

## The Diamond Cutter of Doubts

### Part II

At the time, Subhūti asked the Buddha: 'World Honoured One, if a virtuous man or woman is determined to develop the Supreme Enlightened Mind, how should his or her mind abide and how should it be subdued?'

The Buddha said to Subhūti: 'A virtuous man or woman who is determined to develop the Supreme Enlightened Mind, should thus develop it: I have to lead all living beings to put a stop to (reincarnation) and escape (suffering), and when they have been so led, not one of them in fact stops (reincarnating) or escapes suffering. Why? Because, Subhūti, if a Bodhisattva clings to the notion of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, he is not a (true) Bodhisattva. Why? Because, Subhūti, there is not really a Dharma which can develop the Supreme-Enlightenment-Mind.

From now on, the two subtle views of the reality of ego and of dharma are broken up. In the sūtra, at the beginning, the question: 'How should the mind abide? How should it be subdued?' was asked because newly initiated Bodhisattvas were ordinary broad-minded men, who were determined to develop a mind for the liberation of all living beings. Therefore, they had every kind of attachment to the forms (of things). In their self-cultivation, they relied on their physical bodies of the five aggregates (skandhas) and in their practice of almsgiving (dāna) in quest of merits, they clung to the six coarse objects of sense (guṇas). In their quest of enlightenment, they grasped the external appearance of the Buddha's Nirmāṇa-kāya. For them, the Buddha land was adorned with treasures. Therefore, they still had attachment to forms in their deeds and were too far away from prajñā.

The Buddha successively cut off all doubts which arose in Subhūti's mind until all his concepts of material appearance were eliminated and the true wisdom of the real suchness of wisdom (Bhūtatathatā-prajñā) could be realized, resulting in Subhūti's awakening and in the dissipation of the whole assembly's doubts. The first part of the sūtra covers these points, which cannot be understood at first sight, (dealing with) the elimination of ego caused by the ordinary man's conception of it in the

visible form of the five aggregates (skandhas). The four forms thus perceived were all *coarse*.

From now on, the (second half of the sūtra) deals with the elimination of doubts harboured by Bodhisattvas who are already awakened to the prajñā but who do not as yet relinquish the idea of the wisdom which could realize (prajñā). They grasp this wisdom as an ego. This is the self-preservation and self-awareness of ego. These are the two subtle tenets (of the reality of ego and dharma) and the four forms are now fine. For this reason, the word 'I' (now) occurs often in the sūtra which says: 'I have to lead all living beings to destroy reincarnation' and does not mention the practice of dāna. This shows that although the meritorious performance is complete, the conception of Buddha and living beings is still not relinquished. Their conceptions were coarse before, but are *subtle* now.

*Question.*—(About this erroneous fine view that) this subtle wisdom is an ego, why does the question 'How should the mind abide and how should it be subdued?' not have the same meaning as when it was asked previously (at the beginning of the sūtra?)

*Answer.*—In this second question 'How should the mind abide?' the Bodhisattva has already relinquished (the conception of) the five aggregates (skandhas), but since he has not abandoned his old habits, he still seeks a place of quiet abode in the Bhūtatathatā Wisdom. Moreover, he is also impatient in his quest of enlightenment (Bodhi) and clings to the idea that Bodhi should have a place of abode. Since he cannot seek it, his mind is ill at ease and he asks: 'How should the mind be subdued?' It was the mind which sought Buddhahood which was not at ease, because he still clung to his views of Buddha and living beings and because he failed to perceive the sameness of the two. The question is the same but its meaning is now different. For this reason, the World Honoured One wipes out (this doubt) by saying that those who develop the Bodhi Mind, should look into the fact that not a single living being is actually liberated, after they have delivered all living beings, for the latter are fundamentally Bhūtatathatā and should not be subjected to further extinction (of reincarnation). If these Bodhisattvas still hold the view of the end (of reincarnation) and an escape (from suffering), they cannot rid themselves of the (false idea of the) four forms and cannot be true Bodhisattvas. This was the (doctrine of) the non-seeing of living beings who could be delivered. However, Buddhas and living beings were fundamentally one, and if there be no end to (reincarnation for) living beings, there would be no Dharma enabling Bodhisattvas to develop a mind in quest of Bodhi. Why? Because living beings are fundamentally calm, do not reincarnate



and are identical with Bodhi itself. What more then should be sought? This is the (doctrine of) not-seeing the Buddha fruit.

*Doubt.*—If there is no Dharma which can enable one to attain enlightenment (Bodhi), is the Bodhi which we now apprehend, not a Dharma? Did not the World Honoured One who became Buddha because he had obtained this Dharma with Dīpaṅkara Buddha, really obtain the Bodhi? How can it be said that no Dharma is obtained? This doubt is dealt with in the following paragraph.

'Subhūti, what do you think? When the Tathāgata was with Dīpaṅkara Buddha, did He have any Dharma by means of which He attained Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi)?'

'No, World Honoured One. As I understand the meaning of the Buddha's teaching, when He was with Dīpaṅkara Buddha, He had no Dharma by means of which He attained "Supreme Enlightenment".'

The Buddha said: 'Just so! Subhūti, just so! There was really no Dharma by means of which the Tathāgata attained Supreme Enlightenment. Subhūti, if there had been, Dīpaṅkara Buddha would not have predicted: "In your next life, you will be a Buddha named Śākyamuni".'

The Buddha pointed out that Bodhi cannot be obtained to destroy a doubt caused by attachment to (the idea of) Buddha. Subhūti was suspicious and thought that the Buddha had obtained a Dharma when He was with Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The World Honoured One successively broke up Subhūti's wrong conjectures again and again to reveal the non-acquisition of a single Dharma.

*Doubt.*—The Prajñā-dharma was the real cause of the attainment of Buddhahood. If, as now said, there is no Dharma, there will be no cause. If there is no cause, how can one obtain the Bodhi fruit? In the following text, this doubt is wiped out by the teaching that Dharma-kāya does not belong to either cause or fruit (or effect).

'... Why is it? Because "Tathāgata" means the suchness of all Dharmas.<sup>1</sup> If someone still says: "The Tathāgata obtained Supreme Enlightenment," (I tell you), Subhūti, there is no Dharma by means of which the Buddha did so, (because), Subhūti, that Enlightenment was by itself neither real nor unreal. This is why the Tathāgata says that all Dharmas are Buddha's Dharmas. Subhūti, these so-called Dharmas are not but are (expediently) called all Dharmas.<sup>2</sup> Subhūti, supposing there is a man whose body is great. ...'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The undifferentiated whole of all dharmas, or things.

<sup>2</sup> The words 'all Dharmas' are two meaningless terms having no real nature, but are expediently so-called for convenience sake.

<sup>3</sup> Here Subhūti who already understood what the Buddha wanted to say, replies without waiting for Him to finish His question. The great body is the Sambhoga-kāya which cannot be compared to the essential one, the Dharma-kāya.

Subhūti said: 'World Honoured One, the great body of which the Tathāgata speaks is not great, but is (expediently) called a great body.'

The above shows that Dharma-kāya does not belong to either cause or fruit. Subhūti, who did not realize that Dharma-kāya was beyond both, clung to the idea that the Tathāgata had practised and had gained. The Buddha wiped out this concept by saying that He had not obtained anything.<sup>1</sup> As He was apprehensive that Subhūti was not sufficiently awakened to this, He said to him: 'Why do I say that Bodhi does not gain anything? Because the word Tathāgata cannot be applied to material things. It is the absolute in the very substance of all things (dharmas). Moreover, all dharmas are fundamentally absolute. How then can this be realized by practice? Therefore, I say there is no Dharma which enables the Buddha to obtain Bodhi.'

In the Ch'an Sect, this is the Transcendental Path which all Buddhas of the past, present and future forbid one to look at. If you do you go blind,<sup>2</sup> because in it there is no room for searching and grasping. The Tathāgata-bodhi has no positive (characteristic to grasp). It is enough not to hold inverted views of annihilation or of permanence in relation to all things (dharmas).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Buddha said: It is neither real nor unreal, because all dharmas were not dharmas. If one realizes that the great body has no body, one will readily understand that all dharmas are not in fact dharmas.

*Doubt.*—As Subhūti heard that there is no Dharma which enables one to develop his mind, he doubted: 'A Bodhisattva is so-called because he has a Dharma to save living beings. Now if there is no Dharma, where did the name of Bodhisattva come from?' In the following text, this doubt is cut off by the (teaching on the) unreality of things (dharmas) and of ego.

'Subhūti, in like manner, if a Bodhisattva says: "I should lead uncountable living beings to put a stop to (reincarnation) and escape (from suffering)", he cannot be called a Bodhisattva. Why? Because there is really no dharma called the Bodhisattva (stage). Therefore, the Buddha says: "Of all dharmas, there is not a

<sup>1</sup> The self-natured prajñā is immanent in every living being who, because of ignorance, thinks that he can acquire it by means of self-cultivation. The Buddha taught that prajñā is self-possessed by man and can manifest itself only after he has been stripped of all feelings and passions. Therefore, there is no gain whatsoever when one attains enlightenment. A Ch'an master said: 'Just strip yourselves of worldly feelings but don't interpret anything as saintly.'

<sup>2</sup> The word 'blind' should not be interpreted literally. It means that he who uses his discriminating mind to look at the Transcendental Path will never perceive it, for it only appears after one has put an end to all worldly feelings and discerning and can be equated with a pure and clean mind.

<sup>3</sup> Bodhi is free from all dual concepts of permanence and of annihilation or impermanence which are a pair of opposites produced by the deluded mind.



single one which possesses an ego, a personality, a being and a life." Subhūti, if a Bodhisattva says: "I should adorn Buddha lands", he cannot be called a Bodhisattva. Why? Because when the Tathāgata speaks of such adornment it is not, but is (expediently), called adornment. Subhūti, if a Bodhisattva is thoroughly versed in (the doctrine of) the unreality of ego and of things (dharma), the Tathāgata will call him a true Bodhisattva.'

The above shows that Dharma-kāya has no ego with which to break up the Bodhisattva's two fine (erroneous) views of the reality of ego and of things (dharma). Subhūti grasped the idea that a Bodhisattva was so called because of the existence of a Dharma which enabled the latter to liberate all living beings. The World Honoured One told him that there was no real Dharma to kill the idea of the reality of things (dharma). He was apprehensive that Subhūti might have a doubt about the unreality of Dharma, without which Dharma a Buddha land could not be adorned. Therefore, the World Honoured One pointed out that the land (or realm) of permanent peace and enlightenment did not need adornment, in order to kill the idea of a mind abiding there and of the reality of an ego. If one is not thoroughly versed in this doctrine, one will not be a true Bodhisattva. Therefore, He declared: 'If one is thoroughly versed in the unreality of ego and things (dharma), the Tathāgata will call him a true Bodhisattva.'

*Doubt.*—If a Bodhisattva cannot see any living beings to liberate or realms to purify, how is it that the Tathāgata has five kinds of vision? To kill this doubt, the sūtra points out that he uses the minds of living beings for eyes and has not Himself five kinds of vision.

'Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess human eyes?

'Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata possesses human eyes.'

'Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess deva eyes?'<sup>1</sup>

'Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata possesses deva-eyes.'

'Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess wisdom eyes?'<sup>2</sup>

'Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata possesses wisdom eyes.'

'Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess Dharma eyes?'<sup>3</sup>

'Yes, World Honoured One. The Tathāgata possesses Dharma eyes.'

'Subhūti, What do you think? Does the Tathāgata possess Buddha eyes?'<sup>4</sup>

'Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata possesses Buddha eyes.'

'Subhūti, what do you think? Does the Tathāgata say that the sand-grains in the Ganges are sand-grains?'

<sup>1</sup> Deva eye: divine sight, unlimited vision.

<sup>2</sup> Wisdom eye: eye of wisdom that sees all things as unreal.

<sup>3</sup> Dharma eye: because it is able to penetrate all things, to see the truth that releases us from reincarnation.

<sup>4</sup> Buddha eye, the eye of the Buddha, the enlightened one who sees all and is omniscient.

'Yes, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata says they are sand-grains.'

'Subhūti, what do you think? If there were as many Ganges rivers as sand-grains in the Ganges, and if there were as many Buddha realms as sand-grains of all these Ganges rivers, would there be many world systems?'

'Many, World Honoured One!'

The Buddha said: 'The living beings in all these world systems have many different minds which are all known to the Tathāgata. Why? Because the minds the Tathāgata speaks of are not minds but are (expediently) called minds. And why? Because, Subhūti, neither the past, the present nor the future mind can be found.'<sup>1</sup>

This shows that mind, Buddha and living beings do not differ from one another.<sup>2</sup> Subhūti doubted and thought that since the Buddha possesses the five kinds of eye, there should be things (dharma) which He can see, and worlds and living beings to match (these eyes). The World Honoured One said that His five kinds of eye are not really eyes and that He sees by using the minds of living beings. Moreover, there are uncountable living beings in the worlds which are as many as the sand-grains of the Ganges rivers, and the Tathāgata knows them all and sees all their different minds because these beings are (inside) His own mind. Therefore, when the mind of a being is stirred by a thought, it is the Tathāgata's own mind which is moved. How then can this be unknown to and unseen by Him?

Subhūti doubted again and thought that since the mind of a being is born and dies, did the Tathāgata's mind also have birth and death? For this reason, the World Honoured One said that in all this, the mind of a being is fundamentally the absolute and has neither birth nor death, the same as the Tathāgata's mind which is in the universal condition of Nirvāṇa. The Tathāgata and living beings are clearly immutable and free from birth and death as well as from coming and going. This is called the sameness of Mind, Buddha and living being. For this reason, the mind cannot be found in the past, present or future.

*Doubt.*—Hitherto the Tathāgata had wiped out all attachments by saying that there are no (Buddha) lands to adorn and no beings to liberate. He was apprehensive that Subhūti might turn his thoughts to the non-existence of lands and living beings, and might think that since almsgiving (dāna) did not reap any merit, it would be useless to practise it. Therefore, the World Honoured One wiped out this doubt by declaring that the merit of no-merit is the greatest merit.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is elimination of the conception of time.

<sup>2</sup> Mind, Buddha and being are intrinsically the same.

<sup>3</sup> A merit not conditioned by the deluded mind is the greatest merit.



'Subhūti, what do you think? If someone filled the universe with the seven treasures and gave all away in his practice of dāna, would this (good) cause enable the giver to gain a great merit?'

'Yes, World Honoured One, because of this (good) cause the giver would gain a great merit.'

'Subhūti, if the merit was real, the Tathāgata would not say it was great.<sup>1</sup> He says so because there is no merit.'

The above shows the formless merit. Subhūti clung to form in the practice of dāna which, he thought, would reap merits. He did not realize that the giver and the six objects of sense (guṇas) are fundamentally non-existent, so that any merit gained is (equally) non-existent. Therefore, the World Honoured One wiped out this (wrong) view by declaring that the merit is great because of the non-existence of merit. When He said: 'There is no merit', He did not mean that there was no merit at all. As the capacity of the mind (when freed from delusion) is as great as space, the merit will be very great.

*Doubt.*—As Subhūti heard that the mind should not be attached to form when liberating living beings and adorning Buddha lands, he doubted and thought: Liberation of living beings and adornment of (Buddha) lands are the causes of attaining Buddhahood, with the resultant fruit adorned with myriads of good virtues. Now, if there are no living beings to liberate and no (Buddha) lands to adorn, this means that there is no cause whatsoever. He also thought that, if there is no enlightenment (Bodhi) to attain, there will be no fruit. If cause and effect are wiped out, there will be no Buddha. However, he saw the perfect material appearance of the Tathāgata; where did this come from? This doubt was cut off by the Buddha who pointed out that the Tathāgata should not be perceived by means of His perfect material appearance.

'Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Buddha be perceived by His completely perfect physical body (rūpa-kāya)?'

'No, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata should not be so perceived. Why? Because the Buddha says the completely perfect rūpa-kāya is not, but is called the completely perfect rūpa-kāya.'

'Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata be perceived by His completely perfect forms?'

'No, World Honoured One, the Tathāgata should not be so perceived, because the Tathāgata says the completely perfect forms are not but are called completely perfect forms.'

<sup>1</sup> If a merit can be estimated and expressed in words, it will not be great. On the other hand, if a merit is not conditioned by the conception of existence and non-existence, it will be really very great.

The above prevents the forms of Sambhoga-kāya being used to reveal the oneness of Dharma-kāya and Sambhoga-kāya. The completely perfect Rūpa-kāya was the Sambhoga-kāya adorned with myriads of perfect virtues. As many aeons have been spent to liberate living beings for the adornment of Buddha lands, this resultant fruit is a reward of the (perfect) cause and is called by the Tathāgata, the completely perfect Rūpa-kāya. Moreover, this Sambhoga-kāya was fundamentally Dharma-kāya and for this reason, He said: 'It is not the completely perfect Rupa-kāya.' Dharma-kāya and Sambhoga-kāya being one, He said: 'It is called the completely perfect Rūpa-kāya.' This was to break up the (view of the reality of) forms which are seen (i.e. the objective). In the next sentence, He wiped out the seeing which was *able to see* (the subjective). As Sambhoga-kāya was identical with Dharma-kāya, there existed no forms which could be seen. Both wisdom and body (or substance) being absolute, the sickness of seeing (or illusory view) was eliminated. The objective seen and the subjective wisdom melting into one, the Dharma-kāya was exposed.<sup>1</sup>

The use of the positive term 'is' or the negative term 'is not' was to protect the disciples against their fall into old ruts by driving away their (false) views. This is why the Tathāgata who taught the Dharma, did not in fact teach anything at all. What He did was to protect living beings against mental sickness by enjoining upon them not to hold (false) views, by eliminating their passionate clinging to the unreal and by urging them to relinquish all attachments. Students should understand that this is (the sole content of His teaching).<sup>2</sup>

*Doubt.*—Subhūti, who had heard that the Buddha had no forms which could be seen, doubted and thought: 'Who is teaching the Dharma if there are no physical forms?' The Buddha wiped out this (false) view by saying that there is really no Dharma to expound.

'Subhūti, do not say that the Tathāgata thinks: "I must expound the Dharma". Do not have such a thought. Why? Because if someone says so, he will really slander the Buddha and be unable to understand my teaching. Subhūti, when (the Tathāgata) expounds the Dharma, there is really no Dharma to teach: but this is (expediently) called teaching the Dharma.'

This killed the doubt about the Tathāgata's Sambhoga-kāya expounding the Dharma. Since the time of His appearance in this world, the

<sup>1</sup> The elimination of the subjective 'seeing' and objective 'forms' was for the purpose of ensuring the melting of these two extremes into one undivided whole, i.e. the Dharma-kāya or self-natured Buddha.

<sup>2</sup> The Buddha's teaching consisted only of curing His disciples' mental illness by stripping them of feelings and passions so that they could perceive their fundamental nature which was pure and clean. He had no firm Dharma to expound to them.



Tathāgata had no (real) Dharma to expound. He only expediently broke up living beings' feelings (and discernings). He used single words and His 'No' or 'Not' called for a stop to halt (His disciples') wrong thoughts. This was precisely His idea of protecting, and cherishing living beings. Therefore, He said: 'This is called the expounding of Dharma.'

*Doubt.*—Subhūti had already understood the doctrine of the Dharma-kāya which does not speak of and proclaim anything, and is a very profound Dharma, but he did not know whether living beings in future ages would believe and receive it. This doubt arose in his mind and was cut off by (the doctrine of) the non-existence of living beings expounded in the next paragraphs.

Then the wise Subhūti said to the Buddha: 'World Honoured One, will there be in future ages living beings who will believe this Dharma when they hear it?'

The Buddha said: 'Subhūti, the living beings (you just mentioned) are neither living nor not-living beings.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because, Subhūti, the Tathāgata says these living beings are not (really), but they are (expediently), called living beings.'

The above shows the absolute oneness of living beings and Dharma to wipe out the (false) view of the reality of living beings. Subhūti had obtained the wonderful comprehension of the (doctrine of the) Dharma-kāya and could believe and receive it. However, this Dharma was very profound and he did not know if there would be in future ages living beings able to believe it. This was due to his view of the reality of birth and death which was still not relinquished, so that he thought of future living beings. The World Honoured One replied that living beings were fundamentally the absolute and are the same as the Dharma. How could there be a future time? The suchness of living beings and the sameness of the three times are the supreme pattern of the ultimate prajñā. When the Buddha said: 'They are neither living beings nor not living beings. Why? Because these living beings are not really, but are expediently called living beings', he meant that they were fundamentally the absolute. For this reason He said: 'They are neither living beings . . .' As the absolute follows circumstantial causes to accomplish actions, He said: ' . . . nor not-living beings.' He again explained that the so-called living beings are the absolute that follows circumstantial causes and owe their forms to the combination of various dharmas. Therefore, He said that living beings are falsely called and are not really living beings. They are non-existent but are called living beings (for convenience sake only).

*Doubt.*—If the Dharma-kāya had no forms and if no Dharma could

<sup>1</sup> Elimination of both 'living beings' and 'not-living beings' which are a pair of opposites.

be acquired, why was it said that the practice of all good virtues (enables) one to attain enlightenment (Bodhi)? This doubt is cut off by the following doctrine of gainlessness in the universal nature.

Subhūti said to the Buddha: 'World Honoured One, does your (own) attainment of Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi) mean that you have not gained anything whatsoever?'

The Buddha replied: 'Just so, Subhūti, just so, I have not gained even the least Dharma from Supreme Enlightenment, and this is called Supreme Enlightenment. Furthermore, Subhūti, this Dharma is universal and impartial; wherefore it is called Supreme Enlightenment. The practice of all good virtues (Dharmas), free from attachment to an ego, a personality, a being and a life, will result in the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment. Subhūti, the so-called good virtues (Dharmas), the Tathāgata says, are not good but are (expediently) called good virtues.'<sup>1</sup>

This destroys the (false) view of Buddha and Dharma. Subhūti had already understood that the Dharma-kāya was pure and clean, and that there was no Dharma which could be acquired. However, he still doubted and thought there was (an actual) gain when the Buddha said that the practice of all good virtues (Dharmas) would enable one to obtain enlightenment. (He thought:) Was the Tathāgata's Bodhi fruit not acquired? The Buddha replied that nothing was obtained, because the Buddha and living beings are the same and are neither two nor different (entities). Bodhi means this and nothing else. Therefore, there is nothing that can be realized and obtained. When it was said that the practice of good virtues (Dharmas) led to the attainment of Bodhi, this meant that the four forms should be relinquished when practising these good virtues. As practice was tantamount to no-practice, so was attainment to non-attainment. Since there was no acquisition, the Dharma was really a perfect one.

*Doubt.*—Which Dharma is best if the (concept of) good Dharma is wrong? The next paragraph explains that the Dharma which reaches prajñā is the unsurpassed one.

'Subhūti, if (on the one hand) a man, in his practice of charity (dāna) gives away the seven treasures piled up in a heap as great as all the Mounts Sumeru in the Universe put together, and (on the other hand) another man receives, holds (in mind), reads and recites even a four-line stanza of this Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra, and expounds it to others, the merit resulting from the former's dāna will not be worth one-hundredth, one-thousandth, one-ten-thousandth and one-hundred-

<sup>1</sup> After speaking of good virtues, the Buddha immediately eradicated all traces thereof, lest Subhūti might grasp the dual concept of the good and evil which are non-existent in the universal and impartial reality of prajñā.



thousandth part of that obtained by the latter, as no conceivable comparison can be made between the two.'

This praises the unsurpassed merit of the form-relinquishing *prajñā*. Subhūti thought that if the practice of a good Dharma did not ensure the acquisition of Bodhi, the Dharma in question would not be the unsurpassed one. Then, which Dharma was unsurpassable? The Buddha said the one which reached *prajñā*. In the universe there are 100,000,000 mount Sumerus and if the seven treasures were piled up in a huge heap as great as all the mount Sumerus put together, there would indeed be many treasures to be given away in the practice of *dāna*. The merit resulting therefrom would (however) not be comparable to the merit derived from a four-line stanza which reached *prajñā*. The reason is that the former still clings to forms with a desire for his own gain. As *prajñā* relinquishes all forms, it is incomparable and unsurpassable.

*Doubt.*—Subhūti had heard that living beings and Buddhas are the same (or one undivided whole). If so, there would be no living beings at all. Then, why is it said that the Tathāgata should liberate living beings? (Thus) Subhūti still clung to the concept of an ego and a personality. In the following text, this doubt was cut off by wiping out both ego and personality.

'Subhūti, what do you think? You should not say the Tathāgata has this thought (in His mind): "I should liberate living beings." Subhūti, you should not think so. Why? Because there are really no living beings whom the Tathāgata can liberate. If there were, the Tathāgata would hold (the concept of) an ego, a personality, a being and a life. Subhūti, (when) the Tathāgata speaks of an ego, there is in reality no ego, although common men think so. Subhūti, the Tathāgata says common men are not, but are (expediently) called, common men.'

This removes the doubt about the Buddha holding the concept of an ego and a personality in order to reveal the Dharma-kāya's real self. It was said: 'The Buddha and living beings are the same' and if this doctrine of sameness holds good, there would be no Buddha and no living beings. Then why was it said: 'I should liberate living beings?' As a living being is a personality, if I liberate him, the I or ego would exist. If ego and personality really exist, the four forms will not be eliminated. This is referred to in Ch'an teaching as attainment of the borderline of Dharma-kāya but not the actual penetration into the 'Transcendental Sentence'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Ch'an terminology, the 'transcendental sentence' or 'first sentence' is the symbol of the real, or Dharma-kāya. As soon as a thought arises, it will be the second or third sentence, for a discriminating mind always strays from the absolute *prajñā*.

of Dharma-kāya. For this reason, the Tathāgata spoke words to destroy this idea when He said: 'Do not say that I, the Tathāgata, have this thought of liberating living beings. If "I" had, "I" would be a common man.' Even the common men, mentioned by the Tathāgata, are not really common men. How then could He still hold the view of an 'I'? This wiped out the concept of both the saintly and worldly, resulting in the impartial One Way.<sup>1</sup> This completes the doctrine of *prajñā*.

*Doubt.*—If Dharma-kāya is egoless and if the form of Sambhoga-kāya cannot be perceived by form, is the World Honoured One who was endowed with thirty-two physical characteristics not a (real) Buddha?

'Subhūti, what do you think? Can the Tathāgata be recognised by His thirty-two physical characteristics?'

Subhūti reply: 'Yes, yes, He can.'

The Buddha said: 'Subhūti, if the Tathāgata can be recognised by His thirty-two physical characteristics, a world ruler (*cakravartī*) would be the Tathāgata.'

Subhūti said to the Buddha: 'World Honoured One, as I understand your teaching, the Tathāgata cannot be recognised by His thirty-two physical characteristics.'

Thereupon, the World Honoured One recited the following *gāthā*:

'He who sees me by outward appearance  
(And) seeks me in sound,  
Treads the heterodox path  
(And) cannot perceive the Tathāgata.'

The Buddha pointed out that *Nirmāṇa-kāya* could not reveal the Dharma-kāya which was beyond all forms. Subhūti had already understood that a Buddha was a true one when His Dharma-kāya was egoless and His Sambhoga-kāya had no characteristics. (But) he still doubted and asked himself who was the Buddha, visible here, with His thirty-two physical characteristics? This was his view of the Buddha.<sup>2</sup> The World Honoured One asked him: 'Is it true that the Tathāgata can be recognized by His thirty-two physical characteristics?' As Subhūti clung to these signs which (seemed to) show the (true) Buddha, the World Honoured One broke up his (false) view by saying that a world ruler also has thirty-two physical characteristics. Now Subhūti understood that the Tathāgata could not be recognized by His thirty-two characteristics, and the World Honoured One read the *gāthā* on relinquishment of forms, which ran:

<sup>1</sup> One Way, the way of deliverance from mortality, the Supreme *Yāna*.

<sup>2</sup> By holding the view of the existence of the Buddha, Subhūti still grasped the dual conception of a 'subject', the holder of such a view, and an 'object', the Buddha viewed as existing. This dual view obstructed the attainment of Bodhi.



'He who sees me by outward appearance—and seeks me in sound—treads the heterodox path—and cannot perceive the Tathāgata.'

*Doubt.*—Subhūti had heard that both Dharma-kāya and Sambhoga-kāya had no forms and that Nirmāṇa-kāya was not real. Now there arose in his mind, in respect of Dharma-kāya, the view of annihilation, because of his inability to reach the real self of Dharma-kāya. The Buddha broke up this view by His doctrine of non-annihilation.

'Subhūti, if you have (in your mind) this thought: "The Tathāgata does not rely on His possession of characteristics to obtain supreme Enlightenment," Subhūti, banish that thought. Subhūti, if you think it while developing the Perfect Enlightenment Mind, you will advocate the annihilation of all Dharmas. Do not have such a thought. Why? Because one who develops the Supreme Enlightenment Mind, does not advocate the annihilation (of things).'<sup>1</sup>

'Subhūti, if (on the one hand) a Bodhisattva gave in his practice of dāna, all the seven treasures in quantities sufficient to fill worlds as many as sand-grains in the Ganges, and (on the other hand) another man comprehended that all dharmas were egoless and thereby achieved perfection of patience (kṣānti), the latter's merit would surpass that of the former. Why? Because, Subhūti, all Bodhisattvas do not receive reward for their merits.'

Subhūti asked the Buddha: 'World Honoured One, why do Bodhisattvas not receive reward for their merits?'

'Subhūti, Bodhisattvas should have no longing and no attachment when they practise meritorious virtues; therefore, they do not receive a reward.'

The Buddha broke up the view of annihilation. As Subhūti heard that form should be relinquished in order to perceive the Buddha, the view of annihilation arose in his mind, and he thought that the Tathāgata did not rely on His possession of characteristics to obtain enlightenment. The Buddha taught him this: 'Do not have such a thought, because if you have it (in your mind), you will advocate annihilation (of all dharmas). Those who develop the Bodhi Mind, do not advocate the annihilation of things, but only the non-existence of the ego in all things. If a Bodhisattva knew that all dharmas were egoless and succeeded in his practice of the patience-perfection (pāramitā), his merit would surpass that of a giver of sufficient of the seven treasures to fill worlds as many as sand-grains in the Ganges, because the former did not receive reward for his merit. When it was said that he did not receive any reward, this did not mean that there was no reward at all. It is enough to have no longing for and

<sup>1</sup> Since all forms originally were not created, they should not be annihilated. Creation and annihilation are two opposites and should not be clung to when developing the Bodhi Mind which is free from the duality of things.

no attachment to, any merit. It was said: 'No doer, no doing and no receiver, (but) good and evil karma cannot be wiped out.'

After His appearance in this world, and for forty-nine years, the World Honoured One only said the word *no*. All living beings in the nine worlds<sup>1</sup> clung to the concept of an ego in all things but the Tathāgata used (only) the word *no* to destroy it. This was the right Dharma eye which looked straight into the Transcendental Way. For this reason, the Ch'an sect transmits only the direct pointing through which alone one enters (the real).

*Doubt.*—It had been said that there is no ego and no receiver of merit, but when the Tathāgata was seen walking, standing, sitting or lying, was not this His ego? This was due to attachment to the false conception of unity-with-differentiation<sup>2</sup> of the Three Bodies (Trikāya) and to the non-comprehension of the universalized Dharma-kāya.

'Subhūti, if someone says the Tathāgata comes or goes, sits or lies, he does not understand what I mean. Why? Because the Tathāgata has neither whence (to come) nor whither (to go); therefore, He is called the Tathāgata.'

The above shows the ultimate return to the reality of the Dharma-kāya. Hitherto, Subhūti because of his (false) view of coming and going had thought that the Tathāgata was One whose deportment inspired respect.<sup>3</sup> Did the Tathāgata in fact really come and go? The moment had now come when all clingings disappeared and all feelings ceased, and when the disciple comprehended the sameness of the mutable and immutable. He thus reached the most wonderful reality of the absolute. However, he still held the (false) view of unity-with-differentiation and his mind could not yet grasp the profound meaning of the Trikāya in one body. This (wrong) view is wiped out in the following paragraph about the world and dust.

'Subhūti, what do you think? If a virtuous man or woman reduced to dust all the worlds in the Universe, would those particles of dust be many?'

Subhūti replied: 'Many, World Honoured One. Why? Because if they really existed, the Buddha would not say they were particles of dust. And why? Because when the Buddha speaks of particles of dust, they are not, but are (expediently) called, particles of dust. World Honoured One, when the Tathāgata speaks of worlds, they are not, but are (expediently) called, worlds. Why? Because if they

<sup>1</sup> The nine worlds are those of: (1) Bodhisattvas, (2) Pratyekas, (3) Śrāvakas, (4) devas, (5) men, (6) asuras, (7) animals, (8) hungry ghosts and (9) the denizens of hell.

<sup>2</sup> Unity-with-differentiation: monism and pluralism, Oneness and otherness.

<sup>3</sup> Respect-inspiring deportment: dignity in walking, standing, sitting and lying.



really exist, they are just agglomerations.<sup>1</sup> The Tathāgata speaks of agglomerations which are not, but are (expediently) called, agglomerations.'

'Subhūti, that which is called an agglomeration cannot be spoken of, but the vulgar man has longing for and attachment to this thing.'<sup>2</sup>

This broke up the (false) view of Unity-with-differentiation. As Subhūti's mind had not yet grasped the reality of the Trikāya in One Body, the World Honoured One used the dust and world, as examples, to point out that the one was not monistic nor the other pluralistic. Particles of dust, united together to form a world, seem pluralistic but are not really so. When the world is broken up and reduced to dust, it seems monistic but is not really so. Thus (the so-called) unity-with-differentiation does not obtain anywhere, and therefore is not real. If unity-with-differentiation exists, it would only be an agglomeration (without permanent reality). An agglomeration owes (its seeming existence) to a dual view because monism cannot be pluralistic nor pluralism monistic. If the dust really exists, it cannot agglomerate to make a world, and if a world really exists, it cannot be reduced to dust. The common man takes it for unity but the unity of which the Tathāgata spoke was different. If the two extremes are wiped out, this can be called unity, but when the two extremes have been eliminated, (even) this unity cannot be spoken of.<sup>3</sup> The ordinary man cannot give up the two extremes, such as existence and non-existence, or monism and pluralism, and clings to them. This explains his inability to understand the doctrine of the Trikāya in one body of the universalized Dharma-kāya.

*Doubt.*—If Dharma-kāya is universal and if all things are unreal and cannot be conceived, why did the Buddha speak of the view of four forms? This doubt is removed in the following paragraph.

'Subhūti, what do you think? If someone says: "The Buddha speaks of the view of an ego, a personality, a being and a life," Subhūti, does that person understand what I mean?'

'No, World Honoured One, that person does not understand. Why? Because (when) the Tathāgata speaks of the view of an ego, a personality, a being and a life, it is not really, (but) is (expediently) called the view of an ego, a personality a being and a life.'<sup>4</sup>

'Subhūti, he who develops the Supreme Enlightenment Mind, should thus know, see, believe and comprehend (all things); he should not set up the percep-

<sup>1</sup> Particles of dust united together to form a world.

<sup>2</sup> The unreal phenomenal.

<sup>3</sup> Because it is the reality and is inexpressible.

<sup>4</sup> The Buddha spoke of these views held by worldly men but He did not hold these views.

tion of things (dharma-lakṣaṇa)<sup>1</sup> in his mind. Subhūti, the so-called form of things (dharma-lakṣaṇa), the Tathāgata says is not but is (expediently) called the form of things.'

This wiped out the (subtle) view of relinquishment of form. Subhūti had already understood the doctrine of the absolute universalized Dharma-kāya, but still doubted and thought: If the body or substance of Dharma-kāya could not be seen by means of form, why did the Tathāgata speak of the relinquishment of the view of four forms? The Buddha was apprehensive that Subhūti might still have this doubt hidden in his mind and asked him this question: 'Supposing that someone says: "The World Honoured One says there is the view of the four forms," do you think this person understands what I mean?' Thereupon, Subhūti understood and replied: 'No, this person does not understand what the Tathāgata means. Why? Because (when) the World Honoured One speaks of the view of four forms, there is actually no such view that can be pointed out and spoken of.' This was to wipe out attachment to the view about forms. Therefore, He said: *Not*, which differed in meaning from the previous occasions when he used the word. It was used frequently before in a negative sense whereas here it banishes completely the view concerning forms held in the minds of living beings. They, not the Buddha, held this view. Therefore, He said: '(It) is called the view about forms.' (Here) the two words 'is called' also differ in meaning from when they were used before. Students should examine carefully this difference in meaning.

As all living things are deluded and upset by their views of forms and since their grasp is very hard to break, the Buddha used the Diamond-mind wisdom to demolish these views one by one, in order to enable them to perceive the fundamental wisdom of the Dharma-kāya's body.

At first they clung to the forms of the five aggregates (skandhas) of body and mind and to the six sense data. They were attached to these forms while giving alms (dāna) to seek merits in their quest of Buddhahood. The World Honoured One broke up this by the doctrine of non-attachment.

Next, they clung to the form of Bodhi and the Buddha broke it up by the doctrine of gainlessness.

Next, they clung to the form of Buddha lands adorned by almsgiving (dāna) and the Buddha broke it up by declaring that there are no lands which can be adorned.

Next, they clung to merits which would result in the appearance of

<sup>1</sup> Dharma-lakṣaṇa: form, appearance, aspects and characteristics of dharmas, or things.



the Reward body (or Sambhoga-kāya) and the Buddha broke it up by stating that it is not in fact the completely perfect form body (Rūpa-kāya).

Next, they clung to the appearance of the Trikāya which the Tathāgata possessed and the Buddha broke it up by declaring that the Nirmāṇa-kāya is not real and that Sambhoga-kāya is beyond forms.

Next, they clung to the view that the Dharma-kāya must have forms, and the Buddha broke this up by declaring that the Dharma-kāya has none.

Next, they clung to the existence of a true ego in the Dharma-kāya and the Buddha broke it up by declaring that all things are egoless.

Next, they clung to the view that the Tathāgata possessed the forms of the Trikāya and the Buddha broke up this by declaring that the real is neither monistic nor pluralistic.

Thus all their false views were broken up successively one after the other, and with the elimination of all idea of form and appearance, the mind had nowhere to alight. (The moment had come when) the fundamental Law was in its absoluteness after the relinquishment of all feelings, pointing straight to the reality of Dharma-kāya. As all false forms which *were seen* were non-existent, the seeing which *could see* them also vanished. This was the ultimate pattern of true Prajñā which penetrated right into the Transcendental Path of the Dharma-kāya. Therefore, the Buddha gave them this commandment: 'He who develops the Bodhi-mind should, in respect of all things, thus know, see, believe and interpret; he should not give rise (in his mind) to things with form (dharma-lakṣaṇa).' Only then could there be true knowing, seeing, belief and interpretation, and no more (false) knowing and seeing of the forms of things would ever rise again. Thus the two views of the reality of ego and of things (dharma) would disappear; the conception of the saintly and worldly would be buried in oblivion; and there would be no room for words and speeches as well as for all mental activities. Since it would be wrong to stir the mind and to arouse a thought, He again told them: 'The so-called dharma-lakṣaṇa is not dharma-lakṣaṇa.' This was the true and real dharma-lakṣaṇa which was not the same as the falsely viewed one. This is the profound doctrine of Prajñā in its ultimate subtleness.

*Doubt.*—Subhūti who had been awakened to the whole substance of the Dharma-kāya doubted and thought that if Dharma-kāya could not expound the Dharma, the speaker would be Nirmāṇa-kāya and the Dharma expounded by Nirmāṇa-kāya would not reach the region of Dharma-kāya. How then could those who observed the said Dharma gain

merits? The next paragraph explains that the Dharma expounded by Nirmāṇa-kāya was the true Dharma because of the Trikāya in one body.

'Subhūti, if on the one hand, someone gave away in alms (dāna) the seven treasures in quantities sufficient to fill all the worlds in uncountable aeons, and if on the other hand, a virtuous man or woman developed the Bodhi-mind, and received, held (in mind), read and recited even a four-line stanza of this sūtra and expounded it to others, the latter's merit would surpass that of the former. In what manner should it be taught to others? By teaching it without attachment to form with the immutability of the absolute.'<sup>1</sup>

The above points out that the Nirmāṇa-kāya Buddha teaches the absolute Dharma. Subhūti doubted and thought that if the Dharma taught by the Nirmāṇa-kāya Buddha would not reach the region of Dharma-kāya, merits could not be gained. The Buddha said the Dharma taught by the Nirmāṇa-kāya was exactly the same as if taught by the Dharma-kāya because of the oneness of the Trikāya, and if even a four-line stanza of this Dharma could be held (in mind) and taught to others, the resultant merits would be unsurpassable, owing to the detachment from form while abiding in the immutability of the absolute. This was called the widespread explaining of the Dharma by dust and regions.<sup>2</sup>

*Doubt.*—Since the Dharma-kāya is calm and not liable (to reincarnation), how can one who is calm, expound the Dharma? The following text points out the correct meditation. As Prajñā is immaterial, the phenomenal should be looked into first for the (subsequent) entry into the void which is called absolute voidness, because of the identity of the seeming with the real.

'Why is it? Because:

'All phenomena are like  
A dream, an illusion, a bubble and a shadow,  
Like dew and lightning.  
Thus should you meditate upon them'

The above wonderful meditation leads to the entry into the true voidness of Prajñā. As the true voidness is still and unfathomable, the meditation should be made by means of the seeming, and if the meditation on the above six things, namely dream, illusion, bubble, shadow,

<sup>1</sup> Literally the immobility of Bhūtataṭatā.

<sup>2</sup> A Buddhist term: Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's ears could hear a straw, a plant and a particle of dust expounding the unsurpassed wonderful Dharma. This meant that in the ten directions of space, each particle of dust had a region and each region had a Buddha who expounded the Avataṃsaka Sūtra. In other words, this Bodhisattva perceived the all pervading reality in each particle of dust, plant and region.



dew and lightning, is successful, the true void appears. Up to this point the Ruling Principle (or Fundamental Law) has been expounded but here is given the method of meditation which students should follow for their entry (into Prajñā). Here the true realm of Dharma-kāya is finally dealt with.

When the Buddha had finished expounding this sūtra, the elder Subhūti, together with bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, upāsakas, upāsikās, and all the worlds of devas, men and asuras who had listened to His teaching, were filled with joy and believed, received and observed it.

The listeners were filled with joy and their minds were wonderfully at one with the doctrine. As a result their beliefs were true, they received the sūtra in earnest, and their observance of it had purpose.