

THE DIAMOND SUTRA

Translated by Mu Soeng

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THUS HAVE I HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying at Anathapindika's garden in Jeta Grove in the city of Shravasti. With him was a large gathering of 1,250 monks and bodhisattva-mahasattvas. Early in the morning, when the meal time came, the Buddha put on his robe and, holding his bowl, entered the great city of Shravasti where he begged for food. Having finished begging from door to door, he came back to his own seat in the garden and took his meal. When this was done, he put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, spread his seat, and sat down, mindfully fixing his attention in front of him.

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 instructs them so well. World-Honored One, in the case of a son or daughter of a good family, who arouses the thought for the supreme awakening, how should they abide in it and how should they keep their thoughts under control?"

The Buddha replied, "Well said, indeed, O Subhuti! As you say, the Tathagata thinks very much of all the bodhisattvas and instructs them well. But now listen attentively and I will tell you how those who have set out on the bodhisattva path should abide in it, and how they should keep their thoughts under control."

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

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All the bodhisattva-mahasattvas, who undertake the practice of meditation, should cherish one thought only: 'When I attain perfect wisdom, I will liberate all sentient beings in every realm of the universe, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, or miraculously born; those with form, those without form, those with perception, those without perception, and those with neither perception nor non-perception. So long as any form of being is conceived, I must allow it to pass into the eternal peace of nirvana, into that realm of nirvana that leaves nothing behind, and to attain final awakening.'

"And yet although immeasurable, innumerable, and unlimited beings have been liberated, truly no being has been liberated. Why? Because no bodhisattva who is a true bodhisattva entertains such concepts as a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. Thus there are no sentient beings to be liberated and no self to attain perfect wisdom.

"Furthermore, Subhuti, in the practice of generosity a bodhisattva should be unsupported. He or she should practice generosity without regard to sight, sound, touch, flavor, smell, or

any thought that arises in it. Subhuti, thus should a bodhisattva practice generosity without being supported by any notion of a sign. Why? When a bodhisattva practices generosity without being supported by any notion of a sign, his or her merit will be beyond conception. Subhuti, what do you think? Can you measure the space extending eastward?"

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

"Subhuti, can you measure the space extending toward 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 generosity without cherishing any notion of a sign; it is beyond measure like space. Subhuti, a bodhisattva should persevere one-pointedly in this instruction.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is it possible to recognize the Tathagata by means of bodily marks?"

"No, World-Honored One. And why? When the Tathagata speaks of the bodily marks, he speaks of the no-possession of no marks."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All that has a form is an illusory existence. When the illusory nature of form is perceived, the Tathagata is recognized."

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, in times to come, will there be beings who, when they hear these teachings, have real faith and confidence in them?"

The Buddha said, "Subhuti, do not utter such words. Five hundred years after the passing of the Tathagata, there will be beings who, having practiced rules of morality and being thus possessed of merit, happen to hear of these statements and will understand their truth. Such beings, you should know, have planted their root of merit not only under one, two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but under countless Buddhas. When such beings, upon hearing these statements, arouse even one moment of pure and clear confidence, the Tathagata will see them and recognize their immeasurable amount of merit. Why? Because all these beings are free from the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul; they are free from the idea of a dharma as well as a no-dharma. Why? Because if they cherish the idea of a dharma, they are still attached to a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. If they cherish the idea of a no-dharma, they are attached to a self, a person, a being, or a living 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.'

"Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata attained the supreme awakening? Has he something he can preach?"

Subhuti said, "World-Honored One, as I understand the teaching of the Buddha, the Buddha has no doctrine to convey. The truth is ungraspable and inexpressible. It neither is nor is not. How is it so? Because all noble teachers are exalted by the unconditioned."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If a son or daughter of a good family should fill the three thousand chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures and give them all as a gift to the Tathagatas, would not the merit thus obtained be great?"

Subhuti said, "Very great, indeed, World-Honored One. Why? Because their merit is characterized with the quality of not being merit. Therefore, the Tathagata speaks of the merit as being great."

The Buddha: "If there is a person who, memorizing even four lines from this sutra, preaches it to others, his merit will be superior to the one just mentioned. Why? Because, Subhuti, all the Buddhas and their supreme awakening issue from this sutra. Subhuti, what is known as the teaching of the Buddha is not the teaching of the Buddha."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a srotapanna think, '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. A true srotapanna is one who does not enter sound, odor, flavor, touch, or any thought that arises."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a sakridagamin think, '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,' one who understands that there is really no going-and-coming, he or she is a true sakridagamin."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does an anagamin think, '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; therefore the one who realizes this is called an anagamin."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does an arhat think, '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, 'I have obtained arhatship,' this means that he has the idea of an ego-self, a person, a living being, or a soul.

"Although the Buddha has said that I am the foremost of those who have obtained arana-samadhi, that I am the foremost of those arhats who are liberated from unwholesome desires, World-Honored One, I cherish no thought that I have attained arhatship. World-Honored One, [if I did] you would not have declared of me, 'Subhuti, who is the foremost of those who dwell in peaceful abiding, does not dwell anywhere; that is why he is called a "dweller in peace."'

The Buddha asked Subhuti, "What do you think? When the Tathagata practiced in ancient times under Dipankara Buddha, did he attain any Dharma?"

"No, World-Honored One, he did not attain any Dharma while practicing with the Dipankara Buddha."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a bodhisattva create any harmonious buddha fields?"

"No, World-Honored One, he does not. Why? Because to create a harmonious buddha field is not to create a harmonious buddha field, and therefore it is known as creating a harmonious buddha field."

"So, Subhuti, all bodhisattvas should develop a pure, lucid mind that doesn't depend upon sight, sound, touch, flavor, smell, or any thought that arises in it. A bodhisattva should develop a mind that functions freely, without depending on anything whatsoever."

The Buddha continued, "Subhuti, what do you think? If someone were to have a body as large as Mount Sumeru, would not this body be very 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."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, would the number of grains of sand in all those rivers would be many?"

Subhuti said, "Very many, indeed, World-Honored One. Those Ganges Rivers would indeed be many, much more so the grains of sand in them."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If there were a good man or woman who filled the three thousand chiliocosms containing as many world systems as there are grains of sand in those Ganges Rivers with the seven precious treasures and then gave them all away out of generosity, would

not this merit be very great?"

Subhuti said, "Very great, indeed, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said, "I declare to you, Subhuti, if a good man or woman were to accept, practice, and explain even four lines of this sutra to others, such merit would be far greater than the preceding one.

"Moreover, Subhuti, wherever this sutra or even four lines of it are preached, that place will be respected by all beings including devas, ashuras, etc., as if it were the Buddha's own shrine or chaitya. How much more [worthy of respect] the person who can memorize and recite this sutra [for the benefit of others]! Subhuti, you should know that such a person achieves the highest, foremost, and most wonderful blessing. Wherever this sutra is kept, the place is to be regarded as if the Buddha or a venerable disciple of his were present."

At that time Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what will this sutra be called? How should we keep its teachings in mind?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "This sutra will be called the *Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita*, *The Diamond-Cutter Wisdom That Has Gone Beyond*, because it has the capacity to cut through illusions and afflictions and bring us to the shore of awakening, and by this title you will know it.

"And why? The reason is, Subhuti, that what the Tathagata has called the Prajnaparamita, the highest, transcendental wisdom, is not, in fact, the Prajnaparamita and therefore it is called Prajnaparamita.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any Dharma that the Tathagata has taught?"

"No, indeed, World-Honored One, there is none."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Are there many dust particles in the three thousand chiliocosms?"

"Yes, very many, indeed, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, the Tathagata teaches that what are called dust particles are not dust particles. That is why they are merely dust particles. And what the Tathagata calls chiliocosms are not chiliocosms. That is why they are merely chiliocosms.

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be recognized through the thirty-two marks [of a great man]?"

"No, World-Honored One, he cannot be recognized through the thirty-two marks. And why? Because the Tathagata has taught that what are called the thirty-two marks are really no-

marks. Therefore they are called the thirty-two marks."

"Subhuti, suppose a man or a woman were to renounce all his or her belongings as many times as there are grains of sands in the river Ganges, the merit thus gained would not exceed that of one who, memorizing even one gatha of four lines of this sutra, preaches them to others."

Venerable Subhuti, listening to this discourse, through the shock of the Doctrine, had a deep understanding of the meaning of the sutra and was moved to tears. He said to the Buddha, "It is wonderful, indeed, World-Honored One, how well the Tathagata has taught this discourse on Dharma. Through it [a new level of] cognition has been produced in me. Never before have I heard such a discourse on Dharma. World-Honored One, if someone hears this sutra and has pure and clear confidence in it, that person will gain true perception. And what is called true perception is indeed no-perception. This is what the Tathagata teaches as true perception.

"World-Honored One, it is not difficult for me to have faith in, to understand, and to memorize this sutra, which I have just heard. 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, understand, and memorize it, they will indeed be most wonderful beings. In them no perception of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul will take place. And why? Because that which is perception of self is no-perception. That which is perception of a being, a person, or a living soul is no-perception. And why? Because the Buddhas have left all perceptions behind."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "It is just as you say. If there is a person who, listening to this sutra, is not frightened, alarmed, or disturbed, you should know him as a wonderful person. Why? Because what the Tathagata has taught as *paramaparamita*, the highest perfection, is not the highest perfection and is therefore called the highest perfection.

"Moreover, Subhuti, the teaching of the Tathagata on the perfection of patience is really no perfection and therefore it is the perfection of patience. Why? Subhuti, when, in ancient times, my body was cut to pieces by the king of Kalinga, I did not have the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. Why? When at that time my body was dismembered limb after limb, joint after joint, feelings of anger and ill will would have arisen in me had I had the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul.

"With my superknowledge I recall that in my past five hundred life-times I have led the life of a sage devoted to patience and during those times I did not have the idea of an ego, a person,

a being, or a soul.

"Therefore, Subhuti, a bodhisattva, detaching him- or herself from all ideas, should rouse the desire for utmost, supreme, and perfect awakening. He or she should produce thoughts that are unsupported by forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, or mind objects, unsupported by Dharma, unsupported by no-Dharma, unsupported by everything. And why? Because all supports are no supports. This is the reason why the Buddha teaches that a bodhisattva should practice generosity without dwelling on form. Subhuti, the reason he practices generosity is to benefit all beings.

"The Tathagata teaches that all ideas are no-ideas and that all beings are no-beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks of things as they are, speaks what is true, and speaks in accordance with reality. He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, in the Dharma attained by the Tathagata there is neither truth nor falsehood.

"Subhuti, if a bodhisattva should practice generosity while still depending on form, he or she is like someone walking in the dark. He or she will not see anything. But when a bodhisattva practices generosity without depending on form, he or she is like someone with good eyesight walking in the bright sunshine—he or she can see all shapes and colors.

"Subhuti, if in times to come the sons and daughters of good families memorize and recite this sutra, they will be seen and recognized by the Tathagata with his buddha knowledge, and they will all acquire immeasurable and infinite merit.

"Furthermore, Subhuti, if one should renounce in the morning all one's belongings as many times as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges, and if one should do likewise at noon and in the evening and continue thus for countless ages; and if someone else, on hearing this discourse on Dharma, were to accept it with a believing heart, the merit acquired by the latter would far exceed that of the former. How much more the merit of one who would copy, memorize, learn, recite, and expound it for others!

"Subhuti, to sum up, immeasurable, innumerable, and incomprehensible is this discourse on Dharma. The Tathagata has taught it for the well-being of those who have set out in the best, in the most excellent vehicle.

Those who take up this discourse on Dharma, bear it in mind, recite, study, and expound it in detail for others will all be known to the Tathagata and recognized by him and acquire merit that is incomparable, measureless, and infinite. Such beings will share in the supreme awaken-

ing attained by the Tathagata. Why? Because, Subhuti, this course on the Dharma could not be understood by beings of inferior resolve, nor by those attached to the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. [Being so caught up), they are unable to hear, memorize, learn, recite, and expound this sutra.

"Moreover, Subhuti, the spot of earth where this sutra will be revealed, that spot of earth will be worthy of worship by the whole world with its gods, men, ashuras, worthy of being saluted respectfully, worthy of being honored by circumambulation. That spot of earth will be like a shrine or temple.

"And yet Subhuti, there will be some sons and daughters of good families who will be despised for their memorizing and reciting of this sutra. This is due to their previous evil karma. The impure deeds that these beings have done in their former lives are liable to lead them into states of woe in this lifetime. But [if they are not averse to] being despised in the present life, whatever evil karma they produced in their previous lives will be destroyed, and they will be able to attain the awakening of a Buddha.

"Subhuti, with my superknowledge, I recall that in the past, even before I was with Dipankara Buddha, I made offerings, and had been attendant, to eighty-four thousand multi-million Buddhas. But the merit I gained from that service is not one hundredth nor even one hundredth million of the merit of someone who, at the time of the collapse of the Dharma, memorizes, recites, and learns from this sutra and expounds it to others. It bears neither number, nor fraction, nor enumeration, nor similarity, nor comparison, nor resemblance.

"Moreover, Subhuti, the merit acquired by good men and women who, at the time of the collapse of the Dharma, memorize, recite, and learn this sutra will be so great that if I were to describe it in detail, some people would become suspicious and disbelieving, and their minds might become disoriented. Subhuti, you should know that the meaning of this sutra is beyond comprehension and discussion. Likewise, the fruit that results from receiving and practicing this sutra is beyond comprehension and discussion."

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, may I ask you again? If the sons and daughters of good family wish to arouse the thought of supreme enlightenment, how should they abide in it? How should they keep their thought under control?"

The Buddha replied, "Someone who has set out on the bodhisattva path should cherish one

thought only: 'When I attain perfect wisdom, I will liberate all sentient beings in every realm of the universe, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, miraculously born; those with form, those without form, those with perception, those without perception, and those with neither perception nor non-perception so long as any form of being is conceived, I must allow it to pass into the eternal peace of nirvana, into that realm of nirvana that leaves nothing behind, and to attain final awakening.'

"And yet, although immeasurable, innumerable, and unlimited beings have been liberated, truly no being has been liberated. Why, Subhuti? Because if a bodhisattva entertains such thoughts as a self, a person, a being, or a living soul, he is not a true bodhisattva.

"Subhuti, in fact, there is no independently existing object of mind called the supreme, perfect awakening. What do you think, Subhuti? In ancient times, when the Tathagata was living with Dipankara Buddha, did he attain anything called the supreme, perfect awakening?"

"No, World-Honored One. According to what I understand, there is no attainment of anything called the supreme, perfect awakening."

The Buddha said, "Right you are! It is for this reason that the Dipankara Buddha then predicted of me: 'You, young Brahmin, will be in a future time a Tathagata, an arhat, fully enlightened, by the name of Shakyamuni!' This prediction was made because there is, in fact, nothing that can be attained that is called the supreme, perfect awakening.

"Why is this? Because, Subhuti, 'Tathagata' is synonymous with true suchness (tathata) of all dharmas. And if someone were to say, 'The Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right, and perfect liberation,' he would be speaking falsely. Why? Because there is no Dharma by which the Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right, and perfect awakening. And the Dharma that the Tathagata has fully known and demonstrated is neither graspable nor elusive. Therefore the Tathagata teaches "All dharmas are the Buddha's own and special Dharmas.' Why? All dharmas, Subhuti, have been taught by the Tathagata as no-dharmas. Therefore all dharmas are expediently called the Buddha's own and special Dharmas.

"Subhuti, a comparison can be made with the idea of a great human body. What the Tathagata calls a great body is in fact a no-body. So it is, Subhuti, with the bodhisattvas. If a bodhisattva were to think, 'I will lead all beings to nirvana,' he or she should not be considered a bodhisattva. Why? Because there is no such thing as a 'bodhi being' (bodhi sattva). It is because of this that the Tathagata teaches that all dharmas are without the notion of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul.

"Subhuti, furthermore, if a bodhisattva were to say, 'I will create harmonious buddha fields,' he or she likewise should not be called a bodhi being. Why? The Tathagata has taught that the harmonious buddha fields are not in fact harmonious buddha fields. Such is merely a name. It is thus that he speaks of truly harmonious buddha fields.

"Subhuti, a bodhisattva who thoroughly understands the principle of no-self and no-dharma as the true self and the true Dharma [respectively] is to be considered an authentic bodhisattva.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the human eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the divine eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the gnostic eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the prajna eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the buddha eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata taught about the grains of sand in the Ganges River?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he has."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River and if there were a buddha land for each one of those grains of sand, would those buddha lands be many?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, they would be many indeed."

"Subhuti, I declare to you that however many living beings there may be in all of these manifold buddha lands and though each one of them has numerous trends of thought, the Tathagata has known them all. How is it so? Because the Tathagata teaches that all trends of thought are actually not trends of thought, and that is why he calls them trends of thought. Why? Because the past mind cannot be gotten hold of, the future mind cannot be gotten hold of, and the present mind cannot be gotten hold of.

"What do you think, Subhuti? If a son or daughter of good family were to fill the three thousand chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures and then give them as a gift to the *Tathagatas*,

the arhats, the fully enlightened ones, would the merit of that act be great?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, it would be great indeed, O Lord."

The Buddha said, "So it is, Subhuti, so it is. But if, in reality, there were such a thing as a great heap of merit, the Tathagata would not have spoken of it as a great heap of merit. Such is merely a name. It is because it is without a foundation that the Tathagata has spoken of it as a great heap of merit."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be seen by means of his perfectly formed body?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand it, the Tathagata is not to be seen by means of his perfectly formed body. Why? Because the Tathagata has taught that what is called a perfectly formed body is not a perfectly formed body. Such is merely a name. Therefore it is called a perfectly formed body."

The Buddha asked further, "What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be seen by means of his possession of bodily marks?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand it, the Tathagata cannot be by means of his possession of the bodily marks. Why? Because the Tathagata has taught that what are called the bodily marks are not in fact bodily marks. Such is merely a name. Therefore they are called the bodily marks."

The Buddha asked, "What do you think, Subhuti? Does the Tathagata think, 'by me has Dharma been taught'? Subhuti, whosoever says that the Tathagata thinks this way slanders the Tathagata; he would misrepresent me by seizing on what is not there. Why? The Tathagata has taught that in the teaching of the Dharma there is no Dharma that can be pointed to as Dharma. Such is merely a name. That is why it is called the teaching of Dharma."

Subhuti asked, "World-Honored One, will there be beings in the future, five hundred years from now, at the time of the collapse of the Dharma, who will truly believe these teachings?"

The Buddha said, "Subhuti, there are neither beings nor no-beings. Why? The Tathagata has taught that what are called beings are truly no beings. Such is merely a name. That is why the Tathagata has spoken of them as beings.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any Dharma by [means of] which the Tathagata has understood perfect, unexcelled awakening?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand it, there is no Dharma by which

the Tathagata has understood perfect, unexcelled awakening.”

The Buddha said, "So it is, Subhuti, so it is. Not even the least trace of Dharma is to be found anywhere. Such is merely a name. That is why it is called the perfect, unexcelled awakening.

"Furthermore, Subhuti, the dharma called the anuttara samyaksambodhi is at one with everything else. Nothing in it is at variance with anything else. That is why it is called the perfect, unexcelled awakening. It is self-identical through the absence of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul, and that is why it is fully known as the totality of all the wholesome dharmas. And yet, Subhuti, no dharmas have been taught by the Tathagata. Such is merely a name. Thus are they called 'wholesome dharmas.'"

"Again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of a good family were to pile up the seven precious treasures in the three thousand chiliocosms and give them away as a gift, the merit resulting from such an act would be much less than that of someone who was to memorize but one stanza from this *Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita* and teach it to others. The merit of the latter would indeed be so great that no comparison could be made.

"Subhuti, you must not think that the Tathagata entertains the notion 'I will bring all living beings to the shore of awakening.' Why? Because in reality there are no beings who can be liberated by the Tathagata. To entertain the notion that there are beings who can be liberated would be to partake in the idea of a self, a person, a being and a living soul. The Tathagata has taught that one must not seize upon these notions, and yet foolish common people have seized upon them. Subhuti, though the Tathagata uses the words 'foolish common people,' in reality there are no such people. Such is merely a name. That is why they are called foolish common people.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is the Tathagata to be recognized by means of his possession of [bodily] marks?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said, "If, Subhuti, the Tathagata could be recognized by means of his possession of [bodily] marks, then the *chakravartin* also would be a Tathagata. Therefore the Tathagata is not to be recognized by means of his possession of [bodily] marks."

Subhuti said, "As I understand the Tathagata's teaching, he is not to be recognized by means of his [bodily] marks."

Then the Buddha uttered the following stanzas:

*Those who saw me through my form,
And those who heard me by my voice,
False endeavors they engaged in;
Me those people will not see.*

*A Buddha is to be seen [known] through the Dharma,
And his guidance manifests from Dharma bodies.
Yet the true nature of the Dharma cannot be understood,
And no one can be conscious of it as an object.*

"Subhuti, you should not think that the Tathagata has attained the anuttara samyaksambodhi by virtue of his possession of the thirty-two [bodily] marks. Why? Because the Tathagata could not have attained the anuttara samyaksambodhi through possession of [bodily] marks [alone].

"At the same time, Subhuti, no one should say that those who have set out on the path of the bodhisattva need to see all dharmas in terms of their annihilation. I declare to you, Subhuti, that those who set out in the bodhisattvayana do not entertain any notion of the annihilation of dharmas.

"Again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family were to fill as many world systems as there are grains of sands in the Ganges River with the seven precious treasures and give them as a gift to the *Tathagatas*, arhats, fully enlightened ones, and if, on the other hand, a bodhisattva were to gain the insight that all dharmas are empty and have no self-nature or essence of their own, his or her merit would be immeasurably and incalculably [greater than that of the former]. Why is that? Because bodhisattvas are immune to any rewards of merit."

Subhuti asked, "What does it mean, World-Honored One, that the bodhisattvas are immune to rewards of merit?"

The Buddha said, "The bodhisattva whose merit is great does not get caught in the desire for or idea of merit. She or he understands that such is merely a name. It is for this reason that the bodhisattva is immune to the rewards of merit.

"Whosoever says that the Tathagata goes or comes, stands, sits or lies down does not under-

stand the meaning of my teaching. Why? The Tathagata does not come from anywhere, nor does he depart to anywhere. Therefore he is called the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully enlightened one.

"Subhuti, what do you think? If a son or daughter of good family were to grind as many world systems as there are particles of dust in the three thousand chiliocosms as finely as they can be ground with incalculable vigor, would that be an enormous collection of dust particles?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, it would indeed be an enormous collection. Why? If the dust particles had any real self-existence, the Tathagata would not have called them an enormous collection of dust particles. As I understand it, what the Tathagata calls a collection of dust particles is not in essence a collection of dust particles. Such is merely a name. It is for this reason that it is called a collection of dust particles. Moreover, what the Tathagata has taught as the system of three thousand chiliocosms is not in fact a system of chiliocosms. That is why they are called chiliocosms. To consider the chiliocosms as real would be a case of seizing on a material object that is nothing but an assembly of dust particles. That is why it is called seizing on an object."

The Buddha added, "What is called seizing upon a material object is a matter of linguistic convention without factual content. It is not a dharma or a no-dharma. And yet the foolish common people have seized upon it.

"Subhuti, what do you think? If someone were to say that the Tathagata has taught the view of self, person, being, or living soul, would that person have understood my meaning?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One, such a person would not have understood the Tathagata. Why? What the Tathagata calls a self-view, a person-view, a being-view, or a living soul-view are not in essence a self-view, a person-view, a being-view, or a living soul-view. That is why they are called a self-view, a person-view, a being-view, or a living soul-view."

The Buddha said, "It is in this manner, Subhuti, that someone who has set out on the bodhisattva path should know all dharmas, see that all dharmas are like this, and should have confidence in the understanding of all dharmas without any conception of dharmas. Subhuti, what the Tathagata has called a conception of dharmas is not a conception of dharmas. Such is merely a name. That is why it is called a conception of dharmas.

"Again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family were to pile up the seven precious treasures in all the three thousand chiliocosms and give them away as a gift to the Tathagatas,

the arhats, and the fully enlightened ones, and, on the other hand, if someone were to take but one stanza from this *Vajrachedika Prajnaparamita* and bear it in mind, teach it, recite and study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, his or her merit would be much more immeasurable and incalculable [than that of the former]. And in what spirit would he or she illuminate it for others? Without being caught up in the appearances of things in themselves but understanding the nature of things just as they are. Why? Because:

So you should view all of the fleeting worlds:

A star at dawn, a bubble in the stream;

A flash of lightning in a summer cloud;

A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

When the Buddha had finished [speaking], Venerable Subhuti, the monks and nuns, the pious lay men and women, the bodhisattvas, and the whole world with its gods, ashuras, and *gandharvas* were filled with joy at the teaching, and, taking it to heart, they went their separate ways.

THE END