

THE TRIPLE PARAMITAS

Mahamati the great Bodhisattva spoke: "The Blessed One has said that Buddhahood is realized by fulfilling the six paramitas. What are the six paramitas, and how are they fulfilled?"

The Blessed One answered:

"There are three levels of *paramitas*, Mahamati. What are they? The worldly, the celestial and the transcendental.

"The worldly *paramitas* are practised while clinging fast to the notion of an ego with all that belongs to it and while adhering to dualistic views.

Those who desire this world of form will practise the *dana paramita* in order to gain these regions of existence, and likewise, Mahamati, the ignorant will practise the *paramitas* of *shila*, *kshanti*, *virya*, *dhyana* and *prajna*. Thus they will attain the psychic powers and be born in Brahma's heaven.

"The celestial *paramitas* are practised by *shravakas* and Pratyeka Buddhas

whose thoughts are coloured by the notion of Nirvana. All the *paramitas* are performed by them, but like the ignorant, they desire to enjoy Nirvana for themselves.

"The transcendental *paramitas*, Mahamati, are practised by the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas who are adepts in the highest form of spiritual discipline. They perceive that there is nothing in the world save what is seen of the Mind itself as a result of discursive thought. They understand that duality is of the Mind itself, and they see that discursive thought ceases to function. They know that grasping and clinging are non-existent.

"The Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas practise the *dana paramita* free from every

thought of attachment to specific objects — for they are constructions of

Mind — and only to benefit and offer happiness to all sentient beings.

"In dealing with the objective world, Bodhisattvas do not succumb to discursive thought; rather, they simply practise the *shila paramita*.

"Bodhisattvas practise the *kshanti paramita* without allowing discursive

thinking to arise, and yet they have full knowledge of grasped and grasping.

“Bodhisattvas practise the *virya paramita* energetically from evening twilight until the break of dawn while strictly maintaining every discipline, and yet they permit no discursive thoughts to arise.

“Bodhisattvas practise the *dhyana paramita*, neither cherishing discursive thoughts nor slipping into the philosophers’ notion of Nirvana.

“Bodhisattvas practise the *Prajnaparamita*. When the discursive thinking of the Mind itself ceases, and when everything is exposed to the light of the Intellect, then there is no falling into dualistic views. A turning around occurs at the very root of consciousness, though previously generated karma is not destroyed. When transcendental knowledge is used to attain self-realization — that is the

Prajnaparamita.

“These, Mahamati, are *the paramitas* in their triple meanings.”

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Further, Mahamati said: It is again said by the Blessed One that by fulfilling the six Paramitas Buddhahood is realised. What are the six (237) Paramitas? And how are they fulfilled?

The Blessed One replied: Mahamati, there are three kinds of Paramitas. What are the three? They are the worldly, the super-worldly, and the highest super-worldly. Of these, Mahamati, the worldly Paramitas [are practised thus]: Adhering tenaciously to the notion of an ego-soul

and what belongs to it and holding fast to dualism, those who are desirous for this world of form, etc., will practise the Paramita of charity in order to obtain the various realms of existence. In the same way, Mahamati, the ignorant will practise the Paramitas of morality, patience, energy, Dhyana, and Prajna. Attaining the psychic powers they will be born in Brahma's heaven.

As to the super-worldly Paramitas, they are practised by the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas whose thoughts are possessed by the notion of Nirvana; the Paramitas of charity, etc. are thus performed by them, who, like the ignorant, are desirous of enjoying Nirvana for themselves.

Again, Mahamati, as to the highest super-worldly Paramitas, [they are practised] by the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas who are the practisers of the highest form of spiritual discipline; that is, perceiving that there is nothing in the world but what is only seen of the Mind itself, on account of discrimination, and understanding that duality is of the Mind itself, they see that discrimination ceases to function; and, that seizing and holding is non-existent; and, free from all thoughts of attachment to individual objects which are of the Mind itself, and in order to benefit and give happiness to all sentient beings, [the Bodhisattvas] practise the Paramita of charity. While dealing with an objective world there is no rising in them of discrimination; they just practise morality and this is the Paramita [of morality]. To practise patience with no thought of discrimination rising in them (238) and yet with full knowledge of grasped and grasping—this is the Paramita of patience. To exert oneself with energy from the first part of the night to its end and in conformity with the disciplinary measures and not to give rise to discrimination—this is the Paramita of energy. Not to cherish discrimination, not to fall into the philosopher's notion of Nirvana—this is the Paramita of Dhyana. As to the Paramita of Prajna: when the discrimination of the Mind itself ceases, when things are thoroughly examined by means of

intelligence, there is no falling into dualism, and a revulsion takes place at the basis, while previous karma is not destroyed; when [transcendental knowledge] is exercised for the accomplishment of self-realisation, then there is the Paramita of Prajna.

These, Mahamati, are the Paramitas and their meanings.