

[Chapter Two]

Maka-hannya-haramitsu

Mahāprajñāpāramitā

Translator's Note: *Maka* is a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit word *mahā*, which means “great.” *Hannya* is a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit word *prajñā*, which can be translated as “real wisdom” or “intuitive reflection.” *Haramitsu* is a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit word *pāramitā*, which literally means “to have arrived at the opposite shore,” that is, to have accomplished the truth. So *maka-hannya-haramitsu* means the accomplishment that is great real wisdom. In this chapter, Master Dōgen wrote his interpretation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sūtra*. *Hṛdaya* means heart. This short sutra, usually called the Heart Sutra, represents the heart of the six hundred volumes of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Even though it is very short, the Heart Sutra contains the most fundamental principle of Buddhism. What is the most fundamental principle? *Prajñā*. What is *prajñā*? *Prajñā*, or real wisdom, is a kind of intuitive ability that occurs in our body and mind, when our body and mind are in the state of balance and harmony. We normally think that wisdom is something based on the intellect, but Buddhists believe that wisdom, on which our decisions are based, is not intellectual but intuitive. The right decision comes from the right state of body and mind, and the right state of body and mind comes when our body and mind are balanced and harmonized. So *mahāprajñāpāramitā* is wisdom that we have when our body and mind are balanced and harmonized. And *zazen* is the practice by which our body and mind enter the state of balance and harmony. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, then, is the essence of *zazen*.

[71] “When Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara¹ practices the profound *prajñāpāramitā*, the whole body² reflects that the five aggregates³ are totally empty.”⁴ The five aggregates are form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. They are five instances of *prajñā*. Reflection is *prajñā* itself. When this principle is preached and realized, it is said that “matter is just the immaterial”⁵ and the immaterial is just matter. Matter is matter, the immaterial is the

22c

immaterial.⁶ They are hundreds of things,⁷ and myriad phenomena. Twelve instances of *prajñāpāramitā* are the twelve entrances [of sense perception].⁸ There are also eighteen instances of *prajñā*.⁹ They are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind;¹⁰ sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations, and properties;¹¹ plus the consciousnesses of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. There are a further four instances of *prajñā*. They are suffering, accumulation, cessation, and the Way.¹² There are a further six instances of *prajñā*. They are giving, pure [observance of] precepts, patience, diligence, meditation, and *prajñā* [itself].¹³ One further instance of *prajñāpāramitā* is realized as the present moment. It is the state of *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.¹⁴ There are three further instances of *prajñāpāramitā*. They are past, present, and future.¹⁵ There are six further instances of *prajñā*. They are earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.¹⁶ And there are a further four instances of *prajñā* that are constantly practiced in everyday life: they are walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.¹⁷

[74] In the order of Śākyamuni Tathāgata there is a *bhikṣu*¹⁸ who secretly thinks, “I shall bow in veneration of the profound *prajñāpāramitā*. Although in this state there is no appearance and disappearance of real *dharmas*,¹⁹ there are still understandable explanations of all precepts, all balanced states, all kinds of wisdom, all kinds of liberation, and all views. There are also understandable explanations of the fruit of one who has entered the stream, the fruit of [being subject to] one return, the fruit of [not being subject to] returning, and the fruit of the arhat.²⁰ There are also understandable explanations of [people of] independent awakening,²¹ and [people of] *bodhi*.²² There are also understandable explanations of the supreme right and balanced state of *bodhi*. There are also understandable explanations of the treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. There are also understandable explanations of turning the wonderful Dharma wheel²³ to save sentient beings.” The Buddha, knowing the *bhikṣu*’s mind, tells him, “This is how it is. This is how it is. The profound *prajñāpāramitā* is too subtle and fine to fathom.”²⁴

The *bhikṣu*’s “secretly working concrete mind”²⁵ at this moment is, in the state of bowing in veneration of real *dharmas*, *prajñā* itself—whether or not [real *dharmas*] are without appearance and disappearance—and this is a “venerative bow” itself. Just at this moment of bowing in veneration, *prajñā* is realized as explanations that can be understood: [explanations] from “precepts,

balance, and wisdom,”²⁶ to “saving sentient beings,” and so on. This state is described as being without.²⁷ Explanations of the state of “being without” can thus be understood. Such is the profound, subtle, unfathomable *prajñāpāramitā*.

[76] The god Indra²⁸ asks the venerable monk Subhūti,²⁹ “Virtuous One! When bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*³⁰ want to study³¹ the profound *prajñāpāramitā*, how should they study it?”

Subhūti replies, “Kauśika!³² When bodhisattva *mahāsattvas* want to study the profound *prajñāpāramitā*, they should study it as space.”³³ 23a

So studying *prajñā* is space itself. Space is the study of *prajñā*.

[77] The god Indra subsequently addresses the Buddha, “World-honored One! When good sons and daughters receive and retain, read and recite, think reasonably about, and expound to others this profound *prajñāpāramitā* that you have preached, how should I guard it? My only desire, World-honored One, is that you will show me compassion and teach me.”

Then the venerable monk Subhūti says to the god Indra, “Kauśika! Do you see something that you must guard, or not?”

The god Indra says, “No, Virtuous One, I do not see anything here that I must guard.”

Subhūti says, “Kauśika! When good sons and daughters abide in the profound *prajñāpāramitā* as thus preached, they are just guarding it. When good sons and daughters abide in the profound *prajñāpāramitā* as thus preached, they never stray. Remember, even if all human and nonhuman beings were looking for an opportunity to harm them, in the end it would be impossible. Kauśika! If you want to guard the bodhisattvas who abide in the profound *prajñāpāramitā* as thus preached, it is no different from wanting to guard space.”³⁴

Remember, to receive and retain, to read and recite, and to think reasonably about [*prajñā*] are just to guard *prajñā*. And to want to guard it is to receive and retain it, to read and recite it, and so on.

[78] My late master, the eternal buddha, says:

Whole body like a mouth, hanging in space;
Not asking if the wind is east, west, south, or north,
For all others equally, it speaks *prajñā*.
*Chin ten ton ryan chin ten ton.*³⁵

This is the speech of *prajñā* [transmitted] by Buddhist patriarchs from rightful successor to rightful successor. It is *prajñā* as the whole body, it is *prajñā* as the whole of others,³⁶ it is *prajñā* as the whole self, and it is *prajñā* as the whole east, west, south, and north.

23b [79] Śākyamuni Buddha says, “Śāriputra!³⁷ These many sentient beings should abide in this *prajñāpāramitā* as buddhas. When they serve offerings to, bow in veneration of, and consider the *prajñāpāramitā*, they should be as if serving offerings to and bowing in veneration of the buddha-bhagavats.³⁸ Why? [Because] the *prajñāpāramitā* is no different from the buddha-bhagavats, and the buddha-bhagavats are no different from the *prajñāpāramitā*. The *prajñāpāramitā* is just the buddha-bhagavats themselves, and the buddha-bhagavats are just the *prajñāpāramitā* itself. Wherefore? Because, Śāriputra, the apt, right, and balanced state of truth, which all the tathāgatas have, is always realized by virtue of the *prajñāpāramitā*. Because, Śāriputra, all bodhisattva *mahāsattvas*, the independently awakened, arhats, those beyond returning, those who will return once, those received into the stream, and so on, always attain realization by virtue of *prajñāpāramitā*. And because, Śāriputra, all of the ten virtuous paths of action³⁹ in the world, the four states of meditation,⁴⁰ the four immaterial balanced states,⁴¹ and the five mystical powers⁴² are always realized by virtue of the *prajñāpāramitā*.”

[80] So buddha-bhagavats are the *prajñāpāramitā*, and the *prajñāpāramitā* is “these real *dharmas*.” These “real *dharmas*” are “bare manifestations”: they are “neither appearing nor disappearing, neither dirty nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.” The realization of this *prajñāpāramitā* is the realization of buddha-bhagavats. We should inquire into it, and we should experience it. To serve offerings to it and to bow in veneration is just to serve and to attend buddha-bhagavats, and it is buddha-bhagavats in service and attendance.

Shōbōgenzō Maka-hannya-haramitsu

Preached to the assembly at Kannondōri-in Temple on a day of the summer retreat in the first year of Tenpuku.⁴³

Copied in the attendant monks’ quarters at Kippō Temple in Etsu⁴⁴ on the twenty-first day of the third lunar month in spring of the second year of Kangen.⁴⁵