharmas, the base), and eventually destroys the no-mark itself. The emptiness of emptiness!

The bodhisattva sees all the dharmas as being without cohesion or dispersal, without colour or form, non-resisting, ineffable and indescribable, a unique nature, that is to say, without nature.



## **The multiple characteristics of the dharmas :**

All the dharmas can be classified into several categories; just reading the list gives an insight into understanding how the Buddha spoke of many different ways of practising the Way in all circumstances, and how his way of teaching could fix this knowledge in the mind of his listeners.

Dharma in two categories:

- Name and form
- Material and immaterial
- Visible and invisible
- Pure and impure
- Conditioned and unconditioned
- Patience and harmony
- Respect and homage
- A material gift and a gift of the Law
- Perfection of morality and perfection of right vision
- Simplicity-sincerity and softness-tenderness
- Intelligence and eloquence
- Truth of experience and absolute truth
- Vision of knowing and vision of destroying
- Moderation in desires and satisfaction
- Easy food and easy satisfaction
- Knowledge of the destruction of vices and knowledge of their non-production
- Law and activity in conformity with the Law

Groups of three dharmas:

- The way of vision, meditation, the way of the Arhat
- The three natures : detachment , separation and destruction
- The cultivation of morality, concentration and wisdom
- The three refuges, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha
- The three material things : hearing, renunciation and wisdom
- The three sources of merit: giving, morality and meditation
- The three doors of deliverance: emptiness, signlessness and wishlessness
- The three things that do not demand secrecy: actions of the body, speaking and thinking

Groups of four dharmas:

- The four fixations of attention (the Satipatthana Sutra)
- The four right efforts
- The four beliefs
- The four knowledges
- The four methods of conquering another
- The four pathways
- The four solidities
- The four infinite sentiments

- The four supports

Groups of five dharmas:

- The five senses
- The five liberations
- The five forces
- The five great gifts
- The five knowledges
- The five manners of expressing oneself in conformity with the Law
- The five obstacles (to meditation)

Groups of six:

- The six surrenders
- The six devotions
- The six supernatural knowledges
- The six grounds of the Way of the vision of truth
- The six paramitas
- The six samadhis

Groups of seven:

- The seven conscious gatherings
- The seven riches
- The seven supports
- The seven good dharmas
- The seven destinies of brave people
- The seven purities
- The seven meritorious material deeds
- The seven meritorious immaterial deeds

Groups of eight:

- The eightfold Path
- The eight freedoms
- The eight thoughts of the Great Being
- The eight sorts of energy
- The eight strengths of the Arhat

Groups of nine:

- The nine successive gatherings
- The nine pure knowledges leading to the knowledge of the destruction of vice.
- The nine pure lands of the Way of meditation
- The nine members of the causal chain from name-and-form to old-age-and-death. The dharmas are not empty depending on emptiness: they are originally and eternally empty in themselves. The dharmas are not unperceived because wisdom does not reach them; they are originally and eternally unperceived in themselves.

And then follow the 14 transformative thoughts, the 15 thoughts of the Way of the vision of truths, the 16 exercises on the breath, the 17 noble practices, the 18 exclusive attributes, the 19 lands of separation, the 162 ways of breaking the passions on the way of meditation, the 178 fruits of the monks.

Having become aware of all these dharmas, the Buddha introduces them in the emptiness of their nature and feels no attachment to any one of them. In the same way, a skilful artisan by the power of herbs, can transform silver into gold and gold into silver.



To speak of the emptiness of dharmas and their ungraspable void does not constitute an obstacle for the practitioner, but helps him to understand that no dharma is graspable. This point is important as it shows that the Buddha does not impose a system of beliefs or one way of practice, but encourages the practitioner to constantly study by himself by developing his intuition based on his own practice of meditation.

To save beings by benevolence and compassion, that is the strength of the Prajnaparamita and the true nature of the dharmas about which the Buddha spoke.

Books do not suffice, as they point towards perfection and the pleasures of life : they are not real. To believe that the true nature of the dharmas is impermanence, pain, the void, and the non-self, leads the Buddha's disciples to false beliefs and to possess true wisdom is not the same as saying that they have acquired Prajnaparamita.

It is said that the Buddha entered and came out of concentrations which his closest disciples didn't even know the name of and knew even less of its nature. The bodhisattvas pronounce the

Great Vow (to save all beings), and possess benevolence and great compassion. They seek all the qualities, possess a knowledge that is very focused, drive out every kind of consideration (the pure and the impure, the eternal and the transitory, pleasure and pain, the void and the real, the 'me' and the non-me), and see what is not dual in the character of the dharmas. The Bodhisattva doesn't stop at or attach himself to that which is not absolute, completely pure, irrefutable and infallible. This position (completely neutral) adopted by the Bodhisattva, is Prajnaparamita.

There is a method for acquiring Prajnaparamita, providing one does not wish to obtain it.

1. By the practice of the five virtues (the paramitas)

- Material gifts and the gift of the Law which can guide beings
- The observance of morality, which allows escape from the three evil destinies
- Patience, which bypasses the poison of anger
- Energy, which destroys all laziness on the Way
- Meditation, (*dhyana*) which destroys distraction and avoids the five desires

The practice of dhyana which leads to samadhi is the basis of Prajnaparamita, for the monk, concentrated and recollected can contemplate the True nature of the dharmas. He knows that the desire for retribution is not eternal, and that after enjoying happiness one can fall once more into misery.

The bodhisattva concentrates his thoughts without grasping them, avoids the five desires and "*being seated with his body straight, having fixed his attention in front, he seeks energetically to concentrate, and until his flesh and bones break he will never desist.*" Engaging one's thoughts like this is how one reaches Prajnaparamita.

2. By the practice of one sole virtue.

The *paramitas* have a double aspect ; one sole virtue encapsulates all the others, each virtue is practiced at its own time. There is interaction and it is the predominant virtue that imposes its name.

3. By abstaining from all practice

All practices are false and vain; from near and far they show drawbacks, as attaching oneself to them produces regret and pain in the long run. The noble practice consists in exercising the absence of all practices, as every practice grasps the nature (mind) of beings and the realities they pursue at present will all show themselves as false later on.

However, the bodhisattva, who **with a detached mind** does such practices does not commit a fault.

For the one who exercises the absence of practice, nothing else exists. Misunderstanding, passions and mistakes no longer arise at all, because they are purified like space (as he sees the true nature of their character.) He acquires the True character of the dharmas in holding his non-



acquisition as an acquisition. It is said in “Prajna which is not acquired”: “*The dharmas are not empty as a function of vacuity; they are originally and eternally empty in themselves: the dharmas are not not-perceived because wisdom does not reach them: they are originally and eternally not-perceived in themselves.*”

This is why one should not ask how many virtues should be practised to attain Prajnaparamita. The Buddhas, by benevolence and compassion towards beings, teach practices to conform to current usage, but there is nothing absolute about it.

So why seek Prajnaparamita?

Things which cannot be acquired are of two sorts :

- The pleasures of the world which do not correspond to expectation.
- The True character of the dharmas, which escapes perception. Not being non-existent, it includes merit and wisdom and grows the roots of good.

It is in accordance with the worldly mind that we speak of acquisition.

In the mind of Buddha nothing is acquired.

This is the meaning of the Prajnaparamita, the Great Virtue of Wisdom.

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