

# **Diamond Wisdom**

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a gift from  
Dharma Friends of Dr. Lin



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# **Diamond Wisdom Transcendence Sutra**

*Popularly known as the Diamond Sutra*

*Under imperial order translated into Chinese*

*By*

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*Yao Qin Dynasty*

*Section Division by Xiao Tong*

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## **1. Origination of the Dharma Assembly**

Thus I heard: once the Buddha stayed in the garden of the alms-giving elder Anathapindaka that contains Jeta's grove, located in the country of Sravasti. He was accompanied by the assembly of great monks that were one thousand two hundred and fifty in number. At that time it was the Buddha's mealtime, so he put on his robe and held his bowl, then entered the great city of Sravasti to beg for food. In the city he begged from house to house, and then he returned to where he originally stayed. After he had finished the meal, he put away the robe and the bowl. Then, having washed his feet, he arranged a seat and sat down.

## **2. Auspicious Appearance's Supplication**

Then Elder Subhuti was among the assembly. He rose up from his seat, exposed his right shoulder as a gesture of respect, and knelt on his right knee. With his palms folded in reverence he addressed the Buddha, "Precious World Honored One! Tathagata well looks after

the Bodhisattvas, and well advises the Bodhisattvas. World Honored One, for those good men and good women that have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, how should they abide? How should they tame their minds?" The Buddha said, "Good, good! Subhuti, just as what you said, Tathagata well looks after the Bodhisattvas, and well advises the Bodhisattvas. Now you listen attentively, for your sake I would expound on how those good men and good women that have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus abide and thus tame their minds." "Certainly, World Honored One, I am eager and happy to hear about it."

### **3. Right Doctrine of Mahayana**

The Buddha told Subhuti, "All Great Bodhisattvas should thus tame their minds: 'All sorts of sentient beings, be they oviparous, viviparous, born of moisture, born through transformation, with form, without form, with thoughts, without thoughts, or neither with thoughts nor without thoughts, I would let all of them enter Nirvana without remains so as to rescue them through cessation of sufferings. Thus rescue through cessation of sufferings immeasurably, countlessly, and boundlessly many sentient beings, and yet in reality there are no sentient beings that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings.' Why is it so? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva."

### **4. Wondrous Activities without Abiding**

"Furthermore, Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should not abide in anything. Applying this to alms-giving, it would be called as 'alms-giving without abiding in color, without abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression'. Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should practice alms-giving like this, without abiding in form. Why is it so? If a Bodhisattva practices alms-giving without abiding in form, the resulting meritorious virtues are inconceivable. Subhuti, what do you think, can the empty space to the east be conceivable or not?" "No, World Honored One." "Subhuti, can the empty space to the south,



west, north, or above or below the four cardinal directions be conceivable or not?" "No, World Honored One." "Subhuti, when a Bodhisattva practices alms-giving without abiding in form, the meritorious virtues are also likewise inconceivable. Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should abide only in accordance with this teaching."

## **5. Genuine Witness in Accordance with Truth**

"Subhuti, what do you think, can Tathagata be seen through bodily form or not?" "No, World Honored One, Tathagata cannot be seen through bodily form. Why is it so? Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself." The Buddha told Subhuti, "Each and every form is illusive. If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed."

## **6. Right Faith Being Rare**

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, would there be many sentient beings that, upon hearing such sayings or reading such statements, raise solid faith or not?" The Buddha told Subhuti, "Don't talk like that. After Tathagata will have entered Nirvana, five hundred years later there will be someone, who abides by Buddhist rules of conducts and cultivates merits, that will raise faith in these statements, and consider them as truths. You should know that such a person not only has planted good roots under the guidance of one Buddha, two Buddhas, three, four or five Buddhas, but also has planted all sorts of good roots under the guidance of immeasurably many thousands of myriads of Buddhas. Upon hearing such statements, even if only one thought of pure faith arises in a person, Subhuti, Tathagata completely knows and completely sees that all such sentient beings attain such immeasurable meritorious virtues. Why is it so? All these sentient beings no longer have any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being. They have neither a notion of a thing nor a notion of not-a-thing. Why is it so? All these sentient beings, if their minds hold on to notions, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. If they hold on to a notion of a thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Why is it so?"

If they hold on to a notion of not-a-thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Therefore, one should not hold on to a notion of a thing, and should not hold on to a notion of not-a-thing. Due to this reason Tathagata often said, 'All of you monks know that the teachings I expounded are likened to rafts.' Even teachings should eventually be renounced, not to mention things that are not teachings."

## **7. Neither Attainment Nor Saying**

"Subhuti, what do you think, has Tathagata attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment? Are there sayings of Tathagata that are teachings?" Subhuti said, "According to my understanding of the meaning of what the Buddha said, there is neither a definite thing named as 'the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment', nor definite teachings that Tathagata could say. Why is it so? The teachings as said by Tathagata are all neither to be adopted nor to be said, neither teachings nor non-teachings. Why is it so? All virtuous ones and holy ones employ uncontrived teachings through various approaches."

## **8. Arising According to the Teachings**

"Subhuti, what do you think, if a person uses seven kinds of treasures fulfilling a great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds for alms-giving, would the meritorious virtues accrued by such a person be numerous or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly numerous, World Honored One. Why is it so? These meritorious virtues are not meritorious virtues by nature, therefore Tathagata said that the meritorious virtues are much." "If, in addition, there is someone that adheres to the teachings of this Sutra and expounds them to others, even though only a gatha of four sentences is covered, the merit of such a person surpasses that of the former. Why is it so? Subhuti, all Buddhas and their teachings on the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment all originate from this Sutra. Subhuti, what are referred to as 'Buddhas' teachings' are not Buddhas' teachings in themselves."

## **9. Formless Being the Form of Oneness**

"Subhuti, what do you think, could a Srota-apanna raise the thought: 'I have attained the fruit of Srota-apanna' or not?" Subhuti said, "No, World Honored One. Why is it so? A Srota-apanna is named as 'Stream Enterer', but there is nothing entered. Not entering color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression, that is named as 'Srota-apanna'." "Subhuti, what do you think, could a Sakrdagamin raise the thought: 'I have attained the fruit of Sakrdagamin' or not?" Subhuti said, "No, World Honored One. Why is it so? A Sakrdagamin is named as 'Once Returner', but in reality there is neither going nor coming, that is named as 'Sakrdagamin'." "Subhuti, what do you think, could an Anagamin raise the thought: 'I have attained the fruit of Anagamin' or not?" Subhuti said, "No, World Honored One. Why is it so? An Anagamin is named as 'Never Returner', but in reality there is no never-returning, therefore that is named as 'Anagamin'." "Subhuti, what do you think, could an Arhat raise the thought: 'I have attained the path of Arhat' or not?" Subhuti said, "No, World Honored One. Why is it so? In reality there is not a thing, that is named as 'Arhat'. World Honored One, if an Arhat raised the thought: 'I have attained the path of Arhat,' that would constitute grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. World Honored One, the Buddha said that I attained the Samadhi of Non-arguing, thus being foremost among persons, and am the foremost desires-free Arhat. World Honored One, I do not raise this thought: 'I am a desires-free Arhat.' World Honored One, had I raised this thought: 'I have attained the path of Arhat,' then the World Honored One would not have said, 'Subhuti is one that enjoys the practice of non-arguing.' Since Subhuti indeed makes no contrived activities, he named Subhuti as 'enjoying the practice of non-arguing'."

## **10. Adorning Pureland**

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "What do you think, in the past while Tathagata was attending Buddha Kindled Lamp did he obtain teachings or not?" "No, World Honored One. From Buddha Kindled Lamp Tathagata in reality obtained nothing as teachings." "Subhuti, what do you think, do Bodhisattvas adorn Buddha Land or not?" "No, World Honored One. Why is it so? What is referred to as adorning Buddha Land is not adorning in itself, but is named as 'adorning'."

"Therefore, Subhuti, all Great Bodhisattvas should thus raise pure intentions: 'They should not raise intentions that are abiding in color, nor intentions that are abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression; they should raise intentions without abiding anywhere.' Subhuti, suppose someone had a body as huge as the Mountain King Sumeru, what do you think, is such a body huge or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly huge, World Honored One. Why is it so? What the Buddha referred to is not a body in itself, but is named as a 'huge body'."

### **11. Non-contrivance Being Superior in Merits**

"Subhuti, for as many Ganges Rivers as the number of sands in the Ganges River, what do you think, are sands in all those Ganges Rivers numerous or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly numerous, World Honored One. Just those Ganges Rivers are already numerous beyond counting, not to mention their sands." "Subhuti, now I tell you in truth that, if there would be a good man or good woman that fulfills as many great-thousand world systems consisting of thousand-cube worlds as the number of sands in all those Ganges Rivers with seven kinds of treasures, and uses them for alms-giving, would the merits accrued be much?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly much, World Honored One." The Buddha told Subhuti, "If a good man or good woman would abide by this Sutra and preach to others for even just a gatha of four sentences therein, then such meritorious virtues would be superior to the meritorious virtues of the previous deeds."

### **12. To Revere the Right Teaching**

"Furthermore, Subhuti, wherever this Sutra is expounded, even if only a gatha of four sentences therefrom is alluded to, then you should know that such a place should be sustained as a Buddhist pagoda or monastery by all worldly heavenly beings, humans and Asuras. Not to mention where there is someone who can comprehend, abide by, read and recite the Sutra completely. Subhuti, you should know that such a person has accomplished the most superior and foremost rare teaching. If a place has this Sutra, then there is Buddha's presence, and you should conduct yourself as a reverent disciple."

### **13. To Receive and Abide According to the Teachings**

Then Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what should be the name for this Sutra? How should those of us adhere to it?" The Buddha told Subhuti, "This Sutra is named as 'Diamond Wisdom Transcendence'; by this name should all of you adhere to. Why is it so? Subhuti, what the Buddha referred to as wisdom transcendence is not wisdom transcendence in itself, but is named as 'wisdom transcendence'. Subhuti, what do you think, has Tathagata any spoken teaching or not?" Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, Tathagata has nothing spoken." "Subhuti, what do you think, all tiny dusts in a great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds, are those numerous or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly numerous, World Honored One." "Subhuti, those tiny dusts Tathagata says that they are not tiny dusts in themselves, but are named as 'tiny dusts'. What Tathagata referred to as a world is not a world in itself, but is named as a 'world'. Subhuti, what do you think, can Tathagata be recognized by the thirty-two features or not?" "No, World Honored One, Tathagata cannot be recognized by the thirty-two features. Why is it so? What Tathagata says as the thirty-two features are not features in themselves, but are named as 'thirty-two features'." "Subhuti, if there would be a good man or good woman that uses as many bodies and lives as sands of the Ganges River for alms-giving, and in addition there would be a person that adheres to, from within this Sutra, even if only a gatha of four sentences, and expounds it to others, then the merits of the latter is exceedingly much."

### **14. Tranquil Cessation beyond Form**

At this juncture Subhuti, having heard this Sutra, profoundly comprehended its essential significance, and shedding tears in sad weeping he said to the Buddha, "Precious World Honored One! The Buddha spoke such exceedingly profound Sutra, even to the wisdom eye that I have attained since the past, there was never before an opportunity to hear Sutras like this. World Honored One, if there would be someone else that has the opportunity to hear this Sutra and receive it with pure faith, then appearance of reality would arise; one

should know that such a person would have accomplished the foremost rare merits. World Honored One, such appearance of reality is not appearance in itself, therefore Tathagata says that it is named as 'appearance of reality'. World Honored One, now I have had the opportunity to hear such a Sutra, and it would not be difficult for me to have faith in, comprehend, accept and abide by it. If in the future, five hundred years later, there would be some sentient being that has the opportunity to hear this Sutra, and has faith in, comprehends, accepts and abides by it, then such a person would be foremost rare. Why is it so? This person is free from any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being and any notion of living being. Why is it so? A notion of self is not a notion in itself; a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, is not a notion in itself. Why is it so? Being free from all forms is named as the 'Buddhas'." The Buddha told Subhuti, "As such, as such! If there would be someone else that has the opportunity to hear this Sutra and yet not startled, not scared, and not afraid, then you should know that such a person is exceedingly rare. Why is it so? Subhuti, what Tathagata says as the First Transcendence (through alms-giving) is not the First Transcendence in itself, but is named as 'the First Transcendence'. Subhuti, Patience Transcendence, Tathagata says that it is not Patience Transcendence in itself. Why is it so? Subhuti, for example, in the past when my body was cut into pieces by King Kali, at that juncture I had neither any notion of self, nor any notion of person, nor any notion of sentient being, nor any notion of living being. Why is it so? In the past while my body was being cut into pieces, had I had any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being, I ought to have raised anger and hatred. Subhuti, again I recall that in the past I was for five hundred lives a patient fairy, and during all those lives I had had neither any notion of self, nor any notion of person, nor any notion of sentient being, nor any notion of living being. Therefore, Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should raise aspiration toward the unsurpassable full and right enlightenment in the absence of all forms; they should not raise intentions while abiding in color, nor should they raise intentions while abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression. They should raise intentions without any abiding. If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. Therefore, the Buddha says, 'The mind of a Bodhisattva should not abide in color

while practicing alms-giving.' Subhuti, in order to benefit all sentient beings a Bodhisattva should thus practice alms-giving. Tathagata says, 'All forms are not forms in themselves,' also says, 'All sentient beings are not sentient beings in themselves.' Subhuti, Tathagata is one that speaks the truth, one that says the substance, one that is as spoken, one that does not lie, and one that does not change his sayings. Subhuti, the thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. Subhuti, if the mind of a Bodhisattva abides on something while practicing alms-giving, then it would be like a man entering darkness and sees nothing. If the mind of a Bodhisattva does not abide on anything while practicing alms-giving, then it would be like a man with eyes, under bright sunlight, sees all sorts of colors. Subhuti, in the future if there would be good men or good women that can accept, abide by, read and recite this Sutra, then all such persons would be completely known and completely seen by Tathagata through Buddha's wisdom to be capable of accomplishing immeasurable and boundless merits."

### **15. Merits of Abiding by this Sutra**

"Subhuti, suppose there is a good man or good woman that, in the morning, uses as many bodies as sands in the Ganges River for alms-giving, at noon again uses as many bodies as sands in the Ganges River for alms-giving, and in the afternoon also uses as many bodies as sands in the Ganges River for alms-giving, and thus practices alms-giving of bodies for immeasurably many hundreds of thousands of myriads of billions of kalpas. If, in addition, there is someone that, upon hearing this Sutra, raises faith without regress, then the latter's merits would be superior to those of the former, not to mention to copy, write, accept, abide by, read and recite the Sutra and to expound it to others. Subhuti, succinctly speaking, this Sutra possesses inconceivable, immeasurable, and boundless merits. Tathagata says it for those that have raised aspiration toward the Mahayana, and for those that have raised aspiration toward the most superior vehicle. If there be someone that can accept, abide by, read and recite it, and extensively expound it to others, then Tathagata completely knows such a person, completely sees such a person to be capable of accomplishing immeasurable, indescribable, boundless, and

inconceivable merits. Such persons would be carrying Tathagata's unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. Why is it so? Subhuti, for those who like the minor teachings they would be under some notion of self, some notion of person, some notion of sentient being, and some notion of living being, and hence with regard to this Sutra they could not listen to, accept, read, recite, or expound it to others. Subhuti, wherever it may be, if there is a copy of this Sutra, then all worldly heavenly beings, humans, Asuras should make offerings to sustain it. You should know that this place is the pagoda of Buddha, and all should reverently make obeisance to it and circumambulate it, and scatter all kinds of flowers and incenses around it."

## **16. Capable of Purifying Karmic Hindrances**

"Furthermore, Subhuti, if a good man or good woman accepts, abides by, reads and recites this Sutra, and if such a person is treated contemptuously by others, this person's sinful karmas from past lives should have resulted in a falling into some bad realm, through the contemptuous treatment received from others in this life those sinful karmas from past lives would be extinguished, and this person would attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. Subhuti, I recall that in the past for immeasurably, boundlessly, and numberlessly many kalpas, before Buddha Kindled Lamp, I had encountered eight hundred and four thousands of myriads of millions of billions of Buddhas, and I made offerings to and attended to all of them without fail. If there would be someone, in the degenerate period in the future, that can accept, abide by, read and recite this Sutra, then the merits accrued, compared with the merits that I accumulated through serving and making offerings to all those Buddhas, will exceed one hundredfold, one thousandfold, one myriadfold, one billionfold, and will even be inexpressible through numbers or analogies. Subhuti, if a good man or good woman in the degenerate period in the future would actually accept, abide by, read and recite this Sutra, then as to the merits attained, if I completely describe them, and someone happens to hear about them, that person's mind would be wildly confused and become suspicious and doubtful. Subhuti, you should know that the meaning of this Sutra is inconceivable, and the fruitful retribution related to it is also inconceivable."



## 17. Ultimately No Self

Then Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, for a good man or good woman that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, how should the person abide by? How should the person's mind be tamed?" The Buddha told Subhuti, "A good man or good woman, that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, should raise such an intention: 'I should rescue all sentient beings through cessation of sufferings; after all sentient beings have been rescued through cessation of sufferings there is not even one sentient being that, in reality, has been rescued through cessation of sufferings.' Why is it so? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva. Why is it so? Subhuti, to a person that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment there is in reality not a thing. Subhuti, what do you think, while Tathagata was beside Buddha Kindled Lamp, was there a way to attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment or not?" "No, World Honored One. If I understood the meaning of what the Buddha had said, while the Buddha was beside Buddha Kindled Lamp, there was no way to attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." The Buddha said, "As such, as such! Subhuti, in reality there is no such thing as Tathagata's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. Subhuti, if there were a way to attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, then Buddha Kindled Lamp would not have granted me the foretelling: 'In the future you will become a Buddha with the epithet "Sakyamuni".' Since in reality there is no way to attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, therefore, Buddha Kindled Lamp granted me the foretelling by saying the following: 'In the future you will become a Buddha with the epithet "Sakyamuni".' Why is it so? 'Tathagata' means all things are as such. Suppose someone says, 'Tathagata attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment,' Subhuti, in reality there is no such thing as Buddha's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. Subhuti, the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment that Tathagata had attained is in itself neither real nor

unreal. Therefore, Tathagata says, 'All things are all Buddha's things.' Subhuti, what is said as all things is not all things in itself, therefore is named as 'all things'. Subhuti, for example, a tall and huge human body." Subhuti said, "World Honored One, what Tathagata said as a tall and huge human body is not a huge body in itself, but is named as a 'huge body'." "Subhuti, likewise for a Bodhisattva; if this statement is made: 'I should rescue immeasurably many sentient beings through cessation of sufferings,' then not named as a 'Bodhisattva'. Why is it so? Subhuti, in reality there is not a thing, that is named as a 'Bodhisattva'. Therefore, the Buddha said, 'In all things there is neither self, nor person, nor sentient being, nor living being.' Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva makes the statement: 'I should adorn Buddha Land,' then not named as a 'Bodhisattva'. Why is it so? What Tathagata says as adorning Buddha Land is not adorning in itself, but is named as 'adorning'. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva thoroughly comprehends that things are without self, Tathagata says the name is 'truly a Bodhisattva'."

## **18. Equal View in Oneness**

"Subhuti, what do you think, does Tathagata have flesh eyes or not?" "As such, World Honored One, Tathagata has flesh eyes." "Subhuti, what do you think, does Tathagata have heaven eyes or not?" "As such, World Honored One, Tathagata has heaven eyes." "Subhuti, what do you think, does Tathagata have wisdom eyes or not?" "As such, World Honored One, Tathagata has wisdom eyes." "Subhuti, what do you think, does Tathagata have Dharma eyes or not?" "As such, World Honored One, Tathagata has Dharma eyes." "Subhuti, what do you think, does Tathagata have Buddha eyes or not?" "As such, World Honored One, Tathagata has Buddha eyes." "Subhuti, what do you think, as to all sands in the Ganges River, does the Buddha say them to be sands or not?" "As such, World Honored One, Tathagata says them to be sands." "Subhuti, what do you think, as numerous as all sands in one Ganges River, there are such a number of Ganges Rivers, for as numerous as all sands in all these Ganges Rivers, would such a number of Buddha worlds be numerous or not?" "Exceedingly numerous, World Honored One." The Buddha told Subhuti, "In all those lands, how many kinds of minds there are of all

sentient beings, Tathagata knows completely. Why is it so? What Tathagata says as all those minds are not minds in themselves, but are named as 'minds'. Why is it so? Subhuti, minds in the past were unattainable, minds at present are unattainable, minds in the future will be unattainable."

## **19. Dharmadhatu Wholly Alms-given**

"Subhuti, what do you think, if there be a person that uses seven kinds of treasures fulfilling a great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds for alms-giving, then such a person due to such causal conditions would obtain much merits or not?" "As such, World Honored One, this person due to such causal conditions would obtain exceedingly much merits." "Subhuti, if meritorious virtues were substantial, Tathagata would not say that meritorious virtues obtained are numerous; since meritorious virtues are non-substantial, Tathagata says that numerous meritorious virtues are obtained."

## **20. Beyond Form and beyond Features**

"Subhuti, what do you think, can the Buddha be seen through a well-formed physical body or not?" "No, World Honored One, Tathagata should not be seen through a well-formed physical body. Why is it so? What Tathagata says as a well-formed physical body is not a well-formed physical body in itself, but is named as a 'well-formed physical body'." "Subhuti, what do you think, can Tathagata be seen through a complete set of features or not?" "No, World Honored One, Tathagata should not be seen through a complete set of features. Why is it so? What Tathagata says as possessing complete features is not possessing complete features in itself, but is named as 'possessing complete features'."

## **21. Not Saying What Was Said**

"Subhuti, you should not say that Tathagata raised the thought: 'I should preach some teachings.' Do not raise such a thought. Why is it so? If someone says, 'Tathagata has preached some teachings,' then that constitutes slandering the Buddha, due to inability to understand

what I had said. Subhuti, what is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as 'preaching teachings'." At this juncture Wisdom Life Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, will there be many sentient beings that, upon hearing this teaching in the future, will raise faith or not?" The Buddha said, "Subhuti, those are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. Why is it so? Subhuti, all those that are referred to as sentient beings, Tathagata says that they are not sentient beings in themselves, but are named as 'sentient beings'."

## **22. Nothing to be Obtained**

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as to the Buddha's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, was there nothing to be obtained?" The Buddha said, "As such, as such. Subhuti, as to the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, I had had not even a little something that was obtainable, that is named as 'the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment'."

## **23. Practicing Good Deeds with a Pure Mind**

"Furthermore, Subhuti, this thing is of equality, without high or low, and is named as 'the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment'. Practice all good deeds without any notion of self, without any notion of person, without any notion of sentient being, and without any notion of living being, then one would attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. Subhuti, what are said as good deeds, Tathagata says that they are not good deeds in themselves, but are named as 'good deeds'."

## **24. Incomparable Merits and Wisdom**

"Subhuti, Suppose that, for all the Sumerus, Kings of Mountains, in a great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds, someone uses as large and as numerous piles of seven kinds of treasures for alms-giving. If a person accepts, abides by, reads and recites this Wisdom Transcendence Sutra, or even just a gatha of four sentences therein, and expounds it to others, then the meritorious

virtues of this person as compared with those of the former will exceed one-hundred fold, one-thousand fold, one-myriad fold, one-billion fold, and will even be inexpressible through numbers or analogies."

## **25. Conversion without Beings Converted**

"Subhuti, what do you think, all of you should not say that Tathagata raised this thought: 'I should convert sentient beings.' Subhuti, do not raise such a thought. Why is it so? In reality there are no sentient beings that Tathagata converted. If there were sentient beings that Tathagata converted, Tathagata would have had notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Subhuti, what Tathagata says as having a notion of self, is not having a notion of self in itself, but worldly persons take it as having a notion of self. Subhuti, what is referred to as a worldly person, Tathagata says is not a worldly person in itself, but is named as a 'worldly person'."

## **26. Dharmakaya beyond Form**

"Subhuti, what do you think, can Tathagata be seen through the thirty-two features or not?" Subhuti said, "As such, as such, one sees Tathagata through the thirty-two features." The Buddha said, "Subhuti, if Tathagata were to be seen through the thirty-two features, a wheel-turning saintly king would be a Tathagata." Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if I comprehend the meaning of what the Buddha said, one should not see Tathagata through the thirty-two features." Then the World Honored One said the gatha:

*If one sees me through colors and shapes, and seeks me  
through sounds and voices,  
Such a person practices a devious path, and cannot thereby  
comprehend Tathagata.*

## **27. Neither Interrupted Nor Extinguished**

"Subhuti, if you raised this thought: 'Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full

enlightenment.' Subhuti, do not raise this thought: 'Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment.' Subhuti, if you raised this thought: 'Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment say that all things will be interrupted or extinguished'; do not raise such a thought. Why is it so? Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished."

## **28. Neither Accepting nor Clinging**

"Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva uses seven kinds of treasures fulfilling as numerous worlds as sands in the Ganges River for alms-giving, and if, in addition, there is someone who knows that all things are without self and that attainment is achieved through tolerance, then the merits of this Bodhisattva surpasses those obtained by the former Bodhisattva. Why is it so? Subhuti, it is because that Bodhisattvas do not accept meritorious virtues." Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, why do Bodhisattvas not accept meritorious virtues?" "Subhuti, meritorious virtues produced by Bodhisattvas should not be attached to; therefore it is said as 'not accepting meritorious virtues.'"

## **29. Tranquil Bearing**

"Subhuti, if someone says, 'Tathagata comes or goes, sits or lies down,' such a person does not understand the meaning of what I said. Why is it so? What is referred to as Tathagata comes from nowhere and leaves for nowhere, therefore is named as 'Tathagata' (Thus Come)."

## **30. The Ideal of Oneness-of-all**

"Subhuti, if a good man or good woman broke a great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds into tiny dusts, what do you think, would the multitude of those tiny dusts be numerous or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly numerous, World Honored One. Why is it so? Had the multitude of those tiny dusts existed in reality, the Buddha would not have called them to be the multitude of those

tiny dusts. Why is it so? What the Buddha says as a multitude of tiny dusts is not a multitude of tiny dusts in itself, but is named as a 'multitude of tiny dusts'. World Honored One, the great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds as referred to by Tathagata is not a world system in itself, but is named as a 'world system'. Why is it so? Had a world system existed in reality, it would be the oneness of all phenomena. What Tathagata says as the oneness of all phenomena is not the oneness of all phenomena in itself, but is named as 'the oneness of all phenomena'." "Subhuti, what is referred to as the oneness of all phenomena is beyond expression, but worldly persons would be attached to this matter."

### **31. Cognitive Views not Born**

"Subhuti, if someone says, 'The Buddha mentioned the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, and the notion of living being,' Subhuti, what do you think, does such a person understand the meaning of what I said or not?" "No, World Honored One, such a person does not understand the meaning of what Tathagata said. Why is it so? What the World Honored One says as the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of living being, is not in itself the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of living being, but is named as 'the notion of self', 'the notion of person', 'the notion of sentient being', or 'the notion of living being'." "Subhuti, as regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. Subhuti, what is referred to as the notion of a thing, Tathagata says that it is not the notion of a thing in itself, but is named as 'the notion of a thing'."

### **32. Conversion without Reality**

"Subhuti, if there be someone that uses seven kinds of treasures fulfilling immeasurably and numberlessly many worlds for alms-giving, and if there be a good man or good woman, who has raised the Bodhicitta, that upholds this Sutra, even only a gatha of four sentences therein, by accepting, abiding by, reading and reciting it,

and expounding it to others, then meritwise the latter surpasses the former. How to expound it to others? Not grasping to forms, remain as such without swaying. Why is it so?

*All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions,  
bubbles, shadows,  
Like dewdrops and resemble lightning, one should view them  
all as such matters."*

The Buddha had finished speaking this Sutra. The Elder Subhuti and those monks, nuns, male lay disciples, female lay disciples, and all worldly heavenly beings, humans, Asuras, having heard what the Buddha said, were all greatly overjoyed. They accepted the teachings with faith and henceforth practiced accordingly.

End of the Sutra

After about three months, the translation  
completed on March 22, 2003  
El Cerrito, California



# **Classification of Important Statements from the Diamond Sutra**

Dr. Yutang Lin

(Under each quoted statement the section number of its occurrence in the Sutra is given in parentheses.)

## **Classification by View, Practice and Fruitful Attainment**

### **I. View**

1. Each and every form is illusive. If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)
2. All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,  
Like dewdrops and resemble lightning, one should view them all as such matters. (32)

### **II. Practice**

#### **A. Intention**

1. How those good men and good women that have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus abide and thus tame their minds. (2)  
"All sorts of sentient beings, be they oviparous, viviparous, born of moisture, born through transformation, with form, without form, with thoughts, without thoughts, or neither with thoughts nor without thoughts, I would let all of them enter Nirvana without remains so as to rescue them through cessation of sufferings. Thus rescue through cessation of sufferings immeasurably, countlessly, and boundlessly many sentient beings, and yet in reality there are no sentient beings that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings." Why is it so? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a notion of

self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva. (3)

For a good man or good woman that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, how should the person abide by? How should the person's mind be tamed?

Should raise such an intention: "I should rescue all sentient beings through cessation of sufferings; after all sentient beings have been rescued through cessation of sufferings there is not even one sentient being that, in reality, has been rescued through cessation of sufferings." (17)

2. Should thus raise pure intentions: "They should not raise intentions that are abiding in color, nor intentions that are abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression; they should raise intentions without abiding anywhere." (10)

Bodhisattvas should raise aspiration toward the unsurpassable full and right enlightenment in the absence of all forms; they should not raise intentions while abiding in color, nor should they raise intentions while abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression. They should raise intentions without any abiding. (14)  
If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)

3. To a person that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment there is in reality not a thing. (17)

## **B. Behavior**

1. Practice all good deeds without any notion of self, without any notion of person, without any notion of sentient being, and without any notion of living being, then one would attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. (23)
2. A Bodhisattva should not abide in anything. Applying this to alms-giving, it would be called as "alms-giving without abiding in color, without abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression". Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should practice alms-giving like this, without abiding in form. (4)

If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. Therefore, the Buddha says, "The mind of a Bodhisattva should not abide in color while practicing alms-giving." Subhuti,

in order to benefit all sentient beings a Bodhisattva should thus practice alms-giving. (14)

If the mind of a Bodhisattva abides on something while practicing alms-giving, then it would be like a man entering darkness and sees nothing. If the mind of a Bodhisattva does not abide on anything while practicing alms-giving, then it would be like a man with eyes, under bright sunlight, sees all sorts of colors. (14)

3. As regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. (31)

Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished. (27)

Do not raise this thought: "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." (27)

4. What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)  
How to expound it to others? Not grasping to forms, remain as such without swaying. (32)

### **III. Fruitful Attainment**

1. A Srota-apanna is named as "Stream Enterer", but there is nothing entered. Not entering color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression, that is named as "Srota-apanna". (9)

A Sakrdagamin is named as "Once Returner", but in reality there is neither going nor coming, that is named as "Sakrdagamin". (9)

An Anagamin is named as "Never Returner", but in reality there is no never-returning, therefore that is named as "Anagamin". (9)

2. In reality there is not a thing, that is named as "Arhat". (9)

If an Arhat raised the thought: "I have attained the path of Arhat," that would constitute grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. (9)

Since Subhuti indeed makes no contrived activities, he named Subhuti as "enjoying the practice of non-arguing". (9)

3. In reality there is not a thing, that is named as a "Bodhisattva". Therefore, the Buddha said, "In all things there is neither self, nor person, nor sentient being, nor living being." (17)
 

If a Bodhisattva has a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva. (3)

Meritorious virtues produced by Bodhisattvas should not be attached to; therefore it is said as "not accepting meritorious virtues." (28)

If a Bodhisattva thoroughly comprehends that things are without self, Tathagata says the name is "truly a Bodhisattva". (17)
4. Someone who knows that all things are without self and that attainment is achieved through tolerance, (28)
  - 5.1 From Buddha Kindled Lamp Tathagata in reality obtained nothing as teachings. (10)
 

In reality there is no such thing as Tathagata's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. (17)

As to the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, I had had not even a little something that was obtainable, that is named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment". (22)
  - 5.2 The thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. (14)
 

The unsurpassable right and full enlightenment that Tathagata had attained is in itself neither real nor unreal. Therefore, Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things." (17)

This thing is of equality, without high or low, and is named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment". (23)
  - 5.3 Each and every form is illusive. If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)
 

Being free from all forms is named as the "Buddhas". (14)

Tathagata cannot be seen through bodily form. Why is it so? Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself. (5)

Tathagata should not be seen through a well-formed physical body. (20)

Tathagata should not be seen through a complete set of features. (20)

One should not see Tathagata through the thirty-two features. (26)

If one sees me through colors and shapes, and seeks me through sounds and voices,

Such a person practices a devious path, and cannot thereby comprehend Tathagata. (26)

5.4 "Tathagata" means all things are as such. (17)

What is referred to as Tathagata comes from nowhere and leaves for nowhere, therefore is named as "Tathagata" (Thus Come). (29)

5.5 All of you should not say that Tathagata raised this thought: "I should convert sentient beings." (25)

In reality there are no sentient beings that Tathagata converted. If there were sentient beings that Tathagata converted, Tathagata would have had notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. (25)

You should not say that Tathagata raised the thought: "I should preach some teachings." (21)

"Has Tathagata any spoken teaching or not?" Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, Tathagata has nothing spoken." (13)

If someone says, "Tathagata has preached some teachings," then that constitutes slandering the Buddha, due to inability to understand what I had said. (21)

What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)

There is neither a definite thing named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment", nor definite teachings that Tathagata could say. (7)

"All of you monks know that the teachings I expounded are likened to rafts." Even teachings should eventually be renounced, not to mention things that are not teachings. (6)

## **Further Classification by Key Concepts and Types of Arguments**

### **I. Concepts**

#### **A. Non-substantial**

1. Each and every form is illusive. (5)

Minds in the past were unattainable, minds at present are unattainable, minds in the future will be unattainable. (18)

If meritorious virtues were substantial, Tathagata would not say that meritorious virtues obtained are numerous; since meritorious virtues are non-substantial, Tathagata says that numerous meritorious virtues are obtained. (19)

As regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. (31)

All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,

Like dewdrops and resemble lightning, one should view them all as such matters. (32)

2. Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself. (5)

What are referred to as "Buddhas' teachings" are not Buddhas' teachings in themselves. (8)

A notion of self is not a notion in itself; a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, is not a notion in itself. (14)

Patience Transcendence, Tathagata says that it is not Patience Transcendence in itself. Why is it so? Subhuti, for example, in the past when my body was cut into pieces by King Kali, at that juncture I had neither any notion of self, nor any notion of person, nor any notion of sentient being, nor any notion of living being. Why is it so? In the past while my body was being cut into pieces, had I had any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being, I ought to have raised anger and hatred. (14)

If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)

Tathagata says, "All forms are not forms in themselves," also says, "All sentient beings are not sentient beings in themselves." (14)

## **B. Non-dual**

1. Had a world system existed in reality, it would be the oneness of all phenomena. (30)

What is referred to as the oneness of all phenomena is beyond expression, but worldly persons would be attached to this matter. (30)

2. All these sentient beings no longer have any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being. They have neither a notion of a thing nor a notion of not-a-thing. Why is it so? All these sentient beings, if their minds hold on to notions, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. If they hold on to a notion of a thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Why is it so? If they hold on to a notion of not-a-thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Therefore, one should not hold on to a notion of a thing, and should not hold on to a notion of not-a-thing. (6)

Those are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. (21)

The thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. (14)

If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)

3. To a person that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment there is in reality not a thing. (17)

In reality there is no such thing as Tathagata's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. (17)

If a Bodhisattva thoroughly comprehends that things are without self, Tathagata says the name is "truly a Bodhisattva". (17)

4. As regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. (31)

Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things." (17)

5. Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished. (27)

Do not raise this thought: "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." (27)

### **C. Application**

1. If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)  
 A Bodhisattva should not abide in anything. (4)  
 A Bodhisattva should practice alms-giving like this, without abiding in form. (4)  
 Bodhisattvas should raise aspiration toward the unsurpassable full and right enlightenment in the absence of all forms; they should not raise intentions while abiding in color, nor should they raise intentions while abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression. They should raise intentions without any abiding. (14)
2. What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)  
 The teachings as said by Tathagata are all neither to be adopted nor to be said, neither teachings nor non-teachings. (7)  
 How to expound it to others? Not grasping to forms, remain as such without swaying. (32)  
 Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things." (17)
3. Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished. (27)  
 Do not raise this thought: "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." (27)
4. There is neither a definite thing named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment", nor definite teachings that Tathagata could say. (7)

## **II. Types of Arguments**

### **A. Transcending both Yes and No**

All these sentient beings no longer have any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being. They have neither a notion of a thing nor a notion of not-a-thing. Why is it so? All these sentient beings, if their minds hold on to notions, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. If they hold on to a notion of a thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Why is it so? If they hold on to a



notion of not-a-thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Therefore, one should not hold on to a notion of a thing, and should not hold on to a notion of not-a-thing. (6)

"All of you monks know that the teachings I expounded are likened to rafts." Even teachings should eventually be renounced, not to mention things that are not teachings. (6)

Those are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. (21)

The thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. (14)

## **B. Not as Non-substantial**

Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself. (5)

If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)

What are referred to as "Buddhas' teachings" are not Buddhas' teachings in themselves. (8)

A notion of self is not a notion in itself; a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, is not a notion in itself. (14)

Patience Transcendence, Tathagata says that it is not Patience Transcendence in itself. Why is it so? Subhuti, for example, in the past when my body was cut into pieces by King Kali, at that juncture I had neither any notion of self, nor any notion of person, nor any notion of sentient being, nor any notion of living being. Why is it so? In the past while my body was being cut into pieces, had I had any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being, I ought to have raised anger and hatred. (14)

If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)

Tathagata says, "All forms are not forms in themselves," also says, "All sentient beings are not sentient beings in themselves." (14)

## **C. Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up**

### ***1. Directly Indicating Non-substantial***

What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)

A Srota-apanna is named as "Stream Enterer", but there is nothing entered. Not entering color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression, that is named as "Srota-apanna". (9)

A Sakrdagamin is named as "Once Returner", but in reality there is neither going nor coming, that is named as "Sakrdagamin". (9)

An Anagamin is named as "Never Returner", but in reality there is no never-returning, therefore that is named as "Anagamin". (9)

## 2. *Not as Non-substantial*

- a. "Suppose someone had a body as huge as the Mountain King Sumeru, what do you think, is such a body huge or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly huge, World Honored One. Why is it so? What the Buddha referred to is not a body in itself, but is named as a 'huge body'." (10)

What Tathagata said as a tall and huge human body is not a huge body in itself, but is named as a "huge body". (17)

What Tathagata says as a well-formed physical body is not a well-formed physical body in itself, but is named as a "well-formed physical body". (20)

What Tathagata says as the thirty-two features are not features in themselves, but are named as "thirty-two features". (13)

What Tathagata says as possessing complete features is not possessing complete features in itself, but is named as "possessing complete features". (20)

- b. What Tathagata says as all those minds are not minds in themselves, but are named as "minds". (18)

- c. All those that are referred to as sentient beings, Tathagata says that they are not sentient beings in themselves, but are named as "sentient beings". (21)

What is referred to as a worldly person, Tathagata says is not a worldly person in itself, but is named as a "worldly person". (25)

What the Buddha says as a multitude of tiny dusts is not a multitude of tiny dusts in itself, but is named as a "multitude of tiny dusts". (30)

What the World Honored One says as the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of

living being, is not in itself the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of living being, but is named as "the notion of self", "the notion of person", "the notion of sentient being", or "the notion of living being". (31)

- d. Those tiny dusts Tathagata says that they are not tiny dusts in themselves, but are named as "tiny dusts". (13)

What Tathagata referred to as a world is not a world in itself, but is named as a "world". (13)

The great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds as referred to by Tathagata is not a world system in itself, but is named as a "world system". (30)

- e. What Tathagata says as the oneness of all phenomena is not the oneness of all phenomena in itself, but is named as "the oneness of all phenomena". (30)

Such appearance of reality is not appearance in itself, therefore Tathagata says that it is named as "appearance of reality". (14)

What is referred to as the notion of a thing, Tathagata says that it is not the notion of a thing in itself, but is named as "the notion of a thing". (31)

What the Buddha referred to as wisdom transcendence is not wisdom transcendence in itself, but is named as "wisdom transcendence". (13)

- f. What Tathagata says as the First Transcendence (through alms-giving) is not the First Transcendence in itself, but is named as "the First Transcendence". (14)

What is referred to as adorning Buddha Land is not adorning in itself, but is named as "adorning". (10)

What Tathagata says as adorning Buddha Land is not adorning in itself, but is named as "adorning". (17)

What are said as good deeds, Tathagata says that they are not good deeds in themselves, but are named as "good deeds". (23)

What is said as all things is not all things in itself, therefore is named as "all things". (17)

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# Essential Principles of the Diamond Sutra

Dr. Yutang Lin

## A. Origination

In 1996 I wrote an article in Chinese, "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi" (Essential Principles of the Diamond Sutra), to expound the subtle teachings of the popular Chinese version of the Diamond Sutra. In preparation for that work, I worked out a punctuated version of the Diamond Sutra, and obtained therefrom a preliminary work called "Jin Gang Jing Zhong Yao Jing Ju Fen Lei" (Classification of Important Statements from the Diamond Sutra).

Now I would like to provide English readers the same teachings. In preparation I first worked out a punctuated version of the Diamond Sutra with more detail punctuation than the previous version. Then I updated the preliminary work "Jin Gang Jing Zhong Yao Jing Ju Fen Lei" accordingly, and added behind each quoted statement of the Sutra the section number of its occurrence in the Sutra. Then I updated "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi" accordingly.

Then I translated the newly punctuated version of the Diamond Sutra into English. From my English translation of the Sutra, I obtained the English version of the preliminary work, "Classification of Important Statements from the Diamond Sutra." Now based on these two works in English and the Chinese work "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi," I am writing this article to help people understand the subtle teachings contained in this well-known Sutra.

The popular Chinese version of the Diamond Sutra as translated by Tripitaka Dharma Master Kumarajiva was written in the succinct "Wen Yan Wen" (Literary Style of Writings). Hence, in my Chinese work "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi" there are much discussion on different meanings of some key words with respect to the contexts of their various occurrences in the Sutra. In my English translation of the Sutra all such distinctions need to be incorporated because it would be impossible to render a literally translation. Consequently, this article

cannot be a translation of my "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi," but instead must be a writing based on its essential contents.

What is presented below will be following the flow in "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi."

In 1976 I started to study Buddhist teachings on my own. My endeavor began with reading various commentaries on the Diamond Sutra. This was simply because when I was young at home in Taipei we used to have a copy of this Sutra on the small altar, and so it appeared familiar to me. In 1996 while glancing through this Sutra I copied a few statements from it on a piece of paper and left it on my desk. My wife, Shou-Yean, saw it and encouraged me to write an article to expound on their significance so as to provide some references to the numerous readers of this Sutra. In the summer of 1996 while I was visiting Buddhists in Malaysia I used the pattern of argument, "so, not so, named so," that is frequently found in the Diamond Sutra, to expel some doubts for a Buddhist there. He was participating in some Buddhist charity organization but became disheartened because of personnel problems within the organization. I used the name of that organization to say, "A, is not A, but named 'A,'" to help him see the facts, and urged him to continue the service out of Bodhicitta, without being bothered by the mixture of its membership and some lack of consistency in its name and deeds. These were the causal elements that led to my writing of the Chinese article "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi."

It is convenient to use computer to sort out key points in the Sutra. Therefore, I asked Hung Kwok Sing in Hong Kong to look for a computer file of the Diamond Sutra from materials that were already posted on Internet. He found one and revised its format so that my computer can make use of it. I went through the file to proofread the keyed-in version of the Sutra and amended it; in addition, I underlined all important statements in the process. Then I created a new file that contained only these important statements with the underlines removed, so that it would be easier to manage and sort them. Then I created another file to classify these important statements by placing related or similar statements in various groups. Based on these classifications, I then thought about how to present a systematic explanation of the essential principles that run through the whole Sutra. As I composed the presentation, I reviewed the classifications often and made amendments and changes. After more than ten

revisions I obtained my final version of the classification of important statements. This is the process through which the basic materials for the work "Jin Gang Jing Yao Zhi" were obtained. And the classification work "Jin Gang Jing Zhong Yao Jing Ju Fen Lei" was added to it as an appendix.

My presentation of the essential principles of the Diamond Sutra is based on my understanding of the Sutra, without perusing through various commentaries that are available in the literature to review and consider alternative opinions. In this way I have avoided scattered scholastic analyses but instead presented directly the views of a Buddhist practitioner. However, in the exposition my training as a logician naturally comes into play, and consequently concepts of semantics and analyses of argument types are introduced and employed. Furthermore, the interpretations offered all paid attention to consistency in contexts. Therefore, this work is not one without scholastic merits.

The main purpose of this work is to illuminate the essential principles; therefore, important statements from the Sutra with regard to the meritorious virtues of abiding by this Sutra or with regard to its capacity to purify karmic hindrances are not included. The omission does not imply any disregard for such inconceivable benefits. All those who have read records of inspiration of reciting and abiding by the Diamond Sutra would know that the spreading of this Sutra to such width in space and length in time is certainly due to its superior merits.

## **B. Main Text**

### **I. Fundamental Generalization**

Buddha attained liberation in the absence of duality and realized all are in fact in limitless oneness. In this oneness there is no longer the bondage of conceptual differentiation, nor limitations due to sensual perceptions. The essential principle of the Diamond Sutra is to point out that names and concepts are artificial means without any substance to exist on their own and thereby leading its readers to approach the original purity that Buddha attained through renunciation of all sorts of grasping, and to indicate the correct path to

make lively application of names and concepts in one's Buddhist practices and in activities beneficial to others.

## **II. Analyses of Basic Terms**

What follows here is a discussion to illuminate the various meanings of some fundamental terms in the Chinese version of this Sutra. In my English translation of this Sutra most of the time the various meanings are made explicit in each case to render the respective context meaningful. Readers who are not accustomed to philosophical analyses may skip this section and the next section, and go directly to section IV to read explanations on important statements of the Sutra based on my classification.

The fundamental terms of the Diamond Sutra are: Shi (real), Xiang (form), Fa (law), and Ming (name).

In this Sutra the basic meaning of Shi (real) refers to an absolutely independent existence. For example, "in reality there are no sentient beings that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings," (3) [The number in parentheses that appears after a quoted statement from the Sutra indicates the section number of its origination.] is saying that, as far as an absolutely independent existence is concerned, there is no sentient being that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings. This is because the fundamental teaching of Buddhism is that, there is not a thing that has an absolutely independent existence. However, in the Sutra there are some occurrences of Shi that do not carry this meaning, but instead carry the ordinary sense of "having empirical contents." For example, the "real" in "something that is neither real nor unreal" (14) and that in "Had a world system existed in reality" (30). The former says that, something that has nothing to do with having or not empirical contents; while the latter says that, had a world system being identified with contents of our experiences. When one reads the Sutra or this article, such a distinction must be born in mind to get at the correct meaning and avoid confusion.

In this Sutra the meaning of the word Xiang (form) varies with contexts. Sometimes it means concepts as perceived by people, sometimes it means the appearance of things or matters, and sometimes it means both concepts and appearances. For example, in "a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being" (3) it means concepts, in "the thirty-two

features" (13) it means appearances, while in "Being free from all forms" (14) it means both concepts and appearances. Nevertheless, in the light of Buddhist philosophy, all are originally in oneness without duality, therefore, even though concepts as sustained in consciousness and appearances of things are different to us in being inner or outer experiences, they are mutually dependent for their coexistence.

In this Sutra sometimes the meaning of the word Fa (law) is just a thing (including concepts); this is because the Chinese word was used to translate the Sanskrit word dharma that denotes anything that can be experienced or imagined. Sometimes it means methods or Buddhist teachings when its original Chinese meaning of law is relied on. For example, in "A Bodhisattva should not abide in anything." (4) its meaning is just a thing, in "What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say," (21) it means Buddhist teachings, while in "Practice all good deeds" (23) it means methods.

In this Sutra the meaning of the word Ming (name) refers to artificial labeling and assignment of names.

Since the same basic term at various occurrences in the Sutra may have drastically different meanings, while we study this Sutra we need to figure out the correct and proper meaning of each occurrence of a basic term through analyses of its context.

### **III. Types of Arguments Employed to Avoid Duality**

What the Buddha intended to reveal is that which is originally free from duality. Languages are built up on artificially made distinct concepts and relations; therefore, they could mislead people into the confinement of duality. In order to use languages to guide sentient beings without straying into misleading avenues teachings in the Diamond Sutra often make use of the three types of arguments listed in this section.

Prior to giving an explanation of these types of arguments we need to introduce the concept of "language levels" of Semantics so as to clarify the hinges of some problems. When we teach English in Chinese environment, English and Chinese belong to different levels: English is at the level of ordinary language usage where it is used to denote things and communicate intentions, while Chinese is at the level that includes, in addition, English language as its object of discussion. In order to facilitate discussions about all sorts of



problems that arise in situations where languages are used to talk about languages, the languages are classified into different levels. The language used to talk about another language is called a "metalanguage" of the language being talked about. For example, when Chinese is used to talk about English, Chinese becomes a metalanguage of English. In this case, Chinese is what we use and English is what we talk about. When a language and its metalanguage are different languages, such distinction is readily discerned. Nevertheless, when a language and its metalanguage are the same language, then it is very easy for confusions or difficult-to-avoid misunderstandings to arise. The Diamond Sutra is often considered as very difficult to penetrate. One major hurdle hinges on the fact that some words are used at the level of a metalanguage but very difficult to be recognized as such because throughout the text it is all in one language. This point will be further clarified below.

## **1. Transcending both Yes and No**

Once duality arises it would not be what the Buddha intended; therefore, in case of A or non-A that arises from the dualistic distinction that is rampant in worldly contexts, neither should be identified with or grasped. Choosing A or choosing non-A, in either case one would similarly fall into dualistic confinement. Therefore, both are not chosen. In this context both A and non-A belong to the same language level.

## **2. Not as Non-substantial**

Any grasping exists only in duality. In order to help people escape from such duality, "not" is used to indicate that one should not become like that, and its meaning is that one should not hold onto things as having an absolutely independent existence. "Not" with such intent is different from the "not" in our usual saying of "A or not A" where it means "other than." The "not A" meaning "other than A" and "A" belong to the same language level. However, the "not A" in the pattern that often appears in the Diamond Sutra, "A, is not A," means that it is not A with substance; in other words, it means it has no absolutely independent existence as A. If such a "not A" is misunderstood as meaning "other than A," then "A, is not A" would

already have been a contradictory statement in itself. "Not" with such a meaning belongs to the metalanguage, and is not at the same language level with the ordinary usage of "A" and "not A."

### **3. Three Steps involving Breaking down and Setting up**

Both A and non-A (other than A) are to be avoided. This could push ordinary people into a dilemma and cause them to feel puzzled, not knowing what to do. Furthermore, in the Sutra one finds arguments with the pattern "A, is not A" to dispel people's grasping to the reality (in the sense of having an absolutely independent existence) of what is referred to by "A". This adds a sense of contradiction to those people who does not understand that the "not A" here does not mean "other than A." Therefore, it needs to be immediately followed by the indication that it is only an artificial naming device. This type of three-step arguments may be represented by the scheme of "so, not so, named so." In this type of arguments, "not so" dispels grasping to reality, while "named so" establishes utility, therefore it is called as "three steps involving breaking down and setting up". Once it is comprehended that names, even though without reality, could still serve as artificial conveniences, then people would know how to make lively applications of them.

## **IV. Explanation to Important Statements from the Sutra through their Classifications**

From the Diamond Sutra I have quoted some important statements and arranged them below through two kinds of classification.

First, classification by View, Practice and Fruitful Attainment:

I. View

II. Practice

A. Intention

B. Behavior

III. Fruitful Attainment

Then, classification by Key Concepts and Types of Arguments:

I. Concepts

A. Non-substantial

B. Non-dual

C. Application

## II. Types of Arguments

A. Transcending both Yes and No

B. Not as Non-substantial

C. Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up

1. Directly Indicating Non-substantial

2. Not as Non-substantial

In the two kinds of classification above, some of the quoted statements from the Sutra will recur under different headings.

Next, I will present important statements from the Sutra according to these classifications. I will also add explanations. Under each quoted statement the section number of its occurrence in the Sutra is given in parentheses.

Now we begin with classification by View, Practice and Fruitful Attainment.

### I. View

#### 1. Sutra:

- *Each and every form is illusive. If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)*

Explanation: All phenomena we perceive through sensual organs and concepts in our consciousness, when cognitively distinguished and recognized, are sensations obtained in a dualistic mental state, but not the truth that is originally bias-free. Therefore, all these sensations are not substantial in the sense that they cannot have an absolutely independent existence, but are just transient appearances that turn up as a result of the coming together of causal conditions in the framework of time and space. When we see through that all appearances are insubstantial that would be the moment of our comprehension of the awakening of Tathagata.

#### 2. Sutra:

- *All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,*
- *Like dewdrops and resemble lightning, one should view them all as such matters. (32)*

Explanation: All things that come about through artificial endeavors are phenomena caused by the temporary gathering of causal conditions. Therefore, they do not have lasting substantiality, but are as transient as dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, dewdrops and lightning.

### 3. Conclusion

All experiences are insubstantial; all endeavors transient. Once this is understood, then neither would one be deluded into grasping to appearances, nor would one hold on to some illusion and dream of extensively long-term plans or expectations.

## II. Practice

### A. *Intention*

#### 1. Sutra:

- *How those good men and good women that have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus abide and thus tame their minds. (2)*
- *"All sorts of sentient beings, be they oviparous, viviparous, born of moisture, born through transformation, with form, without form, with thoughts, without thoughts, or neither with thoughts nor without thoughts, I would let all of them enter Nirvana without remains so as to rescue them through cessation of sufferings. Thus rescue through cessation of sufferings immeasurably, countlessly, and boundlessly many sentient beings, and yet in reality there are no sentient beings that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings." Why is it so? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva has a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva. (3)*
- *For a good man or good woman that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, how should the person abide by? How should the person's mind be tamed?*

- *Should raise such an intention: "I should rescue all sentient beings through cessation of sufferings; after all sentient beings have been rescued through cessation of sufferings there is not even one sentient being that, in reality, has been rescued through cessation of sufferings." (17)*

Explanation: To have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment means to have set as one's goal the attainment of this ultimate awakening. Usually this is described as having developed the Bodhicitta. To a person with such a great aspiration the goal cannot be just for oneself, but need to be also for all sentient beings to attain the same enlightenment. How could all sentient beings be enabled to attain Buddhahood? If a person with such aspiration could become free from grasping to all sorts of form, then such a person would realize the state of Tathagata and simultaneously lose the grasping to any sentient being as real (existing independently of other conditions). Consequently there is no longer any noticeable distinction between sentient beings and Buddhas; in other words, it is a realization of the oneness of all and the simultaneous attainment of all as Tathagata. In the absence of any grasping to sentient beings as real, immeasurably, countless, and boundlessly many sentient beings are thus rescued through cessation of sufferings. Since there is no longer any grasping to sentient beings as real, therefore it is said that "in reality there are no sentient beings that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings."

In the Sutra it is also said that, "in reality there are no sentient beings that obtained rescue through cessation of sufferings" is due to the fact that a Bodhisattva (one who has developed the Bodhicitta) is no long under the notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being, in other words, no longer holds these as real.

## 2. Sutra:

- *Should thus raise pure intentions: "They should not raise intentions that are abiding in color, nor intentions that are abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression; they should raise intentions without abiding anywhere." (10)*
- *Bodhisattvas should raise aspiration toward the unsurpassable full and right enlightenment in the absence of all forms; they should not raise intentions while abiding in*

*color, nor should they raise intentions while abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression. They should raise intentions without any abiding. (14)*

- *If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)*

Explanation: If one who has developed Bodhicitta is grasping to any form or thing, then such a person is already lost in the mistaken mentality of duality. ("If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding." (14)) Therefore, one should not hold on to any color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression, should stay free from the bondage of any form, and apply the mind that is pure and originally free from grasping. Not grasping to anything does not mean to remain in a lifeless dormant state, rather it means to be natural, alive and pure upon occasions. Therefore, it is said that "they should raise intentions without abiding anywhere," (10) and that "They should raise intentions without any abiding." (14)

### 3. Sutra:

- *To a person that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment there is in reality not a thing. (17)*

Explanation: In the Sutra this statement serves to explain the reason why "if a Bodhisattva has a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva." Therefore, it could not be taken out of the context and be given the seemingly plausible interpretation that the Chinese sentence seems to say: in reality there is no definite way to develop Bodhicitta. Instead, the Chinese sentence needs to be understood as translated above.

### 4. Conclusion

Intentions should arise freely without any attachment to forms. One should, in the absence of forms (preconceived concepts and goals), develop Bodhicitta that is impossible to measure or confine.

## ***B. Behavior***

### 1. Sutra:

- *Practice all good deeds without any notion of self, without any notion of person, without any notion of sentient being, and without any notion of living being, then one would attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. (23)*

Explanation: This statement from the Sutra points out that, practicing all good deeds (including both Buddhist practices and charitable activities) out of pure intentions that is not bounded by grasping to forms would enable one to reach the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. This statement does not fall into either side of the duality of existence and non-existence but harmonizes wisdom and compassion; thus it could serve as the guideline for all practices. In my Dharma talks I often emphasized that one should pay equal attention to practicing Dharma on one's own and attending Dharma-related services. Through this statement we can see that the teaching from the Sutra and my words born of experiences as a practitioner are in concord. Dharma practices such as repeating the name of a Buddha or making prostration to Buddhas would gradually purify one's mind by removing karmic hindrances and prejudicial grasping in inconspicuous ways. Engaging in Dharma-related services would train one in selfless and thorough empathy for others, open up one's mind and vista, and help one to gain wisdom in how to handle matters. Therefore, both ends need to be attended to with equal emphases.

## 2. Sutra:

- *A Bodhisattva should not abide in anything. Applying this to alms-giving, it would be called as "alms-giving without abiding in color, without abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression". Subhuti, a Bodhisattva should practice alms-giving like this, without abiding in form. (4)*
- *If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. Therefore, the Buddha says, "The mind of a Bodhisattva should not abide in color while practicing alms-giving." Subhuti, in order to benefit all sentient beings a Bodhisattva should thus practice alms-giving. (14)*
- *If the mind of a Bodhisattva abides on something while practicing alms-giving, then it would be like a man entering darkness and sees nothing. If the mind of a Bodhisattva does*

*not abide on anything while practicing alms-giving, then it would be like a man with eyes, under bright sunlight, sees all sorts of colors. (14)*

Explanation: All these statements expound, through the example of alms-giving, on how Buddhist practices should be conducted without abiding in form. In other words, one should engage in Dharma practices without predetermined motivation, without seeking future rewards, without becoming partial during the course of activities but remain universally equal to all beings. Furthermore, it points out that, when mind abides somewhere truth cannot be seen, while mind free from abiding will see clearly everything. Hence, we should know what to choose and what to drop, but not to linger in blinding grasping.

### 3. Sutra:

- *As regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. (31)*
- *Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished. (27)*
- *Do not raise this thought: "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." (27)*

Explanation: In the Sutra it is only after having dispelled the grasping as real to notions of self, person, sentient being and living being, and having pointed out directly that these are just artificial names, that the statement quoted above from section 31 of the Sutra is made. Thus it means that all things should be known, viewed, believed to be, and understood without any grasping to their reality, and clearly recognized to be man-made references that have no independent existence on their own.

Even though all things are not to be grasped as real, nor are they to be grasped as void (appearing to be interrupted and extinguished). This is because both grasping as real and grasping as void are dualistic mentality, but not the true situation that is originally pure and free from duality.



Even though one should not grasp forms as real, for most people it would take considerable efforts to become free from delusion and get rid of the grasping to attain awakening. The so-called "complete features of Tathagata" represents the set of virtues accumulated at the completion of all such efforts. Therefore, one should not say that Tathagata attain enlightenment without possessing such features. Not to grasp things as real means only not to take things as existing independently on their own, in other words, it means that things are just phenomena born of the meeting of causal conditions. Therefore, all things evolve in accordance with the law of causes and consequences, and it is not the case that there are no causal relations among things.

4. Sutra:

- *What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)*
- *How to expound it to others? Not grasping to forms, remain as such without swaying. (32)*

Explanation: Preaching the Dharma does not aim at making people to grasp at something, rather, its goal is to help people become free from all sorts of grasping. Therefore, there is nothing that could be taken as real and handed over, but only activities related to preaching the Dharma through which to guide people escape from delusions.

Since preaching the Dharma is an activity to help people escape delusions, therefore, the preacher of the Dharma need, in the first place, to stay away from the delusion of grasping to forms and abide in the original purity that is free from duality.

5. Conclusion:

A practitioner's behavior should based on the pure mind that is free from any grasping. However, one should not, out of no grasping, limit oneself into no activities; instead, one should exert all efforts to practice the Dharma and charitable activities.

### **III. Fruitful Attainment**

1. Sutra:

- *A Srota-apanna is named as "Stream Enterer", but there is nothing entered. Not entering color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression, that is named as "Srota-apanna". (9)*
- *A Sakrdagamin is named as "Once Returner", but in reality there is neither going nor coming, that is named as "Sakrdagamin". (9)*
- *An Anagamin is named as "Never Returner", but in reality there is no never-returning, therefore that is named as "Anagamin". (9)*

Explanation: In systematic teachings of Buddhism stages of fruitful attainment are defined and established so as to guide practitioners progress gradually on the right path. In the Diamond Sutra the goal is to thoroughly dispel all grasping to a sense of reality. Therefore, even the established fruitful stages are explicitly pointed out to be just artificially arranged labeling and should not be taken as of absolute substance. Nevertheless, these names and positions may remind practitioners of certain virtuous aspects of attainments so that practitioners could reflect on their own progress. Thus the great wisdom that is free from bondage of names and forms and yet lively makes uses of them to guide and save deluded beings is fully illustrated.

In both "in reality there is neither going nor coming" and "in reality there is no never-returning" the meaning of "in reality" is not in the usual sense of "existing as a phenomenon" but in the philosophical sense of "existing independently."

In the Diamond Sutra there are many instances of the type of three-step arguments that may be represented by the scheme of "so, not so, named so." The type is called "Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up". The second and third statements quoted above are of this type. However, they differ from the more common instances in that, instead of using simply "not" (in the sense of "not in itself"), it is directly stated that it is "in reality not the case."

In the first statement quoted above, "in reality" (In Chinese it is the word Shi) does not appear, and this seems to be a break from the pattern of the second and third statements quoted above. Since addition of "in reality" to this statement is completely sensible and free from inconsistency, in my Chinese work I suggested that it might as well be added. Now while working on this translation it occurred to

me that, in this statement what is being talked about is that "there is nothing entered" and hence the addition of "in reality" would be just superfluous because, in case there is NOTHING entered, there is no point of pursuing what is the case with NOTHING in reality. Thus I realized the wisdom of Dharma Master Kumarajiva in his omission of the word Shi here.

## 2. Sutra:

- *In reality there is not a thing, that is named as "Arhat". (9)*
- *If an Arhat raised the thought: "I have attained the path of Arhat," that would constitute grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. (9)*
- *Since Subhuti indeed makes no contrived activities, he named Subhuti as "enjoying the practice of non-arguing". (9)*

Explanation: When the grasping as real that holds something as existing independently no longer lingers, liberation from duality is realized. Such states could not be described by any language because languages are basically products of duality. So the name "Arhat" is used to denote the indescribable. If the thought that "I have attained Arhat" arises, that clearly reveals grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being that are born of attachment to form.

If the mind abides somewhere, that constitutes attachment to form, and speeches and behaviors will lack the clarity that comes with original purity. Subhuti's mind abides nowhere, and his speeches and behaviors are merely natural responses to situations, thus he is free and at ease. Therefore, he is said to be enjoying the practice of non-arguing. Subhuti makes no contrived activities, that means only that he does not behave with a predetermined view or inclination but not that he has no activities.

## 3. Sutra:

- *In reality there is not a thing, that is named as a "Bodhisattva". Therefore, the Buddha said, "In all things there is neither self, nor person, nor sentient being, nor living being." (17)*

- *If a Bodhisattva has a notion of self, a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, then not a Bodhisattva. (3)*
- *Meritorious virtues produced by Bodhisattvas should not be attached to; therefore it is said as "not accepting meritorious virtues." (28)*
- *If a Bodhisattva thoroughly comprehends that things are without self, Tathagata says the name is "truly a Bodhisattva". (17)*

Explanation: Absence of grasping to things as real is named as "Bodhisattva". Therefore, to an awakened mind in all phenomena there is no reality of self, person, sentient being, or living being. When notions of self, person, sentient being, or living being arise, there are still lingering traces of the grasping to things as real; therefore, the title "Bodhisattva" should not apply.

A Bodhisattva's mind abides nowhere and yet arises from the immeasurable Bodhi; therefore a Bodhisattva cultivates but is not attached to meritorious virtues. Since Bodhisattvas have transcended the duality of receiving and what is received, therefore it is said as "not accepting meritorious virtues."

Thorough comprehension of things as being without self means to comprehend thoroughly that all things are without absolutely independent existence and cannot function with complete autonomy. Therefore, there is no more attachment to things as real and no longer abiding of mind somewhere. Furthermore, once freed from the confinement of grasping to self, one would be able to generate universally equal love to each and every sentient being, and that amounts to attaining the great compassionate mind with neither abiding nor partiality. Therefore, it is named as "truly a Bodhisattva".

#### 4. Sutra:

- *Someone who knows that all things are without self and that attainment is achieved through tolerance, (28)*

Explanation: Seeing thoroughly that all are without self that exists independently but are just transient phenomena resulting from gathering of causal conditions, one thereby transcends the antagonistic attitude inherent in the distinction of one and others, and

attains the tolerance born of realization of oneness of all. This kind of tolerance is different from the usual kind of patience that one disciplines on oneself or bears unwillingly. Patience that is forced on oneself out of all sorts of considerations is painful to bear, and could easily result in knots of heart. Tolerance born of openness is based on first moving one's focus from the small sphere of personal affairs to the boundless Dharmadhatu to see all sorts of situations and possibilities. Thereby one realizes the swiftness and beyond control of impermanence and changes, and the preciousness of time, and so becomes disinterested in trivial matters, and instead would devote one's efforts completely into positive contributions. This is the meaning of "open tolerance" that I often emphasized. In my book "Wisdom and Compassion in Limitless-Oneness" there are more expositions on this topic. The statement "attainment is achieved through tolerance" quoted above clearly indicates that this kind of tolerance constitutes a path toward enlightenment, and hence should be cultivated.

#### 5.1 Sutra:

- *From Buddha Kindled Lamp Tathagata in reality obtained nothing as teachings. (10)*
- *In reality there is no such thing as Tathagata's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. (17)*
- *As to the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, I had had not even a little something that was obtainable, that is named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment". (22)*

Explanation: Gain or loss is a matter born of dualistic mentality. Attaining enlightenment is the recovery of purity that is originally without duality. Therefore, in the Sutra it is emphasized that enlightenment obtains nothing, has no grasping to things as real, has not even a little something that is obtainable (to be grasped as substantial), but is only called "enlightenment" for convenience's sake so as to distinguish it from the state of deluded grasping and subsequent sorrows.

#### 5.2 Sutra:

- *The thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. (14)*
- *The unsurpassable right and full enlightenment that Tathagata had attained is in itself neither real nor unreal. Therefore, Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things." (17)*
- *This thing is of equality, without high or low, and is named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment". (23)*

Explanation: The thing that Tathagata attains is beyond duality, and hence it is irrelevant to make the usual distinction of its being real or unreal in the sense of having empirical content or not. Please note that, the Sutra emphasizes that one should not grasp anything as real in the sense of having independent existence, but that does not amount to teaching people to grasp all things as unreal in the sense of having no empirical meanings. Both grasping things as real and grasping things as unreal are born of dualistic mentality and deviate from original purity. Even though in the Sutra it is taught that "all things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, like dewdrops and resemble lightning," it does not consider such things as unreal in the sense of lacking empirical meanings.

It is Buddha's realization that all things are just gatherings of causal conditions that are mutually dependent on one another for their concurrent transient existence as phenomena. There is nothing that can be exception to this truth. Therefore, one could say that all things are things as Buddha realized them to be. In the absence of duality all things are non-differentiable from Buddha, hence they may be said to be Buddha's things. In the absence of duality there is no way to make comparisons, therefore there is neither high nor low. The equality in "This thing is of equality" is not the equality that is derived through comparisons; rather, it means the equality that is beyond comparisons or as a result of impossibility to compare.

### 5.3 Sutra:

- *Each and every form is illusive. If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)*
- *Being free from all forms is named as the "Buddhas". (14)*

- *Tathagata cannot be seen through bodily form. Why is it so? Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself. (5)*
- *Tathagata should not be seen through a well-formed physical body. (20)*
- *Tathagata should not be seen through a complete set of features. (20)*
- *One should not see Tathagata through the thirty-two features. (26)*
- *If one sees me through colors and shapes, and seeks me through sounds and voices,*
- *Such a person practices a devious path, and cannot thereby comprehend Tathagata. (26)*

Explanation: All phenomena could not be grasped as substantial, in the sense of having an independent existence, therefore, they are said to be illusive. When it is thoroughly comprehended that all forms are not the appearance of something substantial but just the gathering of causal conditions, duality is thereby transcended and the state of Tathagata is understood. Free from grasping to any form, neither grasping things as real, nor as unreal, nor as different, is called "Tathagata".

Since forms are not substantial, one should not take bodily form, a well-formed physical body, a complete set of features, the thirty-two features, colors and shapes, or sounds and voices as characteristic appearances of Tathagata. If all sorts of form were taken as characteristics of Tathagata, then Tathagata would have become the substance of those forms, and the assumption would fall into the snare of duality.

One should not grasp to forms; this is a very important guideline for practicing the Dharma. It could help prevent one from being lost in the delusive grasping to lights and images, extraordinary sensations and experiences of attainment.

5.4 Sutra:

- *"Tathagata" means all things are as such. (17)*

- *What is referred to as Tathagata comes from nowhere and leaves for nowhere, therefore is named as "Tathagata" (Thus Come). (29)*

Explanation: The so-called "Tathagata" means all things as such, neither real nor unreal, and as such there is neither gain nor loss. Even though phenomena emerge, evolve, and evaporate, Tathagata does not chase after forms, but remains at ease with the current situation, and is free from comparisons and distinctions of coming or going, gain or loss. If, following distinctions, one were to grasp that there is somewhere to come from, and somewhere to go to, that would be distinctions made out of grasping to forms. Tathagata can distinguish all sorts of form but without grasping to any, therefore, not limited by forms and not turning around after forms but remains at ease.

### 5.5 Sutra:

- *All of you should not say that Tathagata raised this thought: "I should convert sentient beings." (25)*
- *In reality there are no sentient beings that Tathagata converted. If there were sentient beings that Tathagata converted, Tathagata would have had notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. (25)*
- *You should not say that Tathagata raised the thought: "I should preach some teachings." (21)*
- *"Has Tathagata any spoken teaching or not?" Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, Tathagata has nothing spoken." (13)*
- *If someone says, "Tathagata has preached some teachings," then that constitutes slandering the Buddha, due to inability to understand what I had said. (21)*
- *What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)*
- *There is neither a definite thing named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment", nor definite teachings that Tathagata could say. (7)*



- *"All of you monks know that the teachings I expounded are likened to rafts." Even teachings should eventually be renounced, not to mention things that are not teachings. (6)*

Explanation: The Buddha Sakyamuni preached for forty-nine years and converted countless sentient beings, and yet in this Sutra it is stated: "Tathagata has nothing spoken" and "In reality there are no sentient beings that Tathagata converted"; why is it so? This is because Buddha's preaching is not a bestowal of some teaching for people to grasp onto but just guidance given in natural responses to people's deluded grasping so as to help the audience move toward liberation. Lest people grasp to Buddha's sayings as right or wrong, it is said as guidance that Tathagata has nothing spoken, so as to avoid grasping. Tathagata no longer has the grasping to sentient beings as real, therefore, even though from the worldly point of view the sentient beings converted are numerous, Tathagata thoroughly sees that in reality there is no sentient being, and hence there could not be any that could be converted or had been converted.

Tathagata is free from duality, and hence does not maintain the intention to convert sentient beings nor feels a sense of responsibility to provide preaching. Nevertheless, due to Tathagata's thorough comprehension of the oneness of all in their mutually dependent concurrent existence, whenever some deluded grasping arises in sentient beings in the presence of Tathagata it would trigger Tathagata's great compassion born of oneness to employ the great wisdom that thoroughly sees through causal relations and consequences to render suitable guidance. Thus, Tathagata conducts endless salvation activities without predetermined motive, methods and ranges of application. Even though Tathagata has no presupposed standpoint, and Tathagata's sayings belong to the "nothing spoken" category of not-to-be-grasped things, and yet Tathagata differs from wood and stones that does not function by responding naturally to delusions in an awakened manner. Such responses take the form of speeches or behavior, and become Tathagata's teaching in words or in deeds. All these teachings in words or in deeds occur naturally as a result of causal conditions, and hence there is no definite teaching that could be grasped as the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment or as the invariable standard teaching of the Buddha.

The Buddha's teachings are transient pedagogical tools, and hence likened to a raft for carrying people across water. Once reached the other shore people should proceed without the raft, therefore it is said: "teachings should eventually be renounced." Here the dispelling of grasping is so thorough that it even reaches the potential grasping to Buddhist teachings that some practitioners might grow accustomed to and fall under. This kind of thorough selflessness and impartiality that dispels any grasping indiscriminately is essential to the attainment of ultimate liberation.

Both teachings and non-teachings are matters born of duality, therefore, eventually both should be renounced. However, teachings may help sentient beings to attain liberation, therefore, before attainment of ultimate liberation sentient beings should rely on the teachings as a temporary pedagogic tool.

## 6. Conclusion

Teachings on fruitful attainments and virtues should be considered as names established for pedagogical purposes but not to be grasped. Even though they are not to be grasped as substantial, they are to be understood as pedagogical tools born of great compassion of oneness and great wisdom of non-abiding, and hence to be relied upon both for one's own practices and for guiding others' practices.

Now we come to classification by Key Concepts and Types of Arguments.

According to Key Concepts and Types of Arguments we will classify important statements from the Diamond Sutra anew. Since most of the important statements had been explained in the previous classification, below, besides general descriptions, the explanation will only touch on points that have not been covered yet. Nevertheless, some statements that had been explained above are given further explanations on aspects that are relevant to the new classification.

### **I. Concepts**

In the Diamond Sutra there are three key concepts: Non-substantial, Non-dual, and Application.

## A. Non-substantial

### 1. Sutra:

- *Each and every form is illusive. (5)*
- *Minds in the past were unattainable, minds at present are unattainable, minds in the future will be unattainable. (18)*
- *If meritorious virtues were substantial, Tathagata would not say that meritorious virtues obtained are numerous; since meritorious virtues are non-substantial, Tathagata says that numerous meritorious virtues are obtained. (19)*
- *As regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. (31)*
- *All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows,*
- *Like dewdrops and resemble lightning, one should view them all as such matters. (32)*

Explanation: There is nothing that has independent existence; this is the meaning of non-substantial as taught in this Sutra. In the statements quoted above, what are said as "illusive," "unattainable," or "non-substantial" all share this meaning. Were meritorious virtues substantial, then they would be limited, and hence from the infinite point of view that would not be numerous, therefore Tathagata would not say that meritorious virtues obtained are numerous. Since meritorious virtues have no independent existence, but are displays of gatherings of causal conditions in the Dharmadhatu that are limitless and immeasurable, therefore they are said to be numerous.

"Without raising the notion of a thing" does not imply inability to distinguish matters, things or meanings. It simply means not to consider any phenomenon as the appearance of something substantial. Dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, dewdrops, and lightning are all transient and ungraspable. All things born of contrivance are likewise transient and ungraspable, and hence one should not grasp them as substantial.

As regards the unattainableness of minds in the past, at present, or in the future I had written a short gatha to expound on it. Please read my work "Great Perfection in the Diamond Sutra."

## 2. Sutra:

- *Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself. (5)*
- *What are referred to as "Buddhas' teachings" are not Buddhas' teachings in themselves. (8)*
- *A notion of self is not a notion in itself; a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, is not a notion in itself. (14)*
- *Patience Transcendence, Tathagata says that it is not Patience Transcendence in itself. Why is it so? Subhuti, for example, in the past when my body was cut into pieces by King Kali, at that juncture I had neither any notion of self, nor any notion of person, nor any notion of sentient being, nor any notion of living being. Why is it so? In the past while my body was being cut into pieces, had I had any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being, I ought to have raised anger and hatred. (14)*
- *If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)*
- *Tathagata says, "All forms are not forms in themselves," also says, "All sentient beings are not sentient beings in themselves." (14)*

Explanation: The negation through "not" in the above quoted statements does not have the usual meaning of "other than." Rather it indicates that it is not substantial as usually assumed. To express this in English I cannot translate word for word from the Chinese version to get a seemingly contradictory statement of the form "A is not A." Instead, I use "not so in itself" to indicate that such a negation belongs to the metalanguage, and that there is no contradiction involved.

To distinguish this kind of "not" of the metalanguage from the "not" of usual usage it is called as "not as Non-substantial". Thus its meaning and real function can be clearly reminded.

This clarification of semantics and concepts is probably the key to understanding the real meaning of the Diamond Sutra. Usually when most people encounter such "not" they would simply understand it as meaning "other than" and consequently find the statements in the Sutra either contradictory or very confusing and hard to comprehend.

## ***B. Non-dual***

### 1. Sutra:

- *Had a world system existed in reality, it would be the oneness of all phenomena. (30)*
- *What is referred to as the oneness of all phenomena is beyond expression, but worldly persons would be attached to this matter. (30)*

Explanation: The original purity as realized by Buddhas, even though neither real nor unreal, and yet is not void of contents; rather it is the effortlessly accomplished presence that is free from the pollution of conceptual fogs and psychological preferences. If we are obliged to say that the world system exists in reality, the most that we can identify as the world system is the presence of all phenomena at present. In this totality there is no boundary to divide or limit, and hence it is called as "the oneness of all phenomena". This oneness of all phenomena is non-dual. Such realization that transcends duality cannot be dealt with by words and languages that are produced under a presumed dualistic context. Any attempt in using languages to describe or explain the boundless reality is merely a foolish preoccupation of those who have not seen the light of this fundamental point.

### 2. Sutra:

- *All these sentient beings no longer have any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being. They have neither a notion of a thing nor a notion of not-a-thing. Why is it so? All these sentient beings, if their minds hold on to notions, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. If they hold on to a notion of a thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living*

*being. Why is it so? If they hold on to a notion of not-a-thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Therefore, one should not hold on to a notion of a thing, and should not hold on to a notion of not-a-thing. (6)*

- *Those are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. (21)*
- *The thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. (14)*
- *If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)*

Explanation: Both sides of a dualistic distinction are born of delusive grasping. A and not-A form a set of mutually dependent concepts that exist or perish together. Transcending duality there is neither the grasping as real of A nor the grasping as real of not-A. Therefore, it is said, "They have neither a notion of a thing nor a notion of not-a-thing." Consequently, when grasping is to be renounced, both grasping to A and grasping to not-A must be renounced simultaneously. Therefore, it is said, "One should not hold on to a notion of a thing, and should not hold on to a notion of not-a-thing."

To a worldly person, both "sentient being" and "non-sentient being" are references with implication of substantial grasping. Therefore, in the Sutra both are negated to indicate non-substantiality. Through such "universal" negation it can be clearly seen that such negation belongs to another language level and could not be at the same level as the ones negated.

In order to use languages to guide people away from the delusive mistake of making dualistic distinctions, one could only adopt expressions that renounce all grasping to either side. Therefore, in Buddhist teachings it is often said, "non-dual" or "not to fall into either side." So as not to fall into dualistic positions through grasping, one could not establish anything for grasping through languages, therefore, there are no direct or affirmative sayings for people to hold onto. Instead, all sayings are negative using "no", "not" or "should not." Nevertheless, it does not thereby fall into the passive side that has no lively path to exit. The solution lies in pointing out that all conceptual tools are artificial means that lack substance and yet still

can serve as temporary labels for phenomena. Thus we can make convenient uses of names and concepts without delusive grasping to their substantiality.

"Neither real nor unreal" can be deduced from non-dual. "Forms are not forms in themselves"; in other words, forms are not forms of some independent reality, and that is non-dual as Tathagata realized.

### 3. Sutra:

- *To a person that has raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment there is in reality not a thing. (17)*
- *In reality there is no such thing as Tathagata's attaining the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment. (17)*
- *If a Bodhisattva thoroughly comprehends that things are without self, Tathagata says the name is "truly a Bodhisattva". (17)*

Explanation: The translations of the first two statements above are obtained through careful consideration of their contexts in the Sutra. The Chinese originals seemed, at first sight, to mean "indeed there is no way." Nevertheless, once the contexts are understood, only the interpretation of "in reality there is nothing that exists independently" makes sense. Both the aspiration toward enlightenment and the attainment of enlightenment are based on this insight. Since "in reality there is nothing that exists independently," then all are mutually dependent for their coexistence to form "the oneness of all phenomena." Therefore, it is said as "non-dual." When one thoroughly comprehends that things are without self, then there is no antagonism possible; thus one also thoroughly comprehends non-duality.

### 4. Sutra:

- *As regards all things, those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment should thus know, thus view, thus believe and thus understand, without raising the notion of a thing. (31)*
- *Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things." (17)*

Explanation: If there is any grasping to the notion of a thing, then it would not be possible to accept all things as they are, i.e., it is no

longer non-dual. Therefore, from non-duality one can deduce that grasping to form or thing is out of the question.

Non-dual, then all things are non-dual from Buddha, hence they may be said to be Buddha's things. Non-dual, then all approaches become approaches to non-duality, i.e., approaches to enlightenment, and hence we can say that all approaches are approaches to Buddhahood. Thus, in light of non-duality, the Chinese statement could be given either one or both of these interpretations without creating conflict.

#### 5. Sutra:

- *Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished. (27)*
- *Do not raise this thought: "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." (27)*

Explanation: Interrupted, extinguished, constant, and permanent are all conceptual matters. They belong to either pole of dualistic sides. Non-duality would not fall to either side of a partial grasping. Therefore, those who have raised aspiration toward enlightenment and possess the right view would not talk in terms of extremes such as being interrupted or extinguished. The purpose of this statement in the Sutra is to prevent readers from falling into the opposite extreme of grasping to things as being interrupted or extinguished after they have learned the teaching that one should not grasp to things as being substantial.

Non-dual, then all are mutually dependent and coexistent. Therefore, the operation of causal conditions and their consequences are precise and without exceptions. The so-called "Tathagata's possessing complete features" signifies completion of all sorts of endeavors during the course of escaping from delusions to reach enlightenment. Therefore, one should not deny the necessity to have such conditions fulfilled.

#### ***C. Application***



In the Diamond Sutra the teachings are not confined to negative expressions that guide one to escape from delusion and to renounce grasping. There are also guidelines on active practices. The key is to understand that, at the juncture of no grasping to anything, it is not dead, interrupted or extinguished, but alive, free, fully engaged without bondage. The statements quoted below from the Sutra exhibit how the teachings therein harmonize the negative and positive aspects to reveal the wonder of lively applications.

1. Sutra:

- *If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)*
- *A Bodhisattva should not abide in anything. (4)*
- *A Bodhisattva should practice alms-giving like this, without abiding in form. (4)*
- *Bodhisattvas should raise aspiration toward the unsurpassable full and right enlightenment in the absence of all forms; they should not raise intentions while abiding in color, nor should they raise intentions while abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression. They should raise intentions without any abiding. (14)*

Explanation: The Sutra uses "improper abiding," "should not abide in anything," "without abiding in form," and "should not raise intentions while abiding in color, nor should they raise intentions while abiding in sound, odor, flavor, touch or impression" to dispel grasping. However, lest readers following such guidelines would mistakenly limit themselves into raising no intentions or engaging in no activities, so it is clearly indicated that "they should raise intentions without any abiding." Through this statement lively applications are alluded to, and hence we know for sure that one should not remain inactive but rather should make good uses of one's mind. What, then, would be the intentions that are without abiding and may be properly raised? Only intentions born of and in conformity with the Bodhicitta. This is because Bodhicitta is based on the right view of non-duality and non-grasping, and its goal is also to help all sentient beings to attain non-duality and non-grasping, and

consequently, it thoroughly yields only intentions without any abiding.

## 2. Sutra:

- *What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)*
- *The teachings as said by Tathagata are all neither to be adopted nor to be said, neither teachings nor non-teachings. (7)*
- *How to expound it to others? Not grasping to forms, remain as such without swaying. (32)*
- *Tathagata says, "All things are all Buddha's things." (17)*

Explanation: Even though in all things there is no substantiality that is graspable and there is no form to hold onto, once the aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment has risen one should propagate the right views and practices to others so as to lead them away from the delusion of grasping to forms and substantiality. Nevertheless, such preaching after one's awakening has no premeditated goals or positions, therefore it is said that such preaching "has no teachings in themselves to say." Preaching of teachings is simply a natural response of an awakened being to the delusion of deluded beings. If we fail to understand that the Buddha's speeches and activities were simply his reactions to the circumstances he faced, and grasped them as something perpetual, that would constitute repeating the mistake of grasping to forms. Therefore, it is said that "the teachings as said by Tathagata are all neither to be adopted nor to be said." To avoid grasping of substantiality, both teachings and non-teachings are not to be grasped, and hence it is indicated that they are "neither teachings nor non-teachings." If a preacher has any grasping to forms, then such a preacher would be incapable of helping others to escape from delusions. Therefore, it is said that to expound the Sutra one should be "not grasping to forms." When one does not run after forms, one would "remain as such without swaying" and be at ease.

Earlier we have explained that there are two interpretations that are both proper for the statement: "All things are all Buddha's things."

They are not repeated here. One further remark added here is that what are usually considered as bad deeds might sometimes help people to become enlightened through the so-called function of "gaining advantages through adverse conditions." For example, someone renounces gambling completely after having lost everything in gambling. Just as a Chinese proverb says, "The return of a prodigal son is more precious than gold." Furthermore, we see in Buddhist Tantric teachings various kinds of advanced practices that are based on the principle of making use of the five poisons of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and suspicion to expose deep-rooted subtle attachments so as to gain thorough liberation from their bondage. From this we can see even clearer that there is nothing with absolute characteristics, but rather that all are relative in nature and full of potential for molding. Once we understand this truth we should make good use of adjusting causal conditions to benefit sentient beings. Among Chan (Zen) Gong An (koan; anecdotes) there is also the saying: "Nowhere is not medicine!" That amounts to another way of saying "All things are all Buddha's things."

### 3. Sutra:

- *Those who have raised aspiration toward the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished. (27)*
- *Do not raise this thought: "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." (27)*

Explanation: "Do not say that things appear to be interrupted or extinguished." This teaching is given to prevent people from grasping to "all things are non-substantial" once they have learned that "there is nothing substantial." When one grasps to all things as non-substantial, one could remain inactive, stagnant in empty silence, disinterested in distinguishing good from evil, or bewildered as to what to do. To prevent such unintended and undesirable consequences of misunderstanding of the teachings, the Sutra clearly points out that one should not fall into grasping either side of a duality. Hence, one should not grasp things as substantial, and one should not grasp things as non-substantial, i.e., interrupted or extinguished.

Furthermore, to prevent people from misunderstanding non-substantiality as having no causal relationships among things, it is taught that one should not think that "Tathagata is not by possessing complete features to have attained the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment," where the possession of complete features signifies completion of accumulation of all sorts of merits. "Non-substantial" means all phenomena are determined by causal conditions and hence there is nothing that exists independently outside this mutually dependent coexistence of all things. Consequently, the distinction between Buddha and sentient being also lies in whether the accumulation of merits due to cultivation of wisdom and compassion is complete or not. Nothing can go beyond causal conditions and laws. When deluded, one is self-limited to what has been the case; when awakened, one will skillfully evolve into what could be the case.

#### 4. Sutra:

- *There is neither a definite thing named as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment", nor definite teachings that Tathagata could say. (7)*

Explanation: The unsurpassable right and full enlightenment cannot be limited or measured by any dualistic means. Therefore, there is no definite thing that may be called as "the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." Teachings of Buddhas are naturally revealed as awakened beings' responses to various sentient beings at different occasions. It is not the case that there are predetermined thoughts that are mechanically ground out on occasions. Therefore, it is said that there are no definite teachings. Tathagata makes applications freely and suitably to guide sentient beings as occasions demand.

#### ***D. Conclusion***

"Non-substantial" and "non-dual" are two concepts that are mutually dependent for their existence. Whereas the lively application as taught in Buddhism is based on thoroughly comprehending and realizing non-substantiality and non-duality.

## **II. Types of Arguments**

In the Diamond Sutra there are three main types of arguments: A. Transcending both Yes and No, B. Not as Non-substantial, and C. Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up. Earlier we have given an explanation on these already. Below we will list relevant statements from the Sutra according to these argument types. Among the third type of arguments, a further division into two sub-types is made. To dispel grasping as real, one type directly indicates non-substantiality, while another type uses "not" in the sense of being non-substantial.

### ***A. Transcending both Yes and No***

Sutra:

- *All these sentient beings no longer have any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being. They have neither a notion of a thing nor a notion of not-a-thing. Why is it so? All these sentient beings, if their minds hold on to notions, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. If they hold on to a notion of a thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Why is it so? If they hold on to a notion of not-a-thing, then they are grasping to notions of self, person, sentient being, and living being. Therefore, one should not hold on to a notion of a thing, and should not hold on to a notion of not-a-thing. (6)*
- *"All of you monks know that the teachings I expounded are likened to rafts." Even teachings should eventually be renounced, not to mention things that are not teachings. (6)*
- *Those are neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings. (21)*
- *The thing that Tathagata attains is something that is neither real nor unreal. (14)*

Explanation: In the statements quoted above, "a notion of a thing, a notion of not-a-thing," "teachings, not teachings," "sentient beings, non-sentient beings," and "real, unreal" are dualistic pairs at the same language level. Their common form is "A, not A." Since neither side

of a dualistic pair is to be grasped, therefore, the teachings all take the form of "transcending both Yes and No" to dispel both. As to the negation used to dispel both poles, it belongs to the metalanguage. Therefore, "neither sentient beings nor non-sentient beings" should be understood as meaning "not to be grasped as sentient beings of substantiality, and not to be grasped as non-sentient beings of substantiality." And "neither real nor unreal" should be understood as meaning "not to be grasped as real with substantiality, and not to be grasped as unreal with substantiality."

### ***B. Not as Non-substantial***

Sutra:

- *Bodily form as referred to by Tathagata is not bodily form in itself. (5)*
- *If it is comprehended that forms are not forms in themselves, then Tathagata is witnessed. (5)*
- *What are referred to as "Buddhas' teachings" are not Buddhas' teachings in themselves. (8)*
- *A notion of self is not a notion in itself; a notion of person, a notion of sentient being, or a notion of living being, is not a notion in itself. (14)*
- *Patience Transcendence, Tathagata says that it is not Patience Transcendence in itself. Why is it so? Subhuti, for example, in the past when my body was cut into pieces by King Kali, at that juncture I had neither any notion of self, nor any notion of person, nor any notion of sentient being, nor any notion of living being. Why is it so? In the past while my body was being cut into pieces, had I had any notion of self, any notion of person, any notion of sentient being, or any notion of living being, I ought to have raised anger and hatred. (14)*
- *If the mind abides somewhere, then that constitutes improper abiding. (14)*

- *Tathagata says, "All forms are not forms in themselves," also says, "All sentient beings are not sentient beings in themselves." (14)*

Explanation: As to the language level and function of this kind of negation a detail exposition has already been presented above, hence it is omitted here.

### ***C. Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up***

#### *1. Directly Indicating Non-substantial*

Sutra:

- *What is referred to as preaching teachings has no teachings in themselves to say, but is named as "preaching teachings". (21)*
- *A Srota-apanna is named as "Stream Enterer", but there is nothing entered. Not entering color, sound, odor, flavor, touch, or impression, that is named as "Srota-apanna". (9)*
- *A Sakrdagamin is named as "Once Returner", but in reality there is neither going nor coming, that is named as "Sakrdagamin". (9)*
- *An Anagamin is named as "Never Returner", but in reality there is no never-returning, therefore that is named as "Anagamin". (9)*

Explanation: The statements quoted above from the Diamond Sutra all belong to the argument type of "Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up" with the second step directly indicating non-substantiality to dispel grasping of things as real.

#### *2. Not as Non-substantial*

Sutra:

- "Suppose someone had a body as huge as the Mountain King Sumeru, what do you think, is such a body huge or not?" Subhuti said, "Exceedingly huge, World Honored One. Why is it so? What the Buddha referred to is not a body in itself, but is named as a 'huge body'." (10)*

- *What Tathagata said as a tall and huge human body is not a huge body in itself, but is named as a "huge body". (17)*
- *What Tathagata says as a well-formed physical body is not a well-formed physical body in itself, but is named as a "well-formed physical body". (20)*
- *What Tathagata says as the thirty-two features are not features in themselves, but are named as "thirty-two features". (13)*
- *What Tathagata says as possessing complete features is not possessing complete features in itself, but is named as "possessing complete features". (20)*
- b. *What Tathagata says as all those minds are not minds in themselves, but are named as "minds". (18)*
- c. *All those that are referred to as sentient beings, Tathagata says that they are not sentient beings in themselves, but are named as "sentient beings". (21)*
- *What is referred to as a worldly person, Tathagata says is not a worldly person in itself, but is named as a "worldly person". (25)*
- *What the Buddha says as a multitude of tiny dusts is not a multitude of tiny dusts in itself, but is named as a "multitude of tiny dusts". (30)*
- *What the World Honored One says as the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of living being, is not in itself the notion of self, the notion of person, the notion of sentient being, or the notion of living being, but is named as "the notion of self", "the notion of person", "the notion of sentient being", or "the notion of living being". (31)*
- d. *Those tiny dusts Tathagata says that they are not tiny dusts in themselves, but are named as "tiny dusts". (13)*
- *What Tathagata referred to as a world is not a world in itself, but is named as a "world". (13)*
- *The great-thousand world system consisting of thousand-cube worlds as referred to by Tathagata is not a world system in itself, but is named as a "world system". (30)*



- e. *What Tathagata says as the oneness of all phenomena is not the oneness of all phenomena in itself, but is named as "the oneness of all phenomena". (30)*
- *Such appearance of reality is not appearance in itself, therefore Tathagata says that it is named as "appearance of reality". (14)*
  - *What is referred to as the notion of a thing, Tathagata says that it is not the notion of a thing in itself, but is named as "the notion of a thing". (31)*
- f. *What the Buddha referred to as wisdom transcendence is not wisdom transcendence in itself, but is named as "wisdom transcendence". (13)*
- *What Tathagata says as the First Transcendence (through alms-giving) is not the First Transcendence in itself, but is named as "the First Transcendence". (14)*
  - *What is referred to as adorning Buddha Land is not adorning in itself, but is named as "adorning". (10)*
  - *What Tathagata says as adorning Buddha Land is not adorning in itself, but is named as "adorning". (17)*
  - *What are said as good deeds, Tathagata says that they are not good deeds in themselves, but are named as "good deeds". (23)*
  - *What is said as all things is not all things in itself, therefore is named as "all things". (17)*

Explanation: All these statements quoted above from the Sutra are of the argument type "Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up" with the second step using negation meaning non-substantiality to dispel grasping of things as real.

These statements cover bodies, features, minds, sentient beings, living beings, tiny dusts, worlds, appearance of reality, Buddhist teachings, all things, etc. They amount to a list of all possible types of things that one might grasp as real but have been explicitly pointed out to be non-substantial by the Sutra. All nouns that are employed in the Sutra to give examples are in turn explicitly dealt with through an argument of the type "Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up" to dispel grasping to them as real, and to establish them as

merely conventional devices of conveniences. In particular, even possible kinds of grasping as real of aspects of Buddhist teachings are deliberately dispelled as soon as they are mentioned. Thus it is clearly seen that the Buddha's teachings are truly of liberation character, and are born of profound wisdom and thorough compassion.

Through "Three Steps Involving Breaking down and Setting up" things emphasized in the Sutra such as "one should raise intentions without abiding anywhere," alms-giving, patience, expounding the teaching to others, etc., can all be practiced boundlessly without any grasping of substantiality. The wonder of Buddhist teachings lies in showing people how to obtain liberation from bondage through seeing things as they truly are, and then to make lively uses of things out of pure spontaneity.

#### ***D. Conclusion***

Among the argument types found in the Diamond Sutra "Transcending both Yes and No" only clarifies the idea of non-duality by helping people to refrain from falling into any one side of a duality. It is only the "Not as Non-substantial" approach that forms the key juncture in the three-step approach that does both breaking down and setting up. Unfortunately, in the Chinese version of the Sutra there are several words used for negation in a dualistic sense as well as for negation in the non-substantial sense. Consequently it has always been very confusing for many readers of this Sutra. I hope that my Chinese works on the Sutra and my English works on the Sutra will help more people to comprehend the correct and subtle meanings of the teachings therein.

### **V. General Statement of the Essential Principles of the Diamond Sutra**

The essential principle of the Diamond Sutra is to dispel grasping to anything as substantial (existing absolutely independently) so that sentient beings would not fall into delusion and suffering that are rooted in artificial duality, and sentient beings that are grasping to forms and self-limited may be liberated; in addition, it further indicates that, after having comprehended the truth of non-substantiality and non-duality, one should, out of a pure mind that

abides on nothing, engage in beneficial services that help oneself as well as others until complete liberation in the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment, and then, out of the great compassion that is born of the realization of all in oneness, incessantly help sentient beings on the path to enlightenment as occasions arise naturally.

In order to dispel grasping, arguments of the type "Transcending both Yes and No" are employed to remind people not to fall into either side of a dualistic division, arguments of the type "Not as Non-substantial" are employed to indicate that there is no substantiality in an absolutely independent existence of anything, and finally arguments of the type "Three Steps involving Breaking down and Setting up" that may be represented as "so, not so, named so" are employed to indicate how to skillfully set up labels of references and make lively uses of them without running into problems. In order to dispel grasping thoroughly the teachings of this Sutra cover body, mind, form, thing, world, as well as teachings, practices, and fruitful positions and merits in Buddhism. From topic to topic, going through layer over layer, all are pointed out to be just names of artificial construction but without substantiality in the sense of having an absolutely independent existence.

As to lively application, the Sutra clearly teaches that one should raise aspirations and intentions of great Bodhi that is not abiding on anything, and practice all good deeds and Buddhist teachings according to laws of causes and consequences, so as to attain original purity that is free from grasping to forms and in the absence of duality. In original purity it is naturally full of great compassion born of the realization of all in oneness, therefore spontaneous and natural teachings will flow out to suit the occasions and sentient beings' needs. Consequently, there is no definite and stereotype teachings but endless teachings through examples set by speeches or behaviors. All such awakening activities of conversion are rooted in non-substantiality and non-duality, and in conformity to causal laws.

## **VI. Application of the Teachings of the Diamond Sutra**

In conformity to the teachings on no grasping as found in the Diamond Sutra, in daily life we should avoid antagonistic mentality and behaviors. We had better often reflect on things and matters through the view that things are impermanent so as to relax and

diminish our tendency of grasping to them as real and regarding them in certain prejudiced ways. In all aspects and levels, be it temporal or spatial, vista or panorama, aversion or longing, open the door and enlarge the capacity to realize that grasping to anything in the boundless and endless flux of all things that have no self-determination is simply vain. Especially to recognize clearly that names and forms are of artificial nature, and thereby free oneself from the torment of incessant comparison and complaining born of noticeable discrepancies in names and reality.

Through no grasping to substantiality and no grasping to forms one escapes the mentality that sets oneself at the center of the universe. Consequently, one sees clearly and thoroughly that all sentient beings are going through all sorts of suffering in the processes of birth, growth, decay, sickness and death. Thus the great compassion born of realizing that all sentient beings are sharing similar sufferings will rise in one's mind. Out of such pure and selfless great mind personal devotion and contribution to charitable activities will begin. Furthermore, out of the great compassionate intention to thoroughly and ultimately free sentient beings from all sufferings, one would engage in learning and practicing Buddhist teachings that can save sentient beings in ultimate ways by helping them to attain enlightenment. When one knows the Dharma well and has experiences in Buddhist practices, then one will also propagate the teachings to others to help them directly. Through thorough practices of the Buddhist teachings one then releases even grasping or fixation to the Buddhist teachings themselves, and realizes the ultimate freedom in seeing and attaining the realization of "all things are all Buddha's things." Consequently, one will be able to provide suitable help and guidance to all sorts of sentient beings as occasions naturally arise.

In this one Sutra all applications mentioned above have been included and expounded. So great it is indeed, the Diamond Wisdom Transcendence Sutra! This Sutra is the illuminating torch of wisdom that sheds bright light on both the ultimate philosophy of Buddhism and the whole course of Buddhist practices and attainments. May beings that uphold this Sutra and abide by its teachings in their practices continue to grow in number, from generation to generation, and spread ever wider throughout the Dharmadhatu!

## **VII. Concluding Remark to this Work**

May beings that have the opportunity to see or listen to the Diamond Sutra and this "Essential Principles of the Diamond Sutra" all abide by the teachings therein, to thoroughly stay away from grasping of substantiality, not to abide in any form, to raise great Bodhicitta that abides nowhere, to practice Dharma diligently, and to engage in charitable services of all sorts, so that they will gradually attain non-duality that has neither gain nor loss, and then widely propagate Dharma through no definite sayings that could be grasped, and actively conduct Dharma activities through actions that are free from premeditation and expectation. Thus they remain as such without swaying in the equilibrium that makes no high or low distinction of Buddhas and sentient beings, and salvage sentient beings as occasions arise without ending.

Chinese original completed on November 5, 1996

(a day for making offerings to Dakinis)

Detail punctuation added to the Chinese original  
on February 6, 2003

English version, after little over a month,  
completed on March 22, 2003

El Cerrito, California

# Great Perfection in the Diamond Sutra

Yutang Lin

*Mind in the past is unattainable;  
The haggling mind disappears!  
Mind in the future is unattainable;  
The expecting mind disappears!  
Mind at the present is unattainable;  
The grasping mind disappears!  
In the world of pure innocence, no antagonism, naturally  
harmonious.*

Comment:

In the Diamond Sutra, it is taught that the three minds of past, present and future are unattainable. Seeing through clear Dharma eye, it points directly to the original purity. Having practiced the Dharma for years and accumulated depth and strength in wisdom and compassion, it is possible to gradually attain the fading away of the latter three minds of haggling, expecting and grasping. The boundary of past and future diminished, at the instant not confined by forms, then all things are in the oneness of a harmonious totality. The Great Perfection as taught in Vajrayana is revealed from such attainment.

Written in Chinese: August 2, 1995

Translated: August 9, 1999

El Cerrito, California

## Appendix to the Diamond Sutra

Yutang Lin

*Disengaged from both right and wrong to merge into non-dual;  
Negating as being insubstantial could eradicate entanglement.  
Syllogistic denial and confirmation lead to lively usage;  
Buddha, is non-Buddha, is named "Buddha."*

Comment:

In my Chinese article "Essentials of the Diamond Sutra" it has been pointed out that there are three types of arguments in the Sutra to avoid dualism: Disengaged from both right and wrong, negating as being insubstantial, and syllogistic denial and confirmation. For details please read my book in Chinese "Yang He Zhai Ming Jing Ji." ("Collection of Expositions on Sutras from the Study for the Cultivation of Harmony") In this sutra the pattern of "A, is non-A, is named 'A'" is used to free attachments to everything. Nevertheless, some followers of Buddha could not help but maintain attitudes and behaviors that are confined by "Buddha." Therefore, I offer the statement which is not spelled out in the Sutra, as an appendix to it. May Buddhists be reminded that "Buddha, is non-Buddha, is named 'Buddha'," and become thoroughly emancipated.

Written in Chinese: January 26, 1999

Yang He Zhai at Taipei

Translated: September 6, 1999

Yang He Zhai at El Cerrito, California

## Giving without Grasping

Yutang Lin

*Diamond Sutra keeps the Dharma eye clear;  
Appearances and grasping are not keepsake.  
Without attachment diligently offer service;  
Devoted sacrifice would induce awakening.*

Comment:

Last few days I had been reviewing the Diamond Sutra in Chinese and had added punctuation marks to it. I appreciated deeply the thorough transparency that the Sutra is alluding to by teaching us to stay away from all conceptual frameworks and any grasping to any sense of reality. If we could remain so awakened, where could worries turn up? The ability to see through appearances and grasping and not become limited by them needs to be cultivated in daily life. One needs to practice giving and offering of services continuously in order to realize gradually the real awakening. "Without attachment diligently offer service" could be taken as the fundamental teaching of this Sutra on how to practice Dharma in daily life.

The practice of Chod, as taught by the tantric patriarch Machig Labdron, applies the abstract principle of "giving without grasping" directly to our fundamental grasping, the grasping to one's body, and thereupon practices giving of the body in visualization. Furthermore, the Chod practice identifies the body with the whole Dharmadhatu and thereby enables the practitioner to engage in a practice of endless and all-encompassing offering.

Written in Chinese and translated on May 10, 2002  
El Cerrito, California



## To Benefit All Beings

Yutang Lin

*To benefit all sentient beings is the ultimate goal,  
Considering action or inaction along its guidance.  
One phrase penetrates the entire Bodhisattva way;  
In the Diamond Sutra a clear mirror hangs above.*

Comment:

Recently I have been translating the Diamond Sutra and my work on it, "Essential Principles of the Diamond Sutra," from Chinese into English. Therefore, I was reviewing the Sutra several times. One passage of the Diamond Sutra stood out to strike me as an echo of what I have said frequently in my works. It reads, "In order to benefit all sentient beings, a Bodhisattva should practice alms-giving in such a manner (meaning to act with a mind that is free from preoccupations.) The phrase "to benefit all sentient beings" was frequently used by me but I did not realize that it was already, word for word, stated in a Sutra. Furthermore, the Sutra explicitly points out that it is the goal of Bodhisattvas. Indeed this is the guideline for all considerations related to the whole Bodhisattva path. Whenever practitioners ponder on choices of action or inaction, they should carefully evaluate if the choice could really be in accordance with this goal. In case one lost sight of this goal, then it is often the case that a correct decision could hardly be reached.

Written in Chinese on February 2, 2003

Translated on February 3, 2003

El Cerrito, California

## Doing Good without Preconception

Yutang Lin

*Do good with a pure mind free from grasping to form;  
Just follow this guidance one would attain awakening.  
A principle to uphold for entire life, actually practiced,  
Not unworthy of Buddha's grace but also helps others.*

Comment:

In the Diamond Sutra the Buddha expounded in details the fundamental principles of the Dharma. Therein all sorts of grasping to reality or hindrances of forms are pointed out and dispelled, and wondrous application of names are taught. In this Sutra often one statement would completely reveal some fundamental principle for practices. For example, "Practice all good deeds without the notion of self, person, sentient being or living being, right then attain the unsurpassable right and full enlightenment." This statement from the Sutra clearly spells out a path for practice to reach enlightenment. If we could carefully abide by this teaching for the remainder of our lives, and put it into practice diligently, then not only would we benefit from Buddha's kindness but also could we spread Buddha's grace to all sentient beings.

Written in Chinese on February 3, 2003

Translated on February 4, 2003

El Cerrito, California

# Complete Revelation

Yutang Lin

*Pouring the fountain of all Buddhas and right teachings,  
In complete revelation the compassionate mind rejoices.  
Whatever taught by Buddha in this Sutra is fundamental;  
Just by observing a four-sentence gatha will one awaken.*

Comment:

The Diamond Sutra fully explains fundamental principles of Buddhism in details. It directly points out that its contents constitute the fountain of all Buddhas and their right teachings. During the course of such a complete revelation it is often the case that a statement made somewhere therein could indeed serve as a principle for a practitioner to abide by all through life. In the Sutra there are twenty-seven occurrences of "three-step arguments" that serve to completely wipe out grasping as real any worldly matter or Buddhists teaching and conceptual hindrances therefrom, and conclude in wondrous application of names and labels born of a mind free from attachments and preconceptions. If one could comprehend the principles through one of such examples, one would immediately comprehend awakening. Therefore, in the Sutra it is said that even just by receiving in good faith and abiding by in practice a gatha of four sentences, the resulting meritorious virtues are inconceivable and the fruitful consequences are likewise inconceivable.

Written in Chinese on February 3, 2003  
Translated on February 7, 2003  
El Cerrito, California

## No Concept of Sentient Being

Yutang Lin

*Tranquility and ease pervade, grasping has passed away.  
Shapes and sounds rise and fall like floating bubbles.  
As phenomena come up and go away no thoughts arise.  
All things are vividly present in limitless oneness.*

Comments:

Here is a brief exposition on "No Concept of Sentient Being" to shed light on the significance of the following phrase found in Sutras: No Self, no others, no sentient beings, and no living beings.

The concept of "sentient being" subsists through grasping, and following such grasping it yields differentiation of sentient beings and non-sentient beings. If this grasping perished, then all sensations rise and fall naturally, without concomitant differentiations, intentions or thoughts, not to mention having their influences. When absence of grasping naturally attained, tranquility and ease prevailed and pervaded everywhere, and, in the absence of thoughts, all sensations rose and fell by themselves, and as soon as they rose, they fell.

Written in Chinese and translated on September 11, 2006  
El Cerrito, California

## As Memories

Yutang Lin

*All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions,  
bubbles, shadows,  
Like dewdrops and resemble lightning, one should view them  
all as such matters.*

This is the famous Gatha found at the end of the Diamond Sutra (Diamond Wisdom Transcendence Sutra), and it is usually referred to as the "six similes." All matters that we can remember are also vivid and yet impossible to grasp and nowhere to be found. Therefore, it seems that we could amend the list with "as memories" and thereby obtain "seven similes."

All our current sensations are clear and real, and yet they are incessantly changing and impossible to control. Thus one knows that the distinctions of real/unreal or truthful/illusory are simply born of our habitual tendency to grasp something as "real." If one could comprehend that in reality all phenomena are essentially impossible to be cut into duality, then one would know the significance of what is meant by "all dharmas are of blank essence."

Written in Chinese on May 24, 2013 in Taipei, Taiwan  
Translated on July 21, 2013 in El Cerrito, California

## Gatha of Seven Similes

Yutang Lin

A few days ago I wrote the article "As Memories." This morning it occurred to me that the famous Gatha at the end of the Diamond Sutra may be slightly modified to form a Gatha of Seven Similes:

*All things born of contrivance are similar to dreams, illusions,  
bubbles, shadows,  
Like dewdrops, lightning and memories, one may constantly view  
them all as such.*

This Gatha is attached to the end of the article "As Memories" so that readers may have the whole picture in view.

Written in Chinese on May 28, 2013 in Singapore  
Translated on July 21, 2013 in El Cerrito, California

# None Alike Hymn

Yutang Lin

*No concept of self, no concept of person like bubbles, like dew  
drops*

*No concept of sentient being, no concept of living being like  
shadows, like lightnings*

*Neither coming nor going, no activities like dreams, like  
illusions*

*Nothing gained, nothing obtainable like memories, like  
thoughts*

*Not abiding on concepts, mind free from attachments as such,  
as like*

Written in Chinese and translated into English on January 29, 2017  
El Cerrito, California

# Comprehending the Diamond Sutra in Light of Direct Experiences

Yutang Lin

## Diamond Wisdom Transcendence Sutra

(The Diamond Sutra)

From the Chinese translation by Tripitaka Dharma Master Kumarajiva of Yao Qin Dynasty

Translated into English by Dr. Yutang Lin

The Sutra is lengthy, and hence it is reverently offered here via the link above.

Usually, expositions on the Diamond Sutra are in terms of concepts and theories. What Dharma is pointing at is simply the totality of direct experiences; to comprehend the Diamond Sutra in light of direct experiences, how then could one expound on it? Here I offer my humble exposition in the following.

My works on or related to the Diamond Sutra are all collected in my book, "[Diamond Wisdom](#)". One essay therein, "[Essential Principles of the Diamond Sutra](#)", contains analyses of basic terms in the Sutra, which are Shi (real), Xiang (form), Fa (law), and Ming (name); in addition, it is explained therein that, in the Sutra, the types of arguments employed are aiming at avoiding duality, and they can be characterized into 3 types: 1. Transcending both yes and no, 2. Not as Non-substantial, and 3. Three Steps involving Breaking down and Setting up.

In the Diamond Sutra, from bodies, features, minds, sentient beings, living beings, tiny dusts, worlds, appearance of reality, Buddhist teachings, up to all things, etc., all are pointed out, through arguments of the type "Three Steps involving Breaking down and Setting up", to be non-substantial. For example, "all those minds are not minds in



themselves, but are named as 'minds'" means that all minds are "not minds"—they do not have factual independent existence but are simply called "minds" for convenient applications. In short, all types of things that might be grasped as real have been listed and pointed out to be non-substantial. Later, I composed a short poem, "[Appendix to the Diamond Sutra](#)", to point out that, to complete the list, the following sentence need to be included: Buddha, is non-Buddha, is named "Buddha".

Now, having comprehended that what Dharma is referring to is simply the totality of direct experiences, how could one comprehend the Diamond Sutra in light of it? The main point is that, from the indivisible and ungraspable character of direct experiences one comprehends that, what all names refer to are not really existing independently in direct experiences but are always inseparable parts of the totality of direct experiences; they are merely distinctions made in human consciousness. In other words, one comprehends that, the "Not as Non-substantial" in the argument type "Three Steps involving Breaking down and Setting up" is genuinely so.

If one's understanding on "Not as Non-substantial" is only a conceptual recognition, then this kind of recognition could be swayed because views could evolve and change. However, comprehension based on direct experiences will recognize the "Not as Non-substantial" of all names as unchangeable appearance of reality. Therefore, only with comprehension based on direct experiences will one's acceptance of teachings in the Diamond Sutra and subsequent practices in accordance with the teachings be solid.

May the exposition above help people to comprehend the Dharma reasonings in the Diamond Sutra.

Written in Chinese on September 18, 2023  
Translated into English on September 20, 2023  
El Cerrito, California

# Named as Buddha

Yutang Lin

25 years ago, I wrote "Appendix to the Diamond Sutra" to propose that the Sutra should have included the syllogism "Buddha, is non-Buddha, is named 'Buddha'" so as to fulfill its intended purpose of thorough emancipation from all grasping to Dharma.

Recently I have been expounding, in Mandarin, this Sutra in Chinese. In section 14, 'Tranquil Cessation beyond Form', I noticed the statement, "Being free from all forms is named as the 'Buddhas'". This definitely points out that Buddha is just a name, used to indicate a state of freedom from the limitations of all concepts. This also demonstrates that the appendix I proposed is in complete accord with the Sutra's teachings.

All other works of mine in English that are related to the "Diamond Sutra" are collected in the book, "Diamond Wisdom". Please consult: <https://www.originalpurity.org/gurulin/efiles/b0/b0053.html>

Written in Chinese and translated into English on March 17, 2024  
El Cerrito, California

# **My Bodhicitta Vows**

(Used for Dedication of Merits)

Dr. Yutang Lin

1. *May virtuous gurus remain with us and those departed return soon!*
2. *May perverse views and violence soon become extinct and Dharma spread without hindrance!*
3. *May all beings proceed diligently on the path and achieve Buddhahood before death!*
4. *May all beings develop Great Compassion and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!*
5. *May all beings develop Great Wisdom and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!*

# Diamond Wisdom

Dr. Yutang Lin

NOT FOR SALE

For your free copy  
Please write to:

br@yogichen.org

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