

Teisho, Heart Sutra, (day 1) 7/5/93

Shodo Harada Roshi

From today through the three days which we are gathered here I will do Dharma lectures on the Heart Sutra. This Heart Sutra in a mere 261 words puts together totally the essence of the Buddha's teaching, his wisdom and understanding. This very experience of the Buddha is manifested in this sutra. Of course, this is an impossible task to do in just three days and we will have to abbreviate it greatly and won't be able to cover it all.

It is a sutra which should be read by each of us every day, but do not end it's study here please.

The title itself, MAKA HANYA HARAMITA SUTRA, was added later and could be called extra but in fact the essence of this sutra is all put together in this one title, so I shall begin by talking about that one title.

The first word MAKA, this word means great, superior, plentiful, all rolled into one. We have to see the essence of this word, not the word as a word.

At Sogenji many people come and go. There was once a couple who lived in the front of the gate. The father of the wife of the couple is an astronaut who was on Apollo nine and his name is Russell Schweikheart, one of the first to experience actual exploration in space. He had a very interesting and unusual experience while traveling in space. This particular astronaut while in space waiting for his experiment to begin when he would walk outside of the ship on a space line. As you know, the capsules they traveled in were very small and compact and limiting and they see the places they are passing through only through a very small window and although we can see the small size of this from the television it is even smaller than we could imagine looking at it from a wide living room. This man had the actual job of walking outside the capsule. As he opened the hatch there were 360 degrees

Completely open and available to him. He felt this deeply and also perceived how there was not a single sound, there is no air for sound waves to travel in up there. He was weightless and there were those 360 degrees of vision free and open and full of space in every direction something which until that time no other human being had been able to experience in the same way. This world of no sound and no weight at all, of complete openness in every possible direction, he faced the sky full of stars, this one was to be walking on a rope which remained between him and the ship, a wire rope, a thin rope only, and he was about to be photographed by one of the other astronauts but the camera was out of order. They told him he had to wait for just five minutes until the camera was repaired. It was during these five minutes that he had a very unusual, unique and special experience.

During these five minutes he was liberated from everything he had ever been attached to and been surrounded by before, separated from it all by this experience. He experienced his own being and his existence in a totally new and different way, asking himself, "what am I, what is it that I am doing here," and suddenly be able to answer and understand these questions in a totally new way.

Why am I here, was I chosen to be here by God, did I make some kind of special effort that allowed this to happen? no, I don't believe it's about that, nor did I make any special effort, there are those that made much greater efforts than me, then why is it me that is out here right now and having this experience... (Lost text)

He briefly saw from his footsteps. Although there was nothing below or above him he saw the Earths globe brilliant and shining below him and knew, that's what he was, he and that Earth were not two separate things.

When he returned to the Earth it took him twelve years to put together the actual meaning and total impact of the experience he

had at this time. From that time on, all of his experiences and all of the ways in which he lived his life were changed according to what he understood in that moment of that brief experience.

The words which are the title of this sutra, Maka Hanya Haramita Shingyo more than explaining the essence of each of these words themselves the meaning of all of this is that the very experience which he had at that moment.

We ourselves lives right on this Earth and see from only two meters above this Earth. WE see from that very low place, we see things dualistically in terms of good, in terms of bad, win and loss in this narrow ridged way we tend to formulate and see what's in front of us.

If we analyze what it was that he experienced, although there's no need to do so in fact, but what he experienced when he was free from all weight, all sound, all limits, he entered what could be considered a similar thing to a total vacuum. He didn't have some kind of special preparation or information that made this experience possible, or had he experienced anything which was unusual that no one else can do but that mind which we all are endowed with, at that moment he let go of all those things which clutter us in such a way, all those social connections and ideas about things which prevent us from experiencing that and he was able at that moment to enter directly that clear pure original mind.

In Japan in the Miramachi period lived Eccu Zenji which he thinks many of you may be familiar with. As Eccu said, as we are born, we add on more and more knowledge, knowledge after knowledge and become only further and further from our true Buddha mind. When we are born of course, these things are not placed on us, but as we live and grow and add on this knowledge our clear mind becoming further and further more and more difficult for us to return to return to. (Possible loss of track)

Our mothers and fathers press on our nose and say, who is this, what's his name, is this John, is this David. Originally when

there is no name placed on something we take on this name and assume it as an identity which we are given a name for all the time.

Everyone asks us, how old are you, how many years old are you. In fact, in true space there is no time, no such thing as an age but our surroundings keep telling us there's something to be considered which makes us feel like we have an age or there is some kind of time or passing through, gaining years. This word of Hanoi, this true great wisdom, in that there is also no time.

(lost text)

And then we are told, this is yours and this is mine. We're told this but originally there is in fact nothing like that. There nothing which belongs to anyone, nothing which is this persons and not hat persons, nothing which is chunked up and disconnected like this. In fact all of it belongs to everyone. All of it is connected and there are no divisions between it.

Of course there is nothing bad about all of these various ways of looking at things. We can experience things in this world in this way as well, it's one possibility, but as we off to school we learn so many more extraneous things.(?)

That's after birth only. At the beginning when we are just born we are like a clear page which then letters are put upon., we are like a white canvas, pure, on which many paints are then painted. Many letters on a page as we're born were clear, but then on an empty canvas many paints are put, this is our original wisdom, this empty canvas, this clear page, but with this we mistakenly think that knowledge is our wisdom, this is not so. That canvas as empty as it is on which we can put many paints, that page on which we can put many words, that emptiness and clarity itself, this is the mind of the Maha Hanya Haramita Shingyo.

To ignore this original nature, that clear canvas, that empty page, and think that only our knowledge is our wisdom is a delusion under which we are always living.

We're always bringing forth self conscious awareness with its dualism and its awareness of our experiences after the fact. Instead of seeing the source of these things we look at the division between good and bad, happy and sad, this person, that person, and let go of that original place from where all of those come forth in the first place.

In the old days it was expressed as a description of what our mind is like, that it's like a mirror, our mind is like a mirror, this wasn't from words describing something from far way, but an actual experience. A mirror reflects what ever comes to it, exactly as it is, without any face of the mirror intruding. This clarity and sharpness is the true reflection, but if we add on to it our awareness and opinion it's like putting on red and green sunglasses, looking at the world through these colors and thinking that the world is in fact a red world or a green world, putting our own narrow interpretation on what we see. In our truest mirror, everything goes away and again it becomes empty, but in our busy deluded mind we hold on to what's been and can't let go of the lingering reflections. We have to realize this empty mirror and not get stuck on those things which appear to be in it and then are leaving. In this way we see what comes and then should let go of it when it leaves, without stopping and getting stuck by anything and wanting it to stay. Like a river flowing by, easily and not being stopped by anything, this is how our original mind actually functions. This is the experience of the Buddha and our clear mind, which works in this way.

This Maka Hanya, this Maka, huge, all embracing. We've seen so many various parts of the scene going by since this morning but they don't run into each other because we don't stop at them. We let go of one and then let the next one in, and in doing this in this way we can allow in even the hugest mountain or there greatest ocean, because we are empty of the things that have come before we can let these things in next.

This which is flowing and fresh always, this awareness is called

the prajna wisdom. That hugeness, that all embracingness is called the Maha Prajna, so huge that the whole universe can be swallowed and embraced within it, that life which is coming from the creation of the world, from before that time, from the very beginning of all things, this is the hugeness of this Maka and in this way we can see things if we can realize that root.

Maka Hanoi Haramita shingyo, that mind which embraces all, and is beyond time in the place of the infinite, yet not separating either from the reality which is right in front of us, this wisdom of this very moment of knowing what is in front of us is also included in this moment.

This title alone can be spoken of for hours but he's going to stop with this and go on to the next words AVOLOKETESVARA BODHISATVA.

Russell Sweikart the astronaut he has been talking about, when he returned from space and his deep experience there he'd changed deeply. The Roshi asked both Russell's wife and daughter how he'd changed and they both said separately but the same thing, that he'd been a studying freak before he flew and after he came back he was soft warm and attentive to everyone, they both agreed on this. Rusty' himself said it a little differently, that when he came back he became suddenly evolved in many different kinds of things involving society, the environment, children, people who were on their death bed, these things had become all very important to him, which hadn't been the way it was before. When he was talking to him about this experience he said, that was an incredible thing which you went through, a life changing experience like that. But Rusty said, no, it wasn't mine, it wasn't my experience, it only happened to me thanks to all the people, thanks to the whole world and within the universe, it was nothing which I personally was responsible for.

AVOLOKETESVARA BODHISATVA this is considered the manifestation of the compassionate vow of the Buddha for all sentient beings, she is said to have 33 vows. And why 33 ? If we divide 100 into 3 it comes out 33. And this represents the infinite amount of things

which are to be done to be able to liberate all beings. AVOLOKETESVARA is in this complicated paradoxical world, this world full of problems, teaching us how to live with clarity. If we try to live in a fifty fifty way we separate and pull and push with each other. This is how international relationships are always becoming complicated, people are always trying for at best fifty fifty. If it's 30 70 or 20 80 nobody can bare it, everyone in fact wants 100 for themselves, but AVALOKETESVASRA in a most paradoxical way in this world full of complications is always giving away a hundred and keeping zero for herself and in this way she is fulfilling that vow. People who are living in countries full of strife may laugh at this or have trouble with it but it is always happening right around us, take for example a mother who cares for her baby, in all the hours, giving up her own sleep and then putting its bowel movement in the mothers mouth to see how its tummy is, giving everything for another who is sick, the baby's smile is the mother's pleasure. This is making another 100 and yourself zero. This is our ability to do something totally for another, our potential for being like Akalotesvara, which is being taught to us by her, but instead this way we all trying to do what we can for ourselves and not giving away at all.

.....? this Earth which people are ruining with their own greed, the freon gas and the things they are doing to pollute it, with their desires, he gave it every thing and it was those people of future generations which he knew needed this world as well for which he made himself a zero.

Avaloketesvara, what it means is to have that vow, to be one who is awakened to that vow, and when one has and given themselves over completely to it then the wisdom comes forth, to be able to become that vow, this is what Avaloketesvara is teaching us by her own example.

Bodhisatva, this is the next word, is one who has awakened and who has given everything to society. We are born into this world and there are many ways to live in this world, usually most people

live for themselves, maybe for their families, this is not bad but being full of those things only can't be called a very high level way of living. If we go a little higher in levels of ways to live we know that we can work for ourselves and for others to be happy as well. We allow others as well as ourselves to have rights, give them respect, we are polite, we are careful, we are mo....? on what we do and most intelligent people live in this way, but is that all there is to being alive?

One other way is that world of religion, like the mother who works for her child without thinking of herself whatsoever with everything she has, only working for the peace of all beings is what Avaloketesvars is representing. This way of living is the most difficult and the most high level, but this is the vow of the Buddha or the Bodhisattva, to build a peaceful world for everyone to live in and to give everything to the doing of it, this is the Buddha's vow and this is why they've come into this world, not because they have some special power, we all have problems and we do mistaken things, but we do have the same vow as the Buddha, this is what is high level. Rusty Sweikhart who saw the whole Earth as his home, every place on it as his own home and all beings on it as his own family, to see all humans as one in this way and to bring this vow to fruition is that mind of Avaloketesvara Bodhisattva.

We are all incomplete in how we are and how we live. As incomplete as we are we manifest everything we have intensely and totally in our lives and this is how we live our vow. This is the way to that deep wisdom, in this world which is changing with the moment we give everything we have to what we do and work with everything we have to bring this vow as near to completion as we possibly can.

Our true sincere mind expresses deeply as it possibly can express it in every single thing we do, this is what we call Satori. Satori is not some kind of supernatural state of mind which comes around and that we wait for, but it is in expressing ourselves in just this way.

However the sutra continues, When practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita, we have the need to raise this vow, but living in this mind, that can embrace the whole world, maybe the way that Avaloketesvara Boddhisattva lives, but it's not so simple, we have to practice and work at it daily. WHEN PRACTICING DEEPLY THE PRAJNA PARAMITA.

Here we're all doing zazen for just this purpose and not just the performing of the zazen form, but that practice of samadhi. It can be through doing the susokan and the counting of the breaths or through the koan practice, without being deluded and distracted and pulling aside, to align our mind in a clear straightforward way, this is not about a word or a breath, but it is about giving everything, offering all of it, not stopping, but giving everything we have to throw it all into what we are doing in every single moment, this is the practice that's being talked about here.

Here it says specifically, practicing deeply the Prajana Paramita, this deeply is indicating that we can't think of this lightly, this is not a rule to superficially guide us , but to not conceptually practice is what it's telling us, but to practice with everything we have until there is nothing left, until there is no itching outside of our shoes that we can't get to the inside of our feet from. We have to practice in such a way that it actually has an effect of our life, that we are able to feel a difference because of it, not some kind of shallow practice but to practice deeply.

In the Eido period, master Sheido Bunon Zenzi, who wrote about these very words, to loose track of your body completely, to throw yourself into what you do totally. The scholar Nishi Dekitaro(Nishi Dekop Kitaro?) also put it in the same way, to become the thing completely and from there to see. To become the thing completely and from there to think. To become the thing completely and from there to move and act on it.

Here we do Zazan, gathered together, on the cushion and this is

practice and it is important practice, but the real work is not just this, but how we do it and carry it on into the midst of society. Not how to go about it but how to put all of our energy into it, to be full and taught in every moment is what our Zazen has to teach us, otherwise it doesn't give life to what we are doing here.

Maka Hanya Haramita isn't about some far away universe that we can barely reach or think about, it's about right here, right now, right within each of us. If it's working with Joshu's mu, that's fine, but it's about putting everything you have into it and putting it into it completely, if we lose that it all becomes conceptual and that is what it means to be shallow.

People who are specialists in training, practice what they do until they can become totally one with the doing of it, whether it's the cooking, holding the knife, the cleaning, sweeping, holding the broom, the walking, doing it totally without one single thought inserted in there and doing it in the way that thoughts don't enter, this is the basic principal of training, and not becoming hard and ridged in the doing of that but to practice so that we are doing it so thoroughly that we can do it naturally and it becomes soft in the doing. At Sogenji since Jan. we have been practicing Kjudo or Japanese ARCHERY. The most important part in the practice of this archery is when we fully pull the bow just before it is completely taut and the arrow is let go, where all of our energy is put into it. The teacher of archery even hits the Roshi and tells him how hard he is, here he is 53 years old and having to start all over again, which is doing for the sake of all of us, because that's also important to know how to do, to let go of the arrow softly, naturally, to be able to work with this kind of flexibility and fluidity, We all do our zazen saying that we can do our zazen here but we can't take it into our lives, it doesn't work in our lives daily, it's because we do it with our heads. We have to keep going and not give up, keep ripening knowing that every place that we are is our place of training and

keeping going until we can do it where ever we are in the same kind of flexible, natural way.

Next we have, WHEN PRACTICING DEEPLY. This when is not about someday when it might happen, some other time, but is in fact telling us that this idea of past, present and future is a fraud. Time is something which we allow to become inside of us, our living is in this very moment, our vow is made as in a frame of the past but it comes to fruition in the seeming present. However this is also backwards, the result is decided first, but it is only the moment which we are in right now which is real. Without any judgment of good or bad but just by totally being involved and absorbed in this here, right now. If we are not full and taught when we stretch the bow we'll never become soft and natural in our practice of archery. Only holding precious this very moment or else it becomes vague and fuzzy. Please don't do that kind of conceptual zazen, which becomes vague and fuzzy, but by being totally right here in the very moment now, we can be in this moment totally.

Next we have, PERCEIVED THAT ALL FIVE SKANDHAS IN THEIR OWN BEING ARE EMPTY, perceived that all five skandhas, this perceived also is not something over there which we can see way far off, but the perception, its object and the awareness about the object which we instantaneously receive, when we can become that very activity without any sense of our own bodies doing some activity. Like a mother who totally cares for her baby. When we see well or smell clearly we don't have a sense of our eyes existing or of our nose being there, we don't feel our own bodies when we're at one with what we're doing but in order to become that we have to practice and be totally that which we're perceiving at that very moment.

This is a very strange thing, we're seeing, we're hearing but we have no sense of the eyes and ears which are doing those things, yet we are perceiving, we're just not stopping at each perception, we move forward, keeping going and then we come to the place where it is perceived that all five skandhas in their own being are

empty. This is all just one moment at a time, keeping going through those clear mind moments, perceiving and seeing directly, and moving moment to moment, but if we stop we become suddenly heavy and have a hard time getting out from under that heaviness. In the Majji period there was a place called (haksolan) and a man there, a priest named nain with whom everyone went to see the circus. As they were watching the circus there was one girl who was balancing on top of a big ball, keeping it going around and around with her feet, and suddenly the Roshi explained, that's it, that's it, what she is doing, just that, that's it' that's how you do it. But then as the ball stopped she again became a usual person and he sighed and said, oh, it's just a usual person. But Buddhism isn't teaching us that we're trying to do anything special, this is proof that we can do this and it can be done all the time. If we let go of our attentiveness however we can fall back into that fuzzy place. By keeping it going and ripening into it is what the practicing is for.

AND WAS SAVED FROM ALL SUFFERING, it goes on to say. This is how it teaches us next. We are continually experiencing suffering but the suffering of living, of aging, of becoming sick and of dying are the very facts of life for each person. But if we can live totally, offering everything we have to each moment, we may read of a person who committed suicide when his company failed, when even (.... people) could stay alive, but his man couldn't stay alive couldn't stand the idea of being alive in the position which he had put himself. He couldn't deal with the awareness of his failure, but we have to intensely to do this, to get through all the difficult times of our life. We age and can't do all the same things' if we compare ourselves with doing what we used to be able to do. But if we put everything into this moment, we're totally alive. There is a different way of living at the age of 40 or 50, 60, 70 or again at the age of 80. Putting everything we can into what we can do in each age. We have difficulties and we put our problems on other people by getting angry at them but that gets us

nowhere and we can't be helped by a doctor in this kind of problem. It is only by putting everything into this very moment, working on how to do that honestly, not thinking about when we were young or when we were healthy, even at the very edge of death, to recognize this very moment is why we've been alive the whole time. What we've been born to do and in doing this we relieve suffering at this moment, not depending on another and not putting forth our ego, that's just guaranteed further suffering. But we have an ego, recognizing that, but to put everything we are into what we do at that moment. At the beginning it's very difficult and we become hard and inflexible, but then if we continue our practice we become bigger, more expansive and flexible, keeping our creative and inventive energy going, this is most necessary, it's not about how many lives we are reborn into, but it's about how much creative and inventive effort we can put into doing it in this way.