



Diamond Sutra (Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra)

UNKNOWN

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

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TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

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Section 1

Homage to the Blessed Noble Perfection of Wisdom.

I heard it this way. Once the Buddha was staying in the city of Śrāvastī, in Jeta's Grove, in the park of Anāthapiṇḍada. He was with a large community of monks, one thousand two hundred and fifty of them, and with many bodhisattvas, who are great beings. One forenoon the Buddha got dressed, took his bowl and robe, and went into the large city of Śrāvastī to collect food. He walked through the city for alms. When he had finished his meal, he came back, put away his bowl and robe, washed his feet, and sat down on a seat that had been prepared. He sat cross-legged, kept his body straight, and kept his attention in front of him. Then many monks came to him, bowed their heads to his feet, walked around him three times with him on their right, and sat down to one side. [1]

Section 2

Then the elder Subhūti was in the assembly, sitting with the monks. He stood up, put his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, put his palms together, bowed to the Buddha, and said: "It is wonderful, Blessed One, very wonderful, Sugata. The Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened One, has taken bodhisattvas, the great beings, under his care with the greatest kindness. It is wonderful, Blessed One, that the Tathāgata has entrusted bodhisattvas, the great beings, with the highest entrusting. Blessed One, how should a son or daughter of a good family who sets out on the bodhisattva path live? How should they practice? How should they direct their mind?"

The Buddha said to Subhūti: "Well said, well said, Subhūti. So it is, just as you say. The Tathāgata has taken bodhisattvas under his care with great kindness, and has entrusted them with the highest entrusting. Now listen carefully

and think about it. I will tell you how a person on the bodhisattva path should live, how they should practice, and how they should direct their mind.” Subhūti said, “Yes, Blessed One,” and he listened. [2]

Section 3

The Buddha said to him: “Subhūti, a person who has set out on the bodhisattva path should develop the mind like this: ‘However many living beings there are, of every kind, in the realm of beings, whether they are born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or appear suddenly, whether they have bodies or have no bodies, whether they have thoughts, have no thoughts, or are neither thinking nor not thinking, and however many are designated in the realm of beings, I must lead all of these beings to the final peace of nirvāṇa, where nothing is left behind.’ When I have led countless beings to that peace, not one being has in fact been led there. Why? Subhūti, if a bodhisattva still thought of a being, he should not be called a bodhisattva. Why? Subhūti, no one should be called a bodhisattva if they still think of a being, a soul, or a person.” [3]

Section 4

“Again, Subhūti, a bodhisattva should not give while holding on to a basis, nor give while holding on anywhere at all. When he gives, he should not hold on to a form, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or any object of the mind. This is how the great bodhisattva should give: his mind should not hold on even to the idea of a sign. Why? A person who gives without holding on builds a heap of merit that is hard to measure. Subhūti, what do you think? Is it easy to measure the space to the east?” “No, Blessed One.” “Is it easy to measure the space to the south, west, or north, below and above, in the in-between directions, in all ten directions?” “No, Blessed One.” “In the same way, Subhūti, a bodhisattva who

gives without holding on builds a heap of merit that is hard to measure. So a person who sets out on the bodhisattva path should give without the mind holding even to the idea of a sign.” [4]

Section 5

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can you see the Tathāgata by the perfection of marks?” Subhūti said: “No, Blessed One. You cannot see the Tathāgata by the perfection of marks. Why? The perfection of marks you spoke of is not really a perfection of marks.” Then the Buddha said to the elder Subhūti: “Where there is a perfection of marks, there is falsehood. Where there is no perfection of marks, there is no falsehood. So you should see the Tathāgata by both marks and the lack of marks.” [5]

Section 6

Subhūti said: “Blessed One, will there be people in the future, in the last age, in the last period of five hundred years when the true teaching has fallen into decline, who will hear these teachings and believe that they are true?” The Buddha said: “Do not say that, Subhūti. There will be people in that future time, in the last period of five hundred years, when the true teaching has declined, who will hear these teachings and believe that they are true. But there will also be bodhisattvas, who are great beings, in that same time. They will be good, disciplined, and wise. When they hear these teachings, they will believe in what is real. These bodhisattvas will not have served only one Buddha, and they will not have planted their roots of goodness under only one Buddha. They will have served many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas and planted their roots of goodness under them. When they hear these teachings, even one moment of clear trust will arise in them. Subhūti, the Tathāgata knows them with his Buddha-knowledge, sees them with his Buddha-eye, and understands them. All

of these people will build a heap of merit that is endless and cannot be measured, and they will receive it. Why? In these bodhisattvas, great beings, no idea of a self arises, nor an idea of a living being, a soul, or a person. No idea of a teaching arises in them, and no idea of a non-teaching arises either. No idea and no absence of idea arises in them. Why? If they held an idea of a teaching, they would still be holding onto a self, a being, a soul, and a person. If they held an idea of a non-teaching, it would be the same. So, Subhūti, a bodhisattva should not hold on to teachings or to non-teachings. That is why the Tathāgata taught this with something hidden in mind: those who understand this teaching as a raft must let go even of the teachings, and how much more must they let go of the non-teachings.” [6]

Section 7

The Buddha asked Subhūti again: “What do you think? When the Tathāgata reached full awakening, did he awaken to any teaching as full awakening? Did he teach any teaching?” Subhūti said: “As I understand what the Blessed One has taught, the Tathāgata did not awaken to any teaching as full awakening, and he did not teach any teaching. Why? What the Tathāgata awakened to and taught cannot be grasped or described. It is neither a teaching nor a non-teaching. Why? Because the noble ones are known through what is beyond conditions.” [7]

Section 8

The Buddha said: “What do you think, Subhūti? Suppose a good man or woman filled a world as large as three thousand great thousands with the seven treasures, and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones. Would that person gain a great deal of merit from this?” Subhūti said: “Yes, Blessed One, a great deal. That person would gain a great deal of merit.

Why? The heap of merit the Blessed One spoke of is no heap; the Tathāgata has said so, and that is why he calls it a heap of merit.” The Buddha said: “Now suppose a good man or woman fills a world as large as three thousand great thousands with the seven treasures and gives them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones, and suppose someone takes up even four lines of this teaching and explains them to others in full. That person’s merit would be far greater, and it could not be counted. Why? All the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, and the full awakening of the Buddhas come from this teaching. The Buddha-teachings the Tathāgata spoke of are not really Buddha-teachings. That is why they are called Buddha-teachings.” [8]

Section 9

The Buddha said: “Subhūti, what do you think? Does a person who has entered the stream think, ‘I have reached the fruit of entering the stream?’” Subhūti said: “No, Blessed One. A person who has entered the stream does not think, ‘I have reached the fruit of entering the stream.’ Why? Because he has entered nothing. He has not entered a form, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or any object of the mind. That is why he is called one who has entered the stream. If a person who has entered the stream thought, ‘I have reached the fruit of entering the stream,’ he would still be holding on to a self, a being, a soul, and a person.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does a person who comes back once think, ‘I have reached the fruit of coming back once?’” “No, Blessed One. Why? Because there is no thing that is a ‘once-returner.’ That is why he is called a once-returner.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does a person who does not come back think, ‘I have reached the fruit of not coming back?’” “No, Blessed One. Why? Because there is no thing that is a ‘non-returner.’ That is why he is called a non-returner.”

“What do you think, Subhūti? Does an arhat think, ‘I have become an arhat?’” “No, Blessed One. Why? Because there is no thing called ‘arhat.’ If an arhat thought, ‘I have become an arhat,’ he would still be holding on to a self, a being, a soul, and a person. Blessed One, the Tathāgata has declared me the foremost of those who live in peaceful solitude. I am an arhat free from desire, but I do not think, ‘I am an arhat free from desire.’ If I thought that, the Tathāgata would not have declared of me, ‘Foremost among those who live in peaceful solitude is Subhūti, the son of good family, who lives nowhere; that is why he is called one who lives in peaceful solitude.’” [9]

Section 10

The Buddha said: “Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata get any teaching from Dīpaṃkara, the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened One?” Subhūti said: “No, Blessed One. He got no teaching from him.” The Buddha said: “Subhūti, if a bodhisattva says, ‘I will make the lands of the Buddhas beautiful,’ he is not telling the truth. Why? When the Tathāgata says ‘adornments, adornments,’ he means these are not really adornments, which is why they are called adornments. So, Subhūti, a bodhisattva who is a great being should let his mind rest on nothing. It should not rest on a form, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or any object of the mind. The mind should rest on nothing at all. Subhūti, suppose a person had a body as large as Mount Sumeru, the king of mountains. What do you think? Would that body be large?” Subhūti said: “Yes, Blessed One, very large. Why? When the Tathāgata says ‘a body, a body,’ he means it is not really a body, which is why it is called a body. Blessed One, that body is neither a thing nor a non-thing, and that is why it is called a body.” [10]

Section 11

The Buddha said: “Subhūti, what do you think? Suppose there were as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. Would there be many grains of sand in all of those rivers?” Subhūti said: “Yes, Blessed One. There would be many rivers, and even more grains of sand.” The Buddha said: “I tell you truly, Subhūti. Suppose a man or a woman filled as many worlds as there are grains of sand in those rivers with the seven treasures, and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones. Would that person gain a great deal of merit?” “A great deal, Blessed One, a great deal, Sugata: it is immeasurable and incalculable.” “But if someone took up even four lines of this teaching and taught them to others, that person’s merit would be far greater than that, and it could not be counted.” [11]

Section 12

“Again, Subhūti, in any place where this teaching is spoken or explained, even four lines of it, that place becomes a shrine for the world of gods, humans, and demigods. How much more so for those who keep this whole teaching, recite it, learn it, and explain it widely to others! Those people, Subhūti, will be endowed with the greatest wonder. In such a place the Teacher lives, or someone who stands in the place of a teacher who knows.” [12]

Section 13

Subhūti said: “Blessed One, what is the name of this teaching, and how should I keep it?” The Buddha said: “Subhūti, this teaching is called the Perfection of Wisdom. Keep it under that name. The Perfection of Wisdom that the

Tathāgata taught is not really a perfection. That is why it is called the Perfection of Wisdom.”

“Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata teach any teaching?” “No, Blessed One. He taught no teaching.”

“Subhūti, what do you think? If a world as large as three thousand great thousands were filled with dust from the earth, would there be a lot of dust?” “A lot, Blessed One, a lot, Sugata.” “Subhūti, the dust the Tathāgata spoke of is not really dust. That is why it is called dust. And the world the Tathāgata spoke of is not really a world. That is why it is called a world.”

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can you see the Tathāgata by the thirty-two marks of a great person?” “No, Blessed One. The marks the Tathāgata spoke of are not really marks. That is why they are called the thirty-two marks.”

“Subhūti, suppose a man or a woman gave up as many bodies as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, day after day, for as many ages as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. And suppose someone else took up even four lines of this teaching and explained them to others. That second person’s merit would be far greater, past all counting.” [13]

Section 14

Then the elder Subhūti began to cry. He wiped his tears and said to the Buddha: “It is wonderful, Blessed One, very wonderful, Sugata, that this teaching has been given for the sake of beings on the foremost path and the highest path. Since this understanding has come to me, Blessed One, I have never heard a teaching like this before. Bodhisattvas who hear this teaching spoken and form the idea of what is real will be filled with the greatest wonder. What is this idea of what is real? It is really the idea of what is unreal, and that is why the Tathāgata speaks of ‘the idea of what is real.’”

“It is no wonder to me, Blessed One, that I can understand this teaching when it is spoken and have faith in it. In the last age, in the last five hundred years, when the true teaching has fallen into decline, there will be beings who

hear this teaching, hold it, recite it, learn it, and explain it widely to others. They will be filled with the greatest wonder.”

“Blessed One, those beings will not hold on to the idea of a self, a being, a soul, or a person. No idea and no absence of ideas will arise in them. Why? The idea of a self is itself no idea. The idea of a being, a soul, or a person is itself no idea. Why? The Buddhas are free of all ideas.”

The Buddha said to the elder Subhūti: “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. Those beings will be filled with the greatest wonder when this teaching is spoken. They will not be shaken, frightened, or terrified. Why? Subhūti, this is the highest perfection, and what the Tathāgata calls the highest perfection is no perfection at all. Countless Buddhas also teach this highest perfection. That is why it is called the highest perfection.”

“And Subhūti, the Tathāgata’s perfection of patience is itself no perfection. Why? Subhūti, when the king of Kāliṅga cut off my arms and legs and my flesh, I had no idea of a self, a being, a soul, or a person. I had no idea of anything, and no lack of ideas either. Why? If I had held the idea of a self at that time, I would also have felt anger. If I had held the idea of a being, a soul, or a person, I would also have felt anger. Why? Subhūti, I remember that for five hundred lives I was a sage who taught patience. Even then I had no idea of a self, a being, a soul, or a person.”

“So, Subhūti, a bodhisattva who is a great being should let go of all ideas and set his mind on the highest and perfect awakening. He should not set his mind on a form, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or any object of the mind. He should not set it on a teaching or a non-teaching, or on any place at all. Why? What rests is itself not resting. So the Tathāgata says that a bodhisattva should give without resting. He should not give while resting on a form, a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or an object of the mind.”

“Subhūti, a bodhisattva should give in this way for the sake of all beings. Why? The Tathāgata says that the idea of beings is not really an idea, and the beings he speaks of are not really beings. Why? The Tathāgata speaks the truth. He speaks what is real and what is so. He speaks as things are, and he does not speak otherwise. He does not speak falsely.”

“Subhūti, the teaching the Tathāgata has fully understood and declared is neither true nor false. It is like a person who walks into a dark room and sees nothing. In the same way, a bodhisattva who gives while holding on to things is like someone walking in the dark. It is like a person with good eyes, when the sun has risen in the morning, who sees many kinds of things. In the same way, a bodhisattva who gives without holding on to things is like someone walking in the light.”

“Subhūti, the sons and daughters of good families who take up this teaching, keep it, recite it, learn 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 of them will build a heap of merit that is endless and cannot be counted, and they will receive it.” [14]

Section 15

“Subhūti, suppose a man or a woman gave away their own bodies, as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, day after day for many hundreds of thousands of *niyutas* of *koṭis* of ages. And suppose someone else heard this teaching and did not turn away from it. That second person would have even more merit, beyond all measure. What about someone who copies this teaching, keeps it, recites it, learns it, and explains it widely to others?”

“Subhūti, this teaching cannot be imagined or compared. The Tathāgata taught it for people on the foremost path and the highest path. Those who take it up, keep it, recite it, learn it, and explain it widely to others are known to the Tathāgata with his Buddha-knowledge, seen by him with his Buddha-eye, and understood by him. All of them will be filled with merit that cannot be measured. They will be filled with merit that cannot be imagined, cannot be compared, and has no limit and no measure. All of them will hold, recite, and master an equal share of awakening. Why? Subhūti, people of low aspiration can-

not hear this teaching, and neither can people who hold on to the idea of a self, a being, a soul, or a person. Nor can people who have not made the bodhisattva's vow hear it, keep it, or learn it. That is not possible."

"Subhūti, in any place where this teaching is spoken aloud, that place will be worthy of honor from the world of gods, humans, and demigods, worthy of being bowed to and walked around, and it will be a shrine." [15]

Section 16

"Subhūti, sons and daughters of good families who take up this teaching, keep it, recite it, learn it, think about it rightly, and explain it widely to others will be looked down on, and looked down on all the more. Why? Any evil deeds they did in past lives, deeds that would lead them to the lower worlds, will be used up in this life, because people look down on them now. Through this they will use up those old deeds and reach the awakening of the Buddhas."

"Subhūti, I remember that countless and more than countless ages ago, before the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara, I honored and pleased eighty-four koṭis of niyutas of hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, and having pleased them I never displeased them. But if, in the last age, in the last five hundred years when the true teaching has declined, sons and daughters of good families take up this teaching, keep it, recite it, learn it, and explain it widely, their merit would be far greater than mine from those offerings. My merit would not come to a hundredth of theirs, nor a thousandth, nor a hundred-thousandth, nor a ten-millionth, nor a hundred-millionth, nor a thousand-millionth, nor any part that can be counted or compared."

"Subhūti, if I told in full the merit of such people, beings would go mad, or their minds would be thrown into confusion. This teaching, Subhūti, cannot be imagined or compared, and what it brings is also beyond imagining." [16]

Section 17

The elder Subhūti asked the Buddha: “Blessed One, how should a person who has set out on the bodhisattva path live? How should they walk? How should they direct their mind?” The Buddha said: “Subhūti, a person on the bodhisattva path should develop the mind like this: ‘I must bring all living beings to the final peace of nirvāṇa, where nothing is left behind.’ When beings have been led to that peace in this way, not one being has really been led there. Why? If a bodhisattva still thought of a being, he should not be called a bodhisattva. Subhūti, no one who still thinks of a living soul, or a person, should be called a bodhisattva. Why? There is no such thing as one who has ‘set out on the bodhisattva path.’”

“Subhūti, what do you think? Is there any teaching that the Tathāgata awakened to, as the highest and complete awakening, in the presence of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened One?” Subhūti said: “As I understand what the Blessed One has said, there is no teaching that the Tathāgata awakened to, as the highest and complete awakening, in the presence of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara.” The Buddha said: “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. There is no teaching that the Tathāgata awakened to, as the highest and complete awakening, in the presence of the Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara. And if I had awakened to any teaching, Dīpaṃkara would not have said to me, ‘Young man, in a future age you will be a Tathāgata named Śākyamuni, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened One.’ But because there is no teaching that the Tathāgata awakened to as the highest awakening, Dīpaṃkara said to me, ‘Young man, in a future age you will be a Tathāgata named Śākyamuni, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened One.’”

“Why, Subhūti, is he called a 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 teachings. 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 reached the highest awakening is speaking falsely, and he is misrepresenting me, holding on to something that is not there. Why? Subhūti, there is no teaching that the Tathāgata awakened to as the highest awakening. Subhūti, the teaching that the Tathāgata fully understood and taught is neither true nor false. That is why it is said, ‘all teachings are the Buddha’s teachings.’ Why? ‘All teachings,’ Subhūti: the Tathāgata has spoken of them as no teachings. That is why it is said, ‘all teachings are the Buddha’s teachings.’”

“Subhūti, suppose a person had a body, a great body.” Subhūti said: “That person of whom the Tathāgata has spoken as ‘a body, a great body’: the Tathāgata has said he is no body. That is why he is called ‘a body, a great body.’”

The Buddha 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 thing called a bodhisattva?” “No, Blessed One, there is no thing called a bodhisattva.” The Buddha said: “‘Beings, beings,’ Subhūti: the Tathāgata has spoken of them as non-beings. That is why they are called beings. That is why the Tathāgata says, ‘all teachings are without a self, without a living soul, without a nourisher, without a person.’”

“Subhūti, a bodhisattva who says, ‘I will make the lands beautiful,’ is not telling the truth. Why? When the Tathāgata speaks of the beauty of lands, he means it is not really beauty. That is why it is called the beauty of lands.”

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

Section 18

The Buddha said: “Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata have the physical eye?” “Yes, Blessed One, he has the physical eye.” “Does he have the heavenly eye?” “Yes, he has the heavenly eye.” “Does he have the eye of wis-

dom?” “Yes, he has the eye of wisdom.” “Does he have the eye of the teaching?” “Yes, he has the eye of the teaching.” “Does he have the Buddha-eye?” “Yes, Blessed One, he has the Buddha-eye.”

“Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata say that the sand in the Ganges is sand?” “Yes, Blessed One. The Tathāgata has said that those grains are sand.” “Subhūti, what do you think? If there were 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, I know the beings in all those worlds, and I know their many and various streams of thought. Why? The Tathāgata said ‘stream of thought, stream of thought,’ but that is not really a stream, which is why it is called a stream of thought. Why? Past thought cannot be found. Future thought cannot be found. Present thought cannot be found.” [18]

Section 19

The Buddha said: “What do you think, Subhūti? Suppose a son or daughter of good family filled a world as large as three thousand great thousands with the seven treasures, and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones. Would that person gain a great deal of merit?” Subhūti said: “A great deal, Blessed One, a great deal, Sugata.” The Buddha said: “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. That person would gain a great deal of merit, a heap that cannot be measured or counted. Why? When the Tathāgata says ‘heap of merit, heap of merit,’ he means it is not really a heap. That is why it is called a heap of merit. If there really were a heap of merit, the Tathāgata would not have said ‘heap of merit.’” [19]

Section 20

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can you see the Tathāgata by the complete form of his body?” “No, Blessed One. You cannot see the Tathāgata by the complete form of his body. Why? When the Tathāgata speaks of the complete form, he means it is not really complete. That is why it is called the complete form.”

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can you see the Tathāgata by his complete marks?” “No, Blessed One. You cannot see the Tathāgata by his complete marks. Why? When the Tathāgata speaks of the complete marks, he means they are not really complete. That is why they are called complete marks.” [20]

Section 21

“Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata think, ‘I have taught a teaching?’” The elder Subhūti said: “No, Blessed One, he does not think that.” The Buddha said: “Subhūti, whoever says that the Tathāgata has taught a teaching is saying something false, and is slandering me. He is holding on to something that is not there. Why? When people speak of ‘teaching a teaching,’ there is no teaching that can be found under that name.”

Then the elder Subhūti said to the Buddha: “Blessed One, in the future, in the last age and the last five hundred years, when the true teaching has declined, will there be beings who hear such a teaching and believe it?” The Buddha said: “They are neither beings nor non-beings, Subhūti. Why? When the Tathāgata says ‘beings, beings,’ Subhūti, he means that all of them are not beings. That is why they are called beings.” [21]

Section 22

“Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata get any teaching that is the highest and complete awakening?” “No, Blessed One. He got none.” “So it is, Subhūti, so it is. Not even an atom of that teaching is found or grasped. That is why it is called the highest and complete awakening.” [22]

Section 23

“Subhūti, that teaching is even, and nothing in it is uneven. That is why it is called the highest and complete awakening. Because there is no self, no being, no soul, and no person in it, this equal and highest awakening is reached through all the good teachings. Why? When the Tathāgata says ‘good teachings, good teachings,’ Subhūti, he means they are not really teachings. That is why they are called good teachings.” [23]

Section 24

“Subhūti, suppose a man or a woman gathered as many heaps of the seven treasures as there are Mount Sumerus in a world as large as three thousand great thousands, and gave them as an offering to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones. And suppose a son or daughter of good family took up even a four-line verse of this Perfection of Wisdom teaching and explained it to others. Subhūti, that earlier heap of merit does not come to a hundredth part of this heap, and it does not bear comparison.” [24]

Section 25

“Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata think, ‘I have freed beings’? Subhūti, he should not be thought of that way. Why? The Tathāgata has freed no beings. If he had freed any being, he would still be holding on to a self, a being, a soul, and a person. When the Tathāgata speaks of ‘holding on to a self,’ he means it is not really holding on. But ordinary people hold on to it. When the Tathāgata says ‘foolish ordinary people, foolish ordinary people,’ Subhūti, he means they are not really people. That is why they are called foolish ordinary people.” [25]

Section 26

“Subhūti, what do you think? Can you see the Tathāgata by his marks?” Subhūti said: “No, Blessed One. As I understand what you have said, you cannot see the Tathāgata by his marks.” The Buddha said: “Well said, Subhūti, well said. That is right, as you say: you cannot see the Tathāgata by his marks. Why? If you could see the Tathāgata by his marks, then a universal king would be a Tathāgata too. So you cannot see the Tathāgata by his marks.” The elder Subhūti said to the Buddha: “As I understand what you have said, you cannot see the Tathāgata by his marks.”

Then at that time the Blessed One spoke these verses:

People who saw me in my form and followed me by my voice were set on wrong effort. They will not see me.

The Buddha should be seen as the teaching, because the leaders are bodies made of teaching. But the nature of the teaching cannot be known, and it cannot be understood. [26]

Section 27

“Subhūti, what do you think? Did the Tathāgata reach the highest and complete awakening because of his marks? You should not see it that way, Subhūti. Why? It would not be by his marks that the Tathāgata reached the highest and complete awakening. And no one should say that those who have set out on the bodhisattva path have declared the destruction or ending of any teaching. You should not see it that way. Why? Among those who have set out, no teaching has been declared destroyed or annihilated.” [27]

Section 28

“Subhūti, suppose a son or daughter of good family filled as many worlds as there are grains of sand in the Ganges with the seven treasures and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones. And suppose a bodhisattva reached the patience of knowing that selfless things do not arise. That bodhisattva’s merit would be far greater, immeasurable and countless. Subhūti, a bodhisattva who is a great being should not take hold of merit.” The elder Subhūti said: “Blessed One, but a bodhisattva should take hold of merit, should he not?” The Buddha said: “It is to be taken up, Subhūti, but not seized. That is why it is said, ‘it is to be taken up.’” [28]

Section 29

“Subhūti, if someone says, ‘The Tathāgata comes or goes, stands or sits, or lies down to sleep,’ that person does not understand what I have taught. Why? The Tathāgata, Subhūti, is called one who has gone nowhere and come from

nowhere. That is why he is called the Tathāgata, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened One.” [29]

Section 30

“Subhūti, what do you think? Suppose a son or daughter of good family ground as many worlds as there are particles of earth in a world as large as three thousand great thousands into such fine powder, with incalculable effort, like a cluster of atoms. Would that cluster of atoms be large?” “Very large, Blessed One.” “Why? If it were a great cluster of atoms, the Buddha would not have called it a cluster of atoms. Why? When the Tathāgata speaks of a cluster of atoms, he means it is not really a cluster. That is why it is called a cluster of atoms.”

“And when the Tathāgata speaks of a world as large as three thousand great thousands, he means it is not really a world. That is why it is called a world. Why? If there really were a world, that would be grasping a lump. When the Tathāgata speaks of grasping a lump, he means it is not really grasping. That is why it is called grasping a lump.” The Buddha said: “Subhūti, grasping a lump cannot be put into words. It is neither a thing nor a non-thing. Foolish ordinary people have grabbed hold of it.” [30]

Section 31

“Why? Subhūti, if someone said, ‘The Tathāgata taught the view of a self, the view of a being, the view of a living soul, the view of a person,’ would that person be speaking rightly?” Subhūti said: “No, Blessed One, no, Sugata, he would not be speaking rightly. Why? When the Tathāgata speaks of the view of a self, he means it is not really a view. That is why it is called the view of a self.”

The Buddha said: “So, Subhūti, a bodhisattva who has set out on the bodhisattva path should know, see, and be convinced of all things in this way: he should not settle even on the idea of a thing, nor on the idea of a non-thing. Why? When the Tathāgata says ‘idea of things, idea of things,’ Subhūti, he means that this is not an idea. That is why it is called the idea of things.” [31]

Section 32

Subhūti, suppose a bodhisattva, a great being, filled immeasurable and countless worlds with the seven treasures and gave them to the Tathāgatas, the Worthy, the Fully Awakened Ones. And suppose a son or daughter of good family took up even a four-line verse of this Perfection of Wisdom teaching, held it, recited it, mastered it, and explained it widely to others. That second person’s merit would be far greater, immeasurable and countless. And how should this be explained? Like this, as in space:

Like a star, a dimness of sight, a lamp, a magic trick, dew, a bubble;
like a dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud: that is how to see everything that is
made by conditions.

That is how it should be explained, and that is why it is said, ‘he explains it.’

This is what the Buddha said, glad at heart. The elder Subhūti, the monks, the nuns, the men and women who follow the teaching, the bodhisattvas, and the whole world with its gods, humans, asuras, and spirits were glad to hear what the Buddha had said. [32]

The noble Diamond-Cutter, the Blessed Perfection of Wisdom, is complete.