

THE PARAMITA'S

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Thus have I heard. at one time the lord Buddha was sojourning in the shravasti, staying in the jetavana grove which Anathapindika had given to the Brotherhood, and with him were assembled twelve hundred and fifty experienced Bhikshus. As the hour drew near for the morning meal, the lord Buddha and his disciples put on their robes and moved on street carrying their food from door to door. After they had returned to the jeta Grove, they laid aside their street garments, bathed their feet, Partook of the morning meal, put away their begging bowls for another day, and afterward seated themselves about the lord Buddha.

The venerable Subhuti rose from his seat in the midst of the assembly, arranged his robes so the right shoulder was exposed, Kneeled upon his right knees, pressed the Palms of his hands together and, bowing respectfully to the lord Buddha, said :- "Tathagata, Honored of the worlds, our beloved lord; May thy mercy be upon us to take good care of us and to give us good instruction. The lord Buddha replied to subhuti, saying :- "Indeed, I will take good care of every Bodhisattva-Mahasattva and give them the best of instruction.

Subhuti replied :- "Honored of the worlds; We are very glad to listen to thy blessed instruction. Tell us what we shall say when good pious men and women come to us enquiring how they should begin the practice of seeking to attain Highest Perfect wisdom (Anuttara Samyak-sambodhi). What shall we tell them? How are they to quiet their drifting minds and subdue their craving thoughts?" The lord Buddha relied to subhuti, saying- "You have made a good request, subhuti. Listen carefully and I will answer your question so that all the Brotherhood will understand. As good and pious men and women come to you wishing to begin the practice of seeking to attain highest perfect wisdom, they will simply have to follow what I am about to say to you, and very soon they will be able to subdue their discriminative thoughts and craving desires, and will be able to attain perfect tranquillity of mind.

THE PRACTICE OF CHARITY, THE DANA PARAMITA

Then the lord Buddha addressed the assembly. Every one in the

world, beginning with the highest BodhiMahasattvas, should follow what I am going to teach you, for this teaching will bring deliverance to everyone whether hatched from an egg, or formed in a womb, or evolved from spawn, or produced by metamorphosis, with or without form, possessing mental faculties or devoid of mental faculties, or both devoid and not devoid, or neither devoid or not devoid and lead them toward perfect Nirvana. Though the sentient beings thus to be delivered by me are innumerable and without limit yet, in reality, there are no sentient beings to be delivered. And why, Subhuti? Because should there exist in the minds of Bodhisattva - Mahasattvas such arbitrary conceptions of phenomena as the existence of one 's own ego-selfness, the ego-selfness of another, self-ness as divided into an infinite number of living and dying beings, or selfness as unified into one universal self existing eternally, they would be unworthy to be called Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas.

Moreover, subhuti, the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas, in teaching the Dharma to others, should first be free themselves from all the craving thoughts awakened by beautiful sights, pleasant sounds, sweet tastes, fragrance, soft tangibles, and seductive thoughts. In their practice of charity, they should not be influenced by any of these seductive phenomena. And why? Because, if in their practice of charity they are influenced by such things they will realize a blessing and merit that is inestimable and inconceivable. What do you think subhuti? Is it possible to estimate the distance of space in the eastern heavens? No, Blessed one. It is impossible to estimate the distance of space in the eastern heavens. Subhuti, is it possible to estimate the limits of space in the northern, southern and western heaven? Or to any of the four corners of the universe, or above or below? No Honored of the worlds;

Subhuti, it is equally impossible to estimate the blessing and merit that will come to the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva who practices charity uninfluenced by any of these arbitrary conceptions. This truth should be taught in the beginning and to every body. The lord Buddha continued. What do you think, subhuti? If a disciple should bestow as alms and abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill the three thousand great worlds, would he thereby acquire a considerable blessing and merit? Subhuti replied :- Honored of the worlds; such a disciple would acquire a very considerable blessing. The lord Buddha said:- "Subhuti, if such a blessing and merit had any substantiality, if it was anything other than a mere expression, the Tathagata would not have used the words, 'blessing and merit'. What do you think, subhuti? Are the atoms of dust that comprise the three thousand great universe very numerous? Very numerous indeed Blessed lord, Subhuti, when the Tathagata speaks of 'atoms

of dust', it does not mean that he has in mind any definite or arbitrary conception. He merely uses the words as a figure of speech. It is just the same with the words, 'the great universe'. They do not assert any definite or idea. He merely uses the words as words. Subhuti, if any good and pious disciple, man or woman, for the sake of charity has been sacrificing his or her life for generation after generation as many as the grains of sand in three thousand great universes, and another disciple has been simply studying and observing even one stanza of this scripture and explaining it to others, his blessing and merit will be far greater. What do you think, Subhuti? Is a disciple bestowed in charity and abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill the three thousand great universes, would there acquire to that person a considerable blessing and merit? Subhuti replied :- "A very considerable blessing and merit. And why? Because what the lord has referred to as 'blessing and merit' does not refer to any objective value or quantity : he only refers to them in a relative sense." The lord Buddha continued :- If there is another disciple who, after studying and observing even a single stanza of this scripture, explains its meaning to others, his blessing and merit will be much greater. And why because from these explanations Buddhas have attained Anuttara - samyak - sambodhi and their teaching are based upon this sacred scripture. But, Subhuti, as soon as I have spoken of these Buddhas and their dharmas, I must recall the words, for there are no Buddhas and no dharmas. The lord Buddha then continued:- When a Bodhisattva-Mahasattva begins the practice of attaining Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, he must give up, also, all clinging to arbitrary conceptions about phenomena. The mind is disturbed by these discriminations of sense concepts and the following arbitrary conceptions about them and, as the mind becomes disturbed, it falls into false imaginations as to one's self and its relation to other selves. It is for that reason that the Tathagata has constantly urged the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas in their practise of charity not to be influenced by any arbitrary conceptions of phenomena such as sights, sounds, etc. The Bodhisattva-Mahasattva should also bestow alms, uninfluenced by any preconceived, thoughts as to self and other selves and for the sole purpose of benefiting sentient beings, always remembering that both the phenomena and sentient beings are to be considered as mere expressions. Nevertheless, Subhuti, the teaching of the Tathagata are all true, credible, immutable :- they are neither extravagant nor chimerical. The same is true of the attainments of the Tathagatas- they should be considered as neither realities nor as unrealities.

Subhuti, it is a Bodhisattva-Mahasattva, in practising charity conceives within his mind any of these arbitrary conceptions discriminating himself from other selves, he will be like a man walking in darkness and seeing

nothing. But if the Bodhisattva - Mahasattva, in his practice of charity, has no arbitrary conceptions of the attainment of the blessing and merit which he will attain by such practice, he will be like a person with good eyes, seeing all things clearly as in the bright sunshine. Its in future ages there should be any good and pious disciple, either man or women, able to faithfully observe and study this scripture, his success and attainment of inestimable and illimitable blessing and merit will be instantly known and appreciated by the transcendental eye of the Tathagata.

THE PRACTICE OF SELFLESS KINDNESS SILA PARAMITA

Subhuti, when a disciple is moved to make objective gifts of charity, he should also practice the Sila Paramita of selfless kindness, that is, he should remember that there is no arbitrary distinction between one's own self and the selfhood of others and, therefore, he should practice, charity by giving, not objective gifts alone, but the selfless gifts of kindness and sympathy. If any disciple will simply practice kindness, he will soon attain Anuttara-Sambodhi. Subhuti, by what I have just said about kindness, the Tathagata does not mean that a disciple when making gifts should in his mind any arbitrary conceptions about kindness, for kindness after all is only a word and charity should be spontaneous and selfless.

The lord Buddha continued :- Subhuti, if any disciple helped together the seven treasures forming and elevation as high as Mount Sumeru and as many Mount Sumeru as there are in the three thousand great universes, and bestowed them in charity, his merit would be less than what would acquire to the disciple that simply observed and studies this scripture and in the kindness of his heart explained it to others. The latter disciple would accumulate greater blessing and merit in comparison of a hundred to one, yes, of a hundred thousand myriads to one. Nothing can be compared with it. The lord Buddha continued :- Do not think, Subhuti that the Tathagata would consider within himself :- I will deliver human beings, that would be a degrading thought. Why ? Because really there are no sentient beings to be delivered by the Tathagata, it would mean that the Tathagata was cherishing within his mind arbitrary conceptions of phenomena such as one's ownself, other selves, living being and an universal self. Even when the Tathagata refers to himself he is not holding in his mind any such arbitrary thought. Only cerrestrial human beings think of selfhood as being a personal possession. Subhuti even the expression

'terrestrial beings' as used by the Tathagata does not mean that there are any such beings. It is used only as a figure of speech. The lord Buddha continued :- Subhuti, if a disciples bestowed as alms and abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill as many worlds as there are grains of sand in the Ganges river, and if another disciple, having realized the principle of the egolessness of all things and thereby had attained perfect selflessness, the selfless discipline would have more blessing and merit than the one who merely practiced objective charity. And why ? Because Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas do not regard their blessing and merit as a private possession. Subhuti enquired of the lord Buddha :- what do the words 'Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas do not look upon their blessing and merit as a private possession mean ? The lord Buddha replied :- As those blessing and merit have never been sought in any covetous spirit by Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas, so by that same spirit they do not look upon them as a private possession, but as the common possession of all animate beings.

THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY AND PATIENCE THE KSHANTIPARAMITA

What do you think, Subhuti ? Supposing a disciple, who has attained the degree of Crotapanna (entered the stream), could he make any such arbitrary assertion as, 'I have entered the stream'? Subhuti replied :- No honored of the worlds; Because, while, by that measure of attainment, it means that he has entered the Holy stream, yet, speaking truly, he has not entered anything, nor has his mind entertained any such arbitrary conception as form, sound, taste, odour touch and discrimination. It is because of that degree of attainment that he is entitled to be called a crotapanna. What do you think, subhuti ? Suppose a disciple has attained the degree of Sakradagamin (one more returner), could he make any such arbitrary assertion, as, 'I have attained the degree of Sakradaagamin' ? No Honored of the worlds ; Because by the degree of Sadradagamin, it is meant that he is to be reborn but only once yes speaking truly, there will be no rebirth either in this world or in any other world. It is because he knows this that he is to be called a Sakradagamin. What do you think, subhuti? Suppose a disciples has attained the degree of Anaagamin (never to return), could he hold within his mind any such arbitrary conception as 'I have attained the degree of Anagamin' ? No, Honored of the worlds ; Because by the degree of Anagamin it means that he is never to return, Yet speaking truly, one who has attained that degree never cherishes any such arbitrary conception and for that reason, he is entitled to be called an Anagamin. What do you think, subhuti ? Suppose a disciple has attained the

degree of Arahant (fully enlightened), could he entertain within his mind any such arbitrary conception as, 'I have become an Arahant'? No, Honored of the worlds; Because speaking truly, there is no such thing as a fully enlightened one. Should a disciple who has attained such a degree of enlightenment, cherish within his mind such an arbitrary conception as, 'I have become an Arahant', he would soon be grasping after such things as his own selfhood, otherselves, living beings and a universal self, O Blessed lord; Thou hast said that I have attained the samadhi of non-assertion and, therefore, have reached the climax of human attainment and because of it, I am an Arahant. If I had cherished within my mind the thought, 'I am an Arahant free from all desire'; My lord could not have declared that Subhuti delights himself in the practice of silence and tranquillity. But, speaking truly, I have cherished no such arbitrary thought, so my lord could truly say, - 'Subhuti delights himself in the practice of silence, and tranquillity? What do you think, subhuti? When the Tathagata in a previous life was with Dipankara Buddha, did I receive any definite teaching or attain any definite degree of discipline because of which I later became a Buddha? No, Honored of the worlds; When Tathagata was a disciple of Buddha Dipankara, speaking truly, he received no definite teaching nor did he attain any definite excellence. What do you think, Subhuti? Do the Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas embellish the Buddha lands is merely a figure of speech? The lord Buddha continued :- For this reason, subhuti, the minds of all Bodhisattvas should be purified of all such conceptions as relate to seeing, hearing, tasting smelling, touching and discriminating. They should use the mental faculties spontaneously and naturally, but unconstrained by any preconceptions arising from the senses. Subhuti, supposing a man had a body as large as Mount sumeru. What do you think? Would his body be counted great? Exceedingly great, Honored of the worlds; Because what the lord Buddha really means by the expression, 'the greatness of the human body' is not limited by any arbitrary conception whatever, so it can rightly be called, 'great'. In what has been said in the foregoing passage about the Third paramita of patience, the Tathagata does not hold in his mind any arbitrary conceptions of the phenomena of patience. He merely refers to it as the third Paramita. And why? Because when, in a previous life, the prince of Kalinga severed the flesh from my limbs and my body, even then I was free from any such ideas as my own self, other selves, living beings, a universal self, because if, at the time of my suffering, had I cherished any of these arbitrary ideas, inevitably, I would have fallen into impatience and hatred.

Besides, Subhuti, I recall that during my five hundred previous lives, I had used life after life to practice patience and to look upon my life humbly as

though it was some saintly being called upon to suffer humility. Even then mind was free from any such arbitrary conceptions of phenomena as my own self, other selves, living beings, and a universal self. The Blessed one resumed :- Subhuti, should there be among the faithful disciples some who have not yet matured their Karma and who must first suffer the natural retribution of sins committed in some previous life by being degraded to a lower domain of existence and should they earnestly and faithfully observe and study this scripture and because of it be despised and persecuted by the people, their Karma will immediately mature and they will at once attain Anuttara samyak-ambodhi. Subhuti, I recall that long ago, numberless asamkhyas of kalpas before the advent of Dipankara Buddha, without any fault having been committed by me, I served and worshipped, with offerings and received spiritual instruction and discipline from eight hundred and four thousand myriads of Buddhas, yet in the far off ages of the last kalpa of this world, if a disciple shall faithfully observe, study and put into practice the teachings of this scripture, the blessing that he by so doing will gain, will far exceed that acquired by me during those long years of service and discipline under those many Buddhas. Yes, it will exceed my poor merit, in comparison as ten my raids to one. Yes even more as uncounted myriads to one. The lord Buddha continued :- Subhuti, in contrast to what I have said as to the inestimable blessing that will come to earnest disciples who observe and study and practice this scripture in that far off last kalpa, I must tell you, that probably there will be some disciples who upon hearing this scripture will become bewildered in their minds and will not believe it. Subhuti, you should remember that just as the Dharma of this scripture transcends human thought, so the effect and the final result of studying it and putting it into practice is also inscrutable.

THE PRACTICE OF ZEAL AND PERSEVERANCE THE VIRYA PARAMITA

What do you think, Subhuti? If there are as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, will these rivers be very numerous? Exceedingly numerous, my lord. Supposing there were these innumerable rivers, how immeasurable would be their grains of sand. And yet, Subhuti, if a good and pious disciple, either man or woman, should bestow as alms an amount of the seven treasures equal to those grains of sand, would the merit that would acquire to him be a considerable blessing and merit? A very considerable merit, my lord. Subhuti, if another disciple after studying and observing

even one stanza of this scripture, should explain it to others his blessing and merit would be greater. Moreover subhuti, if any disciple in any place should teach even one stanza of this scripture, that place would become sacred ground and would be held in reverence, and would be enriched by offerings from gods, devas and spirits, as though it was a sacred pagoda or temple. How much more sacred would the place become if a disciple studied and observed the whole of this scripture. Be assured, Subhuti, that such a disciple will succeed in the attainment of Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, and the place where this scripture is revered will be like an altar consecrated to Buddha, or to one of his honored disciples. The lord Buddha-continued -Subhuti, should there be any good pious disciples, man or woman, who in his zeal to practice charity is willing to sacrifice his life in the morning, or at non-tide, or in the evening, on as many occasions as there are grains of sand in the river ganges, even if these occasions recur for a hundred thousand myriad kalpas, would his blessing and merit be great? It would be great, indeed, lord Buddha. Supposing, subhuti, another disciple should observe and study this scripture in pure faith, his blessing and merit would be greater. And if still another disciple, besides observing and studying this scripture, should zealously explain it to it and circulate it, his blessing and merit would be far greater.

In another words, subhuti, this scripture is invested with a vittae and power that is inestimable, illimitable and ineffable. The Tathagata lucidities this scripture only to those disciples who are earnestly and perseveringly seeking the perfect realization of Anuttra-Sambodhi and attaining the Bothisattva stages of compassion that characterize the Mahayana. As disciples become able to zealously and faithfully observe and study this scripture, explain it to others and circulate it widely, the Tathagata will recognize and support them until they shall succeed in the attainment of its inestimable, illimitable and wonderful vittues. Such disciples will share with the Tathagata its burden of compassion and its reward of Anuttra-samyak-sambodhi. And why Subhuti, is this promise limited to the Mahayana disciples. It is because the Hinayana disciples have not yet been able to free themselves from such arbitrary conceptions of phenomena as one's own selfhood, other personalities, Living beings and a universal self and, therefore are not yet able to faithfully and earnestly observe and study and explain this scripture to others. Listen Subhuti, wherever this scripture shall be observed, and studied and explained that place will become sacred ground to which countless devas and angels will bring offerings. Such places, however humble they may be will be revered, as though they were famous temples and pagodas, to which countless pilgrims will come to offer worship and incense. And over them the devas and angels will hover like a cloud and will sprinkle upon them an offering of celestial flowers.

THE PRACTICE OF TRANQUILLITY THE DHYANA PARAMITA

Then subhuti enquired of the lord Buddha, saying:- Supposing a good pious disciple, either man or woman, having begun the practice of attaining Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (should still find his mind disturbed), how is he to keep his mind tranquil, how is he to wholly subdue his wandering thoughts and craving desires? The lord Buddha replied :- Subhuti, any good pious disciple who undertakes the practice of concentrating his mind in an effort to realize Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, should cherish only one thought, namely, when I attain this highest perfect wisdom, I will deliver all sentient being into the internal peace of Nirvana. If this purpose and vow is sincere, these sentient beings are already delivered. And Yet, Subhuti, if the full truth is realized, one would know that not a single sentient being has ever been delivered. And why, Subhuti? Because if the Bodhisattva-mahassattvas have kept in mind any such arbitrary conceptions as one's ownself, other selves, living beings, or a universal self, they could not be called Bodhisattva-Mahasttvas. And what does this mean, Subhuti? It means that there are no sentient beings to be delivered and there is no selfhood that can begin the practice of seeking to attain Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. What do you think, Subhuti? When the Tathagata was with Buddha Dipankara, did he have any such arbitrary conception of the Dharma as would warrant him in seeking to attain Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi intuitively? No, Blessed lord; As I understand what thought said to us, when the lord Buddha was with Buddha Dipankara, he had no such arbitrary conception of the Dharma as would warrant him in seeking to attain Anuttara-samyak sambodhi intuitively.

The lord Buddha was much pleased with this and said;- You are right, Subhuti. Speaking truly there is no such arbitrary conception of the Dharma as that. If there had been, Dipankara Buddha would not have foretold that in some future life, I would attain Buddhahood under the name of Shakyamun. What does this mean, Subhuti? It means that what I attained is not something limited and arbitrary that can be called, 'Anuttara Samyak-Sambodhi, 'but is Buddhahood whose essence is identical with the essence of all things and is what it is universal, inconceivable inscrutable. Supposing, Subhuti, there should still be a disciple who asserts that the Tathagata had some ideas about the Dharma that warranted him in seeking to attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi. Be it understood, subhuti, that the Tathagata truly had no ideas of the Dharma that warranted him in seeking to attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi.

The lord Buddha emphasized this by saying;- subhuti, the Buddhahood to which the Tathagata attained is both the same as Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi

and not the same. This is only another way of saying that the phenomena of all things is of one 'such-ness' with the Buddhahood and Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, and that it is neither reality nor unreality but abides together with all phenomena in emptiness and silence, inconceivable and inscrutable. Subhuti, that is why I say that the Dharma of all things can never be embraced within any arbitrary conception of phenomena however universal that conception may be. That is why it is called the Dharma and why there is no such thing as the Dharma. Subhuti, suppose I should speak of the largeness of the human body, what would you understand by it? Honored of the world; I should understand that the lord Buddha was not speaking of the largeness of human body as an arbitrary conception of its phenomenality.

I should understand that the words carried only an imaginary meaning. Subhuti, it is just the same when Bodhisattvas speak of delivering numberless sentient beings. If they have in mind any arbitrary conception of sentient being or of definite numbers, they are unworthy to be called Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas. And why, subhuti? Because the very reason why they are called Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas is because they have abandoned all such arbitrary conceptions. And what is true of one arbitrary conception is true of all conceptions.

The Tathagata's teachings are entirely free from all such arbitrary conceptions as one's own self, other selves, living beings or a universal self. To make this teaching more emphatic, the lord Buddha continued;- If a Bodhisattva-Mahasattva was to speak like this;- I will add embellishments to the Buddhalands, he would be unworthy to be called a Bodhisattva-Mahasattva. And why? Because the Tathagata has explicitly thought that when a Bodhisattva-Mahasattva uses such words, they must not hold in mind any arbitrary conception of phenomena: they are to use such expressions merely as so many words. Subhuti, it is only those disciples whose understanding can penetrate deeply enough into the meaning of the Tathagata's teachings concerning the egolessness of both things and living beings, and who can clearly understand their significance, that are worthy to be called Bodhisattva-Mahasattva. The lord Buddha then enquired of subhuti saying:- What do you think? Does the Tathagata possess a physical eye? Subhuti replied:-surely, Blessed lord; he possesses a physical eye. Does the Tathagata possess the eye of transcendental intelligence? Yes, Blessed Lord; the Tathagata possesses the eye of transcendental intelligence. Does the Tathagata possess the eye of spiritual intuition? Yes, Blessed Lord; the Tathagata possesses the eye of spiritual intuition. Does the Tathagata possess the eye of a Buddha's love and Compassion for all sentient life, Subhuti? Subhuti assented and said:- Blessed lord; thou lovest all sentient life. What do you think, Subhuti? When referred to the grains of sand in the river Ganges, did I assert that they were truly grains of sand? No, Blessed lord; you only spoke of

them as grains of sand. Subhuti, if there were as many Ganges rivers as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges and if there were as many Buddha lands, as there are grains of sand in all of these innumerable rivers, would these Buddha-lands be considered, as very numerous Very numerous, indeed, Lord Buddha. Listen, Subhuti. Within these innumerable Buddha lands there are every form of sentient beings with all their various mentalities and conceptions, all of which are fully known to the Tathagata, but not one of them is held in the Tathagata's mind as an arbitrary conception of phenomena. They are merely thought of. Not one of this vast accumulation of conceptions from beginning less time, through the present and into the never ending future, not one of them is graspable. The lord Buddha resumed-Subhuti, if any good and pious disciple, either man or woman, were to take the three thousand great universes and grind them into impalpable powder and blow it away into spaces, what do you think, subhuti? Do you think this powder would have any individual existence? Subhuti replied:- yes, Blessed lord; As and impalpable powder infinitely dissipated, it might be said to have a relative existence, but as the Blessed one uses the words, it has no existence:- the words have only a figurative meaning. Otherwise the words would imply a belief in the existence of matter as an independent and self-existent entity, which it is not. Moreover, when the Tathagata refers to the 'three thousand great universes' he could only do so as a figure of speech. And why? Because if the three thousand, great universes really existed, their only reality would consist in their cosmic unity. Whether as impalpable powder or as great universes, what matters it? It is only in the sense of the cosmic unity of ultimate essence that the tathagata can rightfully refer to it. The lord Buddha was much pleased with this reply and said:- subhuti, although terrestrial human beings have always grasped after the arbitrary conception of matter and great universes, the conception has no true basis-it is an illusion of mortal mind. Even when it is referred to as 'Cosmic unity' it is something inscrutable. The lord Buddha continued-If any disciple were to say that the Tathagata, in his teachings, has constantly referred to himself, otherselves, living beings, an universal self, what do you think, Subhuti? Would that disciple have understood the meaning of what I have been teaching? Subhuti replied:- No Blessed lord; That disciple would not have understood the meaning of the lord's teachings. For when the lord has referred to them he has only used the words as figures and symbols. It is only in that sense that they can be used, for conceptions, and ideas, and limited truths, and Dharmas have no more reality than have matter and phenomena. Then the lord made this more emphatic by saying:- Subhuti,

when disciples begin their practice of seeking to attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, they ought thus to see, to perceive, to know, to understand, and to realize that all things and all Dharmas are nothings, and therefore they ought not to conceive within their minds any arbitrary conception whatever.

The lord Buddha continued:- Subhuti, if any disciple bestowed upon the Tathagata as alms an abundance of the seven treasures sufficient to fill the innumerable and illimitable worlds and if another disciple, a good and pious man or woman, in his practice of seeking to attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi should earnestly and faithfully observe and study a single stanza of this scripture and explain it to others, the accumulated blessing and merit of that latter disciple would be relatively greater. Subhuti, how is it possible to explain this scripture to others without holding in mind any arbitrary conception of things and phenomena and Dharmas? It can only be done, Subhuti, by keeping the mind in perfect tranquillity and in selfless oneness with the "suchness" that is Tathagatahood. And why? Because all the minds arbitrary conceptions of matter phenomena, and of all conditioning factors and all conceptions and ideas relating thereto are like a dream, a phantasm, a bubble, a shadow, the evanescent dew, the lightning's flash. Every true disciple should thus look upon all phenomena and upon all the activities of the mind, and keep his mind empty and selfless and tranquil.

The Practice of Wisdom : The Prajna Paramita

What do you think, Subhuti? Has the Tathagata attained anything that can be described as Anuttara-Samyak-sambodhi? Has he ever given you any such teaching? Subhuti replied:-As I understand the teaching of the Lord Buddha, there is no such thing as Anuttarasamyak-sambodhi nor is it possible for the Tathagata to teach any fixed dharma, And why? Because the things taught by the Tathagata are, in their essential nature, inconceivable and inscrutable: they are neither existent, nor nonexistent; they are neither phenomena nor nomina. What is meant by this? It means that Buddhas and Bodhistwas are not enlightened by fixed teachings but by an intuitive process that is spontaneous and natural. Then the lord Buddha enquired Subhuti:-What do you think, subhuti? Is it possible to recognize the Tathagata by the thirty-two marks of physical excellence? Subhuti replied:- Yes, Honored of the worlds, the Tathagata may be thus recognized. Subhuti, if that is so then chakravartin, the legendary king of the world (who also had the thirty-two marks of excellence) would be classed among the Tathagata. Then Subhuti, realizing his error, said:- Honored of the worlds; Now I realize that the Tathagata cannot be recognized merely by his

thirty-two marks of physical excellence. The lord Buddha then said:- Should anyone looking at an image or a likeness of the Tathagata, claim to know the Tathagata and should offer worshipping and prayer to him, you should consider such a person a heretic who does not know the true Tathagata. What do you think, Subhuti? Is it possible even to see the Tathagata in the phenomena of physical appearance? No, Honored of the worlds. It is impossible even to see the Tathagata in the phenomena of his physical appearance. And why? Because the phenomena of his physical appearance is not the same as the essential Tathagata. You are right, Subhuti. The phenomena of the physical appearance is wholly illusion. It is not until a disciple understands this that he can realize the true Tathagata. What do you think, Subhuti? Can one grasp the Tathagata's personality and his thirty-two marks of physical excellence? No, Blessed one; we cannot grasp the Tathagata's wonderful personality by his thirty-two marks of excellence. And why? Because what the Tathagata has expressed as 'thirty two marks of physical excellence' does not convey definite or arbitrary assertions as to the qualities of a Buddha. The words are used merely as a figure of speech. The Lord said:- Subhuti, if any disciple were to say that the Tathagata is now coming or now going, or is now sitting up or is now lying down, he would not have understood the principle that I have been teaching. And why? Because while the word, Tathagata, means 'He who has thus come' and 'He who has thus gone', the true Tathagata is never coming from anywhere, nor is he going anywhere. The name, Tathagata, is merely a word. Again the lord Buddha enquired of Subhuti, saying:- can the Tathagata be fully known through any manifestation in form (of either body or idea) ? No, Honored of the worlds; The Tathagata cannot be fully known by manifestation in form. And why? Because the phenomena of form is inadequate to incarnate Buddhahood. It can only serve as a mere expression, a hint of that which is inconceivable. What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be fully known by any or all of his transcendental transformations?.

No, Honored of the worlds; The Tathagata cannot be fully known by even all of his transcendental transformations. And why? Because what the Tathagata has just referred to as 'transcendental transformations' is merely a figure of speech. Even the highest Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas are unable to fully realize even by intuition that which is essentially inscrutable. The lord Buddha continued :-Subhuti, do not think the opposite either that when the Tathagata attained Anjittara Samyak-Sambodhi it was not by means of his possession of the thirty-two marks of physical excellence. Do not think that. Should you think that, then when you begin the practice of seeking to attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi

you would think that all systems of phenomena are to be cut off and rejected. Do not think that. And why? Because when a disciple practices seeking to attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, he should neither grasp after such arbitrary conceptions of phenomena nor reject them. The lord Buddha then warned Subhuti, saying:- Subhuti, do not think that the Tathagata ever considers within his own mind:-I ought to enunciate a system of teaching for the elucidation of the Dharma. You should never cherish such an unworthy thought. And why because if any disciple should harbor such a thought, he would not only be misunderstanding the teaching of the Tathagata but he would be slandering him as well. Moreover, what has just been referred to as 'a system of teaching' has no meaning, as Truth cannot be cut up into pieces and arranged into a system. The word can only be used as a figure of speech. Thereupon the venerable Subhuti, because of his enlightened and transcendental intelligence, addressed the Lord Buddha, saying:- Blessed Lord ; In ages to come when any sentient beings shall happen by chance to hear this scripture, will they awaken within their mind the essential elements of faith? The Lord Buddha said:- Subhuti, why do you still hold within your mind such arbitrary conceptions? There are no such things as sentient beings, neither are there any non-sentient beings. And why, Subhuti?. Because what you have in mind as sentient beings are unreal and nonexistent. When the Tathagata has used such words in his teachings, he has merely used them as figures of speech. Your question, therefore, is irrelevant. Subhuti, again enquired:- Blessed Lord, when thou didst attain Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi didst thou feel within thy mind that nothing had been acquired? The lord Buddha replied:- that is it precisely, Subhuti when I attained Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi, I did not feel, as grasped within my mind, any arbitrary conception of Dharma, not even the slightest. Even the words Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi are merely words. Moreover, Subhuti, what I have attained in Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi is the same as what all others have attained. It is something that is undifferentiated, neither to be regarded as a high state, nor is it to be regarded as a low state. It is wholly independent of any definitive or arbitrary conceptions of an individual self, other selves, living beings or an universal self.

Conclusion:- Subhuti respectfully enquired of the lord Buddha:- Honored of the worlds; In future days, if a disciple hears this teaching or a part of it:- a section or a sentence-will it awaken true faith in his mind? Subhuti, do not doubt it. Even at the remote period five hundred years after the nirvana of the Tathagata there will be those who, practicing charity and keeping the precept, will believe in sections and sentences of this scripture and will awaken within their minds a true pure faith. You should know, however, that such disciples, long ago, have planted roots of goodness, not simply before one Buddha shrine, or two, or five, but before the shrines of a hundred thousand

myriad asamkya of Buddhas, so that when they hear sentences and sections of this scripture there will instantly awaken in their minds a pure true faith. Subhuti, the Tathagata know that the sentient beings who awaken faith after hearing sentences and sections of this scripture will accumulate blessing and merit that are inestimable. How do I know this? Because these sentient beings must have already discarded such arbitrary conceptions of phenomena as one's own self, otherselves, living beings and universal self. If they had not, their minds would inevitably grasp after such things and then they would not be able to practice charity nor keep the precepts. Moreover, sentient beings must have also discarded all arbitrary ideas relating to the conceptions of a personal self other personalities, living beings and a universal self, because if they had not, their minds would inevitably grasp after such relative ideas. Further, this sentient beings must have already discarded all arbitrary ideas relating to the conception of the nonexistence of a personal self, other personalities, living beings and a universal self. If they had not, their minds would still be grasping after such ideas. Therefore, every disciple who is seeking Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi should discard, not conceptions of one's own selfhood, themselves, living beings and a universal selfhood, but should discard, also, all ideas about the nonexistence of such conceptions.

While the Thathagata, in his teaching constantly makes use of conceptions and ideas about them, disciples should keep in mind the unreality of all such conceptions and ideas.

They should recall that the Tathagata, in making use of them in explaining the Dhamma always uses them in resemblance of a raft that is of use only to cross a river. As the raft is of no further use after the river is crossed, it should be discarded. So these arbitrary conceptions of things and about things should be wholly given as one attains enlightenment. Wow much more & should be given up conceptions of nonexistent things (and everything is nonexistent). As subhuti listened intently to the words of the lord Buddha, the teaching of the scripture penetrated into the depths of his understanding and he fully realized that it was the true path to enlightenment. The tears come to his eyes as he realized this and he said blessed Lord; I have never before realized this profound scriptures. Thou hast opened my eyes to its Transcendental wisdom. Honored of the worlds; What has been taught us concerning the true significance of Phenomena carries no arbitrary or limited meaning. The teaching is, as you say, a raft that will carry us to the other shore.

Noble Lord; When as at present, I have the chance of hearing this scripture, it is not difficult for me to concentrate my mind upon it and to clearly understand its significance, and it awakens within my mind a pure faith. In

future time after five centuries-if there be any ready to hear it and ready to attain enlightenment, able to concentrate their minds upon it, able to realize a clear understanding of it, such a disciple will hereby become a wonderful and prominent disciple. And if there is such a disciple the reason he will be able to awaken a pure faith will be because he has ceased to cherish any arbitrary conceptions as to his own selfness, the selfhood of others, of living beings, of an universal self. Why is this so? It is Because, if he is cherishing any arbitrary conception as to his own selfhood, he will be cherishing something that is nonexistent. It is the same as to all arbitrary conceptions of other personalities, living beings, or an universal self. They are all expressions of things that are nonexistent. If a disciple is able to discard all arbitrary conceptions of phenomena, he will immediately become a Buddha. The lord Buddha was much pleased with this reply, saying:- True indeed; If a disciple having heard this scripture is not surprised, nor frightened, nor does not shrink from it, you should know that he is worthy to be regarded as a truly wonderful disciple. Subhuti said to the Blessed one:-By what name shall this scripture be known, so that it will be understood and honored and studied?

The lord Buddha replied:- this scripture shall be known as the Vajracchedika Prajna Paramita, By this name it shall be revered, studied and observed. What is meant by this name? It means that when the lord Buddha named it Prajna Paramita, he did not have in mind any definite or arbitrary conception and so he thus named it. It is the scripture that is hard and sharp like a diamond that will cut away all arbitrary conception and bring one to the other shore of enlightenment.

“Gate Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, bodhi Svaha” ;

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

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