

To Give

" To give is non-attachment. "

Every existence in nature, every existence in the human world, every cultural work that we create, is something which was given, or is being given to us, relatively speaking. But as everything is originally one, we are, in actuality, giving out everything. Moment after moment we are creating something, and this is the joy of our life. But this 'I' which is creating and always giving out something is not the 'small I'; it is the 'big I'. Even though you do not realize the oneness of this 'big I' with everything, when you give something you feel good because, at that time, you feel at one with what you are giving. This is why it feels better to give than to take.

We say, " dana prajna paramita ". 'Dana' means 'to give; 'prajna' is 'wisdom', and 'paramita' means 'to cross over', or 'to reach the other shore'. Our life can be seen as a crossing of a river. The goal of our life's effort is to reach the other shore, nirvana. 'Prajna paramita', the true wisdom of life, is that in each step of the way, the other shore is actually reached. To reach the other shore with each step of the crossing is the way of true living. 'Dana prajna paramita' is one of the six ways of true living. The second is 'sila prajna paramita', or the Buddhist precepts. Then there are 'kshanti prajna paramita', or endurance; 'virya prajna paramita', or zeal and constant effort; 'dhyana prajna



paramita', or Zen practice, and 'prajna paramita', or wisdom. Actually these six 'prajna paramita' are one, but as we can observe life from various sides, we count six.

Dogen Zenji said, " To give is non-attachment?. That is, just not to attach to anything is to give. <sup>And</sup> It does not matter what is given. To give a penny, or a piece of leaf is 'dana prajna paramita'; to give one line, or one word of teaching is 'dana prajna paramita'. If given in the spirit of non-attachment, the material offering and the teaching offering have the same value. With the right spirit, all that we do, all that we create is 'dana prajna paramita'. So Dogen said, " To produce something, to participate in human activity is also 'dana prajna paramita'. To provide a ferry boat for people, or to make a bridge for people is 'dana prajna paramita'.<sup>11</sup> Actually to give one line of the teaching may be to make a ferry boat for someone !

According to Christianity every existence in nature is something which was created for or given to us by God. That is the perfect idea of giving. But Christianity also says that God created man. Thus we are somehow separate from God, and as separate, we are liable to think we have the ability to create something separate, something not given by Him. For instance, we create airplanes and free-ways. And when we repeat, " I create, I create, I create ", soon we forget who is actually the 'I' which creates the various things; we soon forget about God. This is the



danger of human culture. Actually, to create with the 'big I' is to give; we cannot create and own what we create for ourselves, as everything was created by God. This point should not be forgotten. But because we do forget who is doing the creating and the reason for the creation, we become attached to the material or exchange value. This kind of value has absolutely no value in comparison to the absolute value of something as God's creation. Even though something has no material or relative value to any <sup>particular</sup> of the 'small is', it has absolute value in itself. Not to be attached to something is to be aware of its absolute value. Everything you do should be based on such an awareness and not on material, or self-centered ideas of value. Then whatever you do is 'dana prajna paramita', is true giving.

When we sit in the cross-legged posture we resume our fundamental activity of creation. There are, perhaps three kinds of creation. The first is to be aware of ourselves after we finish zazen. When we sit we are nothing, do not realize even what we are; we just sit. But when we stand up, we are there! That is the first step in creation. When you are there, everything else is there; everything is created all at once. When we emerge from nothing, when everything emerges from nothing, we see it all as a fresh new creation. This is non-attachment. The second kind of creation is when you act, or produce or prepare something like food or tea. The third kind is to create something within yourself, such as education, or culture, or art, or some system for our society. So there are three kinds of creation. But if



you forget the first, the most important one, the other two will be like children who have lost their parents; their creation will mean nothing.

Usually everyone forgets about zazen. Everyone forgets about God. They work very hard at the second and third kinds of creation, but God does not help the activity. How is it possible for Him to help when He does not realize who He is? That is why we have so many problems in this world. When we forget the fundamental source of our creating we are like children who do not know what to do when they lose their parents.

If you understand 'dana prajna paramita', you will understand how it is we create so many problems for ourselves. Of course, to live is to create problems. If we did not appear in this world, our parents would have no difficulty with us! Just by appearing we create problems for them. This is all right. Everyone creates some problems. But usually people think that when they die, that everything is over, the problems disappear. But your death may create problems too! Actually our problems should be solved or dissolved in this life. But if we are aware that what we do or what we create is really the gift of the 'big I', then we won't be attached to it, and we won't create problems for ourselves or for others.

And we should forget, day by day, what we have done; this is true non-attachment. And we should do something new. To do something new, of course we must know our past and this is all right. But we should not keep holding on to anything we have done; we should only reflect on

it. And we must have some idea of what we should do in future, but the future is the future, the past is the past; now we should work on something new. This is our attitude, and how we should live in this world. This is 'dana prajna paramita', to give something, or to create something for ourselves. So to do something through and through is to resume to our true activity of creation. This is why we sit. If we do not forget this point, everything will be carried on beautifully. But once we forget this point, the world will be filled with confusion.