

Wisdom Beyond Wisdom

The Sanskrit word prajna—transcendental wisdom—is sometimes translated as “wisdom beyond wisdom.” An essential Mahayana Buddhist teaching, it is the experience of “emptiness,” or the interconnectedness of all things, and is only attained by practice. “Prajna paramita” or “actualization of prajna” is usually understood as sixfold (six paramitas): the enactment of generosity, precepts, patience, vigor, contemplation, and prajna. Dogen explains the actualization of prajna as the reality of all things classified in various ways.

If you practice with genuine trust, you will attain the way, regardless of being sharp or dull. Do not think that buddha dharma cannot be understood in this country [Japan] because this is not a country of compassionate wisdom and people are foolish. In fact, everyone has the seed of prajna in abundance; it is only that they have rarely realized it and have not yet fully received buddha dharma.

The manifestation of the twelfefold prajna [the prajna of the six senses and their objects] means twelve types of entering [into buddha dharma].

There is the eighteenfold prajna: the prajna of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind; the prajna of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and objects of mind; and the prajna of the corresponding consciousness of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

There is the fourfold [noble truth] prajna: suffering, craving, freedom from suffering, and the path. There is the sixfold [manifestation] prajna: generosity, precepts, patience, vigor, contemplation, and prajna.

There is the singlefold prajna: unsurpassable, complete enlightenment, actualized at this very moment. There is the manifestation of the threefold prajna: the past, present, and future. There is the sixfold [great element] prajna: earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. And there is the fourfold [bodily posture] prajna: walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, common in daily activities.

I will take refuge in this very profound manifestation of prajna. Although nothing arises or perishes in the midst of this manifestation of prajna, the precept skandha [stream], the samadhi skandha, the wisdom skandha, the emancipation skandha, and the emancipation of views skandha are established.

At the very moment of taking refuge, the prajna that establishes precepts, samadhi, wisdom, and awakening sentient beings is actualized. This prajna is called emptiness. So the actualization

of emptiness is established. This is the manifestation of prajna that is extremely subtle and fathomless.

Rujing, my late master, Old Buddha, said:

The entire body is a mouth [wind-bell] hanging in empty space,
regardless of the wind from the east, west, south, or north,
joining the whole universe in chiming out prajna.
Ting-ting, ting-ting, ting-ting.

This is an authentic heir of buddha ancestors speaking prajna. The entire body is prajna. The entire other is prajna. The entire self is prajna. The entire east, west, south, and north is prajna.

To dedicate yourself and take refuge in the manifestation of prajna is to see and uphold the Buddha, the World-Honored One. It is to be the Buddha, the World-Honored One, seeing and accepting.