



# Summary

1. No attachment to form. – To give our full attention but not to abide is true mindfulness and not attachment.

Attachment to form will prevent us from seeing our true nature. In Ch.5 Buddha tells Subhuti that Tathagata cannot be seen as bodily form. This is because Tathagata is Buddha nature, not the person of Prince Siddhartha, or any other enlightened being. It is only seen when no characteristics are recognised.

We should not cling to form, because it is fleeting and impermanent. Remembering that form has no lasting reality and that all form is only a temporary getting together will help us not to vainly cling to it.

In Ch.1 we see Buddha living naturally in complete mindfulness. He pays full attention to the task at hand. His six senses connect with the six sense objects and go no further. In this way he is equal to any eventuality and deals with whatever arises with equanimity.

Consider what this means in everyday life. We should consider not only physical form, but also the feelings which arise as we make contact with form and with others in everyday dealings. When we receive acclaim or criticism, what happens? Following either is why we get hurt. If we have any image of ourselves at all, we are on the way to being hurt. If we hear acclaim, criticism and so on and go no further, not becoming attached, not abiding, we can be happy at every moment – each moment will be a “now” moment.

Where is our true nature? In our everyday life.

2. No attachment to rescuing sentient beings – When we say “sentient beings,” we usually visualise beings with characteristics and egos. When we contrast Buddhas with sentient beings, we are in duality, the world of birth and death. But if all beings have Buddha nature from the first, who is to be rescued? Although beings need guidance, they are regarded, by the Mahayana, as already intrinsically fully awakened. So no-one is rescued, therefore they are all rescued.

This is the seeming paradoxical nature of Mahayana, and in particular Ch.3 of the Diamond Sutra. We say that beings are delivered to Nirvana, and yet this must at once be denied, since Nirvana is at hand; all beings are already enlightened in the sense that they all have perfect Buddha nature which has but to be realised. When realisation dawns, we see that we had it all the time. Thus no beings are delivered to Nirvana, yet all beings are (already) delivered.

3. No attachment to arising thought – Our true nature is calm and peaceful. The thoughts which disturb this calm don't arise on their own, they are always based on a shadow of some kind. Form is emptiness and has no absolute reality, so what reality can the thoughts have? Sentient beings are no more than arising thoughts themselves. Before any thought arises, they are Buddha.

Here is the answer, again, to Subhuti's questions: How should we control our thoughts? It is to bring the mind – thought – to before birth, to the state of Nirvana.

By what criteria should we abide? Avoiding attachment, living with our true self, we should abide nowhere.

4. No attachment to dana – To give without abiding. Ch.4 is our source for understanding this.

The Bodhisattva has no sense of giver, gift or recipient. He has no expectation of reward, no sense of self and there is no clinging to objects of any kind.

As practitioners we need to watch our minds closely and observe our true motives. To hear ourselves, to be aware of our reactions. To not let the mind run on in delusion and make-believe. To give and to live without abiding.

5. No attachment to the thirty-two marks.

This is similar to non-attachment to form, but refers specifically to the thirty-two marks said to be visible on the body of a Buddha.

Marks are just marks, however impressive or significant they may be. They are all impermanent and empty of characteristics. True reality has no form and Tathagata is not Siddhartha the historical Buddha.

6. No attachment to adornments. What we seek is within, not without. True adornment is the peace of our true nature, which does not depend on where we are or how we live.

Exterior adornments, lovely temples, art, spiritual literature and so on are only guides for us, guiding us to look within.

*“Look inward, thou art Buddha!”<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup>Blavatsky, H.P, *The Voice of the Silence*, Quest Books, 1992.

We may see what we consider to be good or bad, clean or dirty, attractive or repulsive, but when the mind is at peace, all is peace and has no opposite. If the mind is not at peace, living in a palace or having our every material wish granted will never satisfy us.

The true mind is peace itself and needs no adornment.

7. No attachment to merit. This does not mean that we should not act in a compassionate way or choose to do what seems right to us. We may even gain merit, in the sense that following Buddha's teachings will bring us closer to our true nature.

But if we cling to merit we only demonstrate our ignorance, acting as though we are somehow to be rewarded for our virtuous behaviour.

8. No attachment to words or speech. We already have the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment of which Buddha speaks. In fact, Buddha is said to have spoken at different levels at different times, according to his listeners' level of understanding.

Words are only tools that we use, in themselves they are sounds or squiggles on paper, useful to us but of no value in themselves. If we stick to words, to favourite quotations or become mesmerised by their poetry we are likely to stagnate and not realise our ideal of awakening. We can study the Sutra without becoming attached to the words. So it is said that Buddha taught for forty-nine years, but never uttered a word.

9. No attachment to the Prajna Paramita. The Prajna Paramita is the name given to the Diamond which cuts through illusion. It translates as the wisdom which has crossed to the other shore.

As discussed in the commentary on the title, there is really no other shore, only a need to realise that this is so, and that we already have all that we are searching for and need only to understand this. The other shore is just a useful metaphor that we use only as long as we need to. In the meantime, we are using Buddha to look for the Buddha, and the mind to search for the mind, or as in Thien, riding an ox looking for an ox.

We may imagine the teaching of the Sutra as a one hundred mile long pole, or hand-rail along which we feel our way and which we use for our guidance. When understanding comes, the pole is transcended and may be discarded, or it will become a hindrance.

So Prajna Paramita is nothing sacred; like all of Buddhism it is education and not religion.

10. No attachment to the four characteristics and eliminating the minds of past, present and future. In Chapter 18 Buddha says that Tathagata (original mind) is aware of all minds, but adds that they are simply *called* minds. They are all minds of the past, the present and the future, none of which are the true mind. They cannot be grasped and have no enduring reality. Usually, when we are sitting, working, conversing, whatever our activity, our mind is running back and forth between past and future, worrying, regretting, desiring.

Can we let our six senses connect with the six corresponding sense objects just as they are and not run on? Because none of those objects or thought-forms are demanding our attention. The rose does not say: "Look, I am beautiful!" And when we are depressed and everything appears gloomy and sad, this is our mind only. All things are just as they are and we create an imaginary illusory world with our thoughts when we see characteristics of all kinds, when really there are none.

Overall, when applying the teachings in daily life, let us remember that form is impermanent, nothing has independent existence, and when we encounter emotional disturbance, go back to the mind of no birth, the mind of no abode.

Finally, Sutras may be taught and explained in a variety of ways, but when we have heard the teaching as given by others, when we have read and listened to any Sutra, we may say that we have only half the Sutra.

The rest is up to us.

*It is right in front of our eyes, and nothing is missing,*

*So why search for more?*

*Our nature is as bright as ever,*

*It is only our selves that have darkened it.*

Thich Thong Phuong.



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The printing of this book has been made possible through the generosity of the following:

- 1) Donors from Australia - Meditation classes at Sunyata Community and Meditation Centre Inc.  
- Sunyata volunteers
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I vow that the merit and virtue for this will go everywhere and reach everyone;  
All of us and all living beings, So that we will realise and practise the Buddha way.

Sadhu...Sadhu...Sadhu.

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Second revised edition 2009  
**Sunyata Community and Meditation Centre Inc, 2009**

**ISBN 978-0-9802849-1-1**