

Diamond Sutra

Buddha · Other

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DIAMOND SUTRA

(Vajra-prajna-paramita Sutra)

"The Diamond of the Perfection of Transcendental Wisdom"

1. (ABOUT THE CONTEXT)

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha stayed at Anathapindaka's Garden in the grove of jeta in the kingdom of Sravasti; he was together with 1,250 great Bhikshus. When the meal time came the World-honored One put on his cloak and, holding his bowl, entered the great city of Sravasti, where he begged for food. Having finished his begging from door to door, he came back to his own place, and took his meal. When this was done, he put away his cloak and bowl, washed his feet, spread his feet, and sat down.

2. (THE QUESTION: How a Bodhisattva should guard his mind?)

Then the Venerable Subhuti, who was among the assembly, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, and, respectfully folding his hands, addressed the Buddha thus:

"It is wonderful, World-honored One, that the Tathagata thinks so much of all the Bodhisattvas, and so instructs them so well. World-honored One, in case good men and good women ever raise the desire for the Supreme Enlightenment,

-- how would they abide in it?

-- how would they keep their thoughts under control?"

The Buddha said:

"Well said, indeed, O Subhuti! As you say, the Tathagata thinks very much of all the Bodhisattvas, and so instructs them well. But now listen attentively and I will tell you. In case good men and good women raise the desire for the Supreme Enlightenment,

-- they should thus abide in it,

-- they should thus keep their thoughts under control."

"So be it, World-honored One, I wish to listen to you."

3. (About the emptiness of sentient beings & emancipation)

The Buddha said to Subhuti:

"All the Bodhisattva- Mahasattvas should thus keep their thoughts under control.

(FIRST EXAMPLE:)

-- All kinds of beings such as the egg-born, the womb-born, the moisture born, the miraculously-born, those with form, those without form, those with consciousness, those without consciousness, those with no-consciousness and those without no-consciousness - they

are all led by me to enter Nirvana that leaves nothing behind and to attain final emancipation.

-- Though thus beings immeasurable, innumerable, and unlimited are emancipated, (i.e. conventional truth)

-- there are in reality no beings that are ever emancipated.

-- Why, Subhuti?

-- If a Bodhisattva retains the thought of an ego, a person, a being, or a soul, he is no more a Bodhisattva.

4. (About the perfection of dana & the merit of this sutra: beyond conception)

(SECOND EXEMPLE:)

"Again, Subhuti, when a Bodhisattva practices charity he should not be cherishing any idea, that is to say, he is not to cherish the idea of a form when practising charity, nor is he to cherish the idea of a sound, an odour, a touch, or a quality. Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should thus practice charity without cherishing any idea of form, his merit will be beyond conception.

Subhuti, what do you think?

Can you have the conception of space extending eastward?"

"No, World-honored One, I cannot."

"Subhuti, can you have the conception of space extending towards the south, or west, or north, or above, or below?"

"No, World-honored One, I cannot."

"Subhuti, so it is with the merit of a Bodhisattva who practices charity without cherishing any idea of form; it is beyond conception. Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should cherish only that which is taught to him.

5. (About the emptiness of the Tathagata's body-form)

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Is the Tathagata to be recognized after a body-form?"

"No, World-honored One, he is not to be recognized after a body-form.

Why?

According to the Tathagata, a body-form is not a body-form."

The Buddha said to Subhuti,

"All that has a form is an illusive existence. When it is perceived that all form is no-form, the Tathagata is recognized."

6. (About the emptiness of the Dharma - which doesn't mean that there is no-dharma at all; not an ultimate truth to be cherish; but useful as a raft)

Subhuti said to the Buddha:

"World-honored One, if beings hear such words and statements, would they have a true faith in them?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti:

"Do not talk that way. In the last five hundred years after the passing of the Tathagata,

there may be beings who, having practised rules of morality and, being thus possessed of merit, happen to hear of these statements and rouse a true faith in them. Such beings, you must know, are those who have planted their root of merit not only under one, two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but already under thousands of myriads of asamkhyeyas of Buddhas have they planted their root of merit of all kinds. Those who hearing these statements rouse even one thought of pure faith, Subhuti, are all known to the Tathagata, and recognized by him as having acquired such an immeasurable amount of merit.

Why?

Because all these beings are free from the idea of an ego, a person, a being, or a soul; they are free from the idea of a dharma as well as from that of a no-dharma.

Why?

Because if they cherish in their minds the idea of a form, they are attached to an ego, a person, a being, or a soul.

If they cherish the idea of a dharma, they are attached to an ego, a person, a being, or a soul.

Why?

If they cherish the idea of a no-dharma, they are attached to an ego, a person, a being, or a soul.

Therefore, do not cherish the idea of a dharma, nor that of a no-dharma.

For this reason, the Tathagata always preaches thus: `O you Bhikshus, know that my teaching is to be likened unto a raft. Even a dharma is cast aside, much more a no-dharma.'

7. (About the emptiness of the Dharma - There is no absolute dharma to be teach to all - ultimate truth is not expressible in words)

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Has the Tathagata attained the supreme enlightenment?

Has he something about which he would preach?"

Subhuti said:

"World-honored One, as I understand the teaching of the Buddha, there is no fixed doctrine about which the Tathagata would preach.

Why?

Because the doctrine he preaches is not to be adhered to, nor is it to be preached about; it is neither a dharma nor a no-dharma.

How is it so?

Because all wise men belong to the category known as non-doing (asamskara), and yet they are distinct from one another.

8. (About the emptiness of merit & the merit of this sutra: superior)

"Subhuti, what do you think?

If a man should fill the three thousand chilocosms with the seven precious treasures and give them all away for charity, would not the merit he thus obtains be great?"

Subhuti said:

"Very great, indeed, World-honored One." ,

"Why?

Because their merit is characterised with the quality of not being a merit. Therefore, the

Tathagata speaks of the merit as being great.

If again there is a man who, holding even the four lines in this sutra, preaches about it to others, his merit will be superior to the one just mentioned.

Because, Subhuti, all the Buddhas and their supreme enlightenment issue from this sutra. Subhuti, what is known as the teaching of the Buddha is not the teaching of the Buddha.

9. (About the emptiness of the attainments)

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Does a Srotapanna think in this wise: 'I have obtained the fruit of Srotapatti'?"

Subhuti said:

"No, World-honored One, he does not. Why? Because while Srotapanna means 'entering the stream' there is no entering here. He is called a Srotapanna who does not enter (a world of) form, sound, odour, taste, touch, and quality.

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Does a Sakridagamin think in this wise, 'I have obtained the fruit of a Sakridagamin'?"

Subhuti said:

"No, World-honored One, he does not. Why? Because while Sakridagamin means 'going-and-coming for once', there is really no going-and-coming here, and he is then called a Sakridagamin."

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Does an Anagamin think in this wise: 'I have obtained the fruit of an Anagamin'?"

Subhuti said:

"No, World-honored One, he does not. Why? Because while Anagamin means 'not-coming' there is really no not-coming and therefore he is called an Anagamin."

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Does an Arhat think in this wise: 'I have obtained Arhatship'?"

Subhuti said:

"No, World-honored One, he does not.

Why?

Because there is no dharma to be called Arhat.

If, World-honored One, an Arhat thinks in this wise: 'I have obtained Arhatship,' this means that he is attached to an ego, a person, a being, or a soul. Although the Buddha says that I am the foremost of those who have attained Arana-samadhi, that I am the foremost of those Arhats who are liberated from evil desires, World-honored One, I cherish no such thought that I have attained Arhatship. World-honored One, (if I did,) you would not tell me: 'O Subhuti, you are one who enjoys the life of non-resistance.' Just because Subhuti is not at all attached to this life, he is said to be the one who enjoys the life of non-resistance."

10. (About the emptiness of a Buddha-Field & about some conclusions)

The Buddha said to Subhuti:

"What do you think?

When the Tathagata was anciently with Dipankara Buddha did he have an attainment in the dharma?"

"No, World-honored One, he did not.

The Tathagata while with Dipankara Buddha had no attainment whatever in the dharma."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a Bodhisattva set any Buddha land in array?"

"No, World-honored One, he does not."

"Why?"

Because to set a Buddha land in array is not to set it in array, and therefore it is known as setting it in array.

[Then Buddha continued:] Therefore, Subhuti, all the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas should thus rouse a pure thought. They should not cherish any thought dwelling on form; they should not cherish any thought dwelling on sound, odour, taste, touch, and quality; they should cherish thoughts dwelling on nothing whatever.

Subhuti, it is like unto a human body equal in size to Mount Sumeru; what do you think?

Is not this body large?"

Subhuti said:

"Very large indeed, World-honored One."

Why?

Because the Buddha teaches that that which is no-body is known as a large body."

11. (comparing the merit of this sutra: much larger)

"Subhuti, regarding the sands of the Ganga, suppose there as many Ganga rivers as those sands, what do you think? Are not the sands of all those Ganga rivers many?"

Subhuti said:

"Very many, indeed, World-honored One."

Buddha said to Subhuti:

"If a good man or a good woman holding even four lines from this sutra preach it to others, this merit is much larger than the preceding one."

12. (comparing the merit of this sutra: as if the Buddha is present)

"Again, Subhuti, wherever this sutra or even four lines of it are preached, this place will be respected by all beings including Devas, Asuras, etc., as if it were the Buddha's own shrine or chaitya; how much more a person who can hold and recite this sutra! Subhuti, you should know that such a person achieves the highest, foremost, and most wonderful deed. Wherever this sutra is kept, the place is to be regarded as if the Buddha or a venerable disciple of his were present."

13. (About the emptiness of the teachings - a "no-theory" theory - and of the 32 marks & comparing the merit of this sutra: greater)

At that time, Subhuti said to the Buddha:

"World-honored One, what will this sutra be called?"

How should we hold it?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti:

"This sutra will be called the Vajra-prajna-paramita, and by this title you will hold it."

The reason is, Subhuti, that, according to the teaching of the Buddha, Prajnaparamita is not Prajnaparamita and therefore it is called Prajnaparamita.

Subhuti, what do you think?"

Is there anything about which the Tathagata preaches?"

Subhuti said to the Buddha:

"World-honored One, there is nothing about which the Tathagata preaches."

[MISSING PART]:

Subhuti, what do you think? Would there be many molecules in [the composition of] three thousand galaxies of worlds?

Subhuti said: Many indeed, World-honored One!

Subhuti, the Tathagata declares that all these molecules are not really such; they are called "molecules." [Furthermore,] the Tathagata declares that a world is not really a world; it is called "a world."

"Subhuti, what do you think?

Is the Tathagata to be recognized by the thirty-two marks (of a great man)?"

"No, World-honored One, he is not."

"The Tathagata is not to be recognized by the thirty-two marks because what are said to be the thirty-two marks are told by the Tathagata to be no-marks and therefore to be the thirty-two marks.

Subhuti, if there be a good man or a good woman who gives away his or her lives as many as the sands of the Ganga, his or her merit thus gained does not exceed that of one who, holding even one gatha of four lines from this sutra, preaches them for others."

14. (Résumé: a theory of "no-theory" - for this reason it is "indestructible")

At that time Subhuti, listening to this sutra, had a deep understanding of its significance, and, filled with tears of gratitude, said this to the Buddha:

"Wonderful, indeed, World-honored One, that the Buddha teaches us this sutra full of deep sense. Such a sutra has never been heard by me even with an eye of wisdom acquired in my past lives. World-honored One, if there be a man who listening to this sutra acquires a true believing heart he will then have a true idea of things. This one is to be known as having achieved a most wonderful virtue. World-honored One, what is known as a true idea is no-idea, and for this reason it is called a true idea.

"World-honored One, it is not difficult for me to believe, to understand, and to hold this sutra to which I have now listened; but in the ages to come, in the next five hundred years, if there are beings who listening to this sutra are able to believe, to understand, and to hold it, they will indeed be most wonderful beings.

Why?

Because they will have no idea of an ego, of a person, of a being, or of a soul.

For what reason?

The idea of an ego is no-idea (of ego), the idea of a person, a being, or a soul is no-idea (of a person, a being, or a soul).

For what reason?

They are Buddhas who are free from all kinds of ideas."

The Buddha said to Subhuti,

"It is just as you say. If there be a man who, listening to this sutra, is neither frightened nor alarmed nor disturbed, you should know him as a wonderful person.

Why?

Subhuti, it is taught by the Tathagata that the first Paramita is no-first-Paramita and therefore it is called the first Paramita. Subhuti, the Paramita of humility is no-Paramita of humility and therefore it is called the Paramita of humility.

Why?

Subhuti, anciently, when my body was cut to pieces by the King of Kalinga, I had neither the idea of an ego, nor the idea of a person, nor the idea of a being, nor the idea of a soul.

Why?

When at that time my body was dismembered, limb after limb, joint after joint, if I had the idea of an ego, or of a person, or of a being, or of a soul, the feeling of anger and ill-will would have been awakened in me.

Subhuti, I remember in my past hundred births, I was a rishi called Kshanti, and during those times I had neither the idea of an ego, nor that of a person, nor that of a being, nor that of a soul. (i.e. Subhuti, I remember that long ago, sometime during my past five-hundred mortal lives, I was an ascetic practicing patience. Even then was I free from those distinctions of separated selfhood.)

(CONCLUSIONS)

"Therefore, Subhuti,

-- you should, detaching yourself from all ideas, rouse the desire for the supreme enlightenment. (i.e. Therefore, Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should leave behind all phenomenal distinctions and awaken the thought of the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment)

-- You should cherish thoughts without dwelling on form, (i.e. by not allowing the mind to depend upon notions evoked by the sensible world)

-- you should cherish thoughts without dwelling on sound, odour, taste, touch, or quality. (i.e. by not allowing the mind to depend upon notions evoked by sounds, odors, flavors, touch-contacts, or any qualities.)

-- Whatever thoughts you may have, they are not to dwell on anything. (i.e. The mind should be kept independent of any thoughts which arise within it.)

-- If a thought dwells on anything, this is said to be no-dwelling. (i.e. If the mind depends upon anything it has no sure haven.)

-- Therefore, the Buddha teaches that a Bodhisattva is not to practice charity by dwelling on form. Subhuti, the reason he practices charity is to benefit all beings. (i.e. This is why Buddha teaches that the mind of a Bodhisattva should not accept the appearances of things as a basis when exercising charity. Subhuti, as Bodhisattvas practice charity for the welfare of all living beings they should do it in this manner.)

"The Tathagata teaches that all ideas are no-ideas, and again that all beings are no-beings. (i.e. Just as the Tathagata declares that characteristics are not characteristics, so He declares that all living beings are not, in fact, living beings.)

Subhuti, the Tathagata is the one who speaks what is true, the one who speaks what is real, the one whose words are as they are, the one who does not speak falsehood, the one who does not speak equivocally. (i.e. Subhuti, the Tathagata is He who declares that which is true; He who declares that which is fundamental; He who declares that which is ultimate. He does not declare that which is deceitful, nor that which is monstrous.)

"Subhuti, in the Dharma attained by the Tathagata there is neither truth nor falsehood.

(i.e. Subhuti, that Truth to which the Tathagata has attained is neither real nor unreal.)

Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva should practice charity, cherishing a thought which dwells on the Dharma, he is like unto a person who enters the darkness, he sees nothing. (i.e. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva practices charity with mind attached to formal notions he is like unto a man groping sightless in the gloom;)

If he should practice charity without cherishing a thought that dwells on the Dharma, he is like unto a person with eyes, he sees all kinds of forms illumined by the sunlight. (i.e. but a Bodhisattva who practices charity with mind detached from any formal notions is like unto a man with open eyes in the radiant glory of the morning, to whom all kinds of objects are clearly visible.)

"Subhuti, if there are good men and good women in the time to come who hold and recite this sutra, they will be seen and recognized by the Tathagata with his Buddha-knowledge, and they will all mature immeasurable and innumerable merit. (i.e. Subhuti, if there be good men and good women in future ages, able to receive, read and recite this Discourse in its entirety, the Tathagata will clearly perceive and recognize them by means of His Buddha-knowledge; and each one of them will bring immeasurable and incalculable merit to fruition.)

15. (comparing the Mahayana to the Hinayana; the merit of this sutra: a mass of merit, immeasurable, innumerable, and incomprehensible)

"Subhuti, if there is a good man or a good woman who would in the first part of the day sacrifice as many bodies of his or hers as the sands of the Ganga, and again in the middle part of the day sacrifice as many bodies of his or hers as the sands of the Ganga, and again in the latter part of the day sacrifice as many bodies of his or hers as the sands of the Ganga, and keep up these sacrifices through hundred-thousands of myriads of kotis of kalpas; and if there were another who listened to this sutra would accept it with a believing heart, the merit the latter would acquire would far exceed that of the former.

How much more the merit of one who would copy, hold, learn, and recite and expound it for others!

"Subhuti, to sum up, there is in this sutra a mass of merit, immeasurable, innumerable, and incomprehensible. The Tathagata has preached this for those who were awakened in the Mahayana (great vehicle), he has preached it for those who were awakened in the Sreshthayana (highest vehicle). If there were beings who would hold and learn and expound it for others, they would all be known to the Tathagata and recognized by him, and acquire merit which is unmeasured, immeasurable, innumerable, and incomprehensible. Such beings are known to be carrying the supreme enlightenment attained by the Tathagata.

Why?

Subhuti, those who desire inferior doctrines are attached to the idea of an ego, a person, a being, and a soul. They are unable to hear, hold, learn, recite, and for others expound this sutra. Subhuti, wherever this sutra is preserved, there all beings, including Devas and Asuras, will come and worship it. This place will have to be known as a chaitya, the object of worship and obeisance, where the devotees gather around, scatter flowers, and burn incense.

16. (comparing the merit of this sutra: it is indeed beyond calculation, beyond analogy, beyond comprehension)

"Again, Subhuti, there are some good men and good women who will be despised for their holding and reciting this sutra. This is due to their previous evil karma for the reason of which they were to fall into the evil paths of existence; but because of their being despised in the present life, whatever evil karma they produced in their previous lives will be thereby destroyed, and they will be able to obtain the supreme enlightenment.

"Subhuti, as I remember, in my past lives innumerable asamkhyeya kalpas ago I was with Dipankara Buddha, and at that time I saw Buddhas as many as eighty-four hundred-thousands of myriads of nayutas and made offerings to them and respectfully served them all, and not one of them was passed by me. !

If again in the last (five hundred) years, there have been people who hold and recite and learn this sutra, the merit they thus attain (would be beyond calculation), for when this is compared with the merit I have attained by serving all the Buddhas, the latter will not exceed one hundredth part of the former, no, not one hundred thousand ten millionth part. No, it is indeed beyond calculation, beyond analogy.

"Subhuti, if there have been good men and good women in the last five hundred years who hold, recite, and learn this sutra, the merit they attain thereby I cannot begin to enumerate in detail. If I did, those who listen to it would lose their minds, cherish grave doubts, and not believe at all how beyond comprehension is the significance of this sutra and also how also beyond comprehension the rewards are."

17. (Added Section XVII. No One Attains Transcendental Wisdom)

At that time Subhuti addressed Buddha, saying: World-honored One, if good men and good women seek the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment, by what criteria should they abide and how should they control their thoughts?

Buddha replied to Subhuti: Good men and good women seeking the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment must create this resolved attitude of mind: I must liberate all living beings, yet when all have been liberated, verily not any one is liberated. Wherefore? If a Bodhisattva cherishes the idea of an ego-entity, a personality, a being, or a separated individuality, he is consequently not a Bodhisattva, Subhuti. This is because in reality there is no formula which gives rise to the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment. Subhuti, what do you think? When the Tathagata was with Dipankara Buddha was there any formula for the attainment of the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment?

No, World-honored One, as I understand Buddha's meaning, there was no formula by which the Tathagata attained the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment.

Buddha said: You are right, Subhuti! Verily there was no formula by which the Tathagata attained the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment. Subhuti, had there been any such formula, Dipankara Buddha would not have predicted concerning me: "In the ages of the future you will come to be a Buddha called Shakyamuni"; but Dipankara Buddha made that prediction concerning me because there is actually no formula for the attainment of the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment. The reason herein is that Tathagata is a signification implying all formulas. In case anyone says that the Tathagata attained the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment, I tell you truly, Subhuti, that there is no formula by which the Buddha attained it. Subhuti, the basis of Tathagata's attainment of the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment is wholly beyond; it is neither real nor unreal. Hence I say that the whole realm of formulations is not really such, therefore it is called "Realm of formulations."

Subhuti, a comparison may be made with [the idea of] a gigantic human frame.

Then Subhuti said: The World-honored One has declared that such is not a great body; "a great body" is just the name given to it.

Subhuti, it is the same concerning Bodhisattvas. If a Bodhisattva announces: I will liberate all living creatures, he is not rightly called a Bodhisattva. Wherefore? Because, Subhuti, there is really no such condition as that called Bodhisattvaship, because Buddha teaches

that all things are devoid of selfhood, devoid of separate individuality. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva announces: I will set forth majestic Buddha-lands, one does not call him a Bodhisattva, because the Tathagata has declared that the setting forth of majestic Buddha-lands is not really such: "a majestic setting forth" is just the name given to it. Subhuti, Bodhisattvas who are wholly devoid of any conception of separate selfhood are truthfully called Bodhisattvas.

18. (About the emptiness of mental traits, of thoughts)

The Buddha said to Subhuti:

"Of all beings in those innumerable lands, the Tathagata knows well all their mental traits. Why?

Because the Tathagata teaches that all those mental traits are no-traits and therefore they are known to be mental traits. Subhuti,

-- thoughts of the past are beyond grasp,

-- thoughts of the present are beyond grasp,

-- and thoughts of the future are beyond grasp."

(i.e. Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the human eye?

Yes, World-honored One, He does.

Well, do you think the Tathagata possesses the divine eye?

Yes, World-honored One, He does.

And do you think the Tathagata possesses the gnostic eye?

Yes, World-honored One, He does.

And do you think the Tathagata possesses the eye of transcendent wisdom?

Yes, World-honored One, He does.

And do you think the Tathagata possesses the Buddha-eye of omniscience?

Yes, World-honored One, He does.

Subhuti, what do you think? Concerning the sand-grains of the Ganges, has the Buddha taught about them?

Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has taught concerning these grains.

Well, Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges rivers as the sand-grains of the Ganges and there was a Buddha-land for each sand-grain in all those Ganges rivers, would those Buddha-lands be many?

[Subhuti replied]: Many indeed, World-honored One!

Then Buddha said: Subhuti, however many living beings there are in all those Buddha-lands, though they have manifold modes of mind, the Tathagata understands them all. Wherefore?

Because the Tathagata teaches that all these are not Mind; they are merely called "mind".

Subhuti, it is impossible to retain past mind, impossible to hold on to present mind, and impossible to grasp future mind.)

[Section XIX. Absolute Reality is the Only Foundation]

Subhuti, what do you think? If anyone filled three thousand galaxies of worlds with the seven treasures and gave all away in gifts of alms, would he gain great merit?

Yes, indeed, World-honored One, he would gain great merit!

Subhuti, if such merit was Real, the Tathagata would not have declared it to be great, but because it is without a foundation the Tathagata characterized it as "great."

[Section XX. The Unreality of Phenomenal Distinctions]

Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Buddha be perceived by His perfectly-formed body? No, World-honored One, the Tathagata cannot be perceived by His perfectly-formed body, because the Tathagata teaches that a perfectly-formed body is not really such; it is merely called "a perfectly-formed body."

Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be perceived by means of any phenomenal characteristic?

No, World-honored One, the Tathagata may not be perceived by any phenomenal characteristic, because the Tathagata teaches that phenomenal characteristics are not really such; they are merely termed "phenomenal characteristics."

[Section XXI. Words cannot express Truth. That which Words Express is not Truth]

Subhuti, do not say that the Tathagata conceives the idea: I must set forth a Teaching. For if anyone says that the Tathagata sets forth a Teaching he really slanders Buddha and is unable to explain what I teach. As to any Truth-declaring system, Truth is undeclarable; so "an enunciation of Truth" is just the name given to it.

Thereupon, Subhuti spoke these words to Buddha: World-honored One, in the ages of the future will there be men coming to hear a declaration of this Teaching who will be inspired with belief?

And Buddha answered: Subhuti, those to whom you refer are neither living beings nor not-living beings. Wherefore? Because "living beings," Subhuti, these "living beings" are not really such; they are just called by that name.

[Section XXII. It Cannot be Said that Anything is Attainable]

Then Subhuti asked Buddha: World-honored One, in the attainment of the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment did Buddha make no acquisition whatsoever?

Buddha replied: Just so, Subhuti. Through the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment I acquired not even the least thing; therefore it is called "Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment."

23. (About the emptiness of the Dharma; beyond good and no-good)

"Again, Subhuti, this Dharma is even and has neither elevation nor depression; and it is called supreme enlightenment. Because a man practices everything that is good, without cherishing the thought of an ego, a person, a being, and a soul, he attains the supreme enlightenment.

Subhuti, what is called good is no-good, and therefore it is known as good."

(i.e. Furthermore, Subhuti, This is altogether everywhere, without differentiation or degree; therefore it is called "Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment." It is straightly attained by freedom from separate personal selfhood and by cultivating all kinds of goodness.

Subhuti, though we speak of "goodness", the Tathagata declares that there is no goodness; such is merely a name.)

[Section XXIV. The Incomparable Merit of This Teaching]

Subhuti, if there be one who gives away in gifts of alms a mass of the seven treasures equal in extent to as many mighty Mount Sumerus as there would be in three thousand galaxies of worlds, and if there be another who selects even only four lines from this Discourse upon the Perfection of Transcendental Wisdom, receives and retains them, and clearly expounds them to others, the merit of the latter will be so far greater than that of the former that no conceivable comparison can be made between them.

[Section XXV. The Illusion of Ego]

Subhuti, what do you think? Let no one say the Tathagata cherishes the idea: I must liberate all living beings. Allow no such thought, Subhuti. Wherefore? Because in reality there are no living beings to be liberated by the Tathagata. If there were living beings for the Tathagata to liberate, He would partake in the idea of selfhood, personality entity, and separate individuality.

Subhuti, though the common people accept egoity as real, the Tathagata declares that ego is not different from non-ego. Subhuti, those whom the Tathagata referred to as "common people" are not really common people; such is merely a name.

26. (About the emptiness of the marks of the Tathagata)

"Subhuti what do you think?

Can a man see the Tathagata by the thirty-two marks (of a great man)?"

Subhuti said:

"So it is, so it is. The Tathagata is seen by his thirty-two marks."

The Buddha said to Subhuti,

"If the Tathagata is to be seen by his thirty-two marks, can the Cakravartin be a Tathagata?"

Subhuti said to the Buddha:

"World-honored One, as I understand the teaching of the Buddha, the Tathagata is not to be seen by the thirty-two marks."

Then the World-honored One uttered this gatha:

"If any one by form sees me, By voice seeks me, This one walks the false path, And cannot see the Tathagata."

[Section XXVII. It is Erroneous to Affirm that All Things are Ever Extinguished]

Subhuti, if you should conceive the idea that the Tathagata attained the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment by reason of His perfect form, do not countenance such thoughts. The Tathagata's attainment was not by reason of His perfect form. [On the other hand] Subhuti, if you should conceive the idea that anyone in whom dawns the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment declares that all manifest standards are ended and extinguished, do not countenance such thoughts. Wherefore? Because the man in whom the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment dawns does not affirm concerning any formula that it is finally extinguished.

[Section XXVIII. Attachment to Rewards of Merit]

Subhuti, if one Bodhisattva bestows in charity sufficient of the seven treasures to fill as many worlds as there are sand-grains in the river Ganges, and another, realizing that all things are egoless, attains perfection through patient forbearance, the merit of the latter will far exceed that of the former. Why is this, Subhuti? It is because all Bodhisattvas are insentient as to the rewards of merit.

Then Subhuti said to Buddha: What is this saying, World-honored One, that Bodhisattvas are insentient as to rewards of merit?

[And Buddha answered]: Subhuti, Bodhisattvas who achieve merit should not be fettered with desire for rewards. Thus it is said that the rewards of merit are not received.

29. (About the emptiness of the Tathagata)

"Subhuti, if a man should declare that the Tathagata is the one who comes, or goes, or sits, or lies, he does not understand the meaning of my teachings.

Why?

The Tathagata does not come from anywhere, and does not depart to anywhere; therefore he is called the Tathagata.

[Section XXX. The Integral Principle]

Subhuti, if a good man or a good woman ground an infinite number of galaxies of worlds to dust, would the resulting minute particles be many?

Subhuti replied: Many indeed, World-honored One! Wherefore? Because if such were really minute particles Buddha would not have spoken of them as minute particles. For as to this, Buddha has declared that they are not really such. "Minute particles" is just the name given to them. Also, World-honored One, when the Tathagata speaks of galaxies of worlds, these are not worlds; for if reality could be predicated of a world it would be a self-existent cosmos and the Tathagata teaches that there is really no such thing. "Cosmos" is merely a figure of speech.

[Then Buddha said]: Subhuti, words cannot explain the real nature of a cosmos. Only common people fettered with desire make use of this arbitrary method.

[Section XXXI. Conventional Truth Should be Cut Off]

Subhuti, if anyone should say that Buddha declares any conception of egoity do you consider he would understand my teaching correctly?

No, World-honored One, such a man would not have any sound understanding of the Tathagata's teaching, because the World-honored One declares that notions of selfhood, personality, entity and separate individuality, as really existing, are erroneous - these terms are merely figures of speech.

[Thereupon Buddha said]: Subhuti, those who aspire to the Consummation of Incomparable Enlightenment should recognize and understand all varieties of things in the same way and cut off the arising of [views which are mere] aspects. Subhuti, as regards aspects, the Tathagata declares that in reality they are not such. They are called "aspects".

32. (CONCLUSION: About the emptiness of all dharmas)

"How does a man expound it for others? When one is not attached to form, it is of Suchness remaining unmoved.

Why?

"All composite things (samskrita) Are

-- like a dream,

-- a phantasm,

-- a bubble,

-- and a shadow,

-- Are like a dew-drop

-- and a flash of lightening;

They are thus to be regarded."

(i.e. Thus shall ye think of all this fleeting world:

-- A star at dawn,

-- a bubble in a stream;

-- A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,

-- A flickering lamp,

-- a phantom,

-- and a dream.

When the Buddha finished this Discourse the venerable Subhuti, together with the bhikshus, bhikshunis, lay-brothers and sisters, and the whole realms of Gods, Men and Titans, were filled with joy by His teaching, and, taking it sincerely to heart they went their ways.)

[End]