

Diamond Sutra

The Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra

Ninth Assembly: The Vajracchedikā

Translated by Imperial Decree by Tripiṭakācārya Xuanzang

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Diamond Sutra

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Bhagavān was in Śrāvastī, at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, together with a great saṅgha of twelve hundred and fifty bhikṣus.

At that time, the Bhagavān, in the first part of the day, having arranged his robe and carrying his alms bowl, entered the great city of Śrāvastī for alms. Then, the Bhagavān, having begged for alms in that city, returned to his original dwelling, and after finishing his meal, he put away his robe and bowl, and washed his feet. After the mealtime, he arranged his usual seat and sat in the lotus position, with an upright body and right vows, sitting with mindfulness to the fore.

Then, the bhikṣus came into the Buddha's presence. Having arrived, they bowed their heads to the Bhagavān's feet, circumambulated him thrice to the right, and sat to one side. The Venerable Subhūti was also sitting in that assembly.

At that time, the Venerable Subhūti arose from his seat in the assembly, bore one shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, joined his palms in respect, and addressed the Buddha, saying: "It's extraordinary! O Bhagavān! That the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, is able, with the supreme embracement, to embrace the bodhisattva mahāsattvas. That the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, is able, with the supreme entrustment, to entrust the bodhisattva mahāsattvas. O Bhagavān! Those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna: How should they abide? How should they go forth in practice? How should they train their minds?"

After speaking thus, at that time, the Bhagavān addressed the Venerable Subhūti, saying: "Sādhū! Sādhū! O Subhūti! Thus it is! Thus it is! It is just as you have said. That the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, is able, with the supreme embracement, to embrace the bodhisattva mahāsattvas. That the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, is able, with the supreme entrustment, to entrust the bodhisattva mahāsattvas. Therefore, O Subhūti! You should listen carefully and apply your mind extremely well. I shall explain in detail for you. Those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna should abide thus, should go forth in practice thus, and should train their minds thus."

The Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying: "Thus it is! Thus it is! O Bhagavān! I joyfully wish to listen!"

The Buddha said: "O Subhūti! Those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna, should give rise to the following thought: 'All sentient beings, who are included within the class of sentient beings—whether egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, or apparitionally-born, whether with form, or formless, whether with perception, perceptionless, or neither with nor without perception, as many beings as can be designated as being within the designation of the realm of sentient beings—all of these, thus, I shall cause to attain the wondrous nirvāṇa realm without remainder, and then enter parinirvāṇa. Although I have liberated

innumerable sentient beings in this way, and caused them to be liberated in cessation, there are no sentient beings who have attained liberation in cessation.’

“Why is it so? O Subhūti! If a bodhisattva mahāsattva has a conception of a sentient being, they should not be called bodhisattva mahāsattvas. Why is that so? O Subhūti! Bodhisattva mahāsattvas should not speak of a conception of a sentient being. Likewise, a conception of a soul, a conception of a person, a conception of a pudgala, a conception of a mind-made being, a conception of a mānava, a conception of a creator, and a conception of an experiencer should be understood likewise. Why is it so? O Subhūti! There is not even the slightest dharma called ‘one who has set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna.’

“Moreover, O Subhūti! A bodhisattva mahāsattva should practise giving without abiding in things. They should practise giving without abiding in anything; practise giving without abiding in form, practise giving without abiding in sound, smell, taste, touch, or mental dharmas. O Subhūti! Thus, a bodhisattva mahāsattva should practise giving without abiding in the conception of a sign. Why is it so? O Subhūti! If a bodhisattva mahāsattva practises giving without abiding in anything, their heap of merit is immeasurable.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Can you measure empty space in the eastern direction?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān!”

“O Subhūti! Thus, in the southern, western, and northern directions, the four intermediate directions, the upper and lower regions, in all the worlds pervading the ten directions, can you measure the empty space?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān!”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! Thus it is! Thus it is! If a bodhisattva mahāsattva practises giving without abiding in anything, their heap of merit is immeasurable. Just like that, O Subhūti, the bodhisattva should practise giving without thus abiding in the conception of a sign.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by his endowment with the marks?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata cannot be seen by his endowment with the marks. Why is it so? That endowment with the marks spoken of by the Tathāgata is an endowment with non-marks.”

Having spoken thus, the Buddha again addressed the Venerable Subhūti, saying: “O Subhūti! Insofar as there is an endowment with characteristics, it is entirely false. Insofar as there is an endowment with non-characteristics, it is altogether not false. Thus, by the characteristics, which are non-characteristics, should one see the Tathāgata.”

Having spoken thus, the Venerable Subhūti again addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! There may be some sentient beings in the future, in the latter

age, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, in the time period when the True Dharma is about to disappear—hearing sūtra passages of such a form as these, will they give rise to the conception that they are true?”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “Do not speak thus: ‘There may be some sentient beings in the future, in the latter age, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, in the time period when the True Dharma is about to disappear—hearing sūtra passages of such a form as these, will they give rise to the conception that they are true?’ For indeed, O Subhūti, there will be bodhisattva mahāsattvas in the future, in the latter age, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, in the time period when the True Dharma is about to disappear—they will be endowed with śīla, endowed with virtue, and endowed with wisdom.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, those bodhisattva mahāsattvas will not have only attended upon and made offerings to one buddha, not only have planted wholesome roots under one buddha, but rather, O Subhūti, those bodhisattva mahāsattvas will have attended upon and made offerings to many hundreds of thousands of buddhas, and will have planted wholesome roots under many hundreds of thousands of buddhas. Then, being able to hear a sūtra passage of such a form as this, they will attain as little as a single thought of faith. O Subhūti! The Tathāgata, with buddha-knowledge, knows them all; the Tathāgata, with the buddha-eye, sees them all. O Subhūti! The Tathāgata has already awakened to them. All those sentient beings will give rise to an immeasurable, incalculable heap of merit; they will accumulate an immeasurable, incalculable heap of merit. Why is it so? O Subhūti! Those bodhisattva mahāsattvas do not give rise to a conception of a self, nor a conception of a sentient being, nor a conception of a soul, nor a conception of a person, nor a conception of a pudgala, nor a conception of a mind-made being, nor a conception of a māṇava, nor a conception of a creator, and do not give rise to a conception of an experiencer.

“O Subhūti! Those bodhisattva mahāsattvas do not give rise to a conception of a dharma, do not give rise to a conception of a non-dharma, and neither give rise to conception nor give rise to non-conception. Why is that so? O Subhūti! If bodhisattva mahāsattvas gave rise to a conception of a dharma, that would then be their grasping at a self, grasping at a sentient being, grasping at a soul, grasping at a pudgala, and so forth. If they give rise to a conception of a non-dharma, that would also be their grasping at a self, grasping at a sentient being, grasping at a soul, grasping at a pudgala, and so forth. Why is it so? O Subhūti! Neither should one grasp at a dharma nor should one grasp at a non-dharma. Thus, the Tathāgata, with underlying intention, spoke the Dharma teaching of the simile of the raft: that those who understand should abandon dharmas, how much more so non-dharmas!”

The Buddha again addressed the Venerable Subhūti, saying: “O Subhūti! What do you think? Is there any dharma which The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to as anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi? Is there any dharma which The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has taught?”

Subhūti answered: “O Bhagavān! As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, there is not any dharma that the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to as anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi. There is also not any dharma that the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has taught. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to, taught, and contemplated a dharma which is entirely ungraspable and inexpressible. That is neither a dharma nor a non-dharma. Why is it so? Noble pudgalas are all made manifest by the unconditioned.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? If a son of good family or daughter of good family were to fill this cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven jewels and use them as an offering, would that son of good family or daughter of good family, with that as a cause and condition, generate a great heap of merit?”

Subhūti answered: “Very great! O Bhagavān! Very great! O Sugata! That son of good family or daughter of good family, with that as a cause and condition, would generate a massive heap of merit. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! That ‘heap of merit’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-heap of merit. The Tathāgata speaks of a ‘heap of merit’ in this way.”

The Buddha further addressed Subhūti, saying: “O Subhūti! If a son of good family or daughter of good family were to fill this cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven jewels and use them as an offering, and if a son of good family or daughter of good family were, with this Dharma teaching, even down to a four line gāthā, to take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings, the heap of merit produced with this as a cause and condition would be vastly more than the former case, it would be immeasurable and incalculable. Why is it so? Every tathāgata, arhat, samyak-saṃbuddha, has attained anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi from this sūtra. All buddha bhagavāns are born from this sūtra. Why is that so? O Subhūti! The ‘dharma of a buddha’ spoken of by the Tathāgata, are non-dharmas of a buddha. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘dharma of a buddha’ in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Do stream-enterers ever think thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a stream-enterer?’”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! Stream-enterers do not think thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a stream-enterer.’ Why is it so? O Bhagavān! Stream-enterers have not entered into anything in the slightest, so they are called stream-enterers; they do not enter into form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas, so they are called stream-enterers. O Bhagavān! If a stream enterer thinks thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a stream-enterer,’ that is grasping at a self, sentient being, soul, person, pudgala, and so forth.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Do once-returners ever think thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a once-returner?’”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! Once returners do not think thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a once-returner.’ Why is it so? O Bhagavān! There is not the slightest dharma that has realised the state of a once-returner, so they are called a ‘once-returner.’”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Do non-returners ever think thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a non-returner?’”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! Non-returners do not think thus: ‘I can attain the fruit of a non-returner.’ Why is it so? O Bhagavān! There is not the slightest dharma that has realised the state of a non-returner, so they are called non-returners.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Do arhats ever think thus: ‘I can attain arhatship?’”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! Arhats do not think thus: ‘I can attain the state of arhatship.’ Why is it so? O Bhagavān! There is not the slightest dharma called an ‘arhat.’ Therefore, he is called an ‘arhat.’ O Bhagavān! If an arhat thinks thus: ‘I can attain the state of arhatship,’ that is grasping at a self, sentient being, soul, person, pudgala, and so forth. Why is that so? O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has declared me to be the foremost among those who have attained abiding in non-strife. O Bhagavān! Even though I am an arhat, eternally free from greedy desire, the thought has not yet occurred to me that: ‘I have attained arhatship, and am eternally free from greedy desire.’ O Bhagavān! If I were to think thus: ‘I have attained arhatship, and am eternally free from greedy desire,’ the Tathāgata would not have indicated, regarding me, that: ‘Subhūti, the son of good family, is the foremost among those who have attained abiding in non-strife.’ Intending ‘non-abiding anywhere,’ the Tathāgata speaks of ‘abiding in non-strife’ in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Did the Tathāgata, in the past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, receive even the slightest dharma?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata, in the past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, did not receive the slightest dharma.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “If a bodhisattva thinks thus: ‘I shall produce meritorious buddha-land-arrays. ‘ That bodhisattva would not be speaking truthfully. Why is it so? O Subhūti! ‘Meritorious buddha-land-arrays’ spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-arrays. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘meritorious buddha-land-arrays’ in this way. Therefore, O Subhūti, the bodhisattva should give rise to thought which does not abide anywhere. He should give rise to thought which does not abide in form; he should give rise to thought which does not abide in non-form; he should give rise to thought which does not abide in sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas; he should give rise to thought which does not abide in non-sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas. He should give rise to

thought which does not abide anywhere.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “Just as if there were a person endowed with a body, a large body, such that his own-bodily form were even like Sumeru, the king of mountains. O Subhūti! What do you think? Would his own-body be very large?”

Subhūti answered: “His own-body would be very large! O Bhagavān! Very large! O Sugata! Why is it so? O Bhagavān! ‘His own-body’ spoken of by the Tathāgata, is a non-body. Thus is it spoken of as his ‘own-body.’ Regarding a non-body, it is said, ‘own-body.’”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Regarding the number of the grains of sand in the Ganges River: if there were as many Ganges Rivers as those grains of sand, would those Ganges Rivers be many?”

Subhūti answered: “Very many! O Bhagavān! Very many! O Sugata! Even if that many Ganges Rivers existed, they would be countless, what more to speak of their grains of sand!”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! I now declare this to you, I make this known to you: Suppose a son of good family or daughter of good family were to fill as many worlds as there are grains of sand in those Ganges Rivers with the seven jewels and offer them to the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha. O Subhūti! What do you think? Would that son of good family or daughter of good family, with that as a cause and condition, generate a great heap of merit?”

Subhūti answered: “Very great! O Bhagavān! Very great! O Sugata! That son of good family or daughter of good family, with that as a cause and condition, would generate a massive heap of merit.”

The Buddha again addressed Subhūti: “If one were to fill as many worlds as there are grains of sand in those Ganges Rivers with the seven jewels and offer them to the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, and if a son of good family or daughter of good family were, with this Dharma teaching, even down to a four line gāthā, to take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings, the heap of merit produced with this as a cause and condition would be vastly more than the former case, it would be immeasurable and incalculable.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if, in a region of the earth, this Dharma teaching is explained to others, even down to elucidating a four line verse, that region of earth would, by the world, with its devas, humans, asuras, and so forth, be offered to as a caitya of the Buddha. What more to say of those who, endowed with the entirety of this Dharma teaching, write and copy, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their minds on its teachings! Those sentient beings will attain exceedingly rare merit. Just that region of earth is where the great teacher dwells, or anyone else who is in a revered and honoured station; if there are those who are knowledgeable, they will share the same noble conduct as them.”

Having spoken thus, the Venerable Subhūti again addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! What is the name of this Dharma teaching? How should I sincerely bear it?”

After speaking thus, the Buddha addressed Subhūti, saying: “O Venerable One! This current Dharma teaching is called the Vajracchedikā Prajñā Pāramitā, and by this name you should sincerely bear it. Why is it so? O Subhūti! This Prajñā Pāramitā spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-Prajñā Pāramitā; the Tathāgata speaks of a Prajñā Pāramitā in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Is there even the slightest Dharma that the Tathāgata can teach?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! There is not even the slightest Dharma that the Tathāgata can teach.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “Would the subtle particles of dust in the earth element of a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds be many?”

Subhūti answered: “Those particles of dust in the earth element would be very many! O Bhagavān! Very great! O Sugata!”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! The particles of dust in the earth element spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-particles of dust. The Tathāgata speaks of particles of dust in the earth element in this way. Those world systems spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-world systems. The Tathāgata speaks of world systems in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Should one, by means of the thirty-two marks of a great person, see the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! One should not, by means of the thirty-two marks of a great person, see the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! The thirty-two marks of a great person spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-marks. The Tathāgata speaks of the thirty-two marks of a great person in this way.”

The Buddha further addressed Subhūti, saying: “Suppose there is a son of good family or daughter of good family who, day by day, would give away their own-bodies equal to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, and pass kalpas equal to the grains of sand in the Ganges River giving away their own-bodies in this way. Suppose there were, on the other hand, a son of good family or daughter of good family, who were, with this Dharma teaching, even down to a four line gāthā, to take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings, the heap of merit produced with this as a cause and condition would be vastly more than the former case, it would be immeasurable and incalculable.”

At that time, the Venerable Subhūti, by the force of hearing the Dharma, was moved to tears. Having wiped away his tears, he addressed the Buddha, saying:

“How profoundly rare! O Bhagavān! How supremely rare! O Sugata! The Tathāgata now teaches this Dharma teaching broadly for the benefit of those who have set out on the Supreme Vehicle, and broadly for the benefit of those who have set out on the Ultimate Vehicle! O Bhagavān! From this, knowledge arose for me. Such a Dharma teaching has never been heard before.

“O Bhagavān! If there are sentient beings who listen to the teaching of such a profound sūtra and give rise to a perception of the truth, it should be known that they have accomplished that which is supremely rare. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! The ‘perception of the truth’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-perception. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘perception of the truth’ in this way. O Bhagavān! That I, now, hearing the teaching of such a Dharma teaching, understand it and have faith in it, is not remarkable. But if there are sentient beings in the future, in the latter age, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, in the time period when the True Dharma is about to disappear, who should, regarding this profound Dharma teaching, understand it have faith in it, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings, it should be known that they have accomplished that which is supremely rare. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! Those sentient beings do not give rise to the conception of a self, nor to the conception of a sentient being, nor to the conception of a soul, nor to the conception of a person, nor to the conception of a pudgala, nor to the conception of a mind-made being, nor to the conception of a māṇava, nor to the conception of a creator, nor to the conception of an experiencer. Why is that so? O Bhagavān! A conception of a self is a non-conception, a conception of a sentient being, a conception of a soul, a conception of a person, a conception of a pudgala, a conception of a mind-made being, a conception of a māṇava, a conception of a creator, a conception of an experiencer is a non-conception. Why is it so? The buddha bhagavāns have abandoned all conceptions.”

After speaking thus, At that time, the Bhagavān addressed the Venerable Subhūti, saying: “Thus it is! Thus it is! O Subhūti! If there are sentient beings who listen to the teaching of such a profound sūtra, and are not frightened, are not terrified, and won’t have fear, it should be known that they have accomplished that which is supremely rare. Why is it so? O Subhūti! The Tathāgata declares that the supreme pāramitā is the Prajñā Pāramitā. O Subhūti! The supreme pāramitā spoken of by the Tathāgata is taught in common by all, innumerable, buddha bhagavāns. Therefore, it is called the supreme pāramitā. The supreme pāramitā spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-pāramitā. The Tathāgata speaks of a supreme pāramitā in this way.

“Moreover, O Subhūti! The Tathāgata speaks of the Kṣānti Pāramitā as a non-pāramitā. The Tathāgata speaks of a Kṣānti Pāramitā in this way. Why is it so? O Subhūti! When I, in a past age, was sliced, limb from limb, by King Kali, I, then, had no conception of a self, or a conception of a sentient being, or a conception of a soul, or a conception of a person, or a conception of a pudgala, or a conception of a mind-made being, or a conception of a māṇava, or a conception

of a creator, or a conception of an experiencer. At that time, I had neither a conception nor a non-conception. Why is it so? O Subhūti! If, at that time, I had a conception of a self, then, at that time, I would have had a conception of malice; if, at that time, I would have had a conception of a sentient being, a conception of a soul, a conception of a person, a conception of a pudgala, a conception of a mind-made being, a conception of a māṇava, a conception of a creator, or a conception of an experiencer, then, at that time, I would have had a conception of malice. Why is it so? O Subhūti! I recollect that, five hundred births in the past, I was the ṛṣi Kṣāntivādin. I, then, had no conception of a self, no conception of a sentient being, no conception of a soul, no conception of a person, no conception of a pudgala, no conception of a mind-made being, no conception of a māṇava, no conception of a creator, and no conception of an experiencer. At that time, I had neither a conception nor a non-conception.

“Therefore, O Subhūti, a bodhisattva mahāsattva, being far removed from all conceptions, should arouse the aspiration for anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi. He should give rise to thought which does not abide in form; he should give rise to thought which does not abide in non-form; he should give rise to thought which does not abide in sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas; he should give rise to thought which does not abide in non-sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas. He should give rise to thought which does not abide anywhere. Why is it so? O Subhūti! That which abides is non-abiding. The Tathāgata says bodhisattvas should practise giving without abiding in this way. They should practise giving without abiding in form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, because the bodhisattva mahāsattva should work for the benefit of sentient beings, they should give in relinquishment in this way. Why is it so? O Subhūti! The conception of sentient beings is a non-conception; all sentient beings are spoken of by the Tathāgata as not sentient beings. O Subhūti! The Tathāgata speaks what is real, speaks what is true, speaks what is thus, and speaks what is not contrary.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, that which appears before the Tathāgata, whether it is the realised Dharma, or the taught Dharma, or the contemplated Dharma, within that, there is neither truth nor falsehood. O Subhūti! Just as a person entering a dark room would not see anything at all, you should understand that the bodhisattva who, while falling into phenomena, or speaking while falling into phenomena, practises giving is also like that. O Subhūti! Just as a person with clear eyes, who, when the night has ended and the sun rises, sees various forms, you should understand that the bodhisattva who, while not falling into phenomena, or speaking while not falling into phenomena, practises giving is also like that.

“Moreover, O Subhūti! If there are sons of good family or daughters of good family who, regarding this Dharma teaching, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings, then the Tathāgata, with his buddha-knowledge, knows those people, the Tathāgata, with his buddha-eye, sees those people, the Tathāgata

is fully awakened to those people. All those sentient beings will produce an immeasurable heap of merit.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, suppose a son of good family or daughter of good family were, in the morning, to give their own-body equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, were, at midday, to give their own-body equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, were, in the evening, to give their own-body equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges River, and, in different ways, were to pass hundreds of thousands of koṭis of nayutas of kalpas giving their own-body. If, on the other hand, there were one who heard this Dharma teaching being taught, and did not reject it, the heap of merit produced with this as a cause and condition would be vastly more than the former case; it would be immeasurable and incalculable. What more can be said of those who are endowed with this Dharma teaching in its entirety, and who write and copy, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their minds on its teachings!

“Moreover, O Subhūti! This Dharma teaching is inconceivable, immeasurable, and one should expect inconceivable maturation to be brought about from it. O Subhūti! The Tathāgata has spoken this Dharma teaching to benefit sentient beings on the Supreme Vehicle and to benefit sentient beings on the Ultimate Vehicle. O Subhūti! If there are those who, regarding this Dharma teaching, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings, then the Tathāgata, with his buddha-knowledge, knows those people, the Tathāgata, with his buddha-eye, sees those people, the Tathāgata is fully awakened to those people. All those sentient beings will produce an immeasurable heap of merit; it will be a perfect and inconceivable, immeasurable, and limitless heap of merit. O Subhūti! All those sentient beings will bear the Tathāgata’s unexcelled perfect bodhi on their shoulders. Why is it so? O Subhūti! This Dharma teaching cannot be heard by sentient beings who have faith in that which is inferior, nor can it be heard by those with a view of a self, nor those with a view of a sentient being, nor those with a view of a soul, nor those with a view of a person, nor those with a view of a pudgala, nor those with a view of a mind-made being, nor those with a view of a māṇava, nor those with a view of a creator, nor those with a view of an experiencer. For them to take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their mind on its teachings would be impossible.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, in whatever region of the earth this sūtra will be taught, that region of earth would, by the world, with its devas, humans, asuras, and so forth, be offered to, be worshipped, and be circumambulated to the right, as a caitya of the Buddha.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if there are sons of good family or daughters of good family who, regarding this sūtra, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their minds on its teachings, if they are despised, they will be utterly despised. Why is that

so? O Subhūti! For those sentient beings, it is the arising of stored karma, which was created by impure actions, which would result in the retribution of birth in the evil realms, but because, in their present lives, it manifests as being despised, their stored karma which was created through impure actions is all entirely exhausted, and so they will attain unexcelled perfect bodhi. Why is it so?

“O Subhūti! I recollect that in the past, an incalculable number of kalpas, which was again incalculable, even before Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, the Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, there were eighty-four hundreds of thousands of koṭīs of nayutas of buddhas, and I honoured them all. Having honoured them, I had no transgressions. O Subhūti! I honoured all those buddha bhagavāns. Having honoured them, I had no transgressions. If there are sentient beings, who, in the latter time, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, in the time period when the True Dharma is about to disappear: regarding this sūtra, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their minds on its teachings, O Subhūti, my heap of merit from those prior deeds, is, to their heap of merit, not even one hundredth thereof, it is not one thousandth, or a hundred thousandth, or one in a hundred thousand koṭīs, or one in a hundred thousand koṭīs of nayutas, or a countable part, or a calculable part, or a reckonable part, or a comparable part, or even one part of any kind of simile. O Subhūti! If I were to explain the heap of merit that those sons of good family or daughters of good family would give rise to at that time, or the heap of merit that those sons of good family or daughters of good family would assemble, then sentient beings would become confused and their minds would become deranged. Therefore, O Subhūti, the Tathāgata declares that this Dharma teaching is inconceivable, immeasurable, and one should expect inconceivable maturation to be brought about from it.”

At that time, the Venerable Subhūti again addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! Those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna, how should they abide? How should they go forth in practice? How should they train their minds?”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “Those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna should give rise to the following thought: ‘I shall cause all sentient beings to attain the wondrous nirvāṇa realm without remainder, and then enter parinirvāṇa. Yet, although I have liberated innumerable sentient beings in this way, and caused them to be liberated in cessation, there are no sentient beings who have attained liberation in cessation.’ Why is it so? O Subhūti! If a bodhisattva mahāsattva has a conception of a sentient being, they should not be called bodhisattva mahāsattvas. Why is that so? Bodhisattva mahāsattvas should not speak of a conception of a sentient being. Likewise, a conception of a soul, a conception of a person, a conception of a pudgala, a conception of a mind-made being, a conception of a māṇava, a conception of a creator, and a conception of an experiencer should be understood likewise. Why is it so? O Subhūti! There is not even the slightest dharma called ‘one who has set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna.’”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Did the Tathāgata, in the past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, realise even the slightest dharma related to anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi?”

After speaking thus, the Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, the Tathāgata, in the past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, did not realise even the slightest dharma related to anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi.”

Having spoken thus, the Buddha addressed the Venerable Subhūti, saying: “Thus it is! Thus it is! O Subhūti! The Tathāgata, in the past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, did not realise even the slightest dharma related to anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi. Why is it so? O Subhūti! If the Tathāgata, in the past, in the presence of Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, realised even the slightest dharma related to anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi, then Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, the Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, would not have given me a prophecy, saying: ‘You, O Māṇava, shall, in the future, become the Tathāgata called Śākyamuni, the Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha.’ O Subhūti! The Tathāgata did not realise even the slightest dharma related to anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi; therefore, Dīpaṅkara Tathāgata, the Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, gave me a prophecy, saying: ‘You, O Māṇava, shall, in the future, become the Tathāgata called Śākyamuni, the Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha.’ Why is that so? O Subhūti! ‘Tathāgata’ is an appellation for true-thusness; ‘Tathāgata’ is an appellation for unarisen-dharma-nature; ‘Tathāgata’ is an appellation for the path to eternal cessation; ‘Tathāgata’ is an appellation for absolute non-arising. Why is it so? O Subhūti! The ultimate truth is truly non-arising.

“O Subhūti! If someone were to say that the Tathāgata, Arhat, or Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi, you should know that statement to be untrue. Why is that so? O Subhūti! They are repudiating me by giving rise to grasping that which is not true. Why is it so? O Subhūti! There is no dharma that the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to as anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi. O Subhūti! That which appears before the Tathāgata, whether it is the realised Dharma, or the taught Dharma, or the contemplated Dharma, within that, there is neither truth nor falsehood. The Tathāgata thus says that ‘all dharmas are the dharmas of a buddha’ in this way. O Subhūti! When ‘all dharmas are the dharmas of a buddha’ is spoken by the Tathāgata, these are all non-dharmas. The Tathāgata thus says that ‘all dharmas are the dharmas of a buddha’ in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “Just as the person endowed with a body, a large body [as discussed earlier].”

The Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! When the Tathāgata speaks of ‘a person endowed with a body, a large body,’ the Tathāgata is speaking of a non-body. He says ‘Endowed with a body, a large body’ in this way.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! Thus it is, Thus it is! If a bodhisattva thus says: ‘I shall liberate in cessation innumerable sentient beings,’ then they could not be called a bodhisattva. Why is it so? O Subhūti! Is there even the slightest dharma called a ‘bodhisattva?’”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! There is not even the slightest dharma called a ‘bodhisattva.’”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “‘Sentient being’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is not a sentient being. Thus, it is spoken of as a ‘sentient being.’ The Tathāgata thus says that all dharmas are devoid of a sentient being, devoid of a soul, devoid of a person, devoid of a pudgala, and so forth. O Subhūti! If a bodhisattva thus says: ‘I shall produce meritorious buddha-land-arrays,’ it is also spoken in that [not true] way. Why is it so? O Subhūti! ‘Meritorious buddha-land-arrays’ spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-arrays. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘meritorious buddha-land-arrays’ in this way. O Subhūti! If the bodhisattva has deep faith in the selflessness of dharmas, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha declares them to be a ‘bodhisattva.’”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess fleshly eyes?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata possesses fleshly eyes.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! What do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess the divine eye?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata possesses the divine eye.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! What do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess the eye of wisdom?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata possesses the eye of wisdom.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! What do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess the Dharma eye?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata possesses the Dharma eye.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! What do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess the Buddha eye?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata possesses the Buddha eye.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Regarding the number of the grains of sand in the Ganges River, did the Tathāgata speak of those grains of sand?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! Thus it is! O Sugata! The Tathāgata spoke of those grains of sand.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! What do you think? Regarding the number of the grains of sand in the Ganges River: if there were as many Ganges Rivers as those grains of sand, then regarding that total number of the grains of sand in those Ganges Rivers, if there were as many world systems as that, would those world systems be numerous or not?”

Subhūti answered: “Thus it is! O Bhagavān! Thus it is! O Sugata! Those world systems would be extraordinarily numerous!”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! All the sentient beings in those world systems, those sentient beings in their various kinds, I fully understand their mind-streams. Why is it so? O Subhūti! Their ‘mind-streams’ spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-streams. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘mind-streams’ in this way. Why is that so? O Subhūti! Past minds cannot be apprehended, future minds cannot be apprehended, and present minds cannot be apprehended.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? If a son of good family or daughter of good family were to fill this cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven jewels and offer them to the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, would that son of good family or daughter of good family, with that as a cause and condition, generate a great heap of merit?”

Subhūti answered: “Very great! O Bhagavān! Very great! O Sugata!”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! Thus it is! Thus it is! That son of good family or daughter of good family, with that as a cause and condition, would generate a massive heap of merit. Why is it so? O Subhūti! If there were a heap of merit [that were a non-heap], the Tathāgata would not say ‘heap of merit.’”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by his perfection of the form-body?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata cannot be seen by his perfection of the form-body. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! The ‘perfection of the form body’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-perfection. The Tathāgata speaks of the ‘perfection of the form body’ in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by his endowment with the marks?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! The Tathāgata cannot be seen by his endowment with the marks. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! The ‘endowment with the marks’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-endowment with the marks. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘endowment with the marks’ in this way.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Does the Tathāgata ever think thus: ‘I have taught the Dharma’? O Subhūti! You should not view it like this now! Why is it so? O Subhūti! If one says ‘The Tathāgata has taught the

Dharma,’ that would be repudiating me, and grasping unskillfully. Why is it so? O Subhūti! In ‘teaching the Dharma,’ there is no dharma that can be obtained as ‘teaching the Dharma.’”

At that time, the Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! In the future latter time, in the latter period, in the latter five hundred years, in the time period when the True Dharma is about to disappear: will there be any sentient beings who, having heard Dharma teachings of this form, be able to have deep faith in them?”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! There are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. Why is it so? O Subhūti! The Tathāgata speaks of all sentient beings as not sentient beings. Thus, all sentient beings are spoken of.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Is there any dharma which The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to in unexcelled perfect bodhi?”

The Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, there is no dharma that the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha has awakened to in unexcelled perfect bodhi.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! Thus it is! Thus it is! Within it, not the slightest dharma exists or is attained; therefore, it is called ‘unexcelled perfect bodhi.’

“Moreover, O Subhūti! That dharma is equal, without anything unequal within it; therefore, it is called ‘unexcelled perfect bodhi.’ By the nature of being without a self, the nature of being without a sentient being, the nature of being without a soul, the nature of being without a person, the nature of being without a pudgala, and so forth, it is equal. Therefore, it is called ‘unexcelled perfect bodhi.’ All wholesome dharmas are fully realised without exception; All wholesome dharmas are wondrously realised without exception. O Subhūti! ‘Wholesome dharmas’ spoken of by the Tathāgata are all non-dharmas. The Tathāgata speaks of ‘wholesome dharmas’ in this way.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if a son of good family or daughter of good family were to heap up an assemblage of the seven treasures equal in volume to all the Sumeru, Kings of Mountains, in a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds and use it for giving offerings, and if a son of good family or daughter of good family were to, regarding this Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra, even down to a four line gāthā, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and broadly teach it to others, elucidate it, and focus their minds on its teachings, O Subhūti, the heap of merit from those prior deeds is to this [latter] heap of merit not even one hundredth thereof, it is not one thousandth, or a hundred thousandth, or one in a hundred thousand koṭis, or one in a hundred thousand koṭis of nayutas, or a countable part, or a calculable part, or a reckonable part, or a comparable part, or even one part of any kind of simile.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Does the Tathāgata ever

think thus: ‘I have liberated sentient beings’? O Subhūti! You should not view it like this now! Why is it so? O Subhūti! There is not even the slightest sentient being that the Tathāgata liberates. O Subhūti! If there were [the conception of] a sentient being that the Tathāgata liberates, that would be the Tathāgata’s grasping at a self, which would be his grasping at a sentient being, which would be his grasping at a soul, which would be his grasping at a person, and which would be his grasping at a pudgala. O Subhūti! ‘Grasping at a self’ and so forth, spoken of by the Tathāgata, is non-grasping. Thus, ‘grasping at a self’ is spoken of. However, it is grasped at strongly by ordinary foolish people. O Subhūti! ‘Foolish ordinary people’ spoken of by the Tathāgata are non-people. Thus, ‘foolish ordinary people’ are spoken of.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Can the Tathāgata be seen by his endowment with the marks?”

Subhūti answered: “As I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by his endowment with the marks.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! Sādhū! Sādhū! Thus it is! Thus it is! It is just as you have said. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by his endowment with the marks. O Subhūti! If the Tathāgata were to be seen by his endowment with the marks, then even a cakravartin king would be a tathāgata. Therefore, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by his endowment with the marks. Consequently, one should see the Tathāgata by marks that are non-marks.”

At that time, the Bhagavān uttered a gāthā, saying:

“Those who see me by form,
Those who fathom me by sound,
And those who give rise to false renunciation,
Cannot see me.
“One should see the Buddha through Dharma-nature,
That is the leader, the Dharma-body;
Dharma-nature cannot be known,
Thus, it cannot be cognised.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “What do you think? Does the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha realise unexcelled and perfect awakening by endowment with the marks? O Subhūti! You should not view it like this now! Why is it so? O Subhūti! The Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha does not realise unexcelled and perfect awakening by endowment with the marks.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, should those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna declare that even the slightest dharma has been destroyed or annihilated? O Subhūti! You should not view it like this now! Those who have set out on

the Bodhisattva-yāna never declare that even the slightest dharma has been destroyed or annihilated.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if a son of good family or daughter of good family were to fill worlds equal in number to the sands of the Ganges River with the seven jewels and offer them to the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, and if a bodhisattva were to attain patience regarding selflessness and the non-arising of dharmas, with that as a cause and condition, this [latter] would generate a greater heap of merit.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, the bodhisattva should not take hold of a heap of merit.”

The Venerable Subhūti addressed the Buddha, saying: “O Bhagavān! But should the bodhisattva not take hold of a heap of merit?”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! It should be taken hold of without grasping; thus, ‘taking hold’ is spoken of.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if someone were to say, ‘the Tathāgata goes, or comes, or stands, or sits, or lies down,’ that person does not understand the meaning of what I have said. Why is it so? O Subhūti! The term ‘Tathāgata,’ inasmuch as it is used truthfully, is a designation for thusness, which neither goes anywhere, nor comes from anywhere. This is termed the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if a son of good family or daughter of good family, with world systems as numerous as the subtle particles of dust in the earth element of a cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, were to grind such countless worlds, with all their material form, into ink equal to the heap of their particles of dust, O Subhūti, what do you think? Would that heap of particles of dust be great or not?”

Subhūti answered: “That heap of particles of dust would be great! O Bhagavān! Very great! O Sugata! Why is it so? O Bhagavān! If there were truly a heap of particles of dust, the Buddha would not have said ‘heap of particles of dust.’ Why is that so? The ‘heap of particles of dust’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-heap. Thus, ‘heap of particles of dust’ is spoken of. The cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds, spoken of by the Tathāgata, is a non-cosmos. Thus, a ‘cosmos of three thousand great thousand worlds’ is spoken of. Why is it so? O Bhagavān! If there were truly a cosmos, that would be grasping at a unity. ‘Grasping at a unity’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is non-grasping. Thus, ‘grasping at a unity’ is spoken of.”

The Buddha said: “O Subhūti! That grasping at a unity is inexpressible and beyond conceptuality. In this way, all foolish ordinary people strongly attach to dharmas. Why is it so? O Subhūti! If one were to say thus: ‘The Tathāgata has spoken of the view of a self, the view of a sentient being, the view of a soul, the view of a person, the view of a pudgala, the view of a mind-made being, the view of a māṇava, the view of a creator, or the view of an experiencer,’ what do you think? Would that utterance be true or false?”

Subhūti answered: “No! O Bhagavān! No! O Sugata! That utterance would not be true. Why is that so? The Tathāgata has spoken of the view of a self, the view of a sentient being, the view of a soul, the view of a person, the view of a pudgala, the view of a mind-made being, the view of a māṇava, the view of a creator, and the view of an experiencer as a non-view. Thus, the ‘view of a self’ up to the ‘view of an experiencer’ are spoken of.”

The Buddha addressed Subhūti: “Those who have set out on the Bodhisattva-yāna should know all dharmas thus, should see them thus, should have faith in them thus that they do not abide in the conception of a dharma. Why is it so? O Subhūti! The ‘conception of a dharma’ spoken of by the Tathāgata is a non-conception. The Tathāgata speaks of the ‘conception of a dharma’ in this way.

“Moreover, O Subhūti, if a bodhisattva mahāsattva were to fill immeasurable and countless worlds with the seven jewels and offer them to the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyak-saṃbuddha, and if, on the other hand, a son of good family or daughter of good family were to, regarding this Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra, even down to a four line gāthā, take up and bear, read and recite, master completely, and focus their mind on its teachings, and broadly teach it to others, and elucidate it, the heap of merit produced with this as a cause and condition would be vastly more than the former case, it would be immeasurable and incalculable. How does one explain it to others and elucidate it? If one does not explain it to others and elucidate it, this is called explaining it to others and elucidating it.”

At that time, the Bhagavān uttered a gāthā, saying:

“All conditioned things are
Like the stars, darkness, a lamp, an illusion,
Dew, a bubble, a dream, lightning, and a cloud,
To be thus observed.”

Then, after the Bhagavān had spoken this sūtra, the Venerable Subhūti, together with all the bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās, along with all the devas, humans, asuras, gandharvas, and so forth, having heard the sūtra spoken by the Tathāgata, were all overjoyed, believed, took up, and sincerely practised it.

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