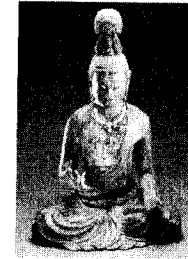


THE DIAMOND SUTRA:

THE PERFECTION
OF WISDOM



Text and Commentaries
translated from Sanskrit and Chinese
by Red Pine

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(edited with Mike O'Connor)

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beings. The first is based on the power of resolution. Some people think that if a person becomes a buddha, the world is purified. This is a great misunderstanding. Buddhas and the beings they teach together complete the perfection and transformation of a world."

In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the Buddha says, "Who would purify their world first purifies their mind. As their mind becomes pure, their world becomes pure." (1)

Tsung-mi says: "How do we purify the mind? Externally, we remain uncontaminated by the six sensations, internally we remain free of self and being as well as unattached to nirvana. This is called purification."

Wang Jih-hsiu says, "In every world system, there is a buddha who establishes the teaching. Shakyamuni established the teaching in this world. In the world to the east, Akshobya Buddha established the teaching. Thus, every world system is also called a buddha realm. Bodhisattvas transform the buddha realm in which they live by performing various acts of kindness in order to transform that world. When Amita Buddha was a bodhisattva, he performed countless acts of kindness and as a result of such good karma was able to transform his world into one whose ground was made of gold [note: the sutras say aquamarine] and whose trees and towers and pavilions were made of the seven jewels. This is to transform. But to say that a bodhisattva transforms or purifies a buddha land is not exactly the truth. For to transform a buddha land is not to transform it. This is what is meant by transforming it."

Ch'en Hsiung says, "Palaces made of jewels and halls of every color are all external decorations. This is what ordinary people call adornment. They are not what bodhisattvas call adornment. If you want to know what a bodhisattva calls adornment, look inside at what is not adorned. The bodhisattva's adornment does not consist in external adornment. On the contrary, it is sought in

the mind. If the mind is pure, what adornment could be greater?"

Thich Nhat Hahn says, "Upon attaining enlightenment, all buddhas and bodhisattvas open a new world for people on the path of realization who want to study and practice with them. After a period of practice, if you have some attainment and peace, you may wish to share them with others and establish a small practice community. But this should always be done in the spirit of formlessness. Do not be bound by the practice center you establish."

Textual note: While all editions have the Buddha asking a rhetorical question that he answers himself, Kumarajiva attributes the response to Subhuti and condenses *sa vitathan vadet* (such a claim would be untrue) into *pu yeh shih-ts'un* (no, Bhagavan). In the Buddha's initial question and the final sentence, Paramartha has *chuang-yen ch'ing-ching* (adorn and purify). Hsuan-tsang has *wo tang ch'eng-pan fo-t'u kung-te chuang-yen* (I shall create a buddha-world and adorn it with virtue), while Yi-ching has *wo tang ch'eng-chiu chuang-yen kuo-t'u* (I shall perfect and adorn a world). Kumarajiva does not include *kshetra* (world) in the last sentence.

Therefore, Subhuti, fearless bodhisattvas should thus give birth to a thought that is not attached and not give birth to a thought attached to anything. They should not give birth to a thought attached to a sight. Nor should they give birth to a thought attached to a sound, a smell, a taste, a touch, or a dharma.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas transform a world in order to liberate the beings who live in that world. Thus, the Buddha returns to the teaching that began this sutra, giving birth to the thought of liberating all beings. Although such a thought is not immune to attachment, only such a thought is capable of no attachment. For only such a thought confronts the illusions of space and time with enough force to break through them. Here, however, liberation is preceded by transformation—but transformation that is

no transformation. For what is there to be transformed? Thus the mind transforms without transforming.

Li Wen-hui says, "Our mind originally does not dwell anywhere. But because it comes into contact with various realms, the mind gives birth to thoughts, unaware that such contact and such realms are empty. It considers the things of the world as real and focuses on these realms. It is like a monkey trying to grab the moon or like eyes with cataracts that see flowers. All things are produced by the mind. To realize one's true nature is not to be attached to anything. The mind not attached to anything is prajna."

According to the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, "The Tathagata is not attached to anything, because his mind does not seek to rest on anything. He is not attached to the created, and he is not attached to the uncreated." (2)

Ch'en Hsiung says, "Once the mind is pure, nothing is more beautiful. Whoever gives birth to the mind while attached to the six realms of sensation does not have a pure mind."

The *Lankavatara Sutra* says, "While most people are transformed by things, a bodhisattva is able to transform things. A person who can transform things is, in fact, the same as a bodhisattva."

The *Sixth Patriarch Sutra* says, "Once, when the Fifth Patriarch was reading the *Diamond Sutra*, when he got to 'They should give birth to a mind that isn't attached to anything,' the Sixth Patriarch (Hui-neng) was suddenly enlightened and said, 'How could I have known my own nature was already pure? How could I have known my own nature was neither created nor destroyed? How could I have known my own nature was already perfect? How could I have known my own nature does not change?' The Fifth Patriarch said, 'Not to recognize your own mind is to study the Dharma to no avail. If, as I was speaking, you recognized your own mind and saw your own nature, you are a leader of men and gods.'" (1)

Hui-neng says, "People who dwell on the sights they see and

give birth to thoughts about sights are deluded. People who remain detached from the sights they see and do not give birth to thoughts about sights are awake. People who give birth to thoughts about sights are like a cloud-covered sky. People who do not give birth to thoughts about sights are like a cloudless sky where the sun and moon shine."

Conze says, "The thought which the bodhisattva should produce, or raise, is a completely free thought, which depends on no object or motive. It is the white heat of wisdom intent on luminous transparency of the Void."

Tao-ch'uan says, "Sitting silent late at night in a mountain shrine / desolate and deserted is just the way it is / why does the west wind stir the forest trees / suddenly a wild goose cry fills the sky."

Textual note: In place of the first sentence, Kumarajiva and Bodhiruci have *chu-p'u-sa mo-ho-sa ying ju-shih sheng ch'ing-ching-hsin* (fearless bodhisattvas should give birth to a pure thought like this). All Chinese translators move *yat na kvacit pratisthitam cittam utpadayitavyam* (and not give birth to a thought attached to anything) to the end of this section. Yi-ching repeats the list of sensory objects twice and at the beginning of each repetition has *pu-chu-yu-shih, pu-chu-sui-ch'u* (not attached to an action and not attached to a place). After negating attachment to the six senses, Hsuan-tsang also negates the negation, e.g., *pu-chu fei-ssu . . . ying sheng ch'i-hsin* (they should give birth to a thought that is not attached to no sight), etc. As elsewhere, Müller does not include *dharmas* among the objects of the senses.

"Subhuti, imagine a person with an immense, perfect body whose self-existence is like that of Mount Sumeru. What do you think, Subhuti? Would such self-existence be great?"

Subhuti replied, "Great, indeed, Bhagavan. Such self-existence would be great, Sugata. And why? Because self-existence, Bhagavan, 'self-existence' is said by the