**Diamond Sutra**

**For Master Nan Huai-Chin Commentary**

**Hue En translation**

***Red Clay Sangha 2024***

***Abridged for Chanting – Session 2***

**Section 1**

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was sojourning in the Kingdom of Sravasti, staying at Anathapindika’s Park in the Grove of Jeta together with an assembly of twelve hundred and fifty bhiksus. As it was time to eat, the World-Honored One put on His robe, picked up His bowl and made His way into the great city of Sravasti where He begged for His food from door to door. This done, He returned to His retreat and took His meal. When He had finished, He put away his robe and bowl, washed His feet, arranged His seat and sat down

**Section 2**

Now in the midst of the assembly was the Elder Subhuti. Forthwith, he arose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt upon his right knee and with palms joined respectfully, addressed the Buddha thus.

“Most rare World-Honored One! The Tathagata is skillfully mindful, perfectly instructing and entrusting the Bodhisattvas. World-Honored One, when virtuous men and virtuous women initiate the mind of anuttara-samyaksambodhi, how should their minds dwell? How should their minds be pacified?”

The Buddha spoke, “Excellent, excellent Subhuti, it is as you say. The Tathagata is skillfully mindful, perfectly instructing and entrusting the Bodhisattvas. Now, listen well to what I say. Virtuous men and virtuous women who initiate the mind of anuttara-samyaksambodhi should thus dwell and pacify their minds.”

“I assure you, World-Honored One, we joyfully await your answer.”

**Section 3**

The Buddha then said, “Subhuti, all the Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas should quell their minds in this way: All kinds of being – whether egg born, womb born, moisture born or transformation born, having form or not having form, having thought or not having thought – through my reaching nirvana are saved. Yet when immeasurable, innumerable and unlimited numbers of beings have been liberated, verily, no beings have been liberated. And why is this Subhuti? If a Bodhisattva retains the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, he is not a true Bodhisattva.”

**Section 4**

“Furthermore, Subhuti, a Bodhisattva ought to practice charity without dwelling. That is to say, a Bodhisattva should also practice charity without dwelling in form, sound, smell, taste, touch or even dharma. Subhuti, Bodhisattvas ought to practice charity, without dwelling in form. Why is this? If Bodhisattvas practice charity without dwelling in form, the blessings will be inestimable and inconceivable.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can you conceive of measuring the extent of space in the East?”

“Certainly not, World-Honored One.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the extent of space in the South, West and North, as well as the Zenith and Nadir be measured?”

“Certainly not, World-Honored One.”

“Subhuti, for Bodhisattvas who practice charity without dwelling, the blessings are also immeasurable.

“Subhuti, a Boddhisattva’s mind should thus dwell as taught.”

**Section 5**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be perceived by means of form or appearance?”

“No, World-Honored One, the Tathagata cannot be so perceived. Why is that? The form and appearance spoken of by the Tathagata is not true form and appearance.”

The Buddha told Subhuti, “Everything with form and appearance is merely illusion. If all form and appearance are seen as illusion, the Tathagata will be perceived.

**Section 6**

Subhuti then said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, will there be living beings who, after hearing these words and sentences, awaken to true faith in them?”

The Buddha said, “Subhuti, do not speak that way. Even in the last five hundred years after the passing of the Tathagata, there will be those practicing charity, performing good actions and observing the precepts who happen to hear these sentences and develop a true faith in them. You should know that such people will have planted the roots of merit not simply before one, two, three, four or five Buddhas, but under countless millions of Buddhas. Furthermore, if upon hearing these words clean, clear belief is instantly awakened, Subhuti, the Tathagata who knows and sees all assures that this person has attained immeasurable fortune.

“Subhuti, the Tathagata knows and sees that these people will acquire immeasurable blessings and merit. Why is this? Because this person also holds no notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, of Dharma and no-Dharma. If such a person seized upon the idea of form, they would still be holding onto the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. If they clung to the idea of Dharma, they would still be holding onto the notion of an ego, a personality a being and a life. If they grasp the idea of no-Dharma, they would still be holding onto the notion of an ego, a personality a being and a life. Therefore, do not grasp onto the concept of Dharma and no-Dharma.”

This is why the Tathagata always says, “Ye Bhiksus, know that the teaching I expound is like a raft. Even the Dharma must be case aside; how much more so no-Dharma.”

**Section 7**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata attained anything by anuttara-samyaksambodhi? Does the Tathagata in fact expound a Dharma?”

Subhuti replied, “As I understand the teaching of the Buddha, there is no definitive Dharma called anuttara-samyaksambhodi, nor is there any definitive Dharma which the Tathagata can expound. Why is this? The Dharma which the Tathagata expounds is inconceivable and beyond words. It is neither Dharma not not-Dharma. All of the saints and sages vary only in mastery of this.”

**Section 14**

At that time, after listening to this reaching, Subhuti realized its profound meaning and was moved to tears. He said to the Buddha, “Most rare, most extraordinary World-Honored One! The Buddha has expounded such a very profound teaching. Since I have acquired the wisdom eye, I have never heard such a teaching. World-Honored One, if someone listens to this teaching with a pure and faithful mind, this person will surely realize reality. One should know that such a person has achieved the most precious merit. World-Honored One, this true form is not true form and so the Tathagata calls it true form.

“World-Honored One, after listening to this teaching, I have no difficulty in believing, understanding, receiving and retaining it, but in the ages to come, in the last five-hundred-year period, if there be a person who happens to listen to this Teaching, believes, understands, receives and retains it, this person will be most rare. The reason is that this person will no longer hold on to an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Why is this? The notion of an ego is not real. The notions of an ego, a personality, a being and a life are not real. The reason is that those having gone beyond all notions are called Buddhas.”

The Buddha said, “Just so, Subhuti, just so! If there be a person who, listening to this teaching, is neither awed nor frightened nor filled with dread, you must know that such a person is rare. The reason is, Subhuti, as the Tathagata says, the first paramita is no first paramita, but is simply called the first paramita.

“Subhuti, the Tathagata speaks of the perfection of patient endurance which is no perfection of patient endurance, but is merely called the perfection of patient endurance. Why so? Subhuti, in a past life my body was mutilated by the Raja of Kalinga, but I was at that time free from the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. While in the past when my limbs were cut away piece by piece, if I still held the conception of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, I would have been stirred by feelings of anger and hatred. Subhuti, I remember five hundred lives ago, I was an ascetic practicing patient endurance and held no conception of an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Therefore Subhuti, Bodhisattvas should go beyond all conceptions of form and appearance in order to develop the Supreme Enlightenment mind. Their minds must not dwell in form, sound, smell, taste, touch nor dharma. Their minds must nor dwell anywhere. In the mind that dwells, one should not dwell. This is the reason the Buddha says that Bodhisattvas’ minds should not rest in form when practicing charity. Subhuti, a Bodhisattva in order to help all sentient beings ought to practice charity in this way. The Tathagata says that all form is not form and the so-called sentient beings are not sentient beings.

“Subhuti, the Tathagata’s words point to the true and correspond to reality. They are as Such, and are neither deceitful nor heterodox. Subhuti, the Dharma which the Tathagata attained is neither real nor illusory.

“Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva practices charity with a mind dwelling in Dharma, he is like a man entering the darkness who cannot see anything: but if a Bodhisattva practices charity with a mind not dwelling in Dharma, he is like a man with open eyes in the daylight who can see things clearly.

“Subhuti, if there be virtuous men and women in the future ages able to receive, retain, recite and write this sutra, the Tathagata with His Buddha wisdom knows and clearly sees that such a person will receive unlimited merit beyond measure.”

**Section 17**

At that time, Subhuti addressed the Buddha thus: “World-Honored One, when virtuous men and virtuous women initiate the mind of anuttara-samyaksambodhi, how should their minds dwell? How should their minds be pacified?”

The Buddha said to Subhuti, “Virtuous men or women who seek anuttara-samyaksambodhi must develop a mind to liberate all sentient beings. Yet, when all sentient beings have been liberated, verily not a single being has been liberated. Why is this? Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva still has any notions of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, she is not a Bodhisattva. This is because, Subhuti, in actuality there is no dharma called attaining anuttara-samyaksambodhi.

“Subhuti, what do you think? When the Tathagata was with Dipankara Buddha, did He have any Dharma by means of which he attained anuttara-samyaksambodhi?”

“No, World-Honored One. If I understand the Buddha’s meaning, when He was with Dipankara Buddha, there was no such Dharma with which he attained anuttara-samyaksambodhi.”

The Buddha said, “Just so, just so, Subhuti! Subhuti, I tell you truly, there is no Dharma by which the Tathagata attained anuttara-samyaksambodhi. Subhuti, if there was a Dharma by which the Tathagata attained anuttara-samyaksambodhi, Dipankara Buddha would not have predicted, ‘In the future, you will be a Buddha named Shakyamuni’. But since there is no Dharma by which one can attain anuttara-samyaksambodhi, Dipankara Buddha predicted that in the future I would become a Buddha named Shakyamuni. Why is this? The Tathagatas and all dharmas are as Such. If someone says the Tathagata attained anuttara-samyaksambodhi, Subhuti, I tell you truly, there is no Dharma as ‘the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment’. Subhuti, the Tathagata’s Supreme Enlightenment is neither real nor illusory. This is why the Tathagata says that all dharma is Buddha Dharma. Subhuti, all dharma is not dharma but is merely called dharma.

“Subhuti, suppose there was a person with an enormous body.”

Subhuti said, “World-Honored One, this enormous body of which the Tathagata speaks is not an enormous body but is merely called so.”

“Subhuti, this is the same concerning Bodhisattvas. Although a Bodhisattva says, ‘I have liberated countless beings’, he is not a Bodhisattva. Subhuti, in reality there is no dharma called Bodhisattva, and this is why the Buddha says that all dharma has no self, no person, no being and no life. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva says, ‘I make the Buddha lands majestic’, this person is not a Bodhisattva. Why is this? The majestic Buddha lands spoken of by the Buddha are not majestic, but are merely called majestic. Subhuti, if a Bodhisattva deeply understands the Dharma of no self and no dharma, the Tathagata calls him a true Bodhisattva.”

**Section 18**

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

“Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has physical eyes.”

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

“Yes, World-Honored One, the Tathagata has deva eyes.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Subhuti, what do you think, does the Buddha say that the sand in the Ganges River is sand?”

“World-Honored One, the Tathagata says it is sand.”

“Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, and there were as many Buddha realms as there are grains of sand in all of these Ganges Rivers, would the Buddha lands be many?”

“Very many, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “The living beings in the multitude of lands have many different kinds of minds which are known to the Tathagata. Why is this? That which the Tathagata calls mind is not really the mind but is merely called such. Being as such, Subhuti, the past mind is ungraspable, the present mind is ungraspable, and the future mind is ungraspable.”

**Section 19**

“Subhuti, what do you think? If a person filled the universe of worlds with the seven treasures and gave away all in his practice of charity, would he not thereby gain great merit?”

“Yes, World-Honored One, because of this one would attain great merit and fortune.”

“Subhuti, if the fortune and merit were real, the Tathagata would not say the fortune and merit gained was great. He says so because there is no merit.”

**Section 22**

Subhuti said to the Buddha, “World-Honored one, when you attained anuttara-samyaksambodhi, was it that you did not attain anything whatsoever?”

The Buddha said, “Just so, just so Subhuti! In the attainment of anuttara-samyaksambodhi, I did not gain even the least Dharma, and this is called anuttara-samyaksambodhi.

**Section 26**

“Subhuti, what do you think? Can the Tathagata be observed through the thirty-two marks of physical excellence?”

Subhuti replied, “It is so, it is so. The Tathagata can be observed through the thirty-two marks.”

Then Buddha said, “Subhuti, if that were so, then a chakravartin would also be a Tathagata.”

Subhuti then said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, as I understand the meaning of your teaching, the Tathagata cannot be observed by the thirty-two marks of physical excellence.”

Thereupon the World-Honored One recited the following verse:

“One who looks for me in appearance

Or pursues me in sound,

Follows paths leading astray,

And cannot perceive the tathagata.”

**Section 29**

“Subhuti, if someone should say it’s as if the Tathagata comes and goes, sits and lies, this person does not understand the meaning of what I say. The reason is that having not whence to come nor whither to go is called the Tathagata.”

**Section 32**

Subhuti, someone might fill the innumerable worlds throughout uncountable aeons with the seven treasures and give away all in alms, but if any good man or woman with bodhicitta practices this teaching, receives, retains, reads and recites even a four line stanza of this teaching and expounds it to others, the latter’s merit would surpass that of the former.”

“How should this teaching be expounded to others? Without attachment to form, at one with Suchness. Why is this. Because:

All phenomena are like

A dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow.

Like a dew dop and a flash of lightening,

Thus should you view them.”

When the Buddha had finished expounding the sutra, the Venerable Subhuti, together with all bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, upasikas and the whole realm of devas, humans and asuras who had listened to His teaching were filled with joy and believed, received and observed it.