

Diamond Prajna

IBDSCL, June 16th, 17th, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to the International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk. Last week, we talked about Prajna Wisdom and we recited the Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra. In fact, every sentence, every word that the Buddha expounded are wisdom. The Dharma is the wisdom; the Precept is wisdom; the three Dharma Seals are wisdom; the four applications of mindfulness are wisdom. Real cultivators need to learn to observe. Observe every day. Observe every moment. Observe that the body is not clean; observe that feelings are bitter; observe that the mind is impermanent; observe that the Dharma is egoless. Observe that all phenomena are empty so that one can see the wonderful true heart. Observe that the five skandhas are empty so that one can cross over all sufferings. The Buddha is in the heart; the Buddha is right in front of you and the Buddha is right in the present moment; the Buddha is everywhere. No matter what you have done before, no matter what you have done in the past countless kalpas; no matter how awful have you been; no matter who have you been; no matter who you are now, you should know that everything is empty. Everything is empty when the mind is empty. Abide in the present moment. Awaken the Buddha of self-nature and fulfill the Bodhi-Vow; unlock the Dharma of self-nature and rescue beings with predestined relationship; return to the Sangha of self-nature and practice the Way of Bodhisattvas. Abandon the five desires. Cultivate the mind by following the sacred Tao. Shed off the mortal body and become a saint and stay in the blissed world forever.

Amitabha! Today, we will recite ***the Diamond Prajna Paramita Sutra***. As we talked about last week, the connotation of all the Prajna sutras is mainly emptiness. The Diamond sutra is supreme for the cultivators of the Mahayana Buddha Dharma. The version that we are going to read today was translated by Kumārajīva.

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

The Vajra Prajna Paramita Sutra

Translated by Tripitaka Master Kumarajiva of Yao Qin

Thus I have heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in the Jeta Grove of the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary together with a gathering of great bhikshus, twelve hundred fifty in all.

At that time, at mealtime, the World Honored One put on his robe, took his bowl, and entered the great city of Sravasti to beg for food. After he had finished his sequential begging within the city, he returned, ate the food, put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, arranged his seat, and sat down.

At that time the Elder Subhuti arose from his seat in the assembly, with his right shoulder covered, knelt his right knee on the ground, put his palms together with respect and said to the Buddha,

“How rare! World Honored One. The Tathagata kindly remembers, protects and instructs all Bodhisattvas!”

“World Honored One, if a good man, or good woman, resolves his mind on anuttarasamyaksambodhi, how should he dwell, how should he subdue his mind?”

The Buddha said, “Good indeed, good indeed, Subhuti. It is as you say. The Tathagata kindly remembers, protects and instructs all Bodhisattvas. Now listen attentively; I shall tell you. A good man, or good woman, who resolves his mind on anuttarasamyaksambodhi should thus dwell, should thus subdue his mind.”

“Yes, certainly, World Honored One. I want to hear. I am delighted to listen.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “All Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, should thus subdue their minds, ‘I must cause all living beings – those born from eggs, born from wombs, born from moisture, born by transformation; those with form, those without form, those with thought, those without thought, those not with thought, and those not without thought – to enter nirvana without residue and be taken across to extinction.’ Yet of the immeasurable, boundless numbers of living beings thus taken across to extinction, there is actually no living beings taken across to extinction. And why? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a mark of self, a mark of others, a mark of living beings, or a mark of longevity, he is not a Bodhisattva.

“Moreover, Subhuti, as to the act of giving, a Bodhisattva should not dwell anywhere when he gives. He should not dwell in forms when he gives, nor should he dwell in sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, or mental constructs when he gives. Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should give thus: he should not dwell in marks. And why? If a Bodhisattva does not dwell in marks when he gives, his blessings and virtues are immeasurable.

“Subhuti, what do you think, is space in the east measurable?”

“No, World Honored One.”

“Subhuti, is space in the south, west, north, or in the intermediate directions, or above, or below, measurable?”

“No, World Honored One.”

“Subhuti, the blessings and virtues of a Bodhisattva who does not dwell in marks when he gives are just as immeasurable. Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should only dwell in what is taught thus.

“Subhuti, what do you think, can the Tathagata be seen by his physical marks?”

“No, World Honored One, the Tathagata cannot be seen by his physical marks. And why? It is because the physical marks spoken of by the Tathagata are no physical marks.”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “All with marks is empty and false. If you can see all marks as no marks then you see the Tathagata.”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, in the future will there be living beings, who, when they hear such phrases spoken will truly believe?”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “Do not speak in such a way! After the Tathagata’s extinction, in the five hundred years, those who hold the precepts and cultivate blessings who will believe such phrases and accept them as true.

“You should know that such people will have planted good roots with not just one Buddha, two Buddhas, three, four, or five Buddhas, but will have planted good roots with measureless millions of Buddhas. All who hear such phrases and produce even one thought of pure faith are completely known and completely seen by the Tathagata. Such living beings thus obtain measureless blessings and virtues. And why? Those living beings have no further mark of self, of others, of living beings, or of longevity; no mark of phenomena and no mark of no phenomena. If living beings’ minds grasp at marks, then that

is attachment to self, to others, to living beings, and to longevity. For that reason you should not grasp at phenomena, nor should you grasp at no phenomena. Regarding that principle, the Tathagata often says, 'All you bhiksus should know that the dharma which I speak is like a raft. Even the dharma should be relinquished, let alone what is not dharma.'

"Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata attained anuttarasamyaksambodhi? Has the Tathagata spoken any dharma?"

Subhuti said, "As I understand what the Buddha has said, there is no certain dharma called anuttarasamyaksambodhi, and there is no certain dharma which the Tathagata has spoken. And why? The dharmas spoken by the Tathagata cannot be grasped and cannot be spoken. It is neither dharma nor non-dharma. And why? Unconditioned dharma distinguishes worthy sages."

"Subhuti, what do you think, if someone filled three thousand great thousand world systems with the seven precious gems and gave them as a gift, would he obtain many blessings and virtues?"

Subhuti said, "Yes. Very many, World Honored One. And why? Such blessings and virtues are not of the nature of blessings and virtues. Therefore the Tathagata speaks of many blessings and virtues."

"If, on the other hand, a person were to receive and hold from this sutra even so few as four lines of verse and speak them for others, his blessings would surpass the previous ones. And why? Subhuti, all Buddhas and all Buddhas' dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi come forth from this sutra. Subhuti, the Buddhadharmas spoken are no Buddhadharmas."

"Subhuti, what do you think, can a Srotaapanna have the thought, 'I have obtained the fruit of Srotaapanna.'?"

Subhuti said, "No, World Honored One. And why? A Srotaapanna means One Who Has Entered the Flow, and yet he has not entered anything. He has not entered forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, or mental constructs. For that reason he is called a Srotaapanna."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Can a Sakrdagamin have the thought, 'I have obtained the fruit of Sakrdagamin.'?"

Subhuti said, “No, World Honored One. And why? A Sakrdagamin means One Who Returns Once More, but he actually does not have a returning. For that reason, he is called a Sakrdagamin.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can an Anagamin have the thought, ‘I have obtained the fruit of Anagamin.’?”

Subhuti said, “No, World Honored One. And why? Anagamin means One Who Does Not Return, but he actually does not have non-returning. For that reason, he is called Anagamin.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can an Arhat have the thought, ‘I have obtained Arhatship.’?”

Subhuti said, “No, World Honored One. And why? Actually, there is no dharma called an Arhat. World Honored One, if an Arhat had the thought, ‘I have attained Arhatship’ that would be attachment to self, to others, to living beings, and to longevity. World Honored One, the Buddha says that in my attainment of the No Strife Samadhi, I am the foremost among men, that I am the foremost Arhat free from desires. World Honored One, I do not have the thought, ‘I am an Arhat free from desires.’ If I had the thought, ‘I have attained Arhatship’ then the World Honored One could not say, ‘Subhuti is the foremost of those who delight in practicing Arana.’ Since Subhuti actually has no practice, he is called ‘Subhuti, who delights in practicing Arana.’”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “What do you think? Was there any dharma which the Tathagata obtained while with Burning Lamp Buddha?”

“No, World Honored One, there was actually no dharma which the Tathagata obtained while with Burning Lamp Buddha.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, does a Bodhisattva adorn Buddhalands?”

“No, World Honored One. And why? The adornment of Buddhalands is no adornment, therefore it is called adornment.”

“Therefore, Subhuti, the Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, should thus produce a pure mind. He should produce that mind without dwelling in forms. He should produce that mind without dwelling in sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, or mental constructs. His mind should produce a thought without dwelling anywhere.

“Subhuti, suppose a person had a body like Sumeru, King of Mountains. What do you think, would that body be big?”

Subhuti said, “Very big, World Honored One. And why? It is said by the Buddha to be non-body. Therefore, it is called a big body.”

“Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, what do you think, would the grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers be many?”

Subhuti said, “Very many, World Honored One. The Ganges Rivers alone would be incalculable, let alone the grains of sand in them.”

“Subhuti, I will now tell you the truth. If a good man, or good woman, used the seven precious gems to fill three thousand great thousand world systems equal in number to the grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers, and gave them as a gift, would he obtain many blessings?”

Subhuti said, “Very many, World Honored One.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “If a good man, or good woman, were to receive and hold from this sutra even so few as four lines of verse and speak them for others, his blessings and virtues would surpass the former’s blessings and virtues.

“Moreover, Subhuti, you should know that all the gods, men, and asuras of the world should make offerings to any place at which even so few as four lines of verse from this sutra are spoken and so forth, just as they would to a Buddha’s shrine or temple; let alone any place where people can completely receive, hold, read, and recite the sutra. Subhuti, you should know that such people realize the foremost and rarest dharma. In any place the sutra text is found, there is the Buddha or a reverent disciple.”

Then Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, what should the sutra be named? How should we respect and hold it?”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “The name of the sutra is Vajra Prajna Paramita. You should respect and hold it by that name. And why? Subhuti, Prajna Paramita is spoken of by the Buddha as no Prajna Paramita, therefore it is called Prajna Paramita.

“Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any dharma spoken by the Tathagata?”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, nothing has been spoken by the Tathagata.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Are all the motes of dust in three thousand great thousand world systems many?”

Subhuti said, “Very many, World Honored One.”

“Subhuti, all motes of dust spoken of by the Tathagata are no motes of dust, therefore they are called motes of dust. The world systems spoken of by the Tathagata are no world systems, therefore they are called world systems.”

“Subhuti, what do you think, can the Tathagata be seen by means of the thirty-two marks?”

“No, World Honored One, one cannot see the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks. And why? The thirty-two marks spoken of by the Tathagata are no thirty-two marks, therefore they are called thirty-two marks.”

“Subhuti, if a good man, or good woman, offered his or her life as many times as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River; and if another person were to receive and hold even so few as four lines of verse of this sutra and explain them for others, then this person’s blessings would be greater.”

At that time, upon hearing the sutra being spoken, Subhuti deeply understood its purport. He wept and said to the Buddha, “How rare, World Honored One, is the Buddha speaking such a profound sutra. From the time I obtained the wisdom eye until the present I have never before heard such a sutra. World Honored One, if someone hears the sutra with a pure mind of faith then he produces real mark. That person should be known to have accomplished the foremost and most rare merits and virtues.

“World Honored One, the real mark is no mark, therefore the Tathagata calls it the real mark.

“World Honored One, now as I hear this sutra, I can believe, understand, receive, and hold it without difficulty. If in the future five hundred years, there are living beings who when they hear this sutra believe, understand, receive, and hold it, such people will be foremost and most rare. And why? Such people will have no mark of longevity, no mark of others, no mark of living beings, and no mark of a life. And why? The mark of self is no mark. The mark of others, the mark of living beings, and the mark of longevity are no marks. And why? Those who have relinquished all marks are called Buddhas.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “So it is, so it is. If someone hears this sutra and is not frightened, or alarmed, or terrified, you should know that person is most rare. And why? Subhuti, the

foremost paramita spoken of by the Tathagata is no foremost paramita, therefore it is called the foremost paramita.

“Subhuti, the paramita of patience spoken of by the Tathagata is no paramita of patience. Therefore, it is called the paramita of patience. And why? Subhuti, it is as in the past when the King of Kalinga dismembered my body, at that time I had no mark of self, no mark of others, no mark of living beings, and no mark of longevity.”

“And why? When I was cut limb from limb, if I had a mark of self, a mark of others, a mark of living beings, or a mark of longevity, I would have been outraged.

“Subhuti, further I recall that in the past, for five hundred lives, I was the Patient Immortal. During all those lives I had no mark of self, no mark of others, no mark of living beings, and no mark of longevity. For that reason, Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should, relinquishing all marks, produce the mind of anuttarasamyaksambodhi. He should produce that mind without dwelling in forms. He should produce that mind without dwelling in sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, or mental constructs. He should produce that mind that does not dwell anywhere. Any dwelling of the mind is non-dwelling. Therefore, the Buddha says, ‘The mind of a Bodhisattva should not dwell in forms when he gives.’ Subhuti, a Bodhisattva, to benefit all beings, should give thus. All marks spoken of by the Tathagata are no marks, and all living beings spoken of are no living beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks the truth, who speaks the actual, who speaks what is so, who does not speak what is false, who does not speak what is not so.

“Subhuti, the dharma obtained by the Tathagata is neither true nor false.”

“Subhuti, a Bodhisattva whose mind dwells in phenomena when he gives is like a man who enters darkness, who cannot see a thing. A Bodhisattva whose mind does not dwell in phenomena when he gives is like a man with eyes in the bright sunlight who can see all kinds of forms.

“Subhuti, in the future, if a good man, or good woman, can receive, hold, read, and recite this Sutra, then the Tathagata by means of all Buddha-wisdom, will completely know and see that person. That person accomplishes measureless and boundless merits and virtues.

“Subhuti, if a good man, or good woman, might in the morning offer as many bodies as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River, and again at noon might offer as many bodies as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River, and again in the evening offer

as many bodies as the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River, offering bodies in that way throughout measureless millions of kalpas, and if someone else, hearing this sutra, believe it with no reservations, then this person's blessings would surpass the former one's, let alone those people who write out, receive, hold, read, recite, and explain it for others. Subhuti, the merits and virtues of this sutra are inexpressible, inconceivable, boundless, and beyond all praises. It is spoken by the Tathagata for those who have set out on the Great Vehicle, those who have set out on the Supreme Vehicle. If people can receive, hold, read, recite, and speak it for others, they are completely known by the Tathagata; they are completely seen by the Tathagata. Such people accomplish immeasurable, inexpressible, boundless, inconceivable merits and virtues and thus bear the Tathagata's anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"And why? Subhuti, one who delights in Hinayana is attached to the view of self, the view of others, the view of living beings, and the view of longevity. He cannot hear, receive, hold, read, or recite the sutra or explain it for others.

"Subhuti, the gods, the men, and the asuras of the world make offerings at any place where this sutra is found. You should know such a place is a stupa where everyone should respectfully bow, circumambulate, and scatter incense and flowers.

"Moreover, Subhuti, if a good man, or good woman, receives, holds, reads, and recites this sutra and if people ridicule him, then that man's karmic offenses from previous lives which destine him for the evil paths, because in his present life he is ridiculed by others due to reciting this sutra, will be destroyed and he will attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Subhuti, I recall that in the past for limitless asamkhyeya kalpas prior to Burning Lamp Buddha, I encountered eighty-four thousands of millions of billions of nayutas of Buddhas, and made offerings to them all, and served them all without exception. But if there is a person in the later dharma ending period who can receive, hold, read, and recite this sutra, the merits and virtues he obtains is a hundred times more, a thousand times more, a million, billion times more, to the point of being so great it exceeds all calculation and comparison, than the merits and virtues I gained from making offerings to all those Buddhas.

"Subhuti, if I were to express thoroughly the merits and virtues of a good man, or good woman, who in the later dharma ending period holds, reads, and recites the sutra, those

who heard this might go insane, and disbelieve. Subhuti, you should know that this sutra's meaning is inconceivable, and that its resulting retribution is also inconceivable."

Then Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if a good man, or good woman, resolves his mind on anuttarasamyaksambodhi, how should he dwell, how should he subdue his mind?"

The Buddha told Subhuti, "A good man, or good woman, who has resolved his mind on anuttarasamyaksambodhi should think thus: 'I should take all living beings across to extinction. Yet when all living beings have been taken across to extinction, there actually is not a single living being who has been taken across to extinction.' And why? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a mark of self, a mark of others, a mark of living beings, or a mark of longevity, then he is not a Bodhisattva. For what reason? Subhuti, actually there is no dharma of resolving the mind on anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

"Subhuti, what do you think? While the Tathagata was with Burning Lamp Buddha, was there any dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi attained?"

"No, World Honored One. As I understand what the Buddha has said, while the Buddha was with Burning Lamp Buddha there was no anuttarasamyaksambodhi attained."

The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is, Subhuti. There actually was no dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi which the Tathagata attained. Subhuti, if there had been a dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi which the Tathagata attained, then Burning Lamp Buddha would not have given me the prediction, 'You will in the future attain Buddhahood and be named Sakyamuni.' Since there actually was no dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi attained, Burning Lamp Buddha gave me the prediction saying these words, 'You will in the future attain Buddhahood and be named Sakyamuni.'

"And why? 'Tathagata' means the thusness of the dharma. If someone were to say the Tathagata attains anuttarasamyaksambodhi, Subhuti, actually there is no dharma of anuttarasamyaksambodhi which the Buddha attains. Subhuti, the anuttarasamyaksambodhi which the Tathagata attains, in that, there is neither true nor false. For that reason, the Tathagata speaks of all phenomena as Buddhadharmas. Subhuti, all phenomena are spoken of as no phenomena. Therefore, they are called phenomena.

"Subhuti, it is like a person's big body."

Subhuti said, “World Honored One, the person’s big body is spoken of by the Tathagata as no big body, therefore it is called a big body.”

“Subhuti, a Bodhisattva is also thus. If he were to say, ‘I should take measureless living beings across to extinction,’ then he would not be called a Bodhisattva. And why? Subhuti, there actually is no dharma called a Bodhisattva. For that reason, the Buddha spoke of the dharma as being devoid of self, devoid of others, devoid of living beings, and devoid of longevity.

“Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva were to say, ‘I shall adorn Buddhalands,’ he would not be called a Bodhisattva. And why? The adornment of Buddhalands spoken of by the Tathagata is no adornment. Therefore, it is called adornment. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva comprehends that all dharmas are devoid of self, the Tathagata calls him a true Bodhisattva.

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the flesh eyes?”

“So it is, World Honored One. The Tathagata has the flesh eyes.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the heavenly eye?”

“So it is, World Honored One. The Tathagata has the heavenly eye.”

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

“So it is, World Honored One. The Tathagata has the wisdom eye.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the dharma eye?”

“So it is, World Honored One. The Tathagata has the dharma eye.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata have the Buddha eye?”

“So it is, World Honored One. The Tathagata has the Buddha eye.”

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

“So it is, World Honored One. The Tathagata has spoken of that sand.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? If all the grains of sand in one Ganges River became an equal number of Ganges Rivers, and all the grains of sand in all those Ganges Rivers became that many Buddhalands, would they be many?”

“Very many, World Honored One.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “All the various thoughts which occur to all the living beings in all those Buddhalands are completely known by the Tathagata. And why? All thoughts are spoken of by the Tathagata as no thoughts, therefore they are called thoughts. For what reason? Subhuti, past thoughts cannot be obtained, present thoughts cannot be obtained, and future thoughts cannot be obtained.

“Subhuti, what do you think? If someone filled the three thousand great thousand worlds with the seven kinds of precious gems and gave them as a gift, would that person for that reason obtain many blessings?”

“So it is, World Honored One. That person would for that reason obtain very many blessings.”

“Subhuti, if blessings and virtues were real, the Tathagata would not have spoken of obtaining many blessings. It is because blessings and virtues do not exist that the Tathagata has spoken of obtaining many blessings.

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be seen in the perfect physical form?”

“No, World Honored One. The Tathagata cannot be seen in the perfect physical form. And why? The perfect physical form spoken of by the Tathagata is no perfection of physical form, therefore it is called the perfection of physical form.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be seen in the perfection of marks?”

“No, World Honored One. The Tathagata cannot be seen in the perfection of marks. And why? The perfection of marks spoken of by the Tathagata are no perfection of marks. Therefore, it is called the perfection of marks.”

“Subhuti, do not say the Tathagata has the thought, ‘I have spoken dharma.’ Do not think that way. And why? If someone says the Tathagata has spoken dharma, then he is slandering the Buddha due to his inability to understand what I say. Subhuti, in the dharma spoken there is no dharma which can be spoken, therefore it is called the dharma spoken.”

Then the sagacious Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, will there be living beings in the future who will believe this sutra when they hear it spoken?”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, they are neither living beings nor no living beings. And why? Subhuti, living beings spoken of by the Tathagata are no living beings, therefore they are called living beings.”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, is it that the Tathagata in attaining anuttarasamyaksambodhi did not attain anything?”

The Buddha said, “So it is, so it is, Subhuti. As to anuttarasamyaksambodhi, there is not even the slightest dharma which I could attain, therefore it is called anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

“Moreover, Subhuti, this dharma is level and equal, with no high or low. Therefore, it is called anuttarasamyaksambodhi. To cultivate all good practices with no self, no others, no living beings, and no longevity is to attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi. Subhuti, good practices spoken of by the Tathagata are no good practices. Therefore, they are called good practices.

“Subhuti, if there were heaps of the seven kinds of precious gems equal in amount to all the Sumerus, Kings of Mountains, in three thousand great thousand world systems, and someone gave them as a gift, and if someone else were to take from this Prajna Paramita Sutra as few as four lines of verse, and receive, hold, read, recite, and speak them for others, his blessings and virtues would surpass the previous one’s by hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of more times than either calculation or analogy could express.

“Subhuti, what do you think? You should not maintain that the Tathagata has this thought: ‘I shall take living beings across.’ Subhuti, do not have that thought. And why? There actually are no living beings taken across by the Tathagata. If there were living beings taken across by the Tathagata, then the Tathagata would have the existence of a self, of others, of living beings, and of longevity. Subhuti, the existence of a self-spoken of by the Tathagata is no existence of a self, but common people take it as the existence of a self. Subhuti, common people spoken of by the Tathagata are no common people, therefore they are called common people.

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can one contemplate the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks?”

Subhuti said, “So it is, so it is, World Honored One. One can contemplate the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks.”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, if one could contemplate the Tathagata by means of the thirty-two marks, then a Sagely Wheel-turning King would be a Tathagata.”

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

At that time the World Honored One spoke a gatha, which says,

If one sees me in forms,
If one seeks me in sounds,
He practices a deviant way,
And cannot see the Tathagata.

“Subhuti, you may have the thought that the Tathagata did not attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi by means of the perfection of marks. Subhuti, do not think that the Tathagata did not attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi by means of the perfection of marks. Subhuti, you should not think that those who have resolved their minds on anuttarasamyaksambodhi affirm the annihilation of all phenomena. Do not have that thought. And why? Those who have resolved their minds on anuttarasamyaksambodhi do not affirm the annihilation of marks.

“Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva filled world systems equal to the number of Ganges River’s sands with the seven precious gems and gave them as a gift, and if another person were to know that all phenomena are devoid of self and accomplish patience, then that Bodhisattva’s merits and virtues would surpass those of the previous Bodhisattva. And why? Subhuti, it is because Bodhisattvas do not receive blessings and virtues.”

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, how is it that Bodhisattvas do not receive blessings and virtues?”

“Subhuti, since Bodhisattvas cannot be greedily attached to the blessings and virtues which they foster, they are said not to receive blessings and virtues.

“Subhuti, if someone were to say that the Tathagata either comes or goes, either sits or lies down, then that person would not understand the meaning of my teaching. And why? The Tathagata does not come from anywhere, nor does he go anywhere. Therefore, he is called the Tathagata.

“Subhuti, if a good man or good woman were to pulverize three thousand great thousand world systems into motes of fine dust, what do you think, would that mass of fine dust be large?”

Subhuti said, “So it is, World Honored One. And why? If that mass of fine dust motes actually existed, the Buddha would not speak of it as a mass of fine dust motes. And why? The mass of fine dust motes spoken of by the Buddha is no mass of fine dust motes. Therefore, it is called a mass of fine dust motes. World Honored One, the three thousand great thousand world systems spoken of by the Tathagata are no world systems, therefore they are called world systems. And why? If world systems actually existed, then there would be a totality of marks. The totality of marks spoken of by the Tathagata is no totality of marks. Therefore, it is called a totality of marks.”

“Subhuti, the totality of marks cannot be spoken of, but people of the common sort greedily attach to such things.

“Subhuti, if someone were to say that the view of a self, the view of others, the view of living beings, and the view of longevity are spoken of by the Buddha, Subhuti, what do you think? Does that person understand the meaning of my teaching?”

“No, World Honored One, that person does not understand the meaning of the Tathagata’s teaching. And why? The view of a self, the view of others, the view of living beings, and the view of longevity spoken of by the World Honored One are no view of self, no view of others, no view of living beings, and no view of longevity. Therefore, they are called the view of self, the view of others, the view of living beings, and the view of longevity.”

“Subhuti, those who have resolved their minds on anuttarasamyaksambodhi should thus know, thus view, thus believe and understand the dharma and not endow the dharma with marks. Subhuti, the marks of the dharma as spoken of by the Tathagata are no marks of the dharma, therefore they are called the marks of the dharma.

“Subhuti, if someone filled measureless asamkhyeyas of world systems with the seven precious gems and gave them as a gift, and if a good man, or good woman, who has resolved his mind on Bodhi were to take from this sutra even as few as four lines of verse and receive, hold, read, recite, and extensively explain them for others, then his blessings would surpass the other’s.”

How should it be explained to others? With no grasping at marks: thus, thus, unmoving. And why?

All conditioned phenomena
Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,

Like dew drops and a lightning flash:

Contemplate them thus.

After the Buddha spoke this sutra the Elder Subhuti, all the bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, upasikas, and the world with its gods, men, and asuras, heard what the Buddha had said, rejoiced, believed, received, revered, and practiced.

Amitabha! That's all for today. Buddha Dharma is boundless! Buddha Dharma can solve all the problems. Everything is in one's heart. Start from the heart! Thank you! See you next week.