

# DIAMOND PRAJNAPARAMITA SUTRA

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## Praise of Incense Offering

Incense burning in the censer,  
All space permeated with fragrance.  
Buddhas perceive it from every direction.  
Auspicious clouds gather everywhere.  
With our sincerity,  
Buddhas manifest themselves in their entirety.  
We take refuge in the bodhisattvas, mahasattvas.  
(repeat three times and prostrations)

## Sutra Opening Verse

The unexcelled, most profound, and exquisitely  
wondrous Dharma,  
Is difficult to encounter throughout hundreds of  
thousands of millions of kalpas.  
Since we are now able to see, hear, receive and retain  
it,  
May we comprehend the true meaning of the  
Tathagata.

# Diamond Prajnaparamita Sutra

1

## **The Causes of This Dharma Meeting**

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was in the city of Sravasti at the Jeta Grove Monastery with a gathering of monks numbering 1,250. At mealtime, the World-honored One put on his robe, picked up his bowl, and went into the city of Sravasti to beg for food. After he had gone from house to house, he returned to the grove. When he had finished eating, he put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, straightened his mat, and sat down.

2

## **Subhuti's Request**

At that time the elder monk Subhuti was among the gathering of monks. He rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, and with palms pressed

together before him, respectfully spoke to the Buddha saying, “Rare, World-honored One, the Tathagata protects and is concerned about all bodhisattvas, and he instructs all bodhisattvas. “World-honored One, when good men and good women commit themselves to *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, in what should they abide in, and how should they subdue their minds?”

The Buddha said, “Wonderful! Wonderful! Subhuti, it is as you have said, the Tathagata protects and is concerned about all bodhisattvas, and instructs all bodhisattvas. Now listen carefully while I tell you, when good men and good women commit themselves to *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, “in what they should abide in, and how they should subdue their minds.”

“Excellent, World-honored One. I will joyfully listen to what you say.”

3

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### **The Heart of the Mahayana**

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “All great bodhisattvas should subdue their minds in the following manner: Of all sentient beings, be they born of eggs, wombs, moisture, or

transformation, or whether they have form, or no form, or whether they are able to perceive, or do not perceive, or are neither able to perceive nor not perceive, I cause them to enter nirvana without remainder, liberating them. Thus by liberating infinite, innumerable, limitless sentient beings, in reality, no sentient beings are liberated.

“And why is this? Subhuti, if a bodhisattva has the notion of a self, the notion of others, the notion of sentient beings, or the notion of longevity, then he is not a bodhisattva.”

4

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### **The Wonder of Behaving Without Attachment**

“Moreover, Subhuti, within this phenomenal world, a bodhisattva should practice giving without abiding in anything. This means that he should not give while abiding in form, nor should he give while abiding in sound, smell, taste, touch, or *dharmas*. Subhuti, a bodhisattva should not give while abiding in any notion whatsoever. And why is this? If a bodhisattva gives without abiding in any notion whatsoever, then his merit will be immeasurable.

“Subhuti, what do you think, can the vastness of space

to the east be measured?”

“No, it cannot, World-honored One.”

“Subhuti, can the vastness of space to the south, west, north, up, or down be measured?”

“No, it cannot, World-honored One.”

“Subhuti, when a bodhisattva gives without abiding in any notion, his merit is just as immeasurable. Subhuti, a bodhisattva should abide in this teaching and this teaching alone.”

5

**Seeing the Truth That Lies Beneath Perception**

“Subhuti, what do you think, can you see the Tathagata from his physical form?”

“No, World-honored One, no one can see the Tathagata from his physical form. And why is this? The Tathagata has said that physical form is not physical form.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “All forms are illusory. If you see that all forms are not forms, then you see the Tathagata.”

## The Rarity of True Belief

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, can sentient beings, upon hearing these words, truly believe them?”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “Do not talk like that. Even after I have entered *nirvana* for five hundred years, there will still be people who uphold the precepts and generate merit who will believe these words and accept them as truth. You should know that they planted good roots not just with one Buddha, or two Buddhas, or three, or four, or five Buddhas, but that they planted good roots with infinite tens of millions of Buddhas. For a person who has one thought of pure belief, Subhuti, the Tathagata fully knows and fully sees that those sentient beings will attain such limitless merit. Such a person already does not have the notion of a self, the notion of others, the notion of sentient beings, the notion of longevity, the notion of phenomena, or the notion of non-phenomena.

“And why is this? If a sentient being clings to a notion with his mind, then he will cling to self, others, sentient

beings, and longevity. If he clings to the notion of phenomena, then he will cling to self, others, sentient beings, and longevity. And why is this? If he clings to the notion of non-phenomena then he will cling to self, others, “sentient beings, and longevity. Thus, he must not cling to phenomena or non-phenomena. This is why I have often said to you, *bhiksus*, that even my teachings should be understood to be like a raft. If even the Dharma must be let go of, what about what is not the Dharma?”

7

### **Nothing Has Been Attained and Nothing Has Been Said**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata really attained *anuttara samyaksambodhi*? Has the Tathagata really spoken the Dharma?”

Subhuti said, “As far as I understand what the Buddha has said, there is no standard Dharma that can be called *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, and there is no standard Dharma spoken by the Tathagata. And why is this? The Dharma of which the Tathagata speaks cannot be held on to, it cannot be spoken, it is not a phenomenon, and it is not a non-phenomenon. Why? All saints and sages

are distinguished by their different understanding of the unconditioned Dharma.”

8

### **Enlightenment Comes from These Teachings**

“Subhuti, what do you think? If someone were to fill the three thousandfold world system with the seven treasures, used them for giving, and attained merit for this, would the merit be great?”

Subhuti said, “It would be very great, World-honored One. And why is this? Such merit is not the nature of merit; thus the Tathagata says it is great.”

“If someone else were to receive and uphold as few as four lines of verse from this sutra, “and if he were to explain them to others, his merit would be even greater than that. And why is this? Subhuti, all Buddhas and all the supremely enlightened teachings of the Buddhas are born of this sutra. Subhuti, that which is called the Buddhadharma is not the Buddhadharma.”

9

### **The Four Fruits Are Empty**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Would it be right for

a *srotapana* to think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of *srotapana*?’”

Subhuti said, “No, World-honored One. And why is this? *Srotapana* means ‘stream-enterer’, and yet there is nothing to be entered. To not enter into form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or *dharmas* is what is called *srotapana*.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Would it be right for a *sakradagami* to think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of *sakradagami*?’”

Subhuti said, “No, World-honored One. And why is this? *Sakradagami* means ‘once-returner’, and yet in truth there is no such thing as returning. This is what is called *sakradagami*.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Would it be right for an *anagami* to think like this: ‘I have attained the fruit of *anagami*?’”

Subhuti said, “No, World-honored One. And why is this? *Anagami* means ‘non-returner’, and yet in truth there is no such thing as never returning. This is the reason it is called *anagami*.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Would it be right for an *arhat* to think like this: ‘I have attained the path of an *arhat*?’”

Subhuti said, “No, World-honored One. And why is this? There is no phenomenon called ‘arhat’. World-honored One, if an *arhat* were to think ‘I have attained the path of an *arhat*’, then he would be clinging to self, others, sentient beings, and longevity.

“World-honored One, the Buddha has said that I have attained non-contentious *samadhi*, and that among all people, I am the foremost in this; and that among all *arhats*, I am also the foremost at going beyond desire. And yet, I do not have the thought that I am a passionless *arhat*. World-honored One, if I were to have the thought that I had attained the path of an *arhat*, then the World-honored One would not have said that Subhuti takes delight in the practice of calm and quiet, free from temptations and distress. Subhuti, in reality, is without practice, and thus it is called delighting in the practice of calm and quiet.”

### **Adorning the Buddha Land**

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “What do you think? In the past, when the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, did he attain the Dharma?”

“No, World-honored One, when the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, he truly did not attain the Dharma.”

“Subhuti, what do you say? Does a bodhisattva adorn the Buddha land?”

“No, World-honored One. And why is this? That which adorns the Buddha land is non-adornment, that is what is called adornment.”

“For this reason, Subhuti, all great bodhisattvas should give rise to purity of mind in this way: they should not give rise to a mind that abides in form; they should not give rise to a mind that abides in sound, smell, taste, touch, or *dharmas*. They should give rise to a mind that does not abide in anything.

“Subhuti, what do you think? If a man’s body were as large as Mount Sumeru, would that body be large?”

Subhuti said, “Very large, World-honored One. And why is this? The Buddha has said that it is not the real body, and thus is called a large body.”

## The Unconditioned Is Supreme

“Subhuti, if each grain of sand in the Ganges River were to become a Ganges River, and if the sand in all of those rivers were added up, what do you think? Would that be a lot of sand?”

Subhuti said, “It would be a lot, World-honored One. The number of Ganges Rivers alone would be enormous; the amount of sand would be even greater than that.”

“Subhuti, I will now truthfully tell you: if a good man or a good woman were to give away as many three thousandfold world systems filled with the seven treasures as there are those grains of sand, would his merit be great?”

Subhuti said, “It would be very great, World-honored One.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “If a good man or a good woman receives and upholds as few as four lines of verse from this sutra, and if he explains them to others, then his merit will be greater.”

## Honoring the True Teaching

“Furthermore, Subhuti, anyone who explains this sutra, even four lines of verse from it, should be honored by people in this world, by those in heaven, and by *asuras* as if he were a Buddha’s stupa or shrine. What then of anyone who receives, upholds, reads, and chants the teachings of this sutra with all of his strength? Subhuti, you should know that such a person already has become accomplished in the highest and rarest Dharma. Wherever this sutra can be found, there also is the Buddha; and it should be honored as if it were one of his disciples.”

## The Name of This Sutra

At that time, Subhuti asked the Buddha, “World-honored One, what should this sutra be called, and how should we receive it and uphold it?”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “This sutra is called the *Diamond Prajnaparamita*, and by this name you should receive it and uphold it. And why is this? Subhuti,

the Buddha has said that *prajnaparamita* is not *prajnaparamita*, and that that is what is called *prajnaparamita*. Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata speak the Dharma?”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, the Tathagata has not said anything.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Is all the fine dust throughout the three thousandfold world system a lot of dust or not?”

Subhuti said, “It is a lot, World-honored One.”

“Subhuti, the Tathagata says that all of that fine dust is not fine dust, and that that is what is called fine dust. The Tathagata says that the world is not the world, and that that is what is called the world. Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be seen by his thirty-two marks?”

“No, World-honored One. And why is this? The Tathagata has said that the thirty-two marks are not marks, and that that is what is called thirty-two marks.”

“Subhuti, suppose a good man or good woman were to give his or her own life as many times as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, if one were to receive and uphold even four verses of this sutra and explain it to others, his merit

would be greater.”

### **Ultimate Tranquility Beyond Notions**

Then, after hearing this sutra and comprehending its deep meaning, Subhuti wept out loud and said to the Buddha, “Rare, World-honored One, the Buddha has spoken such a deep, profound sutra. Since obtaining the wisdom eye I have not heard such a sutra. World-honored One, if anyone should hear this sutra and believe it with a pure mind, then he will give rise to true reality. You should know that this person will attain the supreme, rarest virtue. World-honored One, true reality is not reality, and that is what the Tathagata calls true reality.

“World-honored One, today I have heard this sutra, believed it, understood it, received it, and upheld it, and this was not difficult. If five hundred years from now, someone should hear this sutra, believe it, understand it, receive it, and uphold it, then that person will be a rare person indeed. And why is this? That person is without a notion of self, notion of others, notion of sentient beings, or notion of longevity. And why is this? The notion of a self

is not a notion, and the notion of others, sentient beings, and longevity are not notions. And why is this? That which turns away from all notions is called all Buddhas.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “So it is, so it is. Moreover, if a person hears this sutra and does not become alarmed, or frightened, or scared, then this person is indeed a rare person. And why is this? Subhuti, the Tathagata has said that the supreme *paramita* is not the supreme *paramita*, and that this is what is called the supreme *paramita*. Subhuti, the Tathagata has said that the *paramita* of patience is not the *paramita* of patience. And why is this? Subhuti, long ago when my body was being cut apart by King Kalinga, I had no notion of self, no notion of others, no notion of sentient beings, and no notion of longevity. And why was this? If at that distant time, as my body was being cut apart piece by piece, if I had had a notion of self, a notion of others, a notion of sentient beings, or a notion of longevity, I would have become angry.

“Subhuti, think about this some more; five hundred lifetimes ago when I was a practitioner of patience, I was without a notion of self, a notion of others, a notion of sentient beings, or a notion of longevity. For this reason,

Subhuti, a bodhisattva should turn away from all notions, and initiate the mind of *anuttara samyaksambodhi*. He should not give rise to a mind abiding in form, and he should not give rise to a mind abiding in sound, smell, taste, touch, or *dharmas*. He should give rise to a mind that does not abide in anything.

“If the mind abides in anything it is a false abiding. Thus, the Buddha says that a bodhisattva should not give abiding in form. Subhuti, a bodhisattva should give in this way to benefit all sentient beings. The Tathagata says that all notions are not notions, and therefore he also says that all sentient beings are not sentient beings.

“Subhuti, the Tathagata is a speaker of what is true, what is real, what is so, what is not deceptive, and what is not altered. Subhuti, the Dharma that the Tathagata has attained is not real and it is not unreal.

“Subhuti, when the mind of a bodhisattva abides in phenomena and practices giving he is like a person who has entered into darkness—he sees nothing at all. When the mind of a bodhisattva does not abide in any phenomena and practices giving, he is like someone who has eyes in the full light of the sun—he sees all forms clearly.

“Subhuti, if in future lifetimes there are good men and good women who can receive, uphold, read, and chant this sutra, the Tathagata fully knows and fully sees that these people will attain infinite, limitless virtue.”

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### **The Merit of Upholding This Sutra**

“Subhuti, suppose a good man or good woman were to give as many of his or her lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River in the morning, and give as many of his or her lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River at noon, and give as many of his or her lives as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River in the afternoon, and that this giving continued for infinite hundreds of millions of billions of kalpas; if someone were to hear this sutra, believe it, and not turn his mind against it, his merit would be greater—what of the merit of one who copies, receives, upholds, reads, chants, and explains it to others?

“Subhuti, in summation, the virtue of this sutra is infinite and unlimited. The Tathagata speaks this sutra to those who have initiated the mind of the the Great Vehicle; he speaks it to those who have initiated the mind

of the Supreme Vehicle.

“For those who receive, uphold, read, chant, and explain this sutra to others, the Tathagata fully knows and fully sees that such people will attain infinite, immeasurable, limitless, inconceivable virtue. All such people will shoulder the *anuttara samyaksambodhi* of the Tathagata. And why is this? Subhuti, those who delight in the lesser Dharma cling to a view of self, a view of others, a view of sentient beings, and a view of longevity, and thus they are not able to listen to this sutra, to receive it, to read it, to chant it, or to explain it to others.

“Subhuti, in whatever place this sutra can be found, all who are in the world should make offerings to it, as should all in heaven, and all *asuras*. They should treat this place as if it were a stupa; they should surround it, bow to it, and pay their deepest respect to it. They should scatter incense and flowers all around this place.”

### **Purification of Karma**

“Furthermore, Subhuti, if those good men and good women who receive, uphold, read, and chant this sutra are

disdained by others, it is due to negative karma incurred in a former life. That negative karma should be the cause of the person falling into a lower realm, but in this life he is merely disdained. Eventually his negative karma from previous lives will be eradicated, and he will attain *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.

“Subhuti, I remember infinite *asamkhyā kalpas* ago, before Dipamkara Buddha, I met, honored, served and made offerings to all of the eighty-four hundred billion *nayutas*<sup>1</sup> of Buddhas with every opportunity.

“If someone during the period of declining Dharma can receive, uphold, read, and chant this sutra, the virtue he will attain will be a hundred times—nay, a million, billion times, nay, an incalculable number of times that cannot even be suggested by metaphors—greater than the virtue I attained for honoring all Buddhas.

“Subhuti, good men and good women during the period of declining Dharma will receive, uphold, read, and chant this sutra. If their virtues were completely described there are some who would go mad upon hearing it, and they would form deep doubts and not believe it. Subhuti,

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1. A nayuta is an extremely large number, usually calculated to equal one hundred billion. *Ed.*

you should know that the teachings of this sutra are inconceivable, and its karmic results are inconceivable.”

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### **Complete and Utter Selflessness**

Then Subhuti asked the Buddha, “World-honored One, when good men and good women initiate the mind to *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, what should they abide in? And how should they subdue their minds?”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “When good men and good women initiate the mind to *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, they should give rise to a mind like this: ‘I should liberate all sentient beings, and as I liberate them, I should know that there really are no sentient beings to be liberated.’ And why is this? If a bodhisattva has a notion of self, notion of others, notion of sentient beings, or notion of longevity, then he is not a bodhisattva. And why is this? Subhuti, in truth, there is no phenomenon of initiating the mind to *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.

“Subhuti, what do you think? When the Tathagata was with Dipamkara Buddha, was there the Dharma of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* to attain or not?”

“There was not, World-honored One. As far as I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, when the Buddha was with Dipamkara Buddha, there was no Dharma of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* to attain.”

The Buddha said, “So it is, so it is. Subhuti, in truth, there is no Dharma of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* for the Tathagata to attain. Subhuti, if the Tathagata had attained the Dharma of *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, then Dipamkara Buddha would not have prophesized, ‘In the future you will attain Buddhahood and be called Sakyamuni.’ Since there is no Dharma of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* to attain, Dipamkara Buddha prophesized that I would become a Buddha, saying, ‘In the future you will attain Buddhahood and be called Sakyamuni.’ And why is this? ‘Tathagata’ means all phenomena as they are. Someone might say, ‘The Tathagata has attained *anuttara samyaksambodhi*,’ but Subhuti, there really is no Dharma of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* for the Buddha to attain. Subhuti, within the *anuttara samyaksambodhi* that the Tathagata has attained there is no real nor unreal.

“For these reasons, the Tathagata says that all phenomena are the Buddhadharma. Subhuti, that which is

said to be all phenomena is not all phenomena, and that is why it is called all phenomena. Subhuti, it is the same as a great human body.”

Subhuti said, “World-honored One, the Tathagata has said that a great human body is not a great human body, and that that is why it is called a great human body.”

“Subhuti, a bodhisattva is just like that, and if he should say, ‘I should liberate all sentient beings,’ then he is not a bodhisattva. And why is this? Subhuti, in reality there is no phenomenon called ‘bodhisattva,’ and for this reason the Buddha has said that all phenomena are without self, without others, without sentient beings, and without longevity. Subhuti, if a bodhisattva should say, ‘I will adorn the Buddha land,’ then he is not a bodhisattva. And why is this? The Tathagata has said that that which adorns the Buddha land is non-adornment, and that that is what is called adornment. Subhuti, only after a bodhisattva has fully understood no self and no phenomena will the Tathagata say that he is a true bodhisattva.”

## One Body Sees All

“Subhuti, what do you think, does the Tathagata have eyes of flesh or not?”

“Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has eyes of flesh.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, does the Tathagata have heavenly eyes or not?”

“Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has heavenly eyes.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, does the Tathagata have wisdom eyes or not?”

“Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has wisdom eyes.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, does the Tathagata have Dharma eyes or not?”

“Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has Dharma eyes.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, does the Tathagata have Buddha eyes or not?”

“Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has Buddha eyes.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, has the Buddha said that the sand in the Ganges River is sand or not?”

“Yes, World-honored One, the Tathagata has said that it is sand.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and if all of the sand in all of those rivers were added up, and if the number of Buddha worlds equaled the number of all of those grains of sand, would that be a lot?”

“It would be a lot, World-honored One.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “The Tathagata fully knows and fully sees the minds of the sentient beings in all of these worlds. And how can this be? The Tathagata has said that all minds are not minds and that thus they are called minds. And why is this so? Subhuti, the mind of the past cannot be obtained, the mind of the present cannot be obtained, and the mind of the future cannot be obtained.”

### **Universal Transformation Within the Dharma Realm**

“Subhuti, what do you think? If someone were to fill the three thousandfold world system with the seven treasures, and used them for giving, with this as a cause and condition,

would he attain immense merit?”

“So it is, World-honored One. With this as a cause and condition he will attain immense merit.”

“Subhuti, if there really were such a thing as merit, the Tathagata would never speak about attaining immense merit. It is only because there is no such thing as merit that the Tathagata says that immense merit can be attained.”

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### **Beyond Form and Notions**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Buddha be seen as his physical body, complete [with the thirty-two marks of excellence and eighty noble characteristics]?”

“No, World-honored One, the Buddha should not be seen as his physical body. And why is this? The Tathagata has said that his complete physical body is not the complete physical body, and that this is what is called the complete physical body.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata, complete in all forms, be seen or not?”

“No, World-honored One, the Tathagata should not be seen as complete in all forms. And why is this? The

Tathagata has said that complete in all forms is not complete and that that is what is called complete in all forms.”

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### **Speaking the Unspeakable**

“Subhuti, never say that the Tathagata has the thought, ‘I have spoken the Dharma.’ Do not have that thought. And why is this? If someone says that the Tathagata has spoken the Dharma, then that person is defaming the Buddha, and he does not understand what I have been saying. Subhuti, when a person speaks the Dharma no Dharma can be spoken, and thus it is called speaking the Dharma.”

Then the wise Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, will there ever be sentient beings in the future who, upon hearing this teaching, will believe it?”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, those sentient beings are not sentient beings, and they are not not sentient beings. And why is this? Subhuti, the Tathagata has said that all sentient beings are not sentient beings, and that this is what is called sentient beings.”

### No Dharma to Attain

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, the Buddha attained *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, yet nothing was attained?”

“So it is, so it is, there is not even the slightest Dharma that can be attained in *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, and this is what is called *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.”

### Perfect Equanimity

“Furthermore, Subhuti, the Dharma is equal and without superiority or inferiority. This is called *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.

“Because one is without self, without others, without sentient beings, and without longevity, he practices all wholesome teachings and attains *anuttara samyaksambodhi*. Subhuti, what is called ‘all wholesome teachings,’ the Tathagata says are not all wholesome teachings, and thus they are called all wholesome teachings.”

### **True Generosity Lies in Upholding This Sutra**

“Subhuti, suppose a person gives a quantity of the seven treasures equal to all the Sumeru mountains within a three thousandfold world system; if another person were to use this *prajnaparamita* sutra, even as few as four lines of verse, and receive, uphold, read, chant, and explain it to others, his merit would be one hundred times—nay, a hundred million, billion times, nay, an incalculable number of times that cannot even be suggested by metaphors—greater.”

### **Transformig That Which Cannot Be Transformed**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Do not say that the Tathagata has this thought: ‘I should liberate sentient beings.’ Subhuti, do not have this thought. And why is this? In reality, there are no sentient beings for the Tathagata to liberate. If there were sentient beings for the Tathagata to liberate, then the Tathagata would have a notion of self, others, sentient beings, and longevity.

“Subhuti, when the Tathagata speaks of a self, it is the

same as no self, and yet all ordinary people take it as a self. Subhuti, the Tathagata says that ordinary people are not ordinary people, and that this is what is called ordinary people.”

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### **The Dharma Body Is Without Notion**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be contemplated through his thirty-two marks or not?”

Subhuti said, “So it is, so it is. The Tathagata can be contemplated through his thirty-two marks.”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, if the Tathagata could be contemplated through his thirty-two marks, then a wheel turning monarch would be the same as the Tathagata.”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, as far as I understand the meaning of what the Buddha has said, one should not contemplate the Tathagata by his thirty-two marks.”

If anyone should think that I can be seen among forms,  
Or that I can be sought among sounds,  
Then that person is on the wrong path  
And he will not see the Tathagata.

### Nothing Is Ended and Nothing Is Extinguished

“Subhuti, suppose you had this thought: ‘It is not because his marks are complete that the Tathagata attains *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.’ Subhuti, do not have this thought, ‘It is not because his marks are complete that the Tathagata attains *anuttara samyaksambodhi*.’

“Subhuti, suppose you had this thought: ‘Those who initiate the mind of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* advocate the Dharma of annihilation.’ Do not have this thought. And why is this? Those who initiate the mind of *anuttara samyaksambodhi*, in regards to the Dharma, do not advocate the notions of annihilation.”

### Not Receiving and Not Wanting to Receive

“Subhuti, suppose a bodhisattva gave a quantity of the seven treasures capable of filling as many worlds as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River; if a bodhisattva knows that all phenomena are without self and thereby attains patience, the virtue he attains is superior. Subhuti,

this is because all bodhisattvas do not receive this merit.”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-honored One, why is it that bodhisattvas do not receive merit?”

“Subhuti, the merit of a bodhisattva should not be attached to. That is why it is said that they do not receive merit.”

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### **Awesome Tranquility**

“Subhuti, if someone says, [“Tathagata” means] “thus come,” does he come? Does he go? Does he sit? Does he lie down?’ then this person has not understood my meaning. And why is this? The Tathagata has not come from anywhere, and he does not go anywhere, and that is why he is called the Tathagata.”

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### **Compound Notions**

“Subhuti, if a good man or a good woman were to pulverize a three thousandfold world system into fine dust, what do you think, would that collection of fine dust be a lot or not?”

“It would be a lot, World-honored One. And why is

this? If that collection of fine dust were something that really existed, the Buddha would not have called it a collection of fine dust. And why is this?

“The Buddha has said that a collection of fine dust is not a collection of fine dust and so it is called a collection of fine dust. World-honored One, the three thousandfold world system the Tathagata has spoken about is not a three thousandfold world system and that is what is called a three thousandfold world system. And why is this? If that world really existed, then it would be a unified form. The Tathagata has said that a unified form is not a unified form, and so it is called a unified form.

“Subhuti, that which is a unified form cannot really be spoken about, and yet ordinary people are attached to it.”

### **Not Giving Rise to Belief in Notions**

“Subhuti, if a person were to say, ‘The Tathagata teaches a view of self, a view of others, a view of sentient beings, and a view of longevity’, Subhuti, what do you think, has this person understood the meaning of what I am saying?”

“No, World-honored One. This person has not

understood the meaning of what the Tathagata is saying. And why is this? The World-honored One has said that a view of self, a view of others, a view of sentient beings, and a view of longevity is not a view of self, a view of others, a view of sentient beings, and a view of longevity, and so it is called a view of self, a view of others, a view of sentient beings, and a view of longevity.”

“Subhuti, one who initiates the mind of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* should not give rise to the notion of phenomena. He should know all phenomena in this way; he should know and view them like this, and believe and understand them like this. Subhuti, the Tathagata says that that which is called a notion of phenomena is not a notion of phenomena, and so it is called a notion of phenomena.”

### **Like Shadows, Like Bubbles, Like Dreams**

“Subhuti, suppose a person were to give a quantity of the seven treasures capable of filling infinite *asamkhyā* worlds, if a good man or good woman were to initiate the bodhisattva mind and use this sutra, even as few as four lines of verse from it, and were to receive, uphold, read,

chant, and explain it to others, his merit is greater. And how should this sutra be taught to people? By not grasping to notions and being unmoved by things as they are. And why is this?”

All conditioned phenomena  
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows,  
Like dew and lightning.  
One should contemplate them in this way.

When the Buddha finished speaking this sutra, the elder Subhuti, along with all the *bhiksus*, *bhiksunis*, *upasakas*, *upasikas*, *asuras*, and worldly and celestial beings, heard what the Buddha had said, and all of them were greatly pleased, and they all believed it, received it, and practiced it.

## Triple Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha, wishing that all sentient beings understand the Dharma and make the supreme vow.

I take refuge in the Dharma, wishing that all sentient beings study the sutras diligently and obtain an ocean of wisdom.

I take refuge in the Sangha, wishing that all sentient beings lead the masses in harmony without obstruction.

## Dedication of Merit

May kindness, compassion, joy , and equanimity  
pervade the dharma realms;

May all people and heavenly beings benefit from our  
blessings and friendship;

May our ethical practice of Chan, Pure Land, and  
Precepts help us to realize equality and patience;

May we undertake the great vows with humility and  
gratitude.

# Fo Guang Shan

## International Translation Center

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