

The Diamond Sutra

I

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the garden of Anathapindika in Jeta Grove near Sravasti, with a community of 1,250 bhiksus and many Bodhisattvas.

That day, when it was time to make the round for alms, the Buddha put on his sanghati robe and, taking his bowl, went into the city of Sravasti to seek alms food, going from house to house. When the alms round was completed, he returned to the garden to eat the midday meal. Then he put away his sanghati robe and his bowl, washed his feet, arranged his cushion, and sat down, crossing his legs, holding his body upright, and mindfully fixing his attention in front of him.

2

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti stood up, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, and, raising his hands with palms joined respectfully, said to the Buddha, “It is wonderful, O Well-Gone, it is most precious how mindful the Tathagata is of all the Bodhisattvas, protecting and instructing them so well.

“World-Honored One, if good men and women want to give rise to the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind (i.e., supreme enlightenment), how should they stand, how should they move, and how should they control their thoughts?”

The Buddha replied, “Well said, Subhuti! So it is as you say. The Tathagata is ever mindful of the Bodhisattvas, protecting and instructing them well. Therefore, listen and attend well, Subhuti. I will teach how good men and women who want to give rise to the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind, should stand, should move, should control their thoughts.”

“So be it, Lord,” the Venerable Subhuti said, “We are happy to hear your teachings.”

3

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “This is how the bodhisattva mahasattvas master their thinking: ‘However many species of living beings there are—whether born from eggs, from the womb, from moisture, or spontaneously; whether they have form or do not have form; whether they have thought or do not have thought; or whether it cannot said of them that they have thought or that they do not have thought, all these I must guide to nirvana—to that liberation which leaves nothing behind. Though the number of such beings thus liberated must be immeasurable, no being at all has been led to nirvana.’

“And why? If, Subhuti, a bodhisattva holds the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence, that bodhisattva could not be called a bodhisattva.”

4

”Moreover, Subhuti, when a bodhisattva practices generosity, it is done without regard to appearances, unsupported by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, or mental attachments. That, Subhuti, is the spirit in which a bodhisattva should practice generosity, not relying on signs. And why? If a bodhisattva practices generosity without relying on signs, the happiness that results cannot be conceived of or easily measured. What do you think, Subhuti, is the extent of space to the East easily measured?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

I

“Is the extent of space to the West, South, North, Zenith, and Nadir easily measured?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

“Like so, Subhuti, the merit that results from one who gives without attachment is not easily measured. The Bodhisattvas, Subhuti, should fix their minds single-pointedly on this teaching.”

5

“What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible to grasp the Tathagata by means of signs?”

“No, World-Honored One. When the Tathagata speaks of signs, there are no signs being talked about.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “In a place where there is something that can be distinguished by signs, in that place there is deception. If you can see the signless nature of signs, then you can see the Tathagata.”

6

The Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, “In times to come, in the last epoch, when these teachings become obscured, will there be people who, when they hear these teachings, understand the truth?”

The Buddha replied, “Do not speak that way, Subhuti. Yes, even then there will be those who, gifted with good conduct, virtuous qualities, and wisdom, when hearing these teachings, will understand the truth. Such Bodhisattvas will not have planted roots of merit under one Buddha alone, or even two, three, four, or five Buddhas, but under countless Buddhas. Those Bodhisattvas who give rise to a pure and serene confidence even upon hearing these words of the Tathagata, are seen and known by the Tathagata, and they will attain immeasurable happiness because of this understanding.

And why? “Because in these Bodhisattvas the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence does not take place. They are not caught up in the idea of a dharma or the idea of a no-dharma. They are not caught up in the notion that this is a sign and that is not a sign. And why? If these Bodhisattvas should have the idea of a dharma, or even of a no-dharma, they would thereby seize upon a self, a person, a being, and a separate existence. That is why we should not get caught up in dharmas or in the idea that dharmas do not exist. Therefore this saying has been taught by the Tathagata with a subtle meaning: ‘All the teachings of the Tathagata are like a raft.’ As even these teachings must be abandoned, how much more so a no-teaching.”

7

“What do you think, Subhuti, does the Tathagata know any teaching as the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind? Has the Tathagata ever given such a teaching?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied, “No, not as I understand the teachings of the Tathagata. And why? The teachings that the Tathagata has realized and set forth cannot be conceived of as separate, independent existences and therefore cannot be described. Such teaching is neither self-existent nor non-self-existent. And why? Because the great teachers are only distinguished from others in terms of the unconditioned.”

8

“What do you think, Subhuti? If someone filled 3,000 galaxies with the seven precious things and gave it all away as an act of generosity, would that person gain much merit by that act?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied, “Very much, indeed, O Well-Gone. It would be beyond reckoning. And why? Because the Tathagata has taught that such merit is a no-merit.”

The Buddha said, "On the other hand, if someone else received and lived these teachings, even only a stanza of four lines, and explained them to others, the merit generated by such an act would exceed even that of the first. And why? Because from it has issued all the Buddhas and the teachings of the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind of all the Buddhas. And why? Because, Subhuti, what is called Buddhadharma is all that is not Buddhadharma."

9

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does one who has entered the stream which flows to enlightenment think, 'I have attained the fruit of stream-entry'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. And why? Because nothing has been attained therefore such a one is called Stream Enterer. No sight-object has been attained, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touchable, no object of mind has been won. That is what is meant by 'entering the stream.' If even the thought 'I have attained the fruit of stream entry' should occur, this is to seize upon a self, a person, a being, a separate existence."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Once-Returner think, 'I have attained the fruit of once-returning.'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. And why? Because a Once-Returner must go and return again, but in truth there is no going or returning. To realize this is to be called a Once-Returner."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does a Non-Returner think like this, 'I have attained the fruit of no-return.'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. And why? Because in truth there is no real thing which does not return. This is what is meant by 'Non-Returner.'"

"What do you think, Subhuti? Does an Arhat think like this, 'I have attained the fruit of Arhatship.'?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. And why? There is no separately existing thing that can be called 'Arhat.' If an Arhat gives rise to the thought that he has attained the fruit of Arhatship, then he is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence. World-Honored One, you have often said that I have attained the concentration of peaceful abiding and that in the community, I am the Arhat who has most transformed need and desire. World-Honored One, if I were to think that I had attained the fruit of Arhatship, you certainly would not have said that I love to dwell in the concentration of peaceful abiding."

10

The Buddha asked Subhuti, "In the past when the Tathagata was with Dipankara Buddha, did he attain anything?"

Subhuti answered, "No, World-Honored One. In the past when the Tathagata was practicing under Dipankara Buddha, he did not attain anything."

The Buddha then said, "If a bodhisattva declared, 'I create a serene and beautiful Buddha field,' he would speak falsely. And why? As it is taught by the Tathagata, to create a serene and beautiful Buddha field is to create a no-Buddha field. That is why it is called creating a serene and beautiful Buddha field."

"Therefore, Subhuti, all the bodhisattva mahasattvas should give rise to an unsupported thought which is in no way dependent upon sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind. They should give rise to a pure and clear intention with their minds not dwelling anywhere."

"Suppose, Subhuti, a man had an enormous body, like Sumeru, the king of mountains. Would the sense of personal existence he had also be enormous?"

"Yes, indeed, O Lord," Subhuti answered. "His sense of personal existence would be enormous. But the Tathagata has taught that personal existence is no existence, for it is in fact neither existence nor non-existence. So it is called 'personal existence.'"

11

“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges, would you say that the number of sand in all those Ganges Rivers is very many?”

Subhuti answered, “Very many indeed, World-Honored One. Indeed, the number of Ganges Rivers would be innumerable, how much more so their sand grains.”

“Subhuti, now I want to ask you this: if a good woman or man filled as many galaxies as there are grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers with the seven precious things, and gave it all away as an act of generosity, would that person gain much merit by that act?”

Subhuti replied, “Very much indeed, O Well-Gone.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “If a good man or woman receives, lives, and explains this sutra to others, even if only a stanza of four lines, the resulting merit would be far greater.”

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“Furthermore, Subhuti, any place in which this sutra is studied or explained, even if only one stanza of four lines, will become like a shrine for the whole world with its gods, asuras and people. If even the place where this discourse is taught is like a shrine, how much more can be said for those who continuously remember this whole sutra, who recite, study, and illuminate it in full detail for others. Subhuti, you should know that such people attain the most wonderful and profound truth. Wherever this sutra is found you should conduct yourself as though in the presence of the Buddha or a sage worthy of the Buddha.”

13

After that, Subhuti asked the Buddha, “What should this sutra be called and how should it be remembered?”

The Buddha replied, “This sutra should be called *The Diamond Cutter* because it cuts through all illusions. You should remember it as such. And why? This very discourse which the Tathagata has taught as *the Perfection of Wisdom* is precisely a teaching which is not the perfection of wisdom, therefore it is called *the Perfection of Wisdom*.”

The Buddha asked, “What do you think, Subhuti? Is there any dharma which the Tathagata has taught?”

Subhuti replied, “No indeed, World-Honored One, there is not.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Are there many particles of dust in 3,000 galaxies each containing billions of worlds?”

“Very many, World-Honored One, but what the Tathagata teaches as ‘particles of dust’ are no-particles. Therefore they are called ‘particles of dust.’ And what the Tathagata teaches as ‘galaxies’ are no-galaxies. Therefore they are called galaxies.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be seen by the thirty-two marks of a great sage?”

The Venerable Subhuti replied, “No indeed, World-Honored One. And why? Because the Tathagata has taught that the thirty-two marks of a great sage are really no-marks. That is why they are called ‘the thirty-two marks’.”

“Subhuti, if a good woman or a man were to renounce all they own as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges and if another took from this teaching only one stanza of four lines and demonstrated it to others, the merit of the latter would be far greater.”

14

When he had heard this much and penetrated deeply into its significance, the Venerable Subhuti was moved to tears. He said, “World-Honored One, you are truly rare in this world. Since the day I attained the eyes of understanding, thanks to the guidance of the Buddha, I have

never before heard teachings so deep and wonderful as these. World-Honored One, if someone hears this sutra, has pure and clear confidence in it, and arrives at insight into the truth, that person will realize the rarest kind of virtue. World-Honored One, that insight into the truth is essentially no-insight. That is what the Tathagata calls insight into the truth.

“World-Honored One, today is not difficult for me to hear this wonderful sutra, have confidence in it, understand it, accept it, and put it into practice. But in the future, in the last five hundred years, if there are those who can hear this sutra, have confidence in it, understand it, study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, such as they will be of most remarkable achievement, for in them no idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence takes place. And why? The concept of a self is in error, and the concepts of a person, a being, and a separate existence are in error as well. Thus the Buddhas have left all concepts behind.”

“The Buddha said, “It is as you say, Subhuti. Of remarkable achievement are those who do not tremble in fear or awe when they hear this teaching. And why? Subhuti, what the Tathagata calls *parama-paramita*, the ultimate perfection, is the teaching of countless Buddhas. Therefore it is called the ultimate perfection.

“Subhuti, what the Tathagata teaches as the perfection of patience is no-perfection. That is why it is called the perfection of patience. And why? Subhuti, when the King of Kalinga mutilated my body, ‘I’ possessed no concept of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence. If, at that time, such ideas had arisen, anger and ill-will would have arisen.

“I also remember, long ago, that I led the life of a sage devoted to patience. Even then I was free from the idea of a self, a person, a being, and a separate existence. So, Subhuti, after a bodhisattva has given up all concepts, he must give rise to the unequaled mind of awakening. He cannot rely on sights when he gives rise to that mind, nor on sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, or objects of mind, for all such supporting conditions are in reality no support at all. Thus the Tathagata teaches that the bodhisattva can only give rise to that mind that is not caught up in anything.

“The Tathagata teaches that charity should be practiced by a Bodhisattva who relies on no supporting conditions. For the welfare of all beings, charity should be practiced in this manner without regard to appearances. And why? The idea of a being is no idea. These beings of whom the Tathagata has spoken are not, in fact, beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks in accordance with reality, speaks what is true, and speaks of what is. He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, if we say that the Tathagata has realized a teaching, that teaching is neither graspable nor deceptive.

“Subhuti, a bodhisattva who still depends on notions to practice generosity is like someone walking in the dark. But when a bodhisattva does not depend on notions to practice generosity, he is like someone with good eyesight walking under the bright light of the sun. He can see all shapes and colors.

“Subhuti, those good men or women who will take up the teaching, and receive, study, live and illuminate it in detail for others, they will be seen by the Tathagata’s Buddha-eye. The Tathagata will know them and they will bring to fruition measureless, limitless merit.”

15

“Subhuti, if on the one hand, a good woman or man were to give up all they own, and were they to repeat this act in the morning as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, and if they should do likewise at noon and in the evening, and if in this way they continue doing so for countless ages; and if, on the other hand, someone else listens to this sutra with complete confidence and without contention, the latter would bring to fruition immeasurably greater merit. But no comparison can be made to one who writes this sutra down, receives, recites, and explains it in detail to others.

“In summary, Subhuti, this teaching is inconceivable and cannot be confined by comparison with anything else. If there are those capable of receiving, living, reciting, and explaining this teaching to others, the Tathagata will see and know them, and they will achieve a perfection

of merit inconceivable, immeasurable, and incomparable. Such as these will bear the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened career of the Tathagata. And why? Subhuti, if one is of inferior resolve and finds consolation in limited teachings, he or she is still caught up in the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence and will not be able to hear, receive, recite, and explain this teaching to others. Subhuti, any place this teaching is found is a place worthy of honor by the whole world with its people, gods, and asuras. Such a place is like a shrine and should be venerated with formal ceremony.”

16

“Furthermore, Subhuti, those good men and women who take up, remember, study, and recite this sutra will be humbled. Their misfortunes now are the effects of their past, yet by their present difficulty may they reach the enlightenment of a Buddha. Subhuti, in the remote past, long before I met the fully enlightened Dipankara Buddha, I faultlessly served millions of Buddhas throughout incalculable ages. Nevertheless, the merit gained by those who take up, remember, study, recite, and explain in full detail to others this discourse in the future, when this good teaching is on the decline, will surpass the merit gained in the service I rendered to those millions of Buddhas throughout incalculable ages. Their merit bears no number, comparison, or similarity.

“Subhuti, if I were to detail just how vast this merit of such good men and women would be, people would become frantic and confused. But since the Tathagata has taught that this discourse on Dharma is inconceivable, like so, the result of this teaching is also inconceivable.”

17

The Venerable Subhuti again asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, if good women or men would give rise to the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind, how should they stand, how should they move, and how should they control their thoughts?”

The Buddha replied, “Subhuti, a good woman or man who would give rise to the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind should produce this thought: ‘I must lead all beings to nirvana, to that liberation which leaves nothing behind, yet when all beings have thus been liberated, no being has been liberated.’ And why? Subhuti, if in a bodhisattva the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence, should arise, that bodhisattva could not be called a bodhisattva. And why? A true bodhisattva is not an independently existing object of mind.

What do you think, Subhuti? In the past, when the Tathagata was with Dipankara Buddha, was there any dharma by which he came to know supreme enlightenment?”

“No, World-Honored One. As I understand the teachings of the Buddha, there was no dharma by which the Tathagata has known supreme enlightenment.”

The Buddha said, “Right you are, Subhuti. It is for this reason that the Buddha Dipankara predicted of me, ‘In the future you will be a Buddha, supremely enlightened, and you will be called Shakyamuni.’ And why? Tathagata is synonymous with true Suchness (of *all dharmas*). To say that the Tathagata has attained the ultimate, most fulfilled awakened mind would be to speak falsely since there is no one specific dharma by which the Tathagata has fully known supreme enlightenment. Subhuti, the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind that the Tathagata has attained is neither graspable nor elusive. This is why the Tathagata has said, ‘*All dharmas* are Buddhadharmas,’ for what the Tathagata teaches as *all dharmas* is no-dharma. That is why *all dharmas* are called Buddhadharmas.

“Subhuti, consider a man of gigantic frame.”

Subhuti said, “What the Tathagata calls ‘gigantic frame’ has been taught by the Tathagata as no frame at all.”

“So it is, Subhuti. Thus the bodhisattva who thinks, ‘I will lead all beings to nirvana,’ cannot be called a bodhisattva. And why? Subhuti, is there any independently existing thing called ‘bodhisattva’?”

“No, World-Honored One, there is not.”

“Therefore,” the Buddha continued, “the Tathagata teaches that all dharmas are without a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence. Even if a bodhisattva wished to create a serene, harmonious, and tranquil Buddha field, that bodhisattva cannot be called a bodhisattva. And why? What is called a serene, harmonious, and tranquil Buddha field is a no-Buddha field, as taught by the Tathagata. Therefore the Tathagata speaks of a serene, harmonious, and tranquil Buddha field.

Subhuti, any bodhisattva who thoroughly understands that *all dharmas* are without self is called by the Tathagata a bodhisattva of great courage.”

18

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the physical eye of the Tathagata exist?”

Subhuti replied, “So it is, O Well-Gone, the physical eye of the Tathagata exists.”

The Buddha asked, “Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata’s eye of enlightenment exist?”

Subhuti said, “Surely, Lord, it does exist.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the wisdom eye of the Tathagata exist?”

Subhuti replied, “Indeed, Lord, it does exist.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Dharma eye of the Tathagata exist?”

“Yes, World-Honored One, the Dharma eye of the Tathagata exists.”

The Buddha asked, “Does the Buddha eye of the Tathagata exist?”

“Yes, Lord, it does exist.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata spoken of the grains of sand in the Ganges?”

Subhuti replied, “So it is, O Well-Gone, the Tathagata has done this.”

“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as the number of grains of sand of the Ganges and there was a galaxy of worlds for each grain of sand in all those Ganges Rivers, would those worlds be many?”

“Many indeed, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, however many beings there are in all these worlds, though they each have a different mode of thought, the Tathagata understands them all. And why? Subhuti, what are called different modes of thought are taught by the Tathagata as no-thought. Thus they are called different modes of thought. And why? Subhuti, past thought cannot be retained, future thought cannot be grasped, present thought cannot be held.”

19

“What do you think, Subhuti? If a good man or woman filled this galaxy of billions of worlds with the seven precious things and gave it all away as an act of generosity, would they bring great merit by this act?”

“They would, indeed, O Well-Gone.”

“Subhuti, the merit gained would be immeasurably great. Yet, if there were such a thing as merit the Tathagata would not have said it to be great, but because it is ungraspable and without foundation, the Tathagata has called it great.”

20

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be seen in the manifestation of his form?”

“No, World-Honored One, the Tathagata cannot be seen in the manifestation of his form. And why? Because the Tathagata has taught that the manifestation of his form is a no-manifestation. That is why it is called ‘the manifestation of his form’.”

“What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be seen by his marks?”

“No, World-Honored One, the Tathagata cannot be seen by his marks. And why? Because the Tathagata has taught that these marks are in truth no-marks. That is why they are called marks.”

21

“Subhuti, do not think the Tathagata holds the idea ‘I have demonstrated Dharma.’ And why? If anyone says that the Tathagata demonstrates Dharma, that person speaks falsely, and misrepresents the Tathagata by seizing on what is not there. And why? There is no dharma that can be given as a demonstration of Dharma.”

Subhuti then asked, “World-Honored One, in the future, when this teaching declines, will there be any beings who will feel complete confidence when they hear these words?”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, those beings are neither beings nor non-beings. And why? Subhuti, the Tathagata has taught that beings are no-beings, therefore he speaks of ‘*all-beings*.’”

22

“What do you think, Subhuti,” asked the Buddha, “is there any dharma by which the Buddha has known the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind?”

“There is no such dharma, O Lord.”

“That is right, Subhuti. Not even the least dharma is to be found or acquired. That is why it is called the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind.”

23

“Furthermore, Subhuti, *this* (this Dharma, or this Mind) is identical only with itself, and is undifferentiated, therefore it is called the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind. Self-identical and undifferentiated through the absence of a self, a person, a being, or a separate identity, this supreme enlightenment is known as the totality of all wholesome dharmas. Yet what are called wholesome dharmas are no-dharmas. Therefore they are called wholesome dharmas.”

24

“Subhuti, if someone made a gift of the seven precious things, equal in amount to all the Sumerus in 3,000 galaxies of worlds, as an act of generosity, and if another were to demonstrate to others just one stanza of four lines from this *Vajracchedika Prajñaparamita Sutra*, the merit of the latter would be far greater than that of the former to the extent that no conceivable comparison could be made.”

25

“What do you think, Subhuti, does it even occur to the Tathagata, ‘I have set beings free.’? Do not think that way, Subhuti. And why? In truth there is no being to be liberated by the Tathagata. Were there a being the Tathagata set free, the Tathagata would be caught in the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a separate existence. Subhuti, seizing upon a self has been taught by the Tathagata as a no-seizing. Yet common people have seized upon it. ‘Common people,’ Subhuti, are really no-people, as taught by the Tathagata. Therefore they are called ‘common people.’”

26

“What do you think, Subhuti? Is the Tathagata to be seen by his marks?”

“Not at all, O Lord,” said Subhuti.

The Buddha said, “If the Tathagata could be seen by his marks, then any imperial ruler would be a Tathagata.”

Subhuti said, “World-Honored One, as I understand your teaching, the Tathagata cannot be seen by any marks whatsoever.”

On that occasion the World-Honored One spoke in verse:

Those who see me by form
Or seek me in sound,
Are on the wrong path;
They will not see me.

The Buddhas are seen through Dharma,
Thus, through Dharma their guidance comes;
Yet the nature of Dharma is never discerned,
For it cannot form as an object in the mind.

27

“What do you think, Subhuti, does the Tathagata realize the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind through his perfect marks? Hold no such thought, Subhuti, for the Tathagata did not attain the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind through his marks.

Nor should anyone say that those who have set out upon the bodhisattva path see all objects of mind as nonexistent, or that they presume the destruction or annihilation of any dharma. Please do not think in that way for it is not so. One who gives rise to the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind does not contend that all objects of mind are nonexistent, removed or annihilated.”

28

“Subhuti, if a good man or woman filled with the seven precious things as many galaxies as the number of sand grains in the Ganges and gave it all away as an act of generosity, and if, on the other hand, a bodhisattva who has understood and whole-heartedly accepted the truth that all dharmas are without self, and is able to live and bear fully this truth, the latter would bring immeasurably greater merit. And why? Because a bodhisattva gains no merit.”

Subhuti then said to the Buddha, “But surely, Lord, the bodhisattva should acquire a heap of merit!”

“Subhuti, a bodhisattva gives rise to virtue and happiness but does not seize upon virtue and happiness.

29

The Buddha continued, “If anyone says the Tathagata comes, goes, stands, sits, or reclines, that one fails to understand the Tathagata’s teaching. And why? The meaning of Tathagata is ‘does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere.’ That is what is called ‘Tathagata.’”

30

“Subhuti, if a good woman or man took a galaxy for every particle of dust in this vast galaxy and thoroughly ground each one until it was reduced to atoms, would the heap of atoms be great?”

“Indeed, O Lord,” Subhuti answered, “the heap of atoms would be immense.”

“Subhuti, if there were an enormous heap of atoms, the Tathagata would not have called it an enormous heap of atoms. And why? What is called ‘an enormous heap of atoms’ has been taught by the Tathagata as a no-heap. That is why it is called ‘an enormous heap of atoms.’

“Furthermore, though the Tathagata spoke of a ‘galaxy,’ that galaxy is in truth a no-galaxy, as taught by the Tathagata. Therefore it is called a ‘galaxy.’ Any why? If there were a galaxy, that would have been a case of seizing upon a material object, but the Tathagata teaches that the seizing upon a material object is really a no-seizing. Therefore it is called a ‘seizing upon a material object.’

“Subhuti, what is called a ‘seizing upon a material object’ is just a conventional way of speaking. It has no real basis. Yet common people have seized upon it foolishly.”

31

“Subhuti, if anyone says that the Tathagata has spoken of a self view, a person view, a being view, or a separate existence view, has that person understood the Tathagata?”

“No, World-Honored One. Such a person has not understood the Tathagata. And why? What is called a self view, a person view, a being view, or a separate existence view are all a no-view, as taught by the Tathagata. That is why they are called a self view, a person view, a being view, or a separate existence view.”

“Subhuti, anyone who would give rise to the ultimate, most fulfilled, awakened mind should *know all dharmas*, should *see all dharmas*, without use of any conception whatsoever. And why? Subhuti, what is called a conception of dharmas, the Tathagata has taught as a no-conception. That is why it is called ‘a conception of dharmas.’”

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“Subhuti, if someone were to offer an immeasurable quantity of the seven precious things, enough to fill all space, and give it all away as an act of generosity, the merit of that one would not compare to the immeasurable merit of a good woman or man who gives rise to the mind of supreme enlightenment, and who reads, recites, studies, lives, and explains this discourse on Dharma in full detail to others, even if only a stanza of four lines. In what spirit is this explanation given? Without seizing upon signs or appearances, in accordance with Reality, and without agitation. So I say to you:

As stars at dawn, a bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
A flick’ring lamp, a phantom, and a dream—
Thus should you view what is conditioned.

When the Buddha finished this discourse, the Venerable Subhuti, the bhiksus and bhiksunis, and the whole gathering of people, gods, asuras and gandharvas were filled with joy and confidence. They vowed to put these teachings into practice and departed in peace.