



Diamond Sutra (Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra)

UNKNOWN

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Mouseia's complete machine-assisted Musean translation, made directly from the Sanskrit of F. Max Müller's 1881 *Anecdota Oxoniensia* edition, all 32 sections, with the printed section numbers kept.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

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Contents



Section 1	1	Section 17	12
Section 2	1	Section 18	14
Section 3	2	Section 19	15
Section 4	2	Section 20	15
Section 5	3	Section 21	16
Section 6	3	Section 22	16
Section 7	4	Section 23	16
Section 8	5	Section 24	17
Section 9	5	Section 25	17
Section 10	6	Section 26	18
Section 11	7	Section 27	18
Section 12	7	Section 28	19
Section 13	8	Section 29	19
Section 14	8	Section 30	19
Section 15	10	Section 31	20
Section 16	11	Section 32	21

Section 1

Homage to the Blessed Noble Perfection of Wisdom.

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was staying at Śrāvastī, in the Jeta Grove, in the park of Anāthapiṇḍada, with a great company of monks, twelve hundred and fifty of them, and with many bodhisattvas, great beings. Then, in the forenoon, the Blessed One dressed, took his bowl and robe, and entered the great city of Śrāvastī to beg for alms. He walked through Śrāvastī for alms, and when his meal was done he came back, put away his bowl and robe, washed his feet, and sat down on the seat prepared for him, crossing his legs, holding his body upright, and setting mindfulness before him. Then many monks came to where the Blessed One was, bowed with their heads to his feet, circled him three times to the right, and sat down to one side. [1]

Section 2

Then the venerable Subhūti was in that assembly, seated among the monks. He rose from his seat, drew his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, set his palms together in homage toward the Blessed One, and said: “How wonderful, Blessed One, how supremely wonderful, Sugata, that the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, has so embraced the bodhisattvas, the great beings, with his highest favor. How wonderful, Blessed One, that the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, has so entrusted the bodhisattvas, the great beings, with the highest entrusting. Blessed One, how should a son or daughter of good family who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle stand? How should they walk? How should they hold the mind?”

The Blessed One said to the venerable Subhūti: “Well said, well said, Subhūti. So it is, Subhūti, so it is, just as you say. The Tathāgata has embraced the bodhisattvas, the great beings, with his highest favor, and has entrusted

them with the highest entrusting. Listen, Subhūti, and attend well, and I will tell you how one who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle should stand, how one should walk, and how one should hold the mind.” “So be it, Blessed One,” the venerable Subhūti answered the Blessed One, and he listened. [2]

Section 3

The Blessed One said to him: “Here, Subhūti, one who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle should bring forth the mind in this way: ‘However many living beings there are, of whatever kind, in the realm of beings, whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or by spontaneous birth; whether they have form or are formless; whether they have perception, lack perception, or have neither perception nor non-perception; however many beings can be named as beings, all of them I must lead into the realm of nirvāṇa without remainder and bring to final extinction.’ Yet though countless beings are led to extinction in this way, not one being has in truth been extinguished. Why? Subhūti, if a bodhisattva still held the perception of a being, he should not be called a bodhisattva. Why? Subhūti, no one should be called a bodhisattva who still holds the perception of a being, a living soul, or a person.” [3]

Section 4

“Again, Subhūti, a bodhisattva should not give resting on a basis, nor give resting anywhere at all. He should not give resting on a form, nor on a sound, smell, taste, touch, or any object of mind. In this way the great bodhisattva should give, so that his mind does not rest even on the perception of a sign. Why? The one who gives without resting has a heap of merit that cannot easily be measured. What do you think, Subhūti? Is it easy to measure the space to the east?” “No, Blessed One.” “Is it easy to measure the space to the south, the west, and the north, below and above, in the intermediate directions, in all ten

directions?” “No, Blessed One.” “So too, Subhūti, the bodhisattva who gives without resting has a heap of merit that cannot easily be measured. Therefore a bodhisattva who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle should give so that his mind does not rest even on the perception of a sign.” [4]

Section 5

“What do you think, Subhūti? Can the Tathāgata be seen by the perfection of his marks?” Subhūti answered: “No, Blessed One. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of his marks. Why? The perfection of marks that the Blessed One has spoken of is itself no perfection of marks.” Then the Blessed One said to the venerable Subhūti: “Wherever there is a perfection of marks, there is falsehood; wherever there is no perfection of marks, there is no falsehood. Therefore the Tathāgata should be seen in the marks and in the absence of marks.” [5]

Section 6

Then the venerable Subhūti said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, will there be beings in the future, in the last age, in the last time, in the last five hundred years, when the true teaching is in decline, who, when such passages are spoken, will bring forth the perception of what is real?” The Blessed One said: “Do not speak so, Subhūti. There will be beings in that future time, in the last age, in the last time, in the last five hundred years when the true teaching is in decline, who, when such passages are spoken, will bring forth the perception of what is real. Yet, Subhūti, in that future time there will be bodhisattvas, great beings, in the last age, in the last time, in the last five hundred years when the true teaching is in decline, who will be virtuous, disciplined, and wise, and who, when such passages are spoken, will bring forth the perception of what is real. Those bodhisattvas will not have waited upon only one Buddha, nor will they have

planted their roots of goodness under only one Buddha. They will have waited upon many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, and planted roots of goodness under many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. When such passages are spoken, even a single moment of clear faith will arise in them. Subhūti, such beings are known by the Tathāgata with his Buddha-knowledge, seen by the Tathāgata with his Buddha-eye, and understood by the Tathāgata. All of those beings will gain a heap of merit that cannot be measured or counted, and will receive it. Why? In those bodhisattvas, great beings, no perception of a self arises, nor a perception of a being, of a living soul, or of a person. Nor does any perception of a dharma arise in them, nor any perception of a non-dharma. Nor does any perception or non-perception arise in them. Why? If a perception of dharmas arose in those bodhisattvas, great beings, it would be a grasping at a self, a being, a living soul, and a person. If a perception of non-dharmas arose, it would likewise be a grasping at a self, a being, a living soul, and a person. Why? Subhūti, a bodhisattva, great being, should not grasp at dharmas, nor at non-dharmas. Therefore the Tathāgata has taught this in a veiled way: those who understand this teaching as a raft must give up even the dharmas, and how much more the non-dharmas.” [6]

Section 7

Again the Blessed One said to the venerable Subhūti: “What do you think, Subhūti? Is there any dharma that the Tathāgata awakened to as ‘unsurpassed perfect awakening’? Is there any dharma that the Tathāgata has taught?” The venerable Subhūti answered: “As I understand the meaning of what the Blessed One has said, there is no dharma that the Tathāgata awakened to as unsurpassed perfect awakening, and there is no dharma that the Tathāgata has taught. Why? What the Tathāgata has awakened to and taught cannot be grasped or spoken of. It is neither a dharma nor a non-dharma. Why? Because the noble persons are distinguished by what is unconditioned.” [7]

Section 8

The Blessed One said to him: “What do you think, Subhūti? If a son or daughter of good family were to fill this threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system with the seven treasures, and give them as an offering to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, would that son or daughter gain much merit from it?” Subhūti answered: “Much, Blessed One, much, Sugata. That son or daughter would gain much merit. Why? The heap of merit the Blessed One has spoken of is no heap; the Tathāgata has said so, and therefore he speaks of a heap of merit.” The Blessed One said: “Moreover, Subhūti, if a son or daughter of good family filled this threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system with the seven treasures and gave them as an offering to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, and if someone took up even a four-line verse of this teaching and taught it to others in full, the merit of that one would be far greater, immeasurable and countless. Why? All the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, and the supreme perfect awakening of the Buddhas arise from this teaching. Why? Subhūti, the Buddha-dharmas the Tathāgata has spoken of are no Buddha-dharmas; therefore they are called Buddha-dharmas.” [8]

Section 9

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to one who has entered the stream that ‘I have attained the fruit of stream-entry?’” “No, Blessed One. It does not occur to one who has entered the stream that ‘I have attained the fruit of stream-entry.’ Why? He has entered no dharma; therefore he is called one who has entered the stream, since he has not entered form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or any object of mind. Yet if it occurred to one who has entered the stream that ‘I have attained the fruit of stream-entry,’ he would be grasping at a self, a being, a living soul, and a person.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to one who returns once that ‘I have attained the fruit of once-returning’?” “No, Blessed One. Why? There is no dharma that is a once-returner; therefore he is called a once-returner.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to one who does not return that ‘I have attained the fruit of non-returning’?” “No, Blessed One. Why? There is no dharma that is a non-returner; therefore he is called a non-returner.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to an arhat that ‘I have attained arhatship’?” “No, Blessed One. Why? There is no dharma called arhat. If it occurred to an arhat that ‘I have attained arhatship,’ he would be grasping at a self, a being, a living soul, and a person. Blessed One, I am declared by the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, to be the foremost of those who dwell in the peace of solitude. I am an arhat, free of desire. Yet it does not occur to me that ‘I am an arhat free of desire.’ If it occurred to me that ‘I have attained arhatship,’ the Tathāgata would not have declared of me: ‘Foremost among those who dwell in the peace of solitude is Subhūti, the son of good family, who dwells nowhere; therefore he is called one who dwells in the peace of solitude.’” [9]

Section 10

The Blessed One said: “What do you think, Subhūti? Did the Tathāgata obtain any dharma from the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened Dīpaṃkara?” “No, Blessed One. He obtained none.” “Subhūti, if a bodhisattva were to say, ‘I will bring about the adornment of buddha-lands,’ he would be speaking falsely. Why? ‘Adornments, adornments’: the Tathāgata has said these are no adornments, and therefore they are called adornments. Therefore, Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, should bring forth a mind that rests in nothing. It should not rest on form, nor on sound, smell, taste, touch, or any object of mind. The mind should be brought forth resting in nothing. Subhūti, suppose a person had a body vast and great, like Sumeru, the king of moun-

tains. What do you think, Subhūti, would such a body be great?” “Great, Blessed One, great, Sugata. Why? ‘Body, body’: the Tathāgata has said it is no body, and therefore it is called a body. For, Blessed One, that body is neither a thing nor a non-thing; therefore it is called a body.” [10]

Section 11

The Blessed One said: “What do you think, Subhūti? Suppose there were as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the great Ganges. Would the sands of all those rivers be many?” “Many indeed, Blessed One. Those rivers alone would be many, let alone the sands in them.” “I tell you, Subhūti, I make this known to you: if a woman or a man filled as many world-systems as there are sands in those rivers with the seven treasures, and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, would that woman or man gain much merit from this?” “Much, Blessed One, much, Sugata: it is immeasurable and incalculable.” “Yet if a son or daughter of good family took up even four lines of this teaching and taught them to others, the merit of that one would be far greater, beyond all measure.” [11]

Section 12

“Again, Subhūti, in whatever place this teaching is spoken or explained, even a four-line verse, that place becomes a shrine for the world with its gods, humans, and asuras. How much more so for one who keeps this teaching in full, recites it, learns it, and explains it at length to others! Such people, Subhūti, will be endowed with a supreme wonder. In that place the Teacher dwells, or one who stands in the place of a teacher who knows.” [12]

Section 13

Subhūti said to the Blessed One: “What is the name of this teaching, Blessed One, and how should I hold it?” The Blessed One said: “This teaching, Subhūti, is called the Perfection of Wisdom. Hold it so. For the Perfection of Wisdom that the Tathāgata has taught is itself no perfection; therefore it is called the Perfection of Wisdom.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Is there some dharma that the Tathāgata has taught?” “No, Blessed One, there is none.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? If there were as much dust of the earth as there is in a world-system of three thousand great thousands, would that dust be much?” “Much indeed, Blessed One, much, Sugata.” “Subhūti, the dust the Tathāgata has spoken of is no dust; therefore it is called dust. And the world-system the Tathāgata has spoken of is no world-system; therefore it is called a world-system.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Can the Tathāgata be seen by the thirty-two marks of a great person?” “No, Blessed One. The marks the Tathāgata has spoken of are no marks; therefore they are called the thirty-two marks.”

“Subhūti, suppose a woman or a man gave up as many bodies as there are sands in the Ganges, day after day, for as many kalpas as there are sands in the Ganges; and suppose someone else took up even four lines of this teaching and explained them to others. The merit of this second person would be far greater, beyond all measure.” [13]

Section 14

Then the venerable Subhūti was moved to tears. He wiped away his tears and said to the Blessed One: “How wonderful, Blessed One, how supremely wonderful, Sugata, is this teaching that the Tathāgata has spoken for the sake of

beings who have set out on the foremost vehicle and the highest vehicle. Since this understanding has arisen in me, Blessed One, I have never before heard a teaching of this kind. Bodhisattvas who hear this teaching spoken, and bring forth the perception of what is real, will be endowed with supreme wonder. Why? What is this perception of what is real? It is the perception of the unreal, and so the Tathāgata speaks of the perception of what is real.”

“It is no wonder to me, Blessed One, that I should understand this teaching as it is spoken and have faith in it. Beings who will come in the last time, in the last age, in the last five hundred years when the true teaching has declined, and who will take up this teaching, hold it, recite it, master it, and explain it widely to others, will be endowed with supreme wonder.”

“Blessed One, those beings will not hold the perception of a self, nor of a being, nor of a living soul, nor of a person. Nor will any perception or non-perception arise in them. Why? The perception of self is itself no-perception. The perception of a being, of a living soul, of a person is itself no-perception. Why? The Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, are freed from every perception.”

The Blessed One said to the venerable Subhūti: “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. Those beings will be endowed with supreme wonder when this teaching is spoken. They will not be startled, nor frightened, nor overcome with dread. Why? Subhūti, this is the supreme perfection that the Tathāgata has taught, namely the no-perfection. And the supreme perfection that the Tathāgata teaches is taught by immeasurable Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, as well. Therefore it is called the supreme perfection.”

“Yet also, Subhūti, the patience-perfection of the Tathāgata is itself no perfection. Why? Subhūti, when the king of Kālīṅga cut off my limbs and flesh, at that time I had no perception of a self, of a being, of a living soul, or of a person; I had no perception of any kind, nor of non-perception. Why? If at that time a perception of self had arisen in me, a perception of ill-will would have arisen in me too. If a perception of being, of living soul, or of person had arisen, a perception of ill-will would have arisen in me. Why? Subhūti, I remember that for five hundred births I was a sage who taught patience, and even then there was in me no perception of self, of being, of living soul, or of person.”

“Therefore, Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, should set aside all perceptions and bring forth the mind toward unsurpassed perfect awakening. He should not bring forth a mind that rests on a form, nor on a sound, smell, taste, touch, or object of mind, nor on a dharma, nor on a non-dharma, nor on any place at all. Why? What rests is, for that very reason, unrested. Therefore the Tathāgata says that a bodhisattva should give without resting. He should not give resting on a form, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or an object of mind.”

“Moreover, Subhūti, a bodhisattva should practice such giving for the sake of all beings. Why? The perception of beings that the Tathāgata has spoken of is no perception, and the beings the Tathāgata has spoken of are not beings. Why? The Tathāgata speaks what is true; he speaks what is so; he speaks in accord with what is; he does not speak otherwise; he does not speak what is false.”

“Moreover, Subhūti, the teaching the Tathāgata has fully awakened to and proclaimed is neither true nor false. It is like a person who enters a dark room and sees nothing. So a bodhisattva who gives while resting in things should be seen as one who gives in darkness. And it is like a person with sight, when the sun has risen and the night is over, who sees many kinds of form. So a bodhisattva who gives without resting in things should be seen as one who gives in light.”

“Moreover, Subhūti, the sons and daughters of good family who take up this teaching, hold it, recite it, master it, and explain it widely to others: the Tathāgata knows them with his Buddha-knowledge, sees them with his Buddha-eye, and understands them. All those beings will bring forth an immeasurable, uncountable heap of merit, and they will receive it.” [14]

Section 15

“Subhūti, suppose a woman or a man gave away their own bodies, as many as the sands of the Ganges, in the morning, at midday, and in the evening, day after day for many hundreds of thousands of *niyutas* of *koṭis* of *kalpas*; and

suppose another heard this teaching and did not reject it. That second person's merit would be greater still, beyond all measure. What then of one who copies this teaching, holds it, recites it, learns it, and explains it widely to others?"

"Subhūti, this teaching is inconceivable and incomparable. The Tathāgata has spoken this teaching for the sake of those who have set out on the foremost vehicle and the highest vehicle. Those who take it up, hold it, recite it, learn it, and explain it widely to others are known by the Tathāgata with his Buddha-knowledge, seen by him with his Buddha-eye, and understood by him. All those beings will be endowed with an immeasurable heap of merit. They will be endowed with an inconceivable, incomparable, boundless, measureless heap of merit. All those beings will hold, recite, and master an equal share of awakening. Why? Subhūti, a teaching like this cannot be heard by beings of low aspiration, nor by those who hold a self-view, a being-view, a soul-view, or a person-view. Nor can it be heard, taken up, held, recited, or learned by beings who have not made the bodhisattva's vow. That is not possible."

"Moreover, Subhūti, in whatever place this sutra is proclaimed, that place will become worthy of worship for the world with its gods, humans, and asuras, worthy of salutation and of circumambulation, and will become a shrine." [15]

Section 16

"Moreover, Subhūti, the sons and daughters of good family who take up such a teaching, hold it, recite it, learn it, reflect on it rightly, and explain it widely to others will be reviled, will be utterly reviled. Why? Whatever evil karma they created in former lives, karma that would lead to the lower realms, will be exhausted in this life through the contempt they now meet. They will exhaust that karma and attain the awakening of the Buddhas."

"Subhūti, I recall that in countless and yet more countless aeons long past, before the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, I pleased eighty-four koṭis of nīyutas of hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, and having pleased them I never displeased them. Yet if in the last age, in the last five hun-

dred years when the true teaching has declined, sons and daughters of good family take up such a teaching, hold it, recite it, learn it, and explain it widely to others, the merit of these later ones will far exceed my merit from those offerings. My merit would not come to a hundredth part of theirs, nor to a thousandth, nor to a hundred-thousandth, nor to a ten-millionth, nor to a hundred-koṭi part, nor to a thousand-koṭi part, nor to a hundred-thousand-niyuta-koṭi part, nor to any count, part, reckoning, comparison, or likeness at all.”

“Subhūti, if I were to speak in full of the merit of such people, beings would go mad, or their minds would be thrown into confusion. This teaching, Subhūti, is inconceivable and incomparable, and its fruit is inconceivable too.”
[16]

Section 17

Then the venerable Subhūti asked the Blessed One: “Blessed One, how should one who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle stand? How should he walk? How should he hold the mind?” The Blessed One said: “Here, Subhūti, one who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle should bring forth the mind in this way: ‘All living beings I must bring to final extinction in the realm of nirvāṇa without remainder.’ And when beings have been led to extinction in this way, not one being has been extinguished. Why? If a bodhisattva’s perception of a being were to arise, he should not be called a bodhisattva. If the perception of a living soul, or the perception of a person, were to arise in him, he should not be called a bodhisattva. Why? There is, Subhūti, no dharma called ‘one who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle.’”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Is there any dharma that the Tathāgata awakened to, as unsurpassed perfect awakening, in the presence of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened?” The venerable Subhūti answered: “As I understand the meaning of what the Blessed One has said, there is no dharma that the Tathāgata awakened to, as unsurpassed perfect awakening, in the presence of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara, the Worthy, the

Perfectly Awakened.” The Blessed One said: “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. There is no dharma that the Tathāgata awakened to, as unsurpassed perfect awakening, in the presence of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara. And if, Subhūti, the Tathāgata had awakened to any dharma, Dīpaṃkara, the Tathāgata, would not have predicted of me: ‘You, young man, will in a future age be a Tathāgata named Śākyamuni, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened.’ But because the Tathāgata awakened to no dharma as unsurpassed perfect awakening, therefore Dīpaṃkara, the Tathāgata, predicted of me: ‘You, young man, will in a future age be a Tathāgata named Śākyamuni, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened.’”

“Why, Subhūti, is he called the Tathāgata? ‘Tathāgata’, Subhūti, is a name for true suchness; it is a name for the nature in which nothing arises; it is a name for the cutting off of dharmas; it is a name for what has never at all arisen. Why? This, Subhūti, is non-arising, which is the ultimate truth. Whoever says that the Tathāgata has attained unsurpassed perfect awakening speaks falsely and misrepresents me, grasping at what is not. Why? Subhūti, there is no dharma that the Tathāgata awakened to as unsurpassed perfect awakening. Subhūti, the dharma that the Tathāgata has fully awakened to and taught is neither true nor false. Therefore it is said: ‘All dharmas are Buddha-dharmas.’ Why? ‘All dharmas,’ Subhūti: the Tathāgata has spoken of them as no-dharmas; therefore it is said: ‘All dharmas are Buddha-dharmas.’”

“Suppose, Subhūti, a person had a body, a great body.” The venerable Subhūti said: “That person of whom the Tathāgata has spoken as ‘a body, a great body’: the Tathāgata has said he is no body; therefore he is called ‘a body, a great body.’”

The Blessed One said: “So it is, Subhūti. A bodhisattva who says, ‘I will lead beings to final nirvāṇa,’ should not be called a bodhisattva. Why? Is there, Subhūti, any dharma called a bodhisattva?” “No, Blessed One, there is no dharma called a bodhisattva.” The Blessed One said: “‘Beings, beings,’ Subhūti: the Tathāgata has spoken of them as non-beings; therefore they are called beings. Therefore the Tathāgata says: ‘All dharmas are without a self, without a living soul, without a nourisher, without a person.’”

“Subhūti, a bodhisattva who says, ‘I will bring about the adornment of lands,’ speaks falsely. Why? ‘Adornment of lands, adornment of lands’: Subhūti, the Tathāgata has spoken of them as no adornment; therefore they are called the adornment of lands.”

“Subhūti, the bodhisattva who is convinced that ‘dharmas are without a self, dharmas are without a self’ is declared by the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened, to be a bodhisattva, a great being.” [17]

Section 18

The Blessed One said: “What do you think, Subhūti? Does the Tathāgata have the fleshly eye?” “So it is, Blessed One; the Tathāgata has the fleshly eye.” “Does the Tathāgata have the divine eye?” “So it is, Blessed One; he has the divine eye.” “Does the Tathāgata have the eye of wisdom?” “So it is; he has the eye of wisdom.” “Does the Tathāgata have the eye of dharma?” “So it is; he has the eye of dharma.” “Does the Tathāgata have the Buddha-eye?” “So it is, Blessed One; he has the Buddha-eye.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? As many grains of sand as there are in the Ganges, did the Tathāgata speak of them as sand?” “So it is, Blessed One; the Tathāgata has spoken of those grains as sand.” “What do you think? As many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand, and as many worlds as there are grains in all those rivers, would those worlds be many?” “Many, Blessed One, many, Sugata.” “Subhūti, of as many beings as there are in those worlds, I know the many and various streams of thought. Why? ‘Stream of thought, stream of thought’: the Tathāgata has said this is no stream; therefore it is called a stream of thought. Why? Past thought cannot be apprehended; future thought cannot be apprehended; present thought cannot be apprehended.” [18]

Section 19

“What do you think, Subhūti? Suppose a son or daughter of good family filled this threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system with the seven treasures and gave them as an offering to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened. Would that son or daughter gain much merit from it?” Subhūti answered: “Much, Blessed One, much, Sugata.” The Blessed One said: “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. That son or daughter would gain much merit, a heap of merit immeasurable and countless. Why? ‘Heap of merit, heap of merit’: the Tathāgata has said that this is no heap; therefore it is called a heap of merit. And if there were a heap of merit, the Tathāgata would not have spoken of a heap of merit.” [19]

Section 20

“What do you think, Subhūti? Can the Tathāgata be seen by the perfection of his body, the form-body?” “No, Blessed One. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of the form-body. Why? The perfection of the form-body that the Tathāgata has spoken of is no perfection; therefore it is called the perfection of the form-body.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Can the Tathāgata be seen by the perfection of his marks?” “No, Blessed One. The Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of his marks. Why? The perfection of marks the Tathāgata has spoken of is no perfection; therefore it is called the perfection of marks.” [20]

Section 21

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to the Tathāgata that ‘I have taught a dharma’?” The venerable Subhūti answered: “No, Blessed One, it does not occur to him so.” The Blessed One said: “Whoever, Subhūti, says that the Tathāgata has taught a dharma speaks falsely, and misrepresents me, grasping at what is not. Why? ‘The teaching of dharma, the teaching of dharma’: no dharma can be found that is called the teaching of dharma.”

The venerable Subhūti then said to the Blessed One: “Blessed One, will there be beings in the future, in the last age, in the last five hundred years when the true teaching has declined, who will hear such a teaching and place their faith in it?” The Blessed One said: “They are neither beings nor non-beings, Subhūti. Why? ‘Beings, beings’: Subhūti, the Tathāgata has spoken of all of them as non-beings; therefore they are called beings.” [21]

Section 22

“What do you think, Subhūti? Is there any dharma that the Tathāgata has attained as unsurpassed perfect awakening?” “No, Blessed One, there is none.” “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. Not even an atom of that dharma is found or apprehended, and therefore it is called unsurpassed perfect awakening.” [22]

Section 23

“Subhūti, that dharma is even, and nothing in it is uneven. Therefore it is called unsurpassed perfect awakening. Through being free of a self, free of a being, free of a living soul, and free of a person, this unsurpassed and even perfect

awakening is realized through all the good dharmas. Why? ‘Good dharmas, good dharmas’: Subhūti, the Tathāgata has spoken of them as non-dharmas. Therefore they are called good dharmas.” [23]

Section 24

“Subhūti, suppose a woman or a man gathered as many heaps of the seven treasures as there are Sumeru kings of mountains in this threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system, and gave them as an offering to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened. And suppose a son or daughter of good family took up even a four-line verse of this teaching of the perfection of wisdom, and explained it to others. Subhūti, that earlier heap of merit does not come to a hundredth part of this heap of merit; it does not bear even comparison.” [24]

Section 25

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to the Tathāgata that ‘I have brought beings to liberation’? Subhūti, one should not think so. Why? No being has been brought to liberation by the Tathāgata. If any being had been liberated by him, the Tathāgata would be grasping at a self, a being, a living soul, and a person. ‘Self-grasping, self-grasping’: the Tathāgata has said it is no grasping, but foolish ordinary people have taken it up. ‘Foolish ordinary people, foolish ordinary people’: Subhūti, the Tathāgata has said they are no people; therefore they are called foolish ordinary people.” [25]

Section 26

“What do you think, Subhūti? Can the Tathāgata be seen by the perfection of marks?” “No, Blessed One. As I understand what the Blessed One has said, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of marks.” The Blessed One said: “Well said, well said, Subhūti. So it is, Subhūti, so it is, as you say: the Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of marks. Why? If the Tathāgata could be seen by the perfection of marks, a universal monarch would be a Tathāgata too. Therefore the Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of marks.” The venerable Subhūti said to the Blessed One: “As I understand what the Blessed One has said, the Tathāgata cannot be seen by the perfection of marks.”

Then the Blessed One spoke these verses at that moment:

Those who saw me in my form and followed me in my voice, set on wrong effort, will not see me.

The Buddha is to be seen as the dharma; the leaders are the dharma-bodies. Yet the nature of the dharma cannot be known, and it cannot be understood.
[26]

Section 27

“What do you think, Subhūti? Did the Tathāgata attain unsurpassed perfect awakening through the perfection of marks? One should not see it so, Subhūti. Why? The Tathāgata could not have attained unsurpassed perfect awakening through the perfection of marks. Nor should anyone say that bodhisattvas who have set out on the bodhisattva vehicle have declared the destruction or annihilation of any dharma. One should not see it so. Why? Among the bodhisattvas who have set out, no dharma is declared to be destroyed or annihilated.” [27]

Section 28

“Subhūti, suppose a son or daughter of good family filled as many world-systems as there are sands in the Ganges with the seven treasures and gave them as an offering to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened; and suppose a bodhisattva attained the patience that the selfless dharmas do not arise. The merit of this one would be far greater, immeasurable and countless. Subhūti, a bodhisattva, a great being, should not take hold of a heap of merit.” “Blessed One,” the venerable Subhūti said, “surely a bodhisattva should take hold of a heap of merit?” The Blessed One said: “It is to be taken up, Subhūti, but not seized. Therefore it is said: ‘it is to be taken up.’” [28]

Section 29

“Moreover, Subhūti, if someone were to say, ‘The Tathāgata goes, comes, stands, sits, or lies down,’ that person has not understood the meaning of what I have taught. Why? The Tathāgata, Subhūti, is called one who has gone nowhere and come from nowhere; therefore he is called the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened.” [29]

Section 30

“Subhūti, suppose a son or daughter of good family ground as many world-systems as there are particles of earth in the threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system into such fine powder, with incalculable effort, like a cluster of atoms. What do you think, Subhūti? Would that cluster of atoms be great?” “So it is, Blessed One, so it is, Sugata. That cluster of atoms would be great.” “Why? If, Blessed One, a great cluster of atoms had been, the Blessed One

would not have spoken of a cluster of atoms. Why? The cluster of atoms the Tathāgata has spoken of is no cluster, the Tathāgata has said; therefore it is called a cluster of atoms.”

“And the threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system the Tathāgata has spoken of is no world-system, the Tathāgata has said; therefore it is called the threefold thousand-great-thousand world-system. Why? If, Blessed One, a world-system had been, that would have been a grasping of a lump. And the grasping of a lump the Tathāgata has spoken of is no grasping, the Tathāgata has said; therefore it is called the grasping of a lump.” The Blessed One said: “Subhūti, the grasping of a lump is unspoken, inexpressible. It is neither a dharma nor a non-dharma. And foolish ordinary people have taken it up.” [30]

Section 31

“Why? Subhūti, if anyone said, ‘The Tathāgata has taught the view of a self, the view of a being, the view of a living soul, the view of a person,’ would he be speaking rightly?” “No, Blessed One, no, Sugata, he would not be speaking rightly. Why? The view of a self the Tathāgata has spoken of is no view, the Tathāgata has said; therefore it is called the view of a self.”

The Blessed One said: “So, Subhūti, a bodhisattva who has set out on the bodhisattva vehicle should know, see, and be convinced of all dharmas in such a way that he does not settle even on the perception of a dharma, nor on the perception of a non-dharma. Why? ‘Perception of a dharma, perception of a dharma,’ Subhūti: the Tathāgata has spoken of this as no perception; therefore it is called the perception of a dharma.” [31]

Section 32

Subhūti, suppose a bodhisattva, a great being, filled immeasurable and countless world-systems with the seven treasures, and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Perfectly Awakened. And suppose a son or daughter of good family took up even a four-line verse of this teaching of the perfection of wisdom, held it, recited it, mastered it, and explained it widely to others. That second one's merit would be far greater, immeasurable and countless. And how should it be explained? Thus, as in space:

Like a star, a dimming of the eye, a lamp, an illusion, dew, a bubble;
like a dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud, so should the conditioned be seen.

Thus should it be set forth; therefore it is said, 'he sets it forth.'

Thus spoke the Blessed One, glad at heart. The venerable Subhūti, the monks, the nuns, the male and female lay disciples, the bodhisattvas, and the world with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced in the words of the Blessed One. [32]

Here ends the noble Diamond-Cutter, the Blessed Perfection of Wisdom.