

An Exalted Sutra of the Greater Way on the Perfection of Wisdom

The Diamond Cutter

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In the language of India, this teaching is called the  
**Arya Vajra Chedaka Nama Prajnya Paramita Mahayana Sutra.**

In the language of Tibet, it is called the  
**Pakpa Sherab Kyi Paroltu Chinpa Dorje Chupa Shejawa Tekpa Chenpoy Do.**

[In the English language, it is called  
**An Exalted Sutra of the Greater Way on the Perfection of Wisdom, entitled "The Diamond Cutter." ]**

I bow down to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

These words once I heard. The Conqueror was residing at Shravasti, in the park of Anāpindada in the gardens of Prince Jeta. In convocation with him was a great gathering of 1,250 monks who were listeners, as well as an immense number of bodhisattvas who were great beings.

In the morning then the Conqueror donned his monk's robes and outer shawl, took up his sage's bowl, and entered the great city of Shravasti for requesting his meal. After collecting the food, he returned from the city and partook of it. When he had finished eating he put away his bowl and shawl, for he was a person who had given up eating in the latter part of the day. Lord Buddha then washed his feet and seated himself on a cushion that had been set forth for him. He crossed his legs in the full lotus position, straightened his back, and placed his thoughts into a state of contemplation.

Then a great number of monks advanced towards the Conqueror and, when they had reached his side, bowed and touched their heads to his feet. They circled him in respect three times, and seated themselves to one side. At this point the junior monk Subhuti was with this same group of disciples, and took his seat with them.

Then the junior monk Subhuti rose from his cushion, dropped the corner of his upper robe from one shoulder in a gesture of respect, and knelt with his right knee to the ground. He faced the Conqueror, joined his palms at his heart, and bowed. Then he beseeched the Conqueror, in the following words:

O Conqueror, the Buddha, the One Gone Thus, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Totally Enlightened One has given much beneficial instruction to the bodhisattvas who are great beings. All the instruction he has ever given has been of benefit.

And the One Gone Thus, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Totally Enlightened One, has as well instructed these bodhisattvas who are great beings by granting them clear direction. All the clear direction he has ever granted, o Conqueror, has been a wondrous thing. It is, o Conqueror, a wondrous thing.

And now, o Conquering One, what of those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva? How shall they live? How shall they practice? How should they keep their thoughts?

This did Subhuti ask, and then...

...the Conqueror spoke the following words, in reply to Subhuti's question:

O Subhuti, it is good, it is good. O Subhuti, thus it is, and thus is it: the One Thus Gone has indeed done benefit to the bodhisattvas who are great beings, by granting them beneficial instruction. The One Thus Gone has indeed given clear direction to the bodhisattvas who are great beings, by granting them the clearest of instruction.

And since it is so, o Subhuti, listen now to what I speak, and be sure that it stays firmly in your heart, for I shall reveal to you how it is that those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva should live, and how they should practice, and how they should keep their thoughts.

"Thus shall I do," replied the junior monk Subhuti, and he sat to listen as instructed by the Conqueror. The Conqueror too then began, with the following words:

Subhuti, this is how those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva must think to themselves as they feel the Wish to achieve enlightenment:

I will bring to nirvana the total amount of living beings, every single one numbered among the ranks of living kind: those who were born from eggs, those who were born from a womb, those who were born through warmth and moisture, those who were born miraculously, those who have a physical form, those with none, those with conceptions, those with none, and those with neither conceptions nor no conceptions. However many living beings there are, in whatever realms there may be, anyone at all labelled with the name of "living being," all these will I bring to total nirvana, to the sphere beyond all grief, where none of the parts of the person are left at all. Yet even if I do manage to bring this limitless number of living beings to total nirvana, there will be no living being at all who was brought to their total nirvana.

Why is it so? Because, Subhuti, if a bodhisattva were to slip into conceiving of someone as a living being, then we could never call them a "bodhisattva."

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, if anyone were to slip into conceiving of someone as a living being, or as something that lives, or as a person, then we could never call them a "bodhisattva."

And I say, o Subhuti, that a bodhisattva performs the act of giving without staying in things. They perform the act of giving without staying in any object at all. They perform the act of giving without staying in things that you see. They perform the act of giving without staying in sounds, and without staying in smells, or tastes, or things that you touch, or in objects of the thought.

O Subhuti, bodhisattvas perform the act of giving without conceiving of any thing in any way as a sign. That is how they give.

Why is it so? Think, o Subhuti, of the mountains of merit collected by any bodhisattva who performs the act of giving without staying. This merit, o Subhuti, is not something that you could easily ever measure.

O Subhuti, what do you think? Would it be easy to measure the space to the east of us?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it would not.

The Conqueror said,

And just so, would it be easy to measure the space in any of the main directions to the south of us, or to the west of us, or to the north of us, or above us, or below us or in any of the other directions from us? Would it be easy to measure the space to any of the ten directions from where we now stand?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

Conqueror, it would not.

Then the Conqueror said:

And just so, Subhuti, it would be no easy thing to measure the mountains of merit collected by any bodhisattva who performs the act of giving without staying.

Now Subhuti, what do you think? Should we consider someone to be One Thus Gone, just because they possess the totally exquisite marks that we find on a Buddha's body?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

Oh Conquering One, we should not. We should not consider anyone One Thus Gone just because they possess the totally exquisite marks that we find on a Buddha's body. And why not? Because when the One Thus Gone himself described the totally exquisite marks on a Buddha's body, he stated at the same time that they were impossible.

And then the Conqueror spoke to the junior monk Subhuti again, as follows:

O Subhuti, what do you think? The totally exquisite marks on a Buddha's body, as such, are deceptive. The totally exquisite marks on a Buddha's body are also not deceptive, but only insofar as they do not exist. And so you should see the One Thus Gone as having no marks, no marks at all.

Thus did the Conqueror speak. And then the junior monk Subhuti replied to the Conquering One, as follows:

O Conqueror, what will happen in the future, in the days of the last five hundred, when the holy Dharma is approaching its final destruction? How could anyone of those times ever see accurately the meaning of the explanations given in sutras such as this one?

And the Conqueror replied,

Subhuti, you should never ask the question you have just asked: "What will happen in the future, in the days of the last five hundred, when the Dharma is approaching its final destruction? How could anyone of those times ever see accurately the meaning of the explanations given in sutras such as this one?"

I say to you, o Subhuti, that in the future, in the days of the last five hundred, when the holy Dharma is approaching its final destruction, there will come bodhisattvas who are great beings, who possess morality, who possess the fine quality, and who possess wisdom.

And these bodhisattvas who are great beings, o Subhuti, will not be ones who have rendered honor but to a single Buddha, or who have collected stores of virtue with a single Buddha. Instead, o Subhuti, they will be ones who have rendered honor to many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, and who have collected stores of virtue with many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. Such are the bodhisattvas, the great beings, who then will come.

Suppose, o Subhuti, that a person reaches even just a single feeling of faith for the words of a sutra such as this one. The One Thus Gone, Subhuti, knows any such person. The One Thus Gone, Subhuti, sees any such person. Such a person, o Subhuti, has produced, and gathered safely into themselves, a mountain of merit beyond any calculation.

Why is it so? Because, Subhuti, these bodhisattvas who are great beings never slip into any conception of something as a self, nor do they slip into any conception of something as a living being, nor any conception of something as being alive, nor any conception of something as a person.

Subhuti, these bodhisattvas who are great beings neither slip into any conception of things as things, nor do they slip into any conception of things as not being things. They neither slip into any conception of a thought as a conception, nor do they slip into any conception of a thought as not being a conception.

Why is it so? Because if, Subhuti, these bodhisattvas who are great beings were to slip into any conception of things as things, then they would grasp these same things as being a "self"; they would grasp them as being a living being; they would grasp them as being something that lives; they would grasp them as a person.

And even if they were to slip into thinking of them as not being things, that too they would grasp as being a "self"; and as being a living being; and as being something that lives; and as being a person.

Why is it so? Because, Subhuti, the bodhisattvas never hold the Dharma in the wrong way either. Nor do they hold what is not the Dharma. This then is what the One Thus Gone meant when he said:

Those who understand that this presentation of the Dharma is like a ship leave even these teachings of Dharma behind. What need then is there to mention what they do with that which is not the Dharma?

And the Conqueror said these words as well to the junior monk Subhuti:

Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any such thing as an enlightenment where Those Gone Thus reach some incomparable, perfect, and total Buddhahood? And does the One Thus Gone ever teach any Dharma at all?

Then the junior monk Subhuti replied to the Conqueror, in the following words:

O Conqueror, as far as I can catch the thrust of what the Conqueror has spoken thus far, then I would have to say that it is impossible for there to be any such thing as an enlightenment where Those Gone Thus could ever reach some incomparable, perfect, and total enlightenment. And it is impossible as well for there to be any such thing as a Dharma that the One Thus Gone could ever teach.

And why is this the case? Because it is impossible for there to be any such thing as an enlightenment which the One Thus Gone reached, or a Dharma which he taught, which could ever be held. It is impossible for there to be any such thing that could ever be described. And this is because it is neither true that these things exist, nor that it is impossible for them to exist.

And why is that? Because these persons who are realized beings distinguish all these things, perfectly, through that which is unproduced.

And once more the Conqueror spoke:

O Subhuti, what do you think? Suppose some son or daughter of noble family were to take all the planets of this great world system, a system with a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets, and cover them with the seven kinds of precious substances, and offer them to someone. Would that son or daughter of noble family create many great mountains of merit from such a deed?

Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, many would it be. O You who have Gone to Bliss, it would be many. This son or daughter of noble family would indeed create many great mountains of merit from such a deed. And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, these same great mountains of merit are great mountains of merit that could never exist. And for this very reason do the Ones Gone Thus speak of "great mountains of merit, great mountains of merit."

And then the Conqueror said,

Suppose, o Subhuti, that some son or daughter of noble family were to take all the planets of this great world system, a system with a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets, and cover them all with the seven kinds of precious substances, and offer them to someone. Suppose on the other hand that anyone held but a single verse of four lines from this particular presentation of the Dharma, and explained it to others, and taught it correctly. By doing the latter, a person would create many more great mountains of merit than with the former: the mountains of their merit would be countless, and beyond all calculation.

Why is it so? Because, Subhuti, this is where the matchless and totally perfect enlightenment of the Ones Thus Gone, the Destroyers of the Foe, the Totally Enlightened Buddhas, comes from. It is from this as well that the Buddhas, the Conquerors, are born.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, these qualities of an Enlightened Being-what we call the "qualities of an Enlightened Being-are qualities of an Enlightened Being which Those Gone Thus have said could never even exist. And that in fact is why we can speak of the "qualities of an Enlightened Being."

Now Subhuti, what do you think? Do those who have entered the stream ever think to themselves, "Now I have attained the goal of entering the stream"?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, they do not. And why is it so? It is, o Conqueror, because it would be impossible for them to enter anything at all. And this is precisely why we can even speak of a "stream enterer."

They neither enter into things that you can see, nor into words, nor into smells, nor into tastes, nor into things you can touch, nor into objects of the thought. And this again is precisely why we can even speak of them as having entered the stream.

And if it happened, o Conqueror, that a stream-enterer were to think to themselves, "I have attained the goal of entering the stream," then they would begin to grasp to some self in it. And they would begin to grasp to a living being, and to something that lives, and to a person.

Then the Conqueror spoke again:

What, o Subhuti, do you think? Do those who are to return but once ever think to themselves, "Now I have achieved the goal of returning but once"?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, they do not. And why is it so? Because it is impossible for there ever to be any such state, of having reached the point of needing to return but once. And this is precisely why we can speak of someone who needs to return but once.

And once again did the Conqueror speak:

Subhuti, what do you think? Do those who need never return at all ever think to themselves, "Now I have achieved the goal of never having to return at all"?

Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, they do not. And why is it so? Because it is impossible for there ever to be any such state, of having reached the point of never needing to return at all. And this is precisely why we can speak of someone who need never return at all.

And the Conqueror said,

Subhuti, what do you think? Do those who have destroyed the foe ever think to themselves, "Now I have achieved the state of destroying the foe"?

To this Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, they do not. And why is it so? Because it is impossible for there ever to be any such state, of having destroyed the foe. For suppose, o Conqueror, that such a destroyer of the foe were to think to themselves, "Now I have achieved the state of destroying the foe." They again would then begin to grasp to some self in it. And they would begin to grasp to a living being and to something that lives, and to a person.

O Conqueror, I declare that the Ones Thus Gone-those Destroyers of the Foe who are the Totally Enlightened Buddhas-reside in the highest of all those states that are free of the mental afflictions. And I am, o Conqueror, a person who is free of desire, I am a Foe Destroyer.

But I do not, o Conqueror, think to myself, "I am a Destroyer of the Foe." For suppose, o Conqueror, that I did think to myself, "I have attained the state of a Foe Destroyer." If I did think this way, then the One Thus Gone could never have given me the final prediction: he could never have said:

"Oh son of noble family, oh Subhuti, you will reach the highest of all those states that are free of the mental afflictions. Because you stay in no state at all, you have reached the state free of mental afflictions; you have reached what we call the 'state free of mental afflictions.'"

And then the Conqueror spoke yet again:

O Subhuti, what do you think? Was there anything at all which the One Thus Gone ever received from that One Thus Gone, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha called "Maker of Light"?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, there was not. There exists nothing at all which the One Thus Gone received from that One Thus Gone, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha called "Maker of Light."

Then the Conqueror spoke once more,

Suppose, o Subhuti, that some bodhisattva were to say, "I am working to bring about my paradise." This would not be spoken true.

Why is it so? Because the Ones Thus Gone have stated that these paradises, what we call "paradises," these lands that we work to create, do not even exist. And this is precisely why we can even call them "paradise."

Since this is so, o Subhuti, those bodhisattvas who are great beings develop their wish without staying in these thoughts. They develop their wish without staying in anything at all. They develop their wish without staying in anything you can see. They develop their wish without staying either in sounds, nor in smells, nor in tastes, nor in things you can touch, nor in objects of the thought.

O Subhuti, it is thus: Suppose, for example, that someone's body were to grow this large-suppose it were to grow as large as the king of all mountains, Mt. Sumeru. What do you think, Subhuti? Would that person's body be large?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, such a body would be large. O you who have Gone to Bliss, such a body would be large. And why so? Because Those Gone Thus have stated that it could never be a thing at all. And this is precisely why we can even speak of a "body." Because Those Gone Thus have stated that it could never be a thing at all, we call it a "large body."

And again did the Conqueror speak:

O Subhuti, what do you think? Suppose you counted every drop of water in the Ganges River, and then had exactly that many Ganges Rivers. Would the number of drops in this many Ganges Rivers be very many?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, if the amount of drops in just this one Ganges River is so great, then who need mention the amount of drops in so very many Ganges Rivers?

Then the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, try to imagine it. Try to comprehend it. Think now of a mass of planets equal in number to the number of drops in all these Ganges Rivers. And then imagine that some son or daughter of noble family has come and covered all of them with the seven kinds of precious substances, and then gone and made a gift of these planets to the One Gone Thus, to the Destroyer of the Foe, the Totally Enlightened One, the Buddha.

What do you think, Subhuti? Would they create much merit from such a deed?

Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, many would it be. O you who have Gone to Bliss, it would be many. This son or daughter of noble family would indeed create much merit from such a deed.

And the Conqueror said,

Yes Subhuti, suppose that someone did do this: suppose they did take all these planets, and cover them with the seven kinds of precious substances, and offer them as a gift to the One Gone Thus, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Totally Enlightened One, the Buddha. And now suppose that someone else held but a single verse of four lines from this particular presentation of the Dharma, and explained it to others, and taught it correctly. This second person would create much more merit from their action; their merit would be countless, and beyond all calculation.

And I say to you further, o Subhuti: any place where even just a single verse of four lines from his particular presentation of the Dharma is read out loud, or has ever before been read out loud, thereby becomes a stupa, a place where the entire world, along with its gods, and men, and demigods, can come and pay them honor.

And if this is so, then there is no need to say that any person who takes up this particular presentation of the Dharma, or who holds it, or reads it, or comprehends it, or thinks of it in the proper way, thereby becomes someone who is truly wondrous. And this is because we can then say that the Teacher himself is in that place, as is every other spiritual teacher who has ever lived.

Thus did the Buddha speak.

And then the junior monk Subhuti addressed the following words, with great respect, to the Conqueror:

O Conqueror, what is the name of this particular presentation of the Dharma? How are we to consider it? Then the Conqueror spoke the following to the junior monk Subhuti:

Subhuti, this particular presentation of the Dharma is known as the "perfection of wisdom," and that is how you should consider it.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, that same perfection of wisdom spoken by the Ones Thus Gone is a perfection of wisdom that doesn't even exist. And this is precisely why we can call it the "perfection of wisdom."

O Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any dharma at all which the Ones Thus Gone ever speak?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, none of the dharmas ever spoken by the Ones Thus Gone exists at all.

And the Conqueror spoke again:

O Subhuti, what do you think? If we took all the atoms of dust that exist in all the planets of the great world system—a system with a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets—would that be a great many atoms of dust?

Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it would indeed be a great many atoms of dust. O One who has Gone to Bliss, a great many would that be.

And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, the Ones Gone Thus have stated that whatever atoms of dust there may be are atoms of dust that could never exist. And this is precisely why we can speak of them as "atoms of dust."

The Ones Thus Gone have stated as well that whatever planets there may be are planets that could never exist. And this is precisely why we can speak of them as "planets."

The Conqueror spoke once more:

O Subhuti, what do you think? Should we consider someone to be One Thus Gone, a Destroyer of the Foe, a Totally Enlightened One, a Buddha, just because they possess the 32 marks of a great being?

Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, we should not. Why is it so? Because these 32 marks of a great being described by Those Gone Thus were said, by Those Gone Thus, to be marks that could never exist. And this is precisely why we can speak of them as "the 32 marks of One Gone Thus."

And then the Conqueror said,

And I tell you further, o Subhuti: Suppose some woman or man were to give away their own body, and do this with as many bodies as there are drops of water in the Ganges. And suppose on the other hand that someone held even so little as four lines of verse from this teaching, and taught it to others. The second person would create much greater merit from their act than the former; their merit would be countless, and beyond all calculation.

And then, by the sheer power of the teaching, the junior monk Subhuti began to weep. And when he had wiped away his tears, he spoke to the Conqueror in the following words:

This presentation of the Dharma given by Those Gone Thus, o Conqueror, is wondrous. O You who have Gone to Bliss, it is truly a wonder. O Conqueror, in all the time that has passed from the time I was able to gain wisdom until now, I have never heard this presentation of the Dharma.

O Conqueror, any living being who can think correctly of the sutra that you have just taught is wondrous in the highest. And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, this same correct thinking is something that could never exist. And this is precisely why Those Gone Thus have spoken of thinking correctly; of what we call "thinking correctly."

O Conqueror, the fact that I can feel this way towards this presentation of the Dharma that you have made, the fact that I believe in it, is for me no surprising belief.

But when I think, o Conqueror, of those to come in the future-of those in the last five hundred who take up this particular presentation of the Dharma, and who hold it, or read it, or comprehend it-then truly do they seem to me wondrous in the highest.

And these beings who come, o Conquering One, will not be beings who ever slip into any conception of something as a self; or into any conception of something as a living being; or into any conception of something as being alive; or into any conception of something as being a person.

And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, these same conceptions-conceiving of something as a self, or as a living being, or as being alive, or as being a person-could never exist at all. And why is this so? Because the Enlightened Ones, the Conquerors, are free of every kind of conception.

And when Subhuti had spoken these words, the Conqueror spoke to this junior monk Subhuti as follows:

O Subhuti, this it is, and this is it. Any living being who receives an explanation of this sutra and who is not made afraid, and is not frightened, and who does not become frightened, is wondrous in the highest.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the One Thus Gone now speaks to you the highest perfection, and the highest perfection which the One Thus Gone now speaks to you is that same highest perfection which Conquering Buddhas beyond any number to count have spoken as well. And this is precisely why we can even speak of it as the "highest perfection."

And I say to you further, o Subhuti, that the perfection of patience spoken by the Ones Thus Gone is a perfection that doesn't even exist.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, there was a time when the King of Kalinga was cutting off the larger limbs, and the smaller appendages, of my body. At that moment there came into my mind no conception of a self, nor of a sentient being, nor of a living being, nor of a person-I had no conception at all. But neither did I not have any conception.

Why is it so? Suppose, o Subhuti, that at that moment any conception of a self had come into my mind. Then the thought to harm someone would have come into my mind as well.

The conception of some sentient being, and the conception of some living being, and the conception of person, would have come into my mind. And because of that, the thought to harm someone would have come into my mind as well.

I see it, o Subhuti, with my clairvoyance: I took, in times past, five hundred births as the sage called "Teacher of Patience." And all during that time I never had any conception of a self, or of a living being, or of something being alive, or of a person.

And this is why, o Subhuti, that the bodhisattvas who are great beings give up every kind of conception, and develop within themselves the Wish to achieve perfect and total enlightenment.

And they develop the Wish within them without staying in any of the things you see, nor in sounds, nor in smells, nor in tastes, nor in the things you can touch, nor in any object of the thought as well. Neither do they develop this Wish within them staying in what these objects lack. They develop the Wish without staying in anything at all.

And why is it so? Because these things to stay in never stay themselves. And this then is why the One Thus Gone has said that "Bodhisattvas should undertake the practice of giving without staying."

And I say to you further, o Subhuti, that this is how bodhisattvas give all that they have, for the sake of every living being. And this same conception of anyone as a living being is a conception that does not exist; when the One Gone Thus speaks of "every living being," they too are living beings that do not even exist.

And why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the One Thus Gone is one who speaks right. He is one who speaks true. He is one who speaks precisely what is. The One Thus Gone is one that speaks, without error, precisely that which is.

And I speak to you further, o Subhuti, of that thing where Those Gone Thus reach some absolutely total enlightenment; and of that thing which is the Dharma that they teach. It has no truth, and it has no deception.

This, Subhuti, is how it is. Think of the example of a man who has eyes to see, but who is sitting in the dark. He sees nothing at all. You should consider a bodhisattva who has fallen into things, and who then practices the act of giving, to be just like this man.

And now, Subhuti, think of this man, a man with eyes to see, as dawn breaks and the sun rises into the sky; think how then he sees a whole variety of different forms. You should consider a bodhisattva who has not fallen into things, and who then practices the act of giving, to be just like this man.

I speak to you further, o Subhuti, of those sons or daughters of noble family who take up this particular presentation of the Dharma, and who hold it, or read it, or comprehend it, or who go on to impart it to others in detail, and accurately. These are the kind of people that the Ones Gone Thus know. These are the kind of people that the Ones Gone Thus look upon. Any living being like these people has created a mountain of merit which is beyond all calculation.

And I say to you further, o Subhuti: suppose there were some man or woman who could give away, in a single morning, their own body, the same number of times that there are drops of water in the Ganges River itself. And suppose then at midday, and in the evening, they would again give away their own body, the same number of times that there are drops of water in the Ganges River. And suppose they were to keep up this kind of behavior for many billion upon trillions of eons, giving their bodies away.

I say to you that anyone who hears this particular presentation of the Dharma, and who never thereafter gives it up, creates much greater merit from this single act than the others do: their merit is countless, and beyond all calculation. And what need have I to mention then the merit of those who take it up by writing it down, or who hold it, or read it, or comprehend it, or who go on to impart it to others in detail, and accurately?

Again I say to you, o Subhuti, that this presentation of the Dharma is inconceivably great, and beyond all compare. This presentation of the Dharma was spoken by the Ones Gone Thus for those living beings who have entered well into the highest of all ways, and it was spoken for those living beings who have entered well into the foremost of ways.

Think of those who take up this particular presentation of the Dharma, or hold it, or read it, or comprehend it, or who go on to impart it to others in detail, and accurately. These are the kind of people that the Ones Gone Thus know. These are the kind of people that the Ones Gone Thus look upon. Any living being like these people is possessed of a mountain of merit beyond all calculation.

They are possessed of a mountain of merit which is inconceivable, which is beyond all comparison, which cannot be measured, which is beyond all measure. Any such living being is one that I lift up, and carry forth upon my own shoulders, to the enlightenment I have reached.

And why is it so? O Subhuti, those who are attracted to lesser things are incapable of hearing this presentation of the Dharma. Neither is it something for those who see some self, or for those who see some living being, or for those who see something that lives, and those who see some person are incapable of hearing it; they are incapable of taking it up; they are incapable of holding it; they are incapable of reading it; and they are incapable too of comprehending it. There would never be any place for them to do so.

And I say further to you, o Subhuti: Any place where this sutra is taught thereby becomes a place worthy of the offerings of the entire world, with its gods, and men, and demigods. It becomes a place which is worthy of their prostrations, and worthy of their circumambulations. That place becomes something like a stupa.

O Subhuti, any son or daughter of noble family who takes up a sutra like this, or who holds it, or reads it, or comprehends it, will suffer. They will suffer intensely.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, such beings are purifying non-virtuous karma from the entire string of their previous lives, karma that would have taken them to the three lower realms. As they purify this karma, it causes them to suffer here in this life. As such they will succeed in cleaning away the karma of these non-virtuous deeds of their previous lifetimes, and they will as well achieve the enlightenment of a Buddha.

Subhuti, I see this with my powers of clairvoyance. In days long past-over the course of countless eons that are themselves even more than uncountable-far beyond the time even before the time of the One Gone Thus, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Perfect and Totally Enlightened One named "Maker of Light"-there came 840 billion billion Buddhas. I was able to please them all, and never disturb their hearts.

But then Subhuti, there are those who, in the days of the last five hundred, will take up this sutra, and hold it, and read it, and comprehend it. And I tell you, o Subhuti, that the great mountains of merit that I collected from pleasing all those Buddhas, all those Conquerors, and from never disturbing their hearts, would not come to a hundredth of the mountains of merit that these ones to come will create. Nor would it come to a thousandth part, nor one part in a hundred thousand, nor any other countable part, any part at all; the difference could never be put in numbers; there is no example I could use; no comparison; no reason at all to attempt any comparison.

And suppose, o Subhuti, that I were to describe just how many mountains of virtue would come to be possessed by one of these women or men of noble family, the ones to come who will create those mountains of merit. The living beings who heard me then would go mad; their minds would be thrown into chaos.

I tell you further, o Subhuti, and you must understand it: this presentation of the Dharma is absolutely inconceivable; and how its power ripens in the future is nothing less than absolutely inconceivable as well.

O Conquering One, what of those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva? How shall they live? How shall they practice? How should they keep their thoughts?

And the Conqueror replied,

Subhuti, this is how those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva must think to themselves as they feel the Wish to achieve enlightenment:

I will bring every single living being to total nirvana, to that realm beyond all grief, where they no longer possess any of the heaps of things that make up a suffering person. Yet even if I do manage to bring all these living beings to total nirvana, there will be no living being at all who was brought to their total nirvana.

And why is it so? Because, Subhuti, if a bodhisattva were to slip into conceiving of someone as a living being, then we could never call them a "bodhisattva." And so too if they were to slip into thinking of someone in all the ways up to thinking of them as a person, neither then could we ever call them a "bodhisattva."

Why is it so? Because, Subhuti, there doesn't even exist any such thing as what we have called "those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva."

O Subhuti, what do you think? Was there anything at all which the One Thus Gone ever received from the One Thus Gone called "Maker of Light," which helped bring about my total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha?

Thus did the Conqueror speak, and then did the junior monk Subhuti reply to him, as follows:

O Conqueror, there never could have been anything at all which the One Thus Gone ever received from the One Thus Gone called "Maker of Light" which helped bring about your total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha.

Thus did he speak, and then did the Conqueror reply to the junior monk Subhuti, in the following words:

O Subhuti, it is thus, and thus is it. There is nothing at all which the One Thus Gone ever received from the One Thus Gone called "Maker of Light" which helped me bring about my total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha.

And if there had been, o Subhuti, anything of the sort where the One Thus Gone reached his total enlightenment, well then the One Gone Thus, "Maker of Light," could never have granted me my final prediction, by saying-

O child of Brahman family, in days to come you will become One who has Gone Thus, a Destroyer of the Foe, a Totally Enlightened Buddha called "Able One of the Shakya Clan."

But since, o Subhuti, there was nothing of the sort where the One Thus Gone before you now reached his total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha, well then the One Gone Thus named "Maker of Light" did in fact grant me my final prediction, by saying-

O child of Brahman family, in days to come you will become One who has Gone Thus, a Destroyer of the Foe, a Totally Enlightened Buddha called "Able One of the Shakya Clan."

And why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the very words "One Gone Thus" are an expression that refers to the real nature of things.

Now suppose, o Subhuti, that someone were to say, "The One Gone Thus, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Perfect and Totally Enlightened One, reached his total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha." This would not be spoken true.

And why is it so, Subhuti? Because there is no such thing as One Gone Thus reaching their total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha.

Subhuti, this thing-where One Gone Thus reached their total enlightenment-is something which involves neither anything which is real nor anything which is false. And this is why the Ones Gone Thus have said that "Every existing thing is something of the Buddhas."

And when we speak of "every existing thing," o Subhuti, we are talking about every existing thing that has no existence. And this, in fact, is why we can say that "Every existing thing is something of the Buddhas."

You can think, o Subhuti, of the illustration of a person with a body, whose body becomes larger.

And then the junior monk Subhuti spoke again:

O Conqueror, the One Gone Thus has just spoken of a person with a body, whose body becomes larger. This same body, the One Thus Gone has also stated, is a body that could never exist. And this is precisely why we can say a "person with a body," or "a larger body."

And then the Conqueror spoke again:

O Subhuti, this is how it is. Suppose some bodhisattva were to say, "I will bring all living beings to total nirvana." We could never then call them a "bodhisattva." Why is it so? Subhuti, do you think there is any such thing as what we call a "bodhisattva?"

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, no such thing could ever be.

The Conqueror then said,

This is why, o Subhuti, that the One Thus Gone says that all existing things are such that no living being exists, and nothing that lives exists, and no persons exists.

And suppose, o Subhuti, that some bodhisattva were to say, "I am working to bring about my paradise." That would not be spoken rightly. Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the paradise that you are working to bring about when you say "I am working to bring about my paradise" is something that the One Thus Gone has said that you could never bring about. And this is precisely why we can even speak of them as a "paradise to bring about."

And suppose again, o Subhuti, that there were a bodhisattva who believed that no existing object has a self, that "no existing object has a self." This now is a person that the One Thus Gone, the Destroyer of the Foe, the Perfect and Totally Enlightened One would call a bodhisattva: a "bodhisattva."

O Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone possess the eyes of flesh?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is indeed so: the One Thus Gone does possess the eyes of flesh.

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone possess the eyes of a god?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is indeed so: the One Thus Gone does possess the eyes of a god.

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone possess the eyes of wisdom?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is indeed so: the One Thus Gone does possess the eyes of wisdom.

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone possess the eyes of all things?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is indeed so: the One Thus Gone does possess the eyes of all things.

And then the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone possess the eyes of an Enlightened Being?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is indeed so: the One Thus Gone does possess the eyes of an enlightened being.

Then the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Suppose you had a quantity of Ganges Rivers equal themselves in number to the number of drops of water in the Ganges River. And suppose that every one of the drops of water in all these rivers became a separate planet. Would this be very many planets?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is indeed so: that would be a great many planets.

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, I know, perfectly, the separate mindstreams-each of the thoughts-that each of the total number of living beings in each of these planets possesses.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, that thing we call a "mindstream" is a mindstream that the One Thus Gone has said does not even exist. And this is precisely why we can call it a "mindstream."

And why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, a mind which is past is non-existent. And a mind in the future is non-existent. And a mind that is going on at the present is non-existent as well.

O Subhuti, what do you think? Suppose someone were to take all the planets of this great world system, a system with a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets, and cover them all with the seven kinds of precious substances, and offer them to someone. Would that son or daughter of noble family create many great mountains of merit from such a deed?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, many would it be. O You who have Gone to Bliss, it would be many.

The Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, thus it is, and thus is it. That son or daughter of noble family would indeed create many great mountains of merit from such a deed. And yet, o Subhuti, if these great mountains of merit were in fact great mountains of merit, then the One Thus Gone would never call these great mountains of merit "great mountains of merit."

O Subhuti, what do you think? Should we ever consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they have attained the physical form of an Enlightened Being?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is not so: we should never consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they have attained the physical form of an Enlightened Being. And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, the attainment of the physical form of an Enlightened Being-this thing we call the "attainment of the physical form of an Enlightened Being-is an attainment that the One Thus Gone has said could never exist. And this is precisely why we can even call it the "attainment of the physical form of an Enlightened Being."

Then the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Should we ever consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possess the exquisite marks of an Enlightened Being?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is not so: we should never consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possess the exquisite marks of an Enlightened Being. And why is it so? Because the marks of an Enlightened Being which have been described by the One Gone Thus are marks of an Enlightened Being that the One Gone Thus has said could never exist. And this is precisely why we can even call them "marks of an Enlightened Being."

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone ever think to himself, "Now I will teach the Dharma?" If you think he does, then I tell you, o Subhuti, that you should never see it that way, for there doesn't exist any Dharma that the One Thus Gone ever teaches.

Subhuti, anyone who ever says that "The One Thus Gone teaches the Dharma" is talking about something that doesn't even exist, and is completely mistaken, and is denying who I am.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the teaching of the Dharma that you are thinking of when you say "teaching of the Dharma" is a "teaching of the Dharma" that does not exist at all.

And then the junior monk again addressed the Conqueror, in the following words:

O Conqueror, will there be, in days to come, any living being who ever hears a teaching of the Dharma like this and who believes completely what it says?

And the Conqueror replied,

O Subhuti, such beings will not be living beings, nor will they not be a living being. Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the things we call "living beings" are living beings that the Ones Gone Thus have said are not. And that is precisely why we can call them "living beings."

O Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any such thing as One Gone Thus reaching their total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha?

The junior monk Subhuti replied,

O Conqueror, there could never be any such thing as the One Gone Thus reaching their total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha.

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, thus it is, and thus is it. There is no such thing at all: it is non-existent. There is no such thing, not in the least: it is something non-existent. And that is precisely why we can even call it the "unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha."

I say to you further, o Subhuti, that this thing is completely equal; there is nothing at all about it which is not equal. This too is precisely why we can call it the "unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha." This unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of a Buddha is "completely equal" in being something without a self, and without a living being, and without something that lives, and without any person. Every single thing which is virtue leads to this total enlightenment.

O Subhuti, the One Gone Thus has said that these same things of virtue that we are talking about when we speak of "things of virtue" are things of virtue that don't even exist. And this is precisely why we can call them "things of virtue."

And I say to you further, o Subhuti:

Think of all the number of universal mountains that you would find on all the planets of this great world system: a system with a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets. And suppose that some daughter or son of noble family were to pile together the same number of heaps of the seven precious things, each heap the same size as the mountain, and offer it as a gift to someone.

Suppose that someone else were to take up, and teach to others, even so little as a single verse of four lines from this perfection of wisdom. I tell you, o Subhuti, that the mountain of merit created by the first person would not come to even a hundredth part of the mountain of merit created by the second; it would not come to any of the parts we spoke of before, all the way up to saying that there would be no reason to attempt any comparison between the two.

Subhuti, what do you think? Does the One Thus Gone ever think to himself, "I am going to free all living beings"? If you think that they do, then I tell you, o Subhuti, you should never see it like this. And why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, there is no living being at all that Those Gone Thus could ever free.

And if, o Subhuti, the One Gone Thus ever did free some living being, then he would be grasping to some self of the One Gone Thus, and to some living being, or to something that lives, or to some person of the One Gone Thus.

And the One Gone Thus, o Subhuti, has said that this very act that we call "grasping to some self" is a grasping to this that doesn't even exist. It is, in fact, something that common beings, those who are still children, grasp to.

And these same common beings, o Subhuti, those who are still children, are beings that the One Gone Thus has said never existed at all. And that's precisely why we can call them "common beings."

O Subhuti, what do you think? Should we consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possess exquisite marks?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is not so: we should never consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possess the exquisite marks of One Gone Thus.

And the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, thus it is, and thus is it. We should never consider someone the One Gone Thus just because they possess exquisite marks. If we were, Subhuti, to consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possessed exquisite marks, then a Wheel Emperor would have to be One Gone Thus. As such, we should never consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possess exquisite marks.

Then the junior monk Subhuti addressed the Conqueror in the following words:

As far as I grasp the thrust of what the Conqueror has said, we should never consider someone One Gone Thus simply because they possess exquisite marks.

At this point then the Conqueror spoke these lines of verse:

Whoever sees me in things you can see,  
Whoever knows me in sounds to hear,  
Is living in error, has given me up;  
People like this can't see me at all.  
See that Buddhas are the nature of things  
Our guides are the Dharma bodies.  
Those for whom this nature of things  
Is beyond the things they know  
Will never be able to know things.

O Subhuti, what do you think? Suppose a person thought to themselves that someone was One Gone Thus, a Destroyer of the Foe, a Perfect and Total Buddha, just because they possessed the exquisite marks of an Enlightened Being. Subhuti, you should never think the way they do. This is because, Subhuti, of the fact that there is no such thing as the exquisite marks meaning that One Gone Thus, a Destroyer of the Foe, a Perfect and Total Buddha, has reached their total enlightenment within the unsurpassed, perfect, and total state of an Enlightened Being.

O Subhuti, suppose you were to think to yourself that those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva ever deny any particular thing that exists, or that they imagine that there is nothing which exists. You should never, Subhuti, think that this is so. Those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva never deny any particular thing, nor do they imagine that there is nothing which exists.

And I say to you again, o Subhuti: Suppose that some son or daughter of noble family were to take planets equal in number to the drops of water in the Ganges River, and cover them with the seven kinds of precious things, and offer it as a gift to someone.

Suppose on the other hand that a particular bodhisattva were able to gain the state of mastery towards the fact that no object in the universe has any self-nature, nor ever begins. This second person would create from his act mountains of merit that are infinitely greater than those of the first.

I say to you again, o Subhuti, that bodhisattvas never gather in to themselves great mountains of merit.

And the junior monk Subhuti then said,

O Conqueror, do you mean to say that bodhisattvas should never try to gather into themselves great mountains of merit?

And the Conqueror replied,

Of course they should gather them in, Subhuti. But they should never gather them in in the wrong way. And this is precisely why we can call it "gathering them in."

And suppose, o Subhuti, that someone was to say that "the One Thus Gone goes, and comes, and he stands, and sits, and he lies down as well." Such a person has failed to understand what I am teaching you here.

Why is it so, Subhuti? Because the one we call "One Thus Gone" neither goes anywhere nor comes from anywhere. And this is precisely why we can call them "One Gone Thus, a Destroyer of the Foe, a Perfect and Totally Enlightened One."

And I say again to you, Subhuti. Suppose some daughter or son of noble family were to take all the atoms of dust that made up all the planets in the great world system, of a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets. And suppose for example that they were to crush each of these atoms into a pile of even tinier particles that are equal in number to all these atoms of the planets.

What do you think, Subhuti? Would the tiny particles in these piles be very many?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it is so: the tiny particles in those piles would be very great in number. And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, if such a pile were even possible, then the Conqueror would never have even bothered to mention any piles of tiny particles.

And why is it so? Because the One Thus Gone has said that the "piles of tiny particles" described by the Conqueror are piles that could never exist. And this is precisely why we can call them "piles of tiny particles."

And the One Thus Gone has also said that these "planets on a great world system, a system of a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets," are planets that could never exist. This is precisely why we can call them "planets in a great world system, a system of a thousand of a thousand of a thousand planets."

Why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, if there were any such thing as a planet, then one would have to be grasping it as one whole solid thing. And the One Thus Gone has said that the "tendency to grasp things as one whole solid thing" described by the One Thus Gone is a kind of grasping that could never exist anyway. And this is precisely why we can call it "grasping something as a whole solid thing."

And then the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, this very tendency to grasp things as one whole solid thing is nominal; the thing is beyond all words. Nonetheless those who are still children-common beings-hold on to it.

And suppose, o Subhuti, that someone were to say: "The One Thus Gone talks about seeing something as a self. The One Thus Gone talks about seeing something as a living being. The One Thus Gone talks about seeing something as something that lives. And the One Thus Gone talks too about seeing something as a person." Do you think, Subhuti, that this would ever be said by someone who was speaking correctly?

And Subhuti respectfully replied,

O Conqueror, it would not be so. O You who have Gone to Bliss, that would not be so. And why is it so? Because, o Conqueror, the One Gone Thus has said that this same seeing something as a self described by the One Gone Thus is a way of seeing things that would never exist anyway. And this is precisely why we can call it "seeing something as a self."

Then the Conqueror said,

O Subhuti, this is how those who have entered well into the way of the bodhisattva should understand every single object in the universe. This is how they should see these things; this is how they should think of them. They should never live in a way where they conceive of anything as an object at all, and thus should they think of things.

Why is it so? Because, o Subhuti, the One Thus Gone has said that conceiving of something as an object, this thing we call "conceiving of something as something," is a conception that doesn't exist anyway. And this is precisely why we can call it "conceiving of something as something."

And I say to you again, o Subhuti: Suppose some great bodhisattva were to take a countless number of planets, a number of planets beyond all calculation, and cover them with the seven kinds of precious things, and offer them as a gift to someone.

Suppose on the other hand that some son or daughter of noble family were to take up even so little as a single verse of four lines from this perfection of wisdom, or hold it, or read it, or comprehend it, or teach it to others in detail, and accurately. They would from their act create infinitely more great mountains of merit, beyond all count, and beyond all calculation.

And what would it be, to teach this perfection accurately to others? It would be just the same as not teaching it to others. And that is precisely why we can call it "teaching it to others, and accurately."

See anything

Brought about by causes  
As like a star,  
An obstruction of the eye,  
A lamp, an illusion,  
The dew, or a bubble,  
A dream, or lightning,  
Or else a cloud.

When the Conqueror had spoken these words, then the elder Subhuti rejoiced. And so did the bodhisattvas there rejoice, and all four groups of disciples—the monks, and the nuns, and the men with lifetime vows, and the women with lifetime vows. The entire world rejoiced: the gods, and humans, and near-gods, and spirits too. They rejoiced, and they sang their praises of what the Conquering One had spoken.

This then is the conclusion of *An Exalted Sutra of the Greater Way on the Perfection of Wisdom*, entitled "The Diamond Cutter."

The translation of this sutra from Sanskrit into Tibetan, and its update to newer translation standard,  
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The translation from Tibetan into English was completed by the American geshe Lobsang Chunzin, Michael Roach,  
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in the gardens of Prince Jeta,  
during the opening days of the third millenium after Christ.