

Vajracchedikā Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra

Diamond Cutter Perfect Wisdom Sutra

Translated by Red Pine, edited by Kokyo

1

Thus have I heard: Once the Bhagavān was dwelling near Shrāvasti at Anāthapindada Garden in Jeta Forest together with the full assembly of twelve-hundred fifty monks and a great many fearless bodhisattvas. One day before noon, the Bhagavān put on his patched robe and picked up his bowl and entered the capital of Shrāvasti for offerings. After begging for food in the city and eating his meal of rice, he returned from his daily round in the afternoon, put his robe and bowl away, washed his feet, and sat down on the appointed seat. After crossing his legs and adjusting his body, he turned his awareness to what was before him. A number of monks then came up to where the Bhagavān was sitting. After touching their heads to his feet, they walked around him to the right three times and sat down to one side.

2

On this occasion, the venerable Subhūti was also present in the assembly. Rising from his seat, he uncovered one shoulder and touched his right knee to the ground. Pressing his palms together and bowing to the Buddha, he said: “It is rare, Bhagavān, most rare, indeed, Sugata, how the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One blesses fearless bodhisattvas with the best of blessings. And it is rare, Bhagavān, how the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One entrusts fearless bodhisattvas with the greatest of trusts.

“Even so, Bhagavān, if a noble son or daughter should set forth on the bodhisattva path, how should they stand, how should they walk, and how should they control their thoughts?”

The Buddha told the venerable Subhūti, “Well said, Subhūti. Well said. So it is, Subhūti. It is as you say. The Tathāgata blesses fearless bodhisattvas with the best of blessings and entrusts fearless bodhisattvas with the greatest of trusts. You should therefore truly listen, Subhūti, and consider this well. I shall tell you how those who set forth on the bodhisattva path should stand, how they should walk, and how they should control their thoughts.”

The venerable Subhūti answered, “May it be so, Bhagavān,” and gave his full attention.

3

The Buddha said to him, “Subhūti, those who would now set forth on the bodhisattva path should thus give birth to this thought: ‘However many beings there are in whatever realms of being might exist, whether they are born from an egg or born from a womb, born from the water or born from the air, whether they have form or no form, whether they have perception or no perception or neither perception nor no perception, in whatever conceivable realm of being one might conceive of beings, in the realm of complete nirvana I shall liberate them all. And though I thus liberate countless beings, not a single being is liberated.’

“And why not? Subhūti, a bodhisattva who creates the perception of a being cannot be called a ‘bodhisattva.’ And why not? Subhūti, no one can be called a bodhisattva who creates the perception of a self or who creates the perception of a being, a life, or a soul.”

4

“Moreover, Subhūti, when bodhisattvas give a gift, they should not be attached to a thing. When they give a gift, they should not be attached to anything at all. They should not be attached to a sight when they give a gift. Nor should they be attached to a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a dharma when they give a gift. Thus, Subhūti, fearless bodhisattvas should give a gift without being attached to the perception of an object. And why? Subhūti, the body of merit of those bodhisattvas who give a gift without being attached is not easy to measure. What do you think, Subhūti, is the space to the east easy to measure?”

Subhūti replied, “No, it is not, Bhagavān.”

The Buddha said, “Likewise, is the space to the south, to the west, to the north, in between, above, below, or in any of the ten directions easy to measure?”

Subhūti replied, “No, it is not, Bhagavān.”

The Buddha said, “So it is, Subhūti. The body of merit of those bodhisattvas who give a gift without being attached is not easy to measure. Thus, Subhūti, those who set forth on the bodhisattva path should give a gift without being attached to the perception of an object.”

5

“What do you think, Subhūti, can the Tathāgata be seen by means of the possession of attributes?”

Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the possession of attributes. And why not? Bhagavān, what the Tathāgata says is the possession of attributes is no possession of attributes.”

This having been said, the Buddha told the venerable Subhūti, “Since the possession of attributes is an illusion, Subhūti, and no possession of attributes is no illusion, by means of attributes that are no attributes the Tathāgata can, indeed, be seen.”

6

This having been said, the venerable Subhūti asked the Buddha, “Bhagavān, will there be any beings in the future, in the final epoch, in the final period, in the final five hundred years of the dharma-ending age, who give birth to a perception of the truth of the words of a sutra such as that spoken here?”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, do not ask, ‘Will there be any beings in the future, in the final epoch, in the final period, in the final five hundred years of the dharma-ending age, who give birth to a perception of the truth of the words of a sutra such as that spoken here?’ Surely, Subhūti, in the future, in the final epoch, in the final period, in the final five hundred years of the dharma-ending age, there will be fearless bodhisattvas who are capable, virtuous, and wise who give birth to a perception of the truth of the words of a sutra such as that spoken here.

“Indeed, Subhūti, such fearless bodhisattvas will have honored not just one buddha, and they will have planted auspicious roots before not just one buddha. Surely, Subhūti, such fearless bodhisattvas will have honored countless hundreds and thousands of buddhas, and they will have planted auspicious roots before countless hundreds and thousands of buddhas. In the words of a sutra such as that spoken here, they are sure to gain perfect clarity of mind. The Tathāgata knows them, Subhūti, by means of his buddha knowledge. And the Tathāgata sees them, Subhūti, by means of his buddha vision. The Tathāgata is aware of them, Subhūti. For they all produce and receive a measureless, infinite body of merit.

“And how so? Because, Subhūti, these fearless bodhisattvas do not create the perception of a self. Nor do they create the perception of a being, a life,

or a soul. Nor, Subhūti, do these fearless bodhisattvas create the perception of a dharma, much less the perception of no dharma. Subhūti, they do not create a perception nor no perception.

“And why not? Because, Subhūti, if these fearless bodhisattvas created the perception of a dharma, they would be attached to a self, a being, a life, and a soul. Likewise, if they created the perception of no dharma, they would be attached to a self, a being, a life, and a soul.

“And why not? Because surely, Subhūti, fearless bodhisattvas do not cling to a dharma, much less to no dharma. This is the meaning behind the Tathāgata’s saying, ‘A dharma teaching is like a raft. If you should let go of dharmas, how much more so no dharmas.’”

7

Once again, the Buddha asked the venerable Subhūti, “What do you think, Subhūti? Did the Tathāgata realize any such dharma as ‘unexcelled, perfect enlightenment’? And does the Tathāgata teach any such dharma?”

The venerable Subhūti thereupon answered, “Bhagavān, as I understand the meaning of what the Buddha says, the Tathāgata did not realize any such dharma as ‘unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.’ Nor does the Tathāgata teach such a dharma. And why? Because this dharma realized and taught by the Tathāgata is incomprehensible and inexpressible and neither a dharma nor no dharma. And why? Because sages arise from what is uncreated.”

8

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? If some noble son or daughter filled the billion worlds of this universe with the seven jewels and gave them as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, would the body of merit produced as a result by this noble son or daughter be great?”

Subhūti answered, “Great, indeed, Bhagavān. The body of merit produced as a result by that noble son or daughter would be great, Sugata. And how so? Bhagavān, whatever is said by the Tathāgata to be a body of merit is said by the Tathāgata to be no body. Thus does the Tathāgata speak of a body of merit as a ‘body of merit.’”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, if, instead of filling the billion worlds of this universe with the seven jewels and giving them as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, this noble son or daughter grasped but one four-line verse of this dharma teaching and made it known and

explained it in detail to others, the body of merit produced as a result would be immeasurably, infinitely greater. And how so? Subhūti, from this is born the unexcelled, perfect enlightenment of tathāgatas, arhats, and fully-enlightened ones. From this are born buddhas and bhagavāns. And how so? Buddha dharmas, Subhūti, 'buddha dharmas' are spoken of by the Tathāgata as no buddha dharmas. Thus are they called 'buddha dharmas.'"

9

"Tell me, Subhūti. Do those who enter the stream think, 'I have attained the goal of stream entry'?"

Subhūti replied, "No, indeed, Bhagavān. Those who enter the stream do not think, 'I have attained the goal of stream entry.' And why not? Bhagavān, they do not find any such dharma. Thus are they said to 'enter the stream.' They do not find a sight, nor do they find a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a dharma. Thus are they said to 'enter the stream.' Bhagavān, if those who enter the stream should think, 'I have attained the goal of stream entry,' they would be attached to a self, they would be attached to a being, a life, and a soul."

The Buddha said, "Tell me, Subhūti. Do those who return once more think, 'I have attained the goal of once returning'?"

Subhūti replied, "No, indeed, Bhagavān. Those who return once more do not think, 'I have attained the goal of once returning.' And why not? Bhagavān, they do not find any such dharma as 'once returning.' Thus are they said to 'return once more.'"

The Buddha said, "Tell me, Subhūti. Do those who return no more think, 'I have attained the goal of no returning.'"

Subhūti replied, "No, indeed, Bhagavān. Those who return no more do not think 'I have attained the goal of no returning.' And why not? Bhagavān, they do not find any such dharma as 'no returning.' Thus are they said to 'return no more.'"

The Buddha said, "Tell me, Subhūti. Do those who are free from rebirth think, 'I have attained freedom from rebirth'?"

Subhūti replied, "No, indeed, Bhagavān. Those who are free from rebirth do not think, 'I have attained freedom from rebirth.' And why not? Bhagavān, there is no such dharma as 'freedom from rebirth.' Thus are they said to be 'free from rebirth.' If, Bhagavān, those who are free from rebirth should think, 'I have attained freedom from rebirth,' they would be attached to a self, they would be attached to a being, a life, and a soul.

“And how so? Bhagavān, the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One has declared that I am foremost among those who dwell free of passion. Bhagavān, although I am free from rebirth and without desires, I do not think, ‘I am free from rebirth and without desires.’ Bhagavān, if I thought, ‘I have attained freedom from rebirth,’ the Tathāgata would not have singled me out by saying, ‘Foremost among those who dwell free of passion is the noble son Subhūti. For he dwells nowhere at all. Thus is he called one who dwells free of passion who “dwells free of passion.””

10

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata obtain any such dharma in the presence of Dipankara Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One?”

Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata did not obtain any such dharma in the presence of Dipankara Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, if any bodhisattva should thus claim, ‘I shall bring about the transformation of a world,’ such a claim would be untrue. And how so? The transformation of a world, Subhūti, the ‘transformation of a world’ is said by the Tathāgata to be no transformation. Thus is it called the ‘transformation of a world.’ Therefore, Subhūti, fearless bodhisattvas should thus give birth to a thought that is not attached and not give birth to a thought attached to anything. They should not give birth to a thought attached to a sight. Nor should they give birth to a thought attached to a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a dharma.

“Subhūti, imagine a person with an immense, perfect body whose self-existence is like that of Mount Sumeru. What do you think, Subhūti? Would such self-existence be great?”

Subhūti replied, “Great, indeed, Bhagavān. Such self-existence would be great, Sugata. And why? Because self-existence, Bhagavān, ‘self-existence’ is said by the Tathāgata to be no existence. Thus is it called ‘self-existence.’ Because, Bhagavān, it is neither existence nor no existence. Thus is it called ‘self-existence.’”

11

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? If there were as many rivers as there are grains of sand in the great river of the Ganges, would the number of grains of sand in all those rivers be great?”

Subhūti replied, “The number of rivers would be great, Bhagavān, how much more so their grains of sand.”

The Buddha said, “I shall tell you, Subhūti, so you shall know. If a man or woman filled as many worlds as there are grains of sand in all those rivers with the seven jewels and gave them as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, what do you think, Subhūti, would the body of merit produced as a result by that man or woman be great?”

Subhūti replied, “It would be great, Bhagavān, great, indeed, Sugata. The body of merit produced as a result by that man or woman would be immeasurable and infinite.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, if, then, a man or woman filled as many worlds as that with the seven jewels and gave them as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, and a noble son or daughter grasped but one four-line verse of this dharma teaching and made it known and explained it to others, the body of merit produced as a result would be immeasurably, infinitely greater.”

12

“Furthermore, Subhūti, wherever but one four-line verse of this dharma teaching is spoken or explained, that place is like a stupa in the world of devas, humans, and asuras. How much more shall they be remarkably blessed, Subhūti, who memorize, recite, and master this entire teaching and explain it in detail to others. For in that place, Subhūti, dwells a teacher or one who represents the teacher of wisdom.”

13

This having been said, the venerable Subhūti asked, “Bhagavān, what is the name of this dharma teaching, and how should we remember it?”

The Buddha told the venerable Subhūti, “The name of this dharma teaching, Subhūti, is the *Perfection of Wisdom*. Thus should you remember it. And how so? Subhūti, what the Tathāgata says is the perfection of wisdom, the Tathāgata says is no perfection. Thus is it called the ‘perfection of wisdom.’

“Subhūti, what do you think? Is there any such dharma spoken by the Tathāgata?”

Subhūti said, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. There is no such dharma spoken by the Tathāgata.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Are all the specks of dust in the billion-world-system of a universe many?”

Subhūti said, “Many, Bhagavān. The specks of dust are many, Sugata. And how so? Because, Bhagavān, what the Tathāgata says is a speck of dust, Bhagavān, the Tathāgata says is no speck. Thus is it called a ‘speck of dust.’ And what the Tathāgata says is a world-system, the Tathāgata says is no system. Thus is it called a ‘world-system.’”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One be seen by means of the thirty-two attributes of a perfect person?”

Subhūti said, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One cannot be seen by means of the thirty-two attributes of a perfect person. And why not? Because, Bhagavān, what the Tathāgata says are the thirty-two attributes of a perfect person, Bhagavān, the Tathāgata says are no attributes. Thus are they called the ‘thirty-two attributes of a perfect person.’”

The Buddha said, “Furthermore, Subhūti, if a man or woman renounced their self-existence every day as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges and renounced their self-existence in this manner for as many kalpas as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, and someone grasped but one four-line verse of this dharma teaching and made it known and explained it to others, the body of merit produced as a result would be immeasurably, infinitely greater.”

14

By the force of this dharma, the venerable Subhūti was moved to tears. Wiping his eyes, he said to the Buddha, “How remarkable, Bhagavān, how most remarkable, Sugata, is this dharma teaching that the Bhagavān speaks for the benefit of those beings who seek the foremost of paths, for the benefit of those who seek the best of paths, and from which my own awareness is born. Bhagavān, I have never heard such a teaching as this! They shall be the most remarkably blessed of bodhisattvas, Bhagavān, who hear what is said in this sutra and give birth to a perception of its truth. And how so? Bhagavān, a perception of its truth is no perception of its truth. Thus does the Tathāgata speak of a perception of its truth as a ‘perception of its truth.’

“Hearing such a dharma teaching as this, Bhagavān, it is not remarkable that I should trust and believe it. But in the future, Bhagavān, in the final epoch, in the final period, in the final five hundred years of the dharma-ending age, Bhagavān, those beings who grasp this dharma teaching and

memorize it, recite it, master it, and explain it in detail to others, they shall be most remarkably blessed. Moreover, Bhagavān, they shall not create the perception of a self, nor shall they create the perception of a being, the perception of a life, or the perception of a soul. They shall create neither a perception nor no perception. And why not? Bhagavān, the perception of a self is no perception, and the perception of a being, a life, or a soul is also no perception. And why not? Because buddhas and bhagavāns are free of all perceptions.”

This having been said, the Buddha told the venerable Subhūti, “So it is, Subhūti. So it is. Those beings shall be most remarkably blessed, Subhūti, who are not alarmed, not frightened, and not distressed by what is said in this sutra. And how so? Subhūti, what the Tathāgata proclaims as the best of perfections is, in truth, no perfection. Moreover, Subhūti, what the Tathāgata proclaims as the best of perfections is also proclaimed by countless buddhas and bhagavāns. Thus is it called the ‘best of perfections.’

“So, too, Subhūti, is the Tathāgata’s perfection of forbearance no perfection. And how so? Subhūti, when King Kali cut off my limbs, my ears and nose, and my flesh, at that moment I had no perception of a self, a being, a life, or a soul. I had neither a perception nor no perception. And why not? At that moment, Subhūti, if I had had the perception of a self, at that moment I would have also had the perception of anger. Or if I had had the perception of a being, the perception of a life, or the perception of a soul, at that moment I would have had the perception of anger. And how so? Subhūti, I recall the five hundred lifetimes I was the mendicant Kshanti, and during that time I had no perception of a self. Nor did I have the perception of a being, the perception of a life, or the perception of a soul.

“Therefore, Subhūti, fearless bodhisattvas should get rid of all perceptions in giving birth to the thought of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. They should not give birth to a thought attached to a sight, nor should they give birth to a thought attached to a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a dharma. They should not give birth to a thought attached to a dharma, nor should they give birth to a thought attached to no dharma. They should not give birth to a thought attached to anything. And why not? Every attachment is no attachment. Thus the Tathāgata says that bodhisattvas should give gifts without being attached. They should give gifts without being attached to a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a dharma.

“Moreover, Subhūti, bodhisattvas should practice charity in this manner for the benefit of all beings. And how so? Subhūti, the perception of a being is no perception. Likewise, all the beings of whom the Tathāgata speaks are thus no beings. And how so? Subhūti, what the Tathāgata says is real. What the Tathāgata says is true and is as he says it is and is not other than as he says it is. What the Tathāgata says is not false. Moreover, Subhūti, in the dharma realized, taught, and reflected on by the Tathāgata, there is nothing true and nothing false.

“Subhūti, imagine a person who enters a dark place and who can’t see a thing. He is like a bodhisattva ruled by objects, like someone practicing charity ruled by objects. Now, Subhūti, imagine a person with eyesight at the end of the night when the sun shines forth who can see all manner of things. He is like a bodhisattva not ruled by objects, like someone practicing charity not ruled by objects.

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if a noble son or daughter should grasp this dharma teaching and memorize it, recite it, master it, and explain it in detail to others, the Tathāgata will know them, Subhūti, by means of his buddha knowledge. And the Tathāgata will see them, Subhūti, by means of his buddha vision. The Tathāgata will be aware of them, Subhūti, for all such beings produce and obtain an immeasurable, infinite body of merit.”

15

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if a man or woman renounced their self-existence during the morning as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, and likewise renounced their self-existence during midday as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, and renounced their self-existence during the afternoon as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, and renounced their self-existence in this manner for many hundreds and thousands of millions and trillions of kalpas, and someone heard this dharma teaching and did not reject it, the body of merit produced as a result would be immeasurably, infinitely greater. How much more so if they not only wrote it down but grasped it, memorized it, recited it, mastered it, and explained it in detail to others.

“Furthermore, Subhūti, inconceivable and incomparable is this dharma teaching, this dharma teaching spoken by the Tathāgata, Subhūti, for the benefit of those beings who set forth on the foremost of paths, for the benefit of those beings who set forth on the best of paths. For if someone

grasps, memorizes, recites, and masters this dharma teaching and explains it in detail to others, the Tathāgata will know them, Subhūti, by means of his buddha knowledge. And the Tathāgata will see them, Subhūti, by means of his buddha vision. The Tathāgata will be aware of them, Subhūti, for all such beings produce a body of merit that has no limits, a body of merit that is inconceivable, incomparable, immeasurable, and boundless. For all such beings as these, Subhūti, likewise wear enlightenment upon their shoulders. And how so? Subhūti, this dharma teaching cannot be heard by beings of lesser aspiration: not by those who mistakenly perceive a self, nor by those who mistakenly perceive a being, a life, or a soul. For beings who lack the bodhisattva's aspiration cannot hear, grasp, memorize, recite, or master this dharma teaching.

“Moreover, Subhūti, wherever this sutra is explained, that place shall be honored. Whether in the realm of devas, humans, or asuras, that place shall be honored with prostrations and circumambulations. That place shall be like a stupa.”

16

“Nevertheless, Subhūti, the noble son or daughter who grasps, memorizes, recites, and masters such a sutra as this and contemplates it thoroughly and explains it in detail to others will suffer their contempt, their utter contempt. And how could this be? Subhūti, the bad karma created by these beings in their past lives should result in an unfortunate rebirth. But now, by suffering such contempt, they put an end to the bad karma of their past lives and attain the enlightenment of buddhas.

“Subhūti, I recall in the past, during the countless, infinite kalpas before Dipankara Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One, I served eighty-four hundred, thousand, million, trillion other buddhas and served them without fail. Nevertheless, Subhūti, although I served those buddhas and Bhagavāns and served them without fail, in the future, in the final epoch, in the final period, in the final five hundred years of the dharma-ending age, the body of merit of the person who grasps, memorizes, recites, and masters such a sutra as this and explains it in detail to others will exceed my former body of merit not by a hundredfold or a thousandfold or a hundred thousandfold or a millionfold or a hundred millionfold or a thousand millionfold or a hundred-thousand millionfold, but by an amount that cannot be measured, calculated, illustrated, characterized, or even imagined. Subhūti, if I were to describe this noble son or daughter's

body of merit, the full extent of the body of merit this noble son or daughter would thereby produce and obtain, it would bewilder or disturb people's minds. Furthermore, Subhūti, inconceivable and incomparable is this dharma teaching spoken by the Tathāgata, and inconceivable is the result you should expect."

17

Again the venerable Subhūti asked the Buddha, "Bhagavān, if someone sets forth on the bodhisattva path, how should they stand? How should they walk? And how should they control their thoughts?"

The Buddha said, "Subhūti, someone who sets forth on the bodhisattva path should give birth to the thought: 'In the realm of complete nirvana, I shall liberate all beings. And while I thus liberate beings, not a single being is liberated.' And why not? Subhūti, a bodhisattva who creates the perception of a being cannot be called a 'bodhisattva.' Neither can someone who creates the perception of a life or even the perception of a soul be called a 'bodhisattva.' And why not? Subhūti, there is no such dharma as setting forth on the bodhisattva path.

"What do you think, Subhūti? When the Tathāgata was with Dipankara Tathāgata, did he realize any such dharma as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment?"

To this the venerable Subhūti answered, "Bhagavān, as I understand the meaning of what the Tathāgata has taught, when the Tathāgata was with Dipankara Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One, he did not realize any such dharma as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment."

And to this the Buddha replied, "So it is, Subhūti. So it is. When the Tathāgata was with Dipankara Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One, he did not realize any such dharma as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Subhūti, if the Tathāgata had realized any dharma, Dipankara Tathāgata would not have prophesied, 'Young man, in the future you shall become the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One named Shakyamuni.' Subhūti, it was because the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One did not realize any such dharma as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, that Dipankara Tathāgata prophesied, 'Young man, in the future you shall become the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One named Shakyamuni.'

"And how so? 'Tathāgata,' Subhūti, is another name for what is truly real. 'Tathāgata,' Subhūti, is another name for the dharma with no beginning.

‘Tathāgata,’ Subhūti, is another name for the end of dharmas. ‘Tathāgata,’ Subhūti, is another name for what never begins. And how so? No beginning, Subhūti, is the highest truth. Subhūti, if anyone should claim, ‘The Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One realized unexcelled, perfect enlightenment,’ such a claim would be untrue. Subhūti, they would be making a false statement about me. And how so? Subhūti, the Tathāgata did not realize any such dharma as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Furthermore, Subhūti, in the dharma realized or taught by the Tathāgata, there is nothing true and nothing false. Thus, the Tathāgata says ‘all dharmas are buddha dharmas.’ And how so? ‘All dharmas,’ Subhūti, are said by the Tathāgata to be no dharmas. Thus are all dharmas called ‘buddha dharmas.’

“Subhūti, imagine a perfect person with an immense, perfect body.”

The venerable Subhūti said, “Bhagavān, this perfect person whom the Tathāgata says has an ‘immense, perfect body,’ Bhagavān, the Tathāgata says has no body. Thus is it called an ‘immense, perfect body.’”

The Buddha said, “So it is, Subhūti. And if a bodhisattva says, ‘I shall liberate other beings,’ that person is not called a ‘bodhisattva.’ And why not? Subhūti, is there any such dharma as a bodhisattva?”

The venerable Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. There is no such dharma as a bodhisattva.”

The Buddha said, “And beings, Subhūti, ‘beings’ are said by the Tathāgata to be no beings. Thus are they called ‘beings.’ And thus does the Tathāgata say ‘all dharmas have no self, all dharmas have no life, no individuality, and no soul.’

“Subhūti, if a bodhisattva should thus claim, ‘I shall bring about the transformation of a world,’ such a claim would be untrue. And how so? The transformation of a world, Subhūti, the ‘transformation of a world’ is said by the Tathāgata to be no transformation. Thus is it called the ‘transformation of a world.’

“Subhūti, when a bodhisattva resolves on selfless dharmas as ‘selfless dharmas,’ the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the Fully-Enlightened One pronounces that person a fearless bodhisattva.”

18

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess a physical eye?”

Subhūti replied, “So he does, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata possesses a physical eye.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess a divine eye?”

Subhūti replied, “So he does, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata possesses a divine eye.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess a wisdom eye?”

Subhūti replied, “So he does, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata possesses a wisdom eye.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess a dharma eye?”

Subhūti replied, “So he does, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata possesses a dharma eye.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess a buddha eye?”

Subhūti replied, “So he does, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata possesses a buddha eye.”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? As many grains of sand as there are in the great river of the Ganges, does the Tathāgata not speak of them as grains of sand?”

Subhūti replied, “So he does, Bhagavān. So he does, Sugata. The Tathāgata speaks of them as grains of sand.”

The Buddha said, “What do you think, Subhūti? If there were as many rivers as all the grains of sand in the great river of the Ganges and as many worlds as there are grains of sand in all these rivers, would there be many worlds?”

Subhūti replied, “So there would, Bhagavān. So there would, Sugata. There would be many worlds.”

The Buddha said, “And as many beings as there might be in those worlds, Subhūti, I would know their myriad streams of thought. And how so? Streams of thought, Subhūti, what the Tathāgata speaks of as ‘streams of thought’ are no streams. Thus are they called ‘streams of thought.’ And how so? Subhūti, a past thought cannot be found. A future thought cannot be found. Nor can a present thought be found.”

19

“Subhūti, what do you think? If some noble son or daughter filled the billion worlds of this universe with the seven jewels and gave them all as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, would the body of merit produced as a result by that noble son or daughter be great?”

Subhūti replied, “Great, indeed, Bhagavān. It would be great, Sugata.”

The Buddha said, “So it would, Subhūti. So it would. The body of merit produced as a result by that noble son or daughter would be immeasurably, infinitely great. And how so? A body of merit, Subhūti, a ‘body of merit’ is spoken of by the Tathāgata as no body. Thus is it called a ‘body of merit.’ Subhūti, if there were a body of merit, the Tathāgata would not have spoken of a body of merit as a ‘body of merit.’”

20

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by means of the perfect development of the physical body?”

Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the perfect development of the physical body. And why not? The perfect development of the physical body, Bhagavān, the ‘perfect development of the physical body’ is spoken of by the Tathāgata as no development. Thus is it called ‘the perfect development of the physical body.’”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by means of the possession of attributes?”

Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the possession of attributes. And why not? Bhagavān, what the Tathāgata speaks of as the possession of attributes is spoken of by the Tathāgata as no possession of attributes. Thus is it called the ‘possession of attributes.’”

21

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, what do you think? Does it occur to the Tathāgata: ‘I teach a dharma’?”

Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. It does not occur to the Tathāgata: ‘I teach a dharma.’”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, if someone should claim, ‘the Tathāgata teaches a dharma,’ such a claim would be untrue. Such a view of me, Subhūti, would be a misconception. And how so? In the teaching of a

dharma, Subhūti, in the 'teaching of a dharma' there is no such dharma to be found as the 'teaching of a dharma.'"

Upon hearing this, the venerable Subhūti asked the Buddha, "Bhagavān, will there be any beings in the future, in the final epoch, in the final period, in the final five hundred years of the dharma-ending age, who hear a dharma such as this and believe it?"

The Buddha said, "Neither beings, Subhūti, nor no beings. And how so? Beings, Subhūti, 'beings' are all spoken of by the Tathāgata, Subhūti, as no beings. Thus are they called 'beings.'"

22

"Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata realize any such dharma as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment?"

The venerable Subhūti replied, "No, indeed, Bhagavān. The Tathāgata did not realize any such dharma, Bhagavān, as unexcelled, perfect enlightenment."

The Buddha said, "So it is, Subhūti. So it is. The slightest dharma is neither obtained nor found therein. Thus is it called 'unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.'"

23

"Furthermore, Subhūti, undifferentiated is this dharma in which nothing is differentiated. Thus is it called 'unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.' Without a self, without a being, without a life, without a soul, undifferentiated is this unexcelled, perfect enlightenment by means of which all auspicious dharmas are realized. And how so? Auspicious dharmas, Subhūti, 'auspicious dharmas' are spoken of by the Tathāgata as 'no dharmas.' Thus are they called 'auspicious dharmas.'"

24

"Moreover, Subhūti, if a man or woman brought together as many piles of the seven jewels as all the Mount Sumerus in the billion worlds of the universe and gave them as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, and a noble son or daughter grasped but a single four-line verse of this dharma teaching of the perfection of wisdom and made it known to others, Subhūti, their body of merit would be greater by more than a hundredfold, indeed, by an amount beyond comparison."

25

"Subhūti, what do you think? Does it occur to the Tathāgata: 'I rescue beings?' Surely, Subhūti, you should hold no such view. And why not?"

Subhūti, the being does not exist who is rescued by the Tathāgata. Subhūti, if any being were rescued by the Tathāgata, the Tathāgata would be attached to a self. He would be attached to a being, attached to a life, and attached to a soul. ‘Attachment to a self,’ Subhūti, is said by the Tathāgata to be no attachment. Yet foolish people remain attached. And ‘foolish people,’ Subhūti, are said by the Tathāgata to be no people. Thus are they called ‘foolish people.’”

26

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by means of the possession of attributes?”

Subhūti replied, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha says, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the possession of attributes.”

The Buddha said, “Well done, Subhūti. Well done. So it is, Subhūti. It is as you claim. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the possession of attributes. And why not? Subhūti, if the Tathāgata could be seen by means of the possession of attributes, a universal king would be a Tathāgata. Hence, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the possession of attributes.”

The venerable Subhūti said to the Buddha, “As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha says, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by means of the possession of attributes.”

On that occasion the Buddha then spoke this verse:

“Who looks for me in form,
who seeks me in a voice,
indulges in wasted effort;
such people see me not.”

27

“Subhūti, what do you think? Was it due to the possession of attributes that the Tathāgata realized unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? Subhūti, you should hold no such view. And why not? Subhūti, it could not have been due to the possession of attributes that the Tathāgata realized unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

“Furthermore, Subhūti, someone may claim, ‘Those who set forth on the bodhisattva path announce the destruction or the end of some dharma.’ Subhūti, you should hold no such view. And why not? Those who set forth on the bodhisattva path do not announce the destruction or the end of any

dharmas.”

28

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if a noble son or daughter took as many worlds as there are grains of sand in the Ganges and covered them with the seven jewels and gave them as a gift to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, and a bodhisattva gained an acceptance of the selfless, birthless nature of dharmas, the body of merit produced as a result would be immeasurably, infinitely greater. And yet, Subhūti, this fearless bodhisattva would not obtain a body of merit.”

The venerable Subhūti said, “But surely, Bhagavān, this bodhisattva would obtain a body of merit!”

The Buddha replied, “They would, Subhūti, but without grasping it. Thus is it called ‘obtaining.’”

29

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if anyone should claim that the Tathāgata goes or comes or stands or sits or lies on a bed, Subhūti, they do not understand the meaning of my words. And why not? Subhūti, those who are called ‘Tathāgatas’ do not go anywhere, nor do they come from anywhere. Thus are they called ‘tathāgatas, arhats, fully-enlightened ones.’”

30

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if a noble son or daughter took as many worlds as there are specks of dust in a billion-world universe and by an expenditure of limitless energy ground them into a multitude of atoms, Subhūti, what do you think, would there be a great multitude of atoms?”

Subhūti replied, “So there would, Bhagavān. So there would, Sugata. There would be a great multitude of atoms. And why? If a great multitude of atoms existed, Bhagavān, the Tathāgata would not have spoken of a ‘multitude of atoms.’ And why? Bhagavān, this multitude of atoms of which the Tathāgata speaks is said by the Tathāgata to be no multitude. Thus is it called a ‘multitude of atoms.’

Also, Bhagavān, this ‘billion-world universe’ of which the Tathāgata speaks is said by the Tathāgata to be no universe. Thus is it called a ‘billion-world universe.’ And how so? Bhagavān, if a universe existed, attachment to an entity would exist. But whenever the Tathāgata speaks of attachment to an entity, the Tathāgata speaks of it as no attachment. Thus is it called ‘attachment to an entity.’”

The Buddha said, “Subhūti, attachment to an entity is inexplicable and inexpressible. For it is neither a dharma nor no dharma. Foolish people, though, are attached.”

31

“And how so? Subhūti, if someone should claim that the Tathāgata speaks of a view of a self, or that the Tathāgata speaks of a view of a being, a view of a life, or a view of a soul, Subhūti, would such a claim be true?”

Subhūti said, “No, indeed, Bhagavān. No, indeed, Sugata. Such a claim would not be true. And why not? Bhagavān, when the Tathāgata speaks of a view of a self, the Tathāgata speaks of it as no view. Thus is it called a ‘view of a self.’”

The Buddha said, “Indeed, Subhūti, so it is. Those who set forth on the bodhisattva path know, see, and believe all dharmas but know, see, and believe them without being attached to the perception of a dharma. And why not? The perception of a dharma, Subhūti, the ‘perception of a dharma’ is said by the Tathāgata to be no perception. Thus is it called the ‘perception of a dharma.’

32

“Furthermore, Subhūti, if a fearless bodhisattva filled measureless, infinite worlds with the seven jewels and gave them as an offering to the tathāgatas, the arhats, the fully-enlightened ones, and a noble son or daughter grasped but a single four-line verse of this teaching on the perfection of wisdom and memorized, discussed, recited, mastered, and explained it in detail to others, the body of merit produced by that noble son or daughter as a result would be immeasurably, infinitely greater. And how should they explain it? By not explaining. Thus is it called ‘explaining.’

“As a lamp, a fault of vision, a star in space,
an illusion, a dewdrop, a bubble,
a dream, a cloud, a flash of lightning,
view all created things like this.”

All this was spoken by the Buddha to the joy of the elder Subhūti, the monks and nuns, the laymen and laywomen, the bodhisattvas, the devas, humans, asuras and gandharvas of the world all of whom were greatly pleased with what the Buddha said.