

NOTHINGNESS

無

DIAMOND
WISDOMS
OF
BUDDHA

Diamond Sutra
in Modern
Perspectives

Translated and Annotated

By E. Heng

Remainderless Nirvana

以
無
為
法

心
無
所
住

無
相
布
施

Diamond
Wisdoms
of
Buddha

Diamond Sutra in
Modern
Perspectives

Translated and
Annotated
By
E. Heng

Framework of Understanding Diamond Sutra

The Buddhist purpose in life is to seek enlightenment which is the spiritual release from cycles of life, death and sufferings. This is analogous to heaven in other religions.

Buddha says the ways to enlightenment cannot be defined or verbalized. They encompass all virtuous and benevolent practices. There is no definitive principle to use. But Buddha suggest a few approaches. He teaches us to be devoid of self, people, beings and mortals, and also devoid of the image of self, people, beings and mortals. To achieve that, we need to practice forbearance. We also need to achieve a clean and pure heart not corrupted by our senses and desires. That is why we should not dwell on our senses and gratifications and let our heart to be free. Buddha repeatedly teaches us to do three things: practicing charity, reciting Diamond Sutra abidingly and spreading the Diamond Sutra to other people. More importantly, Buddha teaches us not to be dogmatic about religious teachings because of our preconceived mindset and self centric behaviors that blind us from seeing the realities. In essence, Buddha teaches us to let go of all our desires, passions and obsessions and to have an unburdened heart and a free mind in order to achieve true happiness and purpose in life.

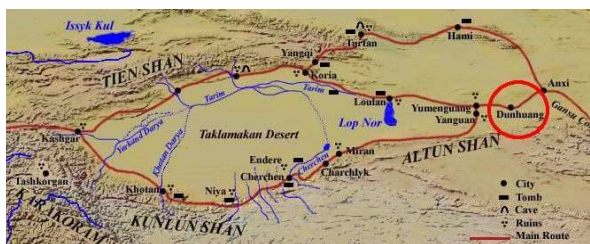
*Dedicated to those
who are living out life
without
asking WHY.*

What is Diamond Sutra?



Picture 1 - Diamond Sutra Scroll

Diamond Sutra (see Picture 1) was discovered in 1900 by a monk in *Dunhuang* (see Picture 2), China, which was an old Silk Road outpost on the edge of the Gobi Desert. *Diamond Sutra* is a Sanskrit text translated into Chinese, one of 40,000 scrolls hidden in “*The Cave of a Thousand Buddhas*” (see Picture 3 on Page 6). The cave was a secret library sealed up around the year 1,000 when the surrounding region was threatened by a neighboring kingdom.



Picture 2 - Map of Dunhuang

In 1907, British-Hungarian archaeologist Marc Aurel Stein was in the area to map out the ancient Silk Road. When he heard about the secret library, he bribed the abbot of the monastic group in charge of the cave and smuggled away thousands of documents, including Diamond Sutra.



Picture 3 - The Cave of a Thousand Buddhas

Diamond Sutra is relatively short, only 6,000 words in all. It is part of a larger collection of sacred texts in Mahayana Buddhism, the branch of Buddhism most prevalent in East Asia. Many believe that Buddha directly dictated the Diamond Sutra which takes the form of a dialog between him and his pupil Subhati.

Diamond Sutra summarizes the key thoughts of Buddha and the main ideology of Buddhism. Constant reading

will bring tremendous inspiration in life, and make life more meaningful as a result. **This book aims to demystify Buddhism and make the Buddhist ideas clear to ordinary people so that they may gain benefits and blessings from practicing the Buddhist ideas in their lives.**

**“Science without religion is lame,
religion without science is blind.”**

— Albert Einstein

**Before copying, reciting and reading
sutra,**

1. Wash both hands clean
2. Sit upright
3. Renounce your body, mouth and heart intentions.

BEST time to recite or read after getting up and cleaning yourself in the morning before breakfast.

Vajracchedikâ Prajñâpâramitâ Sutra (Diamond Sutra)



Picture 4 - Jeta Grove in Sravasti, India.

This is what I have heard. At one time, Buddha was in *Sravasti* (**See Note (1)**) (see *Picture 4*), staying in Anâthapiada's park of *Jeta Grove* (see *Picture 4*), accompanied by many monks, twelve hundred and fifty of them. At that time, it was meal time for Bhagavan (**See Note (2)**). Buddha put on his robe, carried his bowl, and entered the big city of Sravasti to beg for food. Within the city, Buddha took turn to beg for food. After finishing begging, and upon returning home, Buddha ate his meal. He then put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, arranged his seat, and sat down.

(1) Sravasti – One of the six largest cities in ancient India.

(2) Bhagawan – World Honored One, meaning Buddha

At that time, Elder Subhûti rose from his seat in the midst of the crowd. He knelt down with his right knee on the ground, and with his right shoulder bare. He joined his palms in respect, and said to Buddha, “Bhagavan has been well protecting the hearts of your disciples and advising them very well. However, for the virtuous and benevolent men and women who set their hearts on enlightenment **(See Note (3))**, would you tell them what they should dwell on and how they should subjugate their hearts?”

(3) Enlightenment – Belief in science, reason and logic; in Buddhism a blissful state absent of desires and sufferings after achieving a high degree of consciousness.

“Very well, very well.” Buddha told Subhûti. “Like you say, I have been well protecting the hearts of my disciples and advising them very well. Please listen carefully. I will tell you now. For the virtuous and benevolent men and women who set their hearts on enlightenment, this is what they should dwell on and how they should subjugate their hearts,” continued Buddha. “Bhagavan, if that is

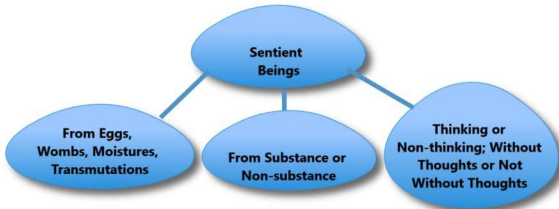
the case, we all wish to hear,” said Subhuti.

Buddha told Subhuti: “All Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas **(See Note (4))**, this is how you should subjugate your heart. For all types of beings, no matter if they are born from eggs, or from wombs, or from moisture, or from transmutation; from visible things or non-visible things; thinking or non-thinking; without thoughts or not without thoughts **(See Note (5))**, I will lead them to Remainderless Nirvana **(See Note (6))** and deliver them from cycles of life, death and sufferings. **(See Note (7))**. I will thus deliver immeasurable, countless and boundless beings. In reality no beings are actually delivered. Why is that so? If bodhisattvas possess the image of self, people, beings and mortals **(See Note (8))**, they are not bodhisattvas.”

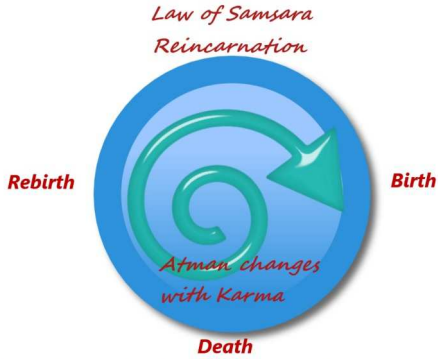
(4) Bodhisattvas are persons who have taken vows and are on way to enlightenment; specifically, those who postpone personal enlightenment in order to help others achieve enlightenment; Mahasattvas are persons who have attained a high degree of consciousness and are in advanced stage of enlightenment.

(5) Buddha gives a complete definition of mortals or sentient beings (see Picture 5) with or without consciousness and characterized by the cycles of life and death. (see Picture 6)

(6) Nirvana is visualized as a place of perfect peace and happiness; an ideal permanent state of spiritual release; a state of realization of non-self and emptiness where desires and sufferings no longer exist. Nirvana literally means cooling or extinguishing, and it relates to desires and sufferings going away with individuals disappearing into the universe. Remainderless means no mind-body complex to obstruct complete and permanent enlightenment. It means that the desires of our body do not linger on after it has disintegrated. Mind is free from bodily desires. Nirvana is a state of nothingness. (see Picture 7).



Picture 5 - Definition of Sentient Beings

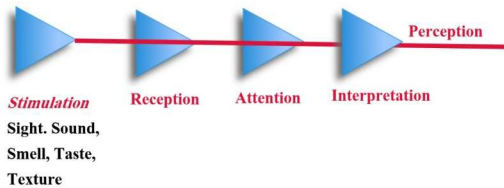


Your atman (soul) increases with karma (good deeds), and higher atman means rebirth into higher life forms, and eventual release from samsara or reincarnation cycles.

Picture 6 - Reincarnation



Picture 7 - Nothingness in Deep Space



Picture 8 - Physical Perception

(7) "Deliver" means freeing from cycles of life, death and sufferings.

(8) Image or physical perception means sensory perception (see Picture 8) of physical forms. After stating his primary goal of helping others to achieve enlightenment and nirvana, Buddha explains that the main hurdle to enlightenment is the habitual image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. Enlightenment requires us to have a clean and pure heart, and image perception or our senses for that matter act to corrupt our heart by stirring desires. A clean and pure heart is free from desires, emotions, obsessions and fixations. We have to be devoid of image perception to free our heart from the our overpowering senses. This is the opening advice of Buddha in Diamond Sutra. A clean and pure hear will lead to virtuous action and thought.

In order to remove environmental contamination to our action and thought, we need to remove sensory influences through image perception. A disciple of Buddha should have no image perception to be immune to environmental contamination. We get all our information through our senses

particularly through visual images, and the visual information is filtered through our preconditioned mindset and cognitive habits, resulting in distortion of perceived reality. Also the image perception will cause mental and emotional stress of greed, fear, anger, disappointment, desperation and disgust. Such emotional stress will contaminate our action and thoughts, thereby causing harm to other people. Therefore Buddha teaches us to rid ourselves of sensory influences and detach ourselves from the mind-body complex. In addition, the mental and emotional stress as a result of distorted sensory information will upset the serenity and purity of our heart which is the foundation of wisdom in life.

Buddha says his mission is to help deliver and liberate countless souls from the cycles of life, death and sufferings but no one soul is actually delivered and freed because they are still held captive to their mindset and image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. He says he cannot help them unless they make the will to remove the habit of image perception from their mind. This means that Buddha can only provide guidance but ultimately

we have to rely on ourselves to make the necessary personal changes in order to gain enlightenment. We have to remove image perception.

“Also, Subhuti, in regard to dharmas(See Note (9)), bodhisattvas should never dwell on them. They must practice giving. I mean giving without dwelling on visual sensation, and also giving without dwelling on *senses* (see Picture 9) of sound, smell and taste which are in conflict with enlightenment,” said Buddha. (See Note (10))



Picture 9 – Senses

(9)“Dharmas” has an all-encompassing meaning: doctrines, teachings, laws, rites, rituals, rules, regulations, value systems, virtues, human behaviors or acquired ways of life, religious practices and philosophies, religious and social order. Dharmas can mean different things in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. In Buddhism, dharmas means religious teachings.

(10) Buddha teaches us not to fixate on religious teachings but to focus on the practice of unconditional charity, one without regard to image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. This means charity without personal motives and without considering race, religion, sex, creed or other social, or cultural divides, and charity that is universal and non-discriminatory. Buddha teaches us not to be obsessed with ways to enlightenment. He teaches us not to fixate on religious doctrines because our preconditioned mindset and cognitive habits limit our ability to understand the realities and also bias our interpretations. Rather than spending time on or thinking about enlightenment ways and religious doctrines, it is more beneficial for us to spend time on charity work and dedicate ourselves to helping other people. Such charity work should not be influenced by our senses, meaning charity without motive, or without regard to race, creed and

class, or any social, religious and economic divide. Action speaks louder than word, and charitable action brings more tangible benefits and merits, especially charitable action not tainted by sensory influences of self, people, beings and mortals. This shows Buddha's pragmatic approach towards religion and his understanding that all religious doctrines and practices are tainted by centric self, people, beings and mortals, and they are fallible and represent impediments to ultimate enlightenment

“Subhuti, bodhisattvas should likewise give without dwelling on images. Why is that so? If bodhisattvas give without dwelling on images, their blessing will be inconceivable.”

“Subhuti, what does it mean? If eastern sky is all empty, can you imagine it?” asked Buddha. Subhuti replied, “No, Bhagawan.” Buddha then asked, “Subhuti, if southern, western and northern skies, in all dimensions, are empty, can you imagine it?” Subhuti replied, “No, Bhagawan.”

Buddha then said, “Subhuti, if

bodhisattvas practice giving without dwelling on images, their blessing will be likewise and unimaginable. Subhuti, all bodhisattvas should abide in such teaching.” **(See Note (11))**

(11) Buddha illustrates the immense merit of universal and unconditional charity, and compares it to the vastness of eastern, southern, western and northern skies.

“Subhuti, what does it mean? Can you see Buddha in body image?” Buddha asked.

“No, Bhagawan. You cannot see Buddha in body image.” Subhuti answered.

Buddha then said, “Why is that so? When I speak of body image, it is in reality not the body image.” Buddha then told Subhuti: “Any possession of image is illusory. If you see images as non-images, you will see Buddha.” **(See Note (12))**

(12) There is a common fallacy that seeing is believing. Buddha teaches people not to perceive him in physical form which is illusory, but rather in non-physical form as in spiritual realm.

Subhuti then said to Buddha, “Bhagawan, there are many beings who have heard the

words that you say, do they really believe you?” Buddha then answered Subhuti: “Do not say like that. After Buddha has passed away for five hundred years, if there are people who abide in moral restraints and practice virtues to enhance their blessings (see Picture 6-Reincarnation), and develop true conviction of these words that I say, and treat my words as truths, you know they are unlike one, two, three, four or five buddhas in terms of planting virtuous roots. In fact, they are like immeasurable millions of buddhas planting virtuous roots. After they have heard such words, they will wholeheartedly develop clear and pure conviction. Subhuti, from what I can know and what I can see, they are the beings who will receive immeasurable merits and blessings.” **(See Note(13))**

“Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.”

— Albert Einstein

(13) Buddha says that people who practice virtuous and moral ways of life will understand his words and develop strong conviction in them. Their moral behaviors will form the foundation for them to understand Buddha's teachings. It is a virtuous cycle. The more they practice moral behaviors, the more they understand Buddha's teachings. The more they understand Buddha's teachings, the more moral they become. When they believe in and practice Buddha's teachings, they will receive immense blessings.

Seeing is believing. That is why Subhuti voices his concern that if Buddha teaches people not to rely on seeing and image perception, they may not believe in him. Buddha says images and perceptions are illusory and do not represent realities. However, if people maintain moral self-restraint and a virtuous life, they will plant virtuous roots and develop virtuous behaviors, and these virtuous changes will cause them to slowly develop clean and pure conviction in what Buddha preaches.

Buddha continued: “Why is that so? That is because those beings are always without the image of self, people, beings and mortals. Also they are without the image perception of dharmas and non-dharmas. Why is that so? If their heart accepts image, they are with self, people, beings and mortals. If they accept image perception of dharmas, they are also with self, people, beings and mortals. Why is that so? If they accept image perception of non-dharmas, they are likewise with self, people, beings and mortals. That is why we should not accept image perception of dharmas, and we should not accept image perception of non- dharmas. I often say you monks who understand what I say are like floating on a raft. Dharmas should be forsaken, what is more if they are non-dharmas.” **(See Note (14))**

(14) Buddha explains the vicious cycle of image perception and dharmas or religious teachings. Since birth, our thoughts and actions have been preconditioned by our subtle interaction with our social, cultural and religious environment over which we have no

control. Our actions and thoughts are based on a set of preconceived ideas or precepts that we unconsciously or subconsciously acquired from our family and social environments. Such precepts filter and bias the raw information from our sensory reception. Our mind will perceive and interpret the information in a way that matches our precepts in order to avoid mental and emotional stresses. Such precepts will cause erroneous conception and interpretation of religious teachings. Image perception causes erroneous teachings, religious and non-religious alike. And erroneous teachings in turn reinforce our biased image perception, and the vicious cycle continues. In order to break the vicious cycle, we need to stop the habit of image perception, rid ourselves of inculcated precepts and reinvent ourselves objectively not relying on biased image perception. Buddha mentions that the main stumbling blocks towards enlightenment are none other than the preconditioned behaviors of relying on image perception and the tendency to being dogmatic. In fact,

image perception causes us to feel certain about the reality that we perceive and internalize through our sensory reception which is biased by our social influences. Therefore it is important to remove the stumbling of dogmas and misguided beliefs by removing our reliance on image perception to form our belief, value system and world view. All teachings are fallible because they are based on human perception.

Buddha then asked, “Subhuti, What does it mean? Now that I have achieved enlightenment, do I have anything to say about how to achieve it?” Subhuti replied, “If I understand you correctly, there is no fixed dharma or way to define enlightenment. Also there is no fixed dharma or way that you can describe to achieve it. Why is that so?” Buddha then said, “The enlightenment dharma or way that I mention is untakable and untalkable. It is not dharma or not non-dharma. Why is that so? That is because all sages use nothing as their dharma or way, but their ways are all unique and distinct from one another.” (**See Note (15)**)

(15) Buddha explains that the concept of enlightenment is difficult to grasp, and so is the dharma or way to achieve it. It is hard to define enlightenment in concrete terms. Nor can it be understood in the framework of dharmas (religious doctrines) or non-dharmas (non-religious doctrines). It is the same as all sages who construct their dharmas or doctrines from zero or ground up, and each dharma or doctrine is distinct from one another. It means that the path to enlightenment has to be built from zero by each of us, and the path will be unique to each of us. Sages create something out of nothing based on divination and revelation, and so do enlightened beings. Buddha expounds the most important concept of nothingness: No physical perception, no dwelling on sensory gratifications, no desires or heart intents, no dwelling on doctrines and non-doctrines, no fixed ways to gain enlightenment, and no perceptions of Buddha in physical forms. Because the enlightenment and the ways to gain enlightenment are too profound for us to grasp and understand, Buddha teaches us not to dwell on them and waste our time. However, Buddha teaches us the

Buddha said to Subhuti, “Tell me what you think. If there are people filled with three thousand great thousand worlds of seven precious jewels and dedicated to giving, are the blessings that they receive plentiful?” Subhuti answered, “Yes, they are, Bhagawan.” Buddha then added, “Why is that so? It is because some blessings are in fact non-blessings in nature. That is why I say their blessings will be plentiful. And again if there are people who abide in this sutra and explain the four line gathas (hymns, verses) to others, they will receive more blessings than others. Why is it? Subhuti, all buddhas and their enlightenment ways originate from this sutra. Subhuti, it is called the Buddha way, not considered the Buddha way by some, but the Buddha way.” **(See Note (16))**

practical approaches to enlightenment by 1. Removing the barriers of sensory perception and gratification; 2) constantly practicing giving; 3) constantly reading, writing and reciting Diamond Sutra to plant virtuous roots, gain insights and reinvent ourselves; 4) constantly explaining and spreading the words of Diamond Sutra.

(16) A recurring theme in Diamond Sutra is that Buddha teaches people to practice unconditional charity, and read and recite Diamond Sutra daily in order to receive merits and blessings beyond our imagination.

We often encounter the common expression of Buddha throughout the Diamond Sutra : “is something, is not something, and is something”. At first glance, this expression seems to defy logic. However, on second thought, it makes sense if Buddha means something that is a matter of subjective and relative perception. Some people think it is, while others think it is not. Three thousand great thousand worlds represent the three basic realms and other thousandfold realms of existence of beings. The three basic realms are realms of desires, forms and formlessness

Buddha then asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? If a srotaapanna (stream-enterer, new convert, see Picture 10) can make the intent, can he obtain the fruits of

srotaapanna?” Subhuti answered no. Buddha then said, “Why is it so? Srotaapanna is so named to enter but in reality they do not enter anything. They do not enter into sensual realms of vision, sound, smell and taste which are in conflict with the (enlightenment) way. They are named as such srotaapanna.”

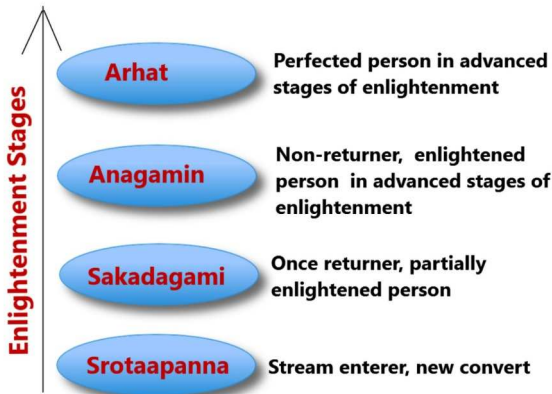
Buddha continued, “Subhuti, What does it mean? If sakadagami (once returner, partially enlightened person, see Picture 10) can make the intent, can he obtain the fruits of sakadagami? Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagawan.” Buddha then said, “Why is that so? Sakadagami is so named to return once to this world but in reality they have not returned at all. They are named as such Sakadagami.”

Buddha then asked, “Subhuti, What does it mean? If anagamin (non-returner, partially enlightened person in final stages of enlightenment, see Picture 10) can make the intent, can he obtain the fruits of anagamin?” Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagawan.” Buddha then said, “Subhuti, What does it mean? Anagamin is so named not to return to this world but in

reality it is not that they have not returned. They are named as such anagamin.”

Buddha again asked, “Subhuti, What does it mean? If an arhat (a perfected person in advanced stages of enlightenment, but not yet achieved Buddha hood, see Picture 10) can make the intent, can he obtain the arhat way?” Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagawan.” Buddha then said, “Why is that so? Really there is no way to define an arhat. If an arhat makes the intent to become one, he only obtains the arhat way because he is still with self, people, beings and mortals.” Buddha continued, “From what I observe from the three personality traits of people (1.greed; 2.aversion inclusive of anger, hatred, aggression, disdain, and cruelty; and 3.delusion), non-contention is the way to go, and it is foremost to depart from the intent to become an arhat. “Buddha said, “If I do not make the intent, I am departing from the intent to become an arhat. If I do make the intent, I only obtain the arhat way. This is not to mention Subhuti is a practicing aranya

(person living in remote isolated place for spiritual training) who actually does nothing and is named as such. Subhuti is indeed a practicing aranya.” (See Note (17))



Picture 10 - Enlightenment Stages

“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

— **Albert Einstein**

(17) There are four stages of enlightenment, namely srotaapanna (streamer enterer, new convert); sakadagami (once returner, partially enlightened person); anagamin (non-returner, partially enlightened person in final stages); and arhat (perfected person in advanced stages of enlightenment shy of Buddha hood). Buddha explains the irony of making a will or intent on enlightenment. The more intent we are on achieving enlightenment, the more we stray from enlightenment. The naming of the enlightenment stages are irrelevant, and enlightenment does not have defined stages of progression. The intent making is a direct result of the manifestation of self, people, beings and mortals. It also manifests itself in the personality traits of people in the form of greed, aversion and delusion. Therefore, the key is not to be intent on becoming an enlightened person but to depart from the intent of becoming one in a passive and non-contentious way, and let our own enlightenment take its course. Here Buddha illustrates the irony of

making an intent. If we make the intent to become progressively from srotaapanna, sakadagami, anagamin to arhat, it does not mean that we will eventually become one. In fact, if we depart from the intention of becoming an arhat, there is better likelihood that we can become one. If we make the intent, we are still influenced by the environment of people, beings and mortals. Making intention makes our heart impure, creates emotional and mental stress and limits our vision to see the true reality. If we do not make the intent, our heart and mind will be free to evolve and lead us to wisdom and enlightenment. Making intent is an obstacle to enlightenment. Because we are still captive to our subjective mindset; our sensory information is filtered; and the feeling of greed, aversion and delusion is aroused should the intent of our heart suffer a setback.

Buddha then asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? Last time when Buddha was with Dipakara Buddha **(See Note (18))**, did Buddha obtain any enlightenment way from him?” Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagavan. Buddha actually did not obtain

any enlightenment way from Dipakara Buddha.” **(See Note (19))** Buddha then asked, “What does it mean? Aren’t the Bodhisattvas making the Buddha-land solemn? “ Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagawan.” Buddha then said, “Why is it so? People making the Buddha-land

(18) One of the Buddhas of the past, said to have lived on Earth one hundred thousand years ago.

(19) Buddha explains that enlightenment cannot be taught and passed from one to another, admitting to the fact that he had not obtained any enlightenment way from Dipakara Buddha.

supposedly solemn are not solemn, but are deemed solemn. That is the reason.” Buddha then continued, “Subhuti, those Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas as such should bear a clean and pure heart. Their heart should not dwell on visual sensation to arouse desires. Their heart should also not dwell on sensation of sound, smell and taste to arouse desires, which is in conflict with the enlightenment way. In

fact, their heart should not dwell on anything at all and let things in their heart happen freely and naturally. Subhuti, suppose someone has the body like Mount Sumeru. What does that mean? Is his body gigantic?” asked Buddha. Subhuti replied, “Very much so. Bhagavan, why is that so?” Buddha said, “That is not a body but it is named a huge body.” **(See Note (20))**

(20) Buddha explains that the path to enlightenment does not rely on external appearances such as solemn religious practices but rather internal conditions of heart and mind. External appearances can be misleading, and Buddha uses the analogy of the body of a giant. But rather, internally, Buddha teaches us to maintain a clean and pure heart not corrupted by our bodily senses of vision, sound, smell and taste, and a free heart that dwells on nothing at all.

Here Buddha emphasizes the importance of substance over form and appearance. He uses the example of solemn Buddha land and analogy of a giant body to symbolize form which is

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, it is like all the sand in the Ganges River, and there are as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges Rivers. What does that mean? Those grains of sand in the Ganges Rivers, are they numerous?” Subhuti answered, “Extremely numerous, Bhagawan.” Buddha then said, “But the Ganges Rivers are numerous, let alone those grains of sand in them. Subhuti, I now tell you the truth. If there are virtuous and benevolent men and women who practice giving using their seven precious jewels in quantities like the grains of sand in the Ganges Rivers in these three thousand great thousand worlds, are the blessings that they receive plentiful?” Subhuti replied, “Very

purely a matter of relative perception. Making Buddha land solemn will not make enlightenment certain, and that is why Buddha did not obtain any enlightenment way from Dipakara Buddha. The crux is having a clean and pure heart devoid of all desires and sensory perturbations from sight, sound, smell and taste. That is the key to enlightenment.

plentiful, Bhagavan.” Buddha then told Subhuti, “If those virtuous and benevolent men and women abide in the verses of this sutra and preach the four line gatha to other people, their blessings will surpass previous ones.” **(See Note (21))**

Buddha continued, “Again, Subhuti. I simply mention the sutra in passing and its four line gatha verses therein. However, you all must know that by this sutra all this world of divine beings such as asuras **(See Note (22))** should be sustained as if in temples. What is even more remarkable if there are people who abidingly recite this sutra. Subhuti, you know these people will have the foremost

(21) Again Buddha reiterates the three important practices of a Buddhist: 1. Charity; 2. Reciting Diamond Sutra; and 3. Preaching Diamond Sutra. Those practices should be as frequent as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, an analogy Buddha uses to illustrate the immensity of the blessings. What's more if they are carried out without the sensory influences of vision, sound, smell and taste and the perception of self, people, beings and mortals

(22) Asuras means lowest rank of deity gods

(23) Buddha explains the powerful effect of Diamond Sutra, and the merits of constantly reciting it. Because of the presence of Buddha wherever Diamond Sutra is, people learning the Sutra should be respected.

Reciting Diamond Sutra is one of the main recurring themes in Diamond Sutra coupled with “Giving”, and “Preaching Diamond Sutra”.

achievements in obtaining this extraordinary way. Wherever this sutra is, there will be presence of Buddha if the students are respected.” **(See Note (23))**

Meanwhile, Subhuti asked, “Bhagavan, what is this sutra named, and how do we uphold it?” Buddha told Subhuti: “This sutra is named Vajracchedikâ Prajñâpâramitâ (Diamond Sutra), and this is the name. You all should uphold it. Why is it? Subhuti, I say this is named Vajracchedikâ Prajñâpâramitâ, not Vajracchedikâ Prajñâpâramitâ by some, but is Vajracchedikâ Prajñâpâramitâ.” Subhuti then asked, “What is the

meaning? Do you have anything to say about the meaning of the Diamond Sutra?” Buddha answered: “No. I have nothing to elaborate.”

Buddha continued: “Subhuti, what does it mean? All the minute dusts in these three thousand great thousand worlds, are they numerous?” Subhuti replied, “They are pretty numerous.” Buddha then said, “Subhuti, for those minute dusts, I say they are not, but they are named minute dusts. For those worlds, I say they are not, but they are named worlds.” Buddha asked Subhuti: “What does it mean? Can one see Buddha using thirty two images of physical perfections?” Subhuti replied, “No, Bhagawan. One cannot use thirty two images of physical perfections to see Buddha.” Buddha continued, “Why is it? I say the thirty two images of physical perfections are not images, but are named images. Subhuti, if there are virtuous and benevolent men and women who give their body and life as numerous times as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, and if those people abide by this Sutra, and preach the four line gathas to other people, their blessings will be plentiful.”

(See Note (24))

At that time, after hearing the Sutra and understanding its profound meaning, Subhuti broke down in tears. He said,

“Bhagavan, the sutra that you preach is so profound, that we in the past with whatever wisdom we had did not have the opportunity to hear about such sutra.”

(24) Buddha explains that our misconception of physical reality around us stems from our over reliance on physical appearances and image perceptions as the axiom says “seeing is believing”. Buddha uses the worlds and minute dusts as an analogy that the ways that we see and interpret our worlds are vastly different from one another. For the same reason, we do not perceive Buddha in terms of thirty two physical appearances of excellence and perfection in order to gain religious insights. This is because our image perceptions differ greatly from one another.

According to Mahayana, Buddhas can manifest simultaneously in innumerable physical forms to help innumerable limited beings throughout all universes. When these emanations are in the form of a collection of bodies of full use or a collection of supreme emanation

Buddha then added, “Again if there are people who hear about this sutra, and believe with a clean and pure heart, they will develop true perception of reality. You know such people will be foremost successful in achieving extraordinary merits. I say true perception, not considered true perception by some, but I say true perception.” **(See Note (25))**

bodies, they are complete with 112 physical faculties, namely the 32 excellent signs and 80 exemplary features. Each of these signs and features has a corresponding cause in terms of constructive actions practiced in previous lives. The excellent signs are the indications of a great person, while the exemplary features reveal inner qualities and serve to make a positive impression on the mental continuum of others. If we are aware of the causes of each of these features, then these physical faculties will show us very clearly the safe direction to take. Instead of focusing on image perceptions, Buddha teaches us to focus on practices of charity, and reciting and preaching Diamond Sutra.

Buddha then continued, “Now that we hear about such sutra, it is not difficult to understand and maintain conviction in it. However, five hundred years after Buddha passes away, if there are beings who hear about the sutra, understand it and maintain conviction in it, such people will be extraordinary. Why is that so? That is because these people do not have the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. Why is it? Because the perception of self is not a true perception, and so are the perceptions of people, beings and mortals. That is why you have to depart from all image perceptions to become a buddha.” Subhuti responded, “That is so true; that is so true.” **(See Note (26))**

25) True perception of reality and complete objectivity is what Buddha teaches. Complete objectivity will lead to tremendous success in life. Complete objectivity begins with a clean and pure heart, which helps develop true perception (see Picture 11) of reality through wisdom and a clear and calm mind, unaffected by distortions and emotional stresses caused by our bodily senses and precepts subconsciously developed in our earlier life. Complete objectivity

means entirely devoid of self and image perception.

Clean and pure heart means without desires or motives in believing in Diamond Sutra. To achieve a clean and pure heart, one needs to eliminate the perception of self, people, beings and mortals, and the sensory influences through our environments, both of which impact our thoughts, words and actions. A clean and pure heart will bring a peaceful and clear mind for us to see the true reality of life and give us the wisdom to navigate our life.

(26) To understand and maintain conviction in Diamond Sutra, we need a completely open mind which is not influenced by our habit of image perception of our environments, and the precepts and predispositions that we acquire unconsciously through our interactions with other people and beings. The key to gaining enlightenment is to depart from all forms of image perceptions.



Picture 11 - True Perception

Buddha then said, “Again if there are people who hear about this sutra, and they are not surprised, not fearful and not intimidated, you know such people are rare. Why is it? I say the foremost paramita **(See Note (27))**, not considered the foremost paramita by some, but the foremost paramita, is forbearance. I reiterate it is the forbearance paramita, not considered the forbearance paramita by some, but the forbearance paramita.

(27) Paramita means complete and perfect behavior.

Why is that so? Subhuti, it was like I had in the past my body mutilated by King Kaliraja, and at that time I was devoid of all image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. How could it be? As time went past with my body slowly breaking apart, had I the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals, I would have developed strong feeling of hatred. Subhuti, I also remember being a forbearance saint for the past five

hundred years, as a result of my being devoid of image perception of self, people, beings and mortals in this world. **(See Note (28))**

(28) Buddha teaches us to have forbearance which comes from having no image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. This means we have to free ourselves from the captivity of our physical body and senses. Forbearance also brings peace of mind and tranquility of heart, and it banishes the emotions of fear and hatred in the face of persecution and harm. No tit for tat, and no perpetuation of cycle of revenge and violence. Image perception preconditions us to think and act based on our precepts. The precepts will cause emotional stresses and missteps in our lives.

Here Buddha emphasizes the importance of forbearance. Forbearance means refraining from getting even when you have been wronged and harmed. Forbearance means forgiving others of words and actions that hurt or harm you

That is why, Subhuti, all bodhisattvas should depart from image perception to develop an enlightening heart. They should not dwell on visual sensation to arouse desire.

physically, mentally and emotionally. Forbearance means not hating others for whatever wrongs or harms that they have done to you. Forbearance means love in spite of transgression and animosity. Buddha says that forbearance is only achievable if we are without the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. This is because image perception will cause us to react emotionally and physically thereby causing harm to other people.

They should also not dwell on sensations of sound, smell and taste to arouse desires, which are in conflict with enlightenment. They should let their hearts dwell on nothing and be free to behave. That is because if there is any dwelling of the heart, it is in fact not a real dwelling. I say bodhisattvas should practice giving with their hearts not

dwelling on visual sensation. Subhuti, bodhisattvas should likewise practice giving in order to benefit all sentient beings. I say all images are not images, and all beings are not beings. (meaning both images and beings are transient and a matter of relative perceptions). Subhuti, what I say is real and true, and as it is, and it is neither exaggerated nor distorted. The enlightenment way that I obtain is intangible but real. **(See Note (29))**

(29) Buddha says enlightenment starts with a clean and pure heart empty of desires and emotional influences from the image perception of environment through our bodily senses. We should not allow anything to dwell in our heart except the desire to practice giving for the benefit for all sentient beings. All image perceptions and beings are ephemeral and appearing deceptive. On the other hand, however, enlightenment is real and true though it is hard to conceive in concrete terms. Again Buddha explains the basic principle of enlightenment is to be devoid of self, people, beings and

Subhuti, if a bodhisattva's heart dwells on doctrine while practicing giving, he is like entering into a dark room and seeing nothing at all. On the other hand, if he does not dwell on doctrine while practicing giving, it is like he has eyes and will see all sorts of colors as if in bright daylight.

and mortars That is because our life most often is controlled by our preconditioned habits of thoughts, words and actions, and the preconditioning is unconsciously done through our sensory influences and our mental, emotional and physical interactions with the environments. Such preconditioned mental filters, precepts and prejudices can also influence the way we internalize and process information in our daily life. The way to enlightenment therefore is to remove image perception and sensory influences from our daily life, and slowly eliminate the preconditioned habits of thoughts, words and actions. Most of the time our thoughts, words and

Subhuti, in the coming generations, if there are virtuous and benevolent men and women who abidingly recite this sutra, they will be like Buddha and have Buddha's wisdom. What I know and see is that those people will achieve immeasurable and boundless merits.

actions are externalized and manifested without our conscious control. Therefore we need to exercise discipline and restraint in our thoughts, words and actions, and make sure they are not dictated by our ingrained habits.

Buddha teaches us that our heart should not fixate on anything and let it be free to behave. All our heart desires are transient and illusory. Buddha believes our heart is basically pure and clean, and if it is free to behave, it will become pure and clean. Our heart is contaminated by our desires and things that we fixate on, and those things are transient and illusory and may not be what we should desire for our good from the perspective of enlightenment.

Subhuti, if there are virtuous and benevolent men and women who practice giving in the morning as frequently as the sand grains in the Ganges River, and if they do so at noon time, and if they do so in the afternoon, and devote their bodies to practicing giving immeasurable millions and billions of times; and again if there are people who hear about this sutra with unwavering conviction, their blessings will be more than others, not to mention copying the sutra, abidingly reciting the sutra, and explaining the sutra to other people. Subhuti, in a nutshell, this sutra has inconceivable, immeasurable and boundless merits. **(See Note (30))** I am talking to people not only in Supreme Vehicles **(See Note (31))** but also in Great Vehicles **(See Note (32))**.

(30) Buddha alerts us to the danger of being dogmatic and fixating on doctrines in the practice of giving. It is likened to entering a dark room and seeing nothing at all, losing a sense of direction and purpose. On the other hand, if one gives without dwelling on doctrine, it is like entering a bright and sunlit room

If there are people who abidingly recite this sutra, and travel widely to preach this sutra, what I can know and see is that such people will accomplish immeasurable, indescribable, boundless

and seeing the real environment in vivid colors. In order to gain enlightenment, Buddha says we need to do three things: 1. Constantly practice giving without dwelling on image perception and sensations of vision, hearing, smell and taste, and on doctrines; 2. Reciting Diamond Sutra constantly; 3. Spreading and teaching Diamond Sutra. Again these three things will bring immense merits and blessings.

Another important recurring theme in Diamond Sutra is that we should not dwell on doctrines, rites and religious habits. Holding rigidly to doctrines will detract from the merits of giving, preventing the awakening of our mind to perceive the true reality.

Again Buddha emphasizes the merits of reciting and reading the Diamond Sutra daily. He says we will gain wisdom and insights from it to guide our life to success. The wisdom is

and inconceivable merits. Such people will help Buddha shoulder the responsibilities of enlightenment.

tantamount to Buddha's, which allows us to achieve success in life by virtue of our true perception of reality of our environments.

(31) "Supreme Vehicles" means people not only concerned with personal enlightenment but also enlightenment of other people.

(32) "Great Vehicles" means people only concerned with their own personal enlightenment

Why is it? Subhuti, if people are only interested in fundamental teachings (concerned only with personal enlightenment), they still possess image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. As a result, they are not receptive to the sutra and cannot recite it and explain it to other people. **(See Note (33))** Subhuti, wherever this sutra is, all the worldly and divine beings including asuras should be sustained. The place should be made known by pagodas and temples. Everyone should pay respect by obeisance and circumambulation, and

burning incense to permeate the air with fragrance.”(See Note (34))

(33) Buddha teaches people to be concerned not only with personal enlightenment but also with enlightenment of other people as well. This is because the obsession with sole personal enlightenment is a selfish agenda, nothing short of a manifestation of image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. Moreover, if they study Diamond Sutra for the sake of their own enlightenment without teaching others, they will not be receptive to the teachings of Diamond Sutra, let alone understanding it. Buddha says people who study and preach the Diamond Sutra will have immeasurable virtues, merits and blessings.

Buddha advises us to spread the Diamond Sutra to help others achieve enlightenment. If we care only about our own enlightenment, we will still be influenced by the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals, and will not be receptive to Diamond Sutra and

Continued Buddha, “Again, Subhuti, for the virtuous and benevolent men and women, if they abidingly recite this sutra but are despised by other people, that is because their sins in previous lives have caused them to descend into evil straits. However, if they are despised by people in this world, their sins in their former lives will be forgiven and they can obtain enlightenment.

explain it to others. As a result, we will not be able to achieve personal enlightenment if such image perception persists. On the contrary, by helping others to achieve enlightenment, we will achieve it ourselves more expediently in the process.

(34) To uphold and spread Diamond Sutra, pagodas and temples are built to symbolize Diamond Sutra and to sustain all worldly and divine beings. Respect is paid by obeisance and circumambulation, and fragrant incense burned to permeate the air.

Subhuti, I remember many eons ago, I was with Dipakara Buddha and I had

accumulated merits equivalent to sustaining 84 billion of multitudes of buddhas, and had no sins. But again, if there are people in the coming generations who abidingly recite this sutra, the merits that they obtain are incomparably more than the merits that I obtained from sustaining the multitudes of Buddhas, which is not even a hundredth of a billion times. Subhuti, if the virtuous and benevolent men and women in the coming generations abidingly recite this sutra, this will amount to the merits that they can obtain. Even if I describe it completely, there still will be people who hear about it, get confused, and have great doubts. Subhuti, you must understand that the sutra is inconceivable, and so is its reward." **(See Note (35))**

At that time, Subhuti asked, "Bhagavan, for the virtuous and benevolent men and women who set their heart on enlightenment, what should they dwell on and how should they subjugate their heart?" Buddha then told Subhuti, "For the virtuous and benevolent men and women who set their heart on enlightenment, this is how they should let their heart be. I should expire and deliver all sentient beings. **(See Note (36))** I

should expire and deliver them but there are actually no beings that can be expired

(35) Buddha explains the cleansing effect of Diamond Sutra on the people's past sins and how their sins in previous lives are forgiven. Also, the merits and rewards of constantly reciting the Diamond Sutra are inconceivable and likened to sustaining a multitude of buddhas.

Buddha teaches us to recite and read the Diamond Sutra daily without fail because of the immense benefits and merits it can bring. We will gain insights and revelations into Diamond Sutra by constantly reading it, thinking about it, explaining it to others and applying it in our daily lives. Diamond Sutra will help us plant our virtuous roots so that our thoughts, words and actions are aligned with Diamond Sutra, and our life and conduct is guided by it. The wisdom that we gain from Diamond Sutra will lead us to not only enlightenment but also success and happiness in life and career.

and delivered. Why is that so? Subhuti, if a bodhisattva has the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals, he is not a bodhisattva. As a result, Subhuti, there is really no definite way to develop the heart for enlightenment.” **(See Note (37))**

(36) “Expire and deliver” means “end life and liberate from the cycles of life, death and suffering”

(37) Buddha says he would help sentient beings to gain enlightenment but the problem is that they may not have the heart for it. In fact, there is no certain way to develop the heart for enlightenment because we are still enveloped in the sensual realms of image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. Until we break away from the shackle of image perception, there is no way for us to develop the heart for enlightenment.

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, what does that mean? When I was with Dipakara Buddha, did I obtain any enlightenment way from him?” Subhuti responded, “No. Bhagavan, if I understand correctly what you say, when you were with Dipakara

Buddha, you did not obtain any definite way from him to accomplish enlightenment.” Buddha said, “Indeed, indeed. Subhuti, there was indeed no definite way that I attained enlightenment. If there were a definite way that I obtained enlightenment, it would be that Dipakara Buddha did not allow me to take notes. You in the coming generations should make a Buddha sign named Úâkyamuni Buddha. That is because there is really no definite way to achieve enlightenment. That is why Dipakara Buddha asked me to take note of his words: ‘You in the coming generations should make a Buddha sign named Úâkyamuni Buddha.’ Why is that so? That is because all those who have attained enlightenment will understand the meaning of enlightenment the way it is. If someone says Buddha achieves enlightenment, Subhuti, there is no clear way for Buddha to achieve it. Subhuti, the enlightenment that I achieve in essence is neither tangible nor surreal. I say all enlightenment ways are the Buddha ways. Subhuti, I mean all ways, not considered all ways by some but all ways.” **(See Note (38))**

Buddha then said, “Subhuti, we can make the analogy of a person with gigantic

body.” (meaning a matter of perception) Subhuti then commented, “Bhagawan, you say the person with gigantic body, considered not gigantic by some but gigantic.” (a matter of perception)

(38) Buddha says there is no definite way to gain enlightenment, and it is intangible but real. The only way to understand and gain enlightenment is through revelations and divinations.

The word "Buddha" means one who woke up," and in Buddhist doctrine, any such enlightened individual is technically a Buddha. Shakyamuni (the sage of Shakyamuni clan) Buddha is a name given to the historical Buddha, especially in Mahayana Buddhism. So it's nearly always the case that when someone is talking about Shakyamuni, he or she is speaking of the historical figure who was born Siddhartha Gautama, but then became known as Shakyamuni only after he became the Buddha. This person, after his enlightenment, is also sometimes called Gautama Buddha.

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, Bodhisattvas are also like that. If you say like that, I would expire and deliver immeasurable sentient beings and would not name them Bodhisattvas. Why is that so? Subhuti, there are really no clear ways to achieve enlightenments, and that is why we name them Bodhisattvas. Hence Buddha says all enlightenment ways boil down to the idea of being devoid of self, people, beings and mortals. Subhuti, if a bodhisattva says like that, I consider him in the solemn Buddha land already enlightened, and not a Bodhisattva on the way to enlightenment. I say solemn Buddha land, not considered solemn Buddha land by some but solemn Buddha land. If a bodhisattva understands completely the idea of self-devoid, he is a real bodhisattva.” **(See Note (39))**

Buddha asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? Do I have the eyes of the flesh?” Subhuti answered, “Yes. Bhagawan, you do.” Buddha then asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? Do I have the eyes of the sky?” Subhuti answered, “Yes. Bhagawan, you do.” Buddha continued to ask Subhuti, “What does it mean? Do I have the wisdom eyes?” Subhuti answered, “Yes. Bhagawan, you do.” Buddha again asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? Do I

have the eyes for the enlightenment way?” Subhuti answered, “Yes. Bhagawan, you do.” Buddha further asked Subhuti,

(39) Buddha says a bodhisattva is like the person with a gigantic body, which is a matter of relative perception. The same goes for a bodhisattva considered in the solemn buddha land. External appearance is not important. The more important thing is that a bodhisattva must be internally devoid of self, people, beings and mortals. Buddha uses the analogy of a giant body to warn against the use of perception for a bodhisattva. We need to avoid image perception of a bodhisattva in the same manner of a giant body, which is not real. Whether one is called a bodhisattva or not is not important. The important thing is that he or she must be devoid of self, people, beings and mortals. Besides, there is no way to define a bodhisattva clearly. A bodhisattva leading a holy and religious life is not good enough. He or she must also be devoid of self, people, beings and mortals, and has a pure, clean and peaceful heart.

“What does it mean? Do I have the Buddha eyes?” Subhuti answered, “Yes. Bhagawan, you do.” **(See Note (40))**

(40) Buddha explains the stages of progression of wisdom to enlightenment, starting from physical observation, big picture view, intellectual wisdom, revelations of principles, and finally the enlightened mind of a Buddha (See Picture 12)

Here Buddha explains the stages of progression of an enlightened mind from eyes of flesh to eyes of a buddha. Eyes represent windows to the mind, and they are used synonymously. Eyes of flesh means mind of ordinary people. Eyes of sky means mind of intelligent people who can form a global view of things that give meanings to details. Eyes of wisdom means a wise mind that has the true perception of reality and act and think accordingly. It is important to process information correctly without bias. Wisdom demands making the right choice based on correct information on the feasible set of alternatives. Eyes of the way means the mind that understands the way to enlightenment. Eyes of Buddha means the mind of an enlightened person.

Buddha asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? Like all the sand in the Ganges



Picture 12 - Stages of Consciousness

River, do you say they are sand?” Subhuti answered, “Yes, Bhagawan. You say it is sand.” Buddha then said, “Subhuti, What does it mean? Like all the sand in one Ganges River, there are as many other Ganges Rivers as there are sand in one Ganges River. The Buddha worlds are like the sand grains in those Ganges Rivers. Are the Buddha worlds as numerous?” Subhuti answered, “Extremely numerous, Bhagawan.” Buddha then told Subhuti, “For all the sentient beings in all the lands of the worlds, they have all kinds of heart desires, and I know all about their heart desires. Why is that so? I say those are heart desires, not considered heart desires by some but they are heart desires. Why is that so? Subhuti, those heart desires could not be satisfied in the past, and cannot be now, and will not be in the future.” **(See Note (41))**

(41) Buddha uses the grains of sand in the Ganges River to symbolize the multitudes of lands, the peoples therein and their heart desires which could not, are not

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, what does it mean? If there are people who are filled with seven precious jewels in these three thousand great thousand worlds, and if they practice giving, do they receive a lot of blessings from karma?” Subhuti replied, “Indeed, Bhagavan. These people do receive a lot of blessings from karma.”

and will not be satisfied. Buddha maintains that the heart desires are ephemeral and not real and only cause pain and suffering, and we should banish all desires from our hearts and let nothing dwell in our hearts and let our hearts be free to behave.

In Buddhism, heart desires are a source of pain and suffering, and if we let go of our heart desires, we will gain peace and tranquility in our heart, leading to perspicacity and wisdom of our mind. Our heart desires clutter our vision to perceive the true reality in life. In order to gain enlightenment, we need to let go of our own heart desires. That is why Buddha says our heart desires can never be satisfied, in the past, at present or in the future. In addition, the heart desires are not real and permanent.

Commented Buddha, “Subhuti, if such blessings are tangible, I do not say they are many. Because many blessings are for no reasons, I say they are many.” **(See Note (42))**

(42) Buddha uses three thousand great thousand worlds to depict all universes in all realms including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Buddha explains that one of the benefits of practicing giving is to increase one's fortune due to karma as well as the numerous blessings as a result.

Karma is the other important concept in Buddhism and Hinduism besides reincarnation. Reincarnation has to do with cycles of life, death and suffering, consistent with the many energy cycles in natural sciences. Karma is destiny or fate for the cycles of life as a result of cause and effect from our previous actions in this life or earlier. In other words, by virtue of karma, our fate and the course in our life is determined by our previous actions. Simply, virtuous action begets good fate, and evil action bad fate. Our past sins have future consequences. It seems like a fair and equitable universal principle.

In our natural worlds, sciences have

Continued Buddha, “Subhuti, what does it mean? Can you see Buddha by complete body image?” Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagavan. You should not be seen by complete body image. Why is it?” Buddha then said, “I say complete body image, not considered complete body image by some but complete body image. Again, Subhuti, what does it mean? Can you see Buddha in complete images?” Subhuti answered, “No, Bhagavan. You should not be seen in complete images. Why is that so?” Buddha replied, “Those images are complete, considered incomplete by some, but complete images.”(See Note (43))

revealed both order and chaos. Order means a set of governing scientific principles explaining the phenomena. Whereas chaos means luck or dice may determine the course of events in the observed phenomena. A case in point: our physical being is determined by the genes of our parents, and how those genes are passed on to us still depends on luck. That might explain the differences in the genetic makeup of siblings.

Continued Buddha, "Subhuti, you should not say that I should have thought of a way to explain the enlightenment dharma verbally. Do not think like that. Why is that so? If some people say Buddha has a

(43) Buddha says he should never be visualized in terms of complete body images because they are not real but a matter of relative image perception. Buddha says all physical appearances and images are not real. They may look real but they are not. They are the results of perception in our mind, and our mind is tampered with preconditioned filters from our social and cultural influences beyond our control. Because of that, those appearances and images may be perceived differently by different people.

People cannot rely on Buddha images to achieve enlightenment because there are no specific ways to do so. As Buddha explains subsequently, the way to enlightenment is based on being devoid of self, people, beings and mortals, and on virtuous and benevolent practices.

spoken enlightenment dharma, this is considered a slander of Buddha. This is because they do not understand what I say. Subhuti, a speaker of dharma who actually has no dharma to speak of is called a speaker of dharma.” Meanwhile, Subhuti asked, “Bhagavan, if there are many sentient beings in the coming generations who hear about what you say, will they become convinced?” Buddha then answered, “Subhuti, they are considered non-beings and not non-beings. Why is that so? Subhuti, all the beings are considered beings, but I consider some non-beings also beings.” Subhuti then said, “Bhagavan, you obtain the enlightenment from nothing.” Buddha said, “Indeed, indeed. Subhuti, I obtain enlightenment way from barely nothing, and such is named enlightenment way. **(See Note (44))**

(44) As it may seem hard to believe, Buddha says enlightenment is impossible to verbalize for all beings, and the ways to obtain it are rare to come by. Those who want to speak about the enlightenment doctrine may find it so profound to express in

Again, Subhuti, such way is fair and equitable, and there is no high or low ranking,

words. Buddha knew that his disciples might want Buddha to simply and clearly explain the dharma or way to attain enlightenment directly. However, Buddha says that the enlightenment way is too profound to be expressible in words, and besides words are always open to different interpretation depending on the assumed contexts and the perception of the audience. Even if the speaker explains the doctrine, because the doctrine is so profound that the audience cannot understand it, and it is like the speaker has not spoken at all. Buddha explains that what we hear and what we see all depend on perception of our mind. Some people can understand what Buddha says while others cannot. This is like some people perceive some as beings while others say they are non-beings. Besides, there are limits and differences to our faculties and senses. It is a matter of perception and interpretation, depending on our preconditioned mind filters.

Buddha says enlightenment is based on nothing, meaning it can only be attained through revelations, and there are many different ways to it.

and is thus called the enlightenment way. It is based on the idea of being devoid of self, people, beings and mortals, and it encompasses the practice of all virtuous and benevolent ways. This will lead to enlightenment. Subhuti, when we mean virtuous and benevolent ways, I consider some non-virtuous and non-benevolent ways also virtuous and benevolent.”

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, if all the seven precious jewels in all the Mounts Sumeru in these three thousand great thousand worlds are gathered together and used by some people to steadfastly practice giving, and if they abidingly recite the four line gathas from this Diamond Sutra and preach them to other people, the blessings they will receive are incomparably more than their previous ones, which is not even like a hundredth of a billion times” **(See Note (45))**

(45) Buddha says the enlightenment way is fair and equitable, and it does not discriminate. It is consistent with the unity concept of the universe, and the notion of devoid of self, people, beings and mortals. In other words, our physical beings consist of the same atoms as the rest of the universe with the same

Buddha then asked, “Subhuti, What does it mean? You all should not think I can (arbitrarily) expire and deliver all beings. Subhuti, you should not think like that.

governing principles of benevolence and virtuousness. Therefore, we are all the same and equal in terms of our ability to obtain enlightenment. Buddha enumerates three main enlightenment principles, namely unconditional charity, reciting Diamond Sutra, and spreading Diamond Sutra. Nothingness, emptiness or Sunyata is the central and profound concept in Buddhism, and many people try to explain it. In order to reach enlightenment, Buddha says we have to achieve a state of devoid of self, people, beings and mortals, a state whereby we are not constrained by our physical body, our psychic, our mental preconditioning, and our animal instincts and reflexes. Some people try to experience the sensation of nothingness through meditation. However, Buddha did not specifically say how to achieve the state of nothingness but there are many ways to do it, and those ways

have to be virtuous and benevolent. Even then, Buddha recognizes that the virtuous and benevolent ways are also open to different interpretations and perceptions. In this Diamond Sutra, Buddha has at least pointed out a few virtuous and benevolent ways. First is to practice unconditional giving. Second is to abstain from and not to indulge in our senses, particularly in vision, sound, smell and taste. Third is to recite the Diamond Sutra daily and often in order to plant virtuous roots so that our thoughts, actions and words will slowly become more virtuous and benevolent, and our conduct and life will become more virtuous and benevolent. Fourth, we will become more virtuous and benevolent if we help spread the Diamond Sutra around, and explain it to other people. Buddha warns against the pitfalls of engaging in doctrines and ignoring practice. Buddha compares those who fixate on doctrines to being in a dark room seeing nothing at all because their mind is closed and blindsided. However, if they practice giving without fixating on doctrines, their eyes and mind will be open and they will find their ways to enlightenment.

Why is that so? Because there is no being that I can (arbitrarily) expire and deliver. If there is a being that I can (arbitrarily) expire and deliver, it means that I possess the notion of self, people, beings and mortals. Subhuti, I say I consider some with 'self' actually without 'self'. But ordinary people only think about 'self'. Subhuti, those ordinary people, I consider some of them not ordinary people, are ordinary people.”(See Note (46))

(46) Buddha says he cannot arbitrarily make people obtain enlightenment. Otherwise he will fall into the discriminatory influence of self, people, beings and mortals, which is common among ordinary people. Buddha says even the concept of self and non self, and the definition of ordinary people are a matter of relative perception. Buddha dispels the idea that he can arbitrarily liberate any being from the cycles of life, death and suffering without going through the path of enlightenment. Buddha says to do so will imply that he is influenced by the notion of self, people, beings and mortals. To decide who is eligible is a matter of arbitrary choice and

Buddha asked Subhuti, “What does it mean? Can you not use thirty two images

and subjective perception. In Buddhism, Buddha only provides guidance but the individual has to find and work his way to enlightenment.

Buddha says you cannot tell a person devoid of self from one with self. It is a matter of perception. Ordinary people is obsessed with self. Even the idea of ordinary is also arbitrary, subjective and a matter of relative perception. One cannot tell an ordinary person from a non-ordinary one.

of excellent traits to see Buddha?” Subhuti answered, “Like you say, like you say, we cannot use thirty two images of excellent traits to see Buddha.” Buddha then said, “Subhuti, If you can use thirty two images of excellent traits to see Buddha, it means by the wheel of destiny, a cakravartin king (ideal universal ruler, virtuous and ideal human being endowed with 32 physical signs of excellent traits) can become a Buddha.” Subhuti then said, “Bhagavan, based on my understanding of what you say, we cannot use thirty two images of excellent traits to see Buddha.

At that moment, Buddha said these gatha

words:

“If one uses visual manifestations to see me, or uses sound to implore me, such person is practicing deviant way, and he cannot see me.” **(See Note (47))**

(47) Buddha says people cannot rely on thirty two images of excellent traits to perceive him and get guidance from him. Otherwise any being born with perfect features can become a Buddha automatically. Therefore, Buddha teaches people not to use physical images to encounter him and not to use sound to implore him. Those practices are considered deviant by Buddha. Buddha teaches people not to use visual images and sound to have communion with Buddha, and they will see, hear and feel Buddha if they do not perceive him in terms of images.

Buddha then continued, “Subhuti, if you think like that, I will not obtain enlightenment based on complete physical appearances of excellent traits. Subhuti, do not think like that. I have obtained enlightenment not from the complete physical appearances of excellent traits.

Subhuti, if you think like that, all the people who set their heart on enlightenment will say all the enlightenment ways are obliterated. Do not think like that. Why is that so? Because people who set their heart on enlightenment will not speak of obliteration concepts.”(See Note (48))

(48) Buddha teaches people not to associate enlightenment with his perfect physical signs of excellence because doing so will obliterate all enlightenment dharmas, and people who set their hearts on enlightenment will not speak of obliteration.

Buddha points out the fallacy of most people relying on physical appearances to gain spiritual enlightenment. If people could rely on physical appearances to gain enlightenment, other ways of enlightenment would disappear. That will not be good for people who set their hearts on enlightenment because they will be blindsided.

Continued Buddha, “Subhuti, if a bodhisattva steadfastly practices giving, using his world of seven precious jewels as

plentiful as the sand grains filling up the Ganges River, and if he understands all enlightenment way is a result of self-devoid and forbearance, then the merits of this bodhisattva will be more than those of previous bodhisattva. Why is that so? Because this bodhisattva is not receptive to blessings.” Subhuti then asked, “ Bhagavan, why do you say he is not receptive to blessings?” Buddha replied, “Subhuti, this is because whatever blessings a bodhisattva receive, he should not be greedy about them. That is why I say a bodhisattva is not receptive to blessings.

Subhuti, if someone says it is like I have come, have gone, have sat down or have lain down, he does not understand the meaning of what I say. Why is that so? This is because an enlightened person is omnipresent and omniscient, and is like he comes from nowhere and goes nowhere.” **(See Note (49))**

(49) Again Buddha emphasizes the merits of giving oneself to charity and having the attitude of self-devoid and forbearance, and in doing so, one should not be covetous of the many blessings that they receive as a result. When a person becomes enlightened, they will understand what Buddha says and will have omnipresence, seeing

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, if the virtuous and benevolent men and women in this

places and people without being there.

Buddha offers some ways to achieve enlightenment after dispelling the notion of using perception of physical appearances. One way is to accumulate merits through charitable giving, and reinvent ourselves internally to achieve a state of self-devoid and forbearance. The more merits we accumulate, the more blessings we will receive, and we should not be greedy about the blessings that we receive because that will prevent us from accumulating and achieving even more merits.

Buddha describes an enlightened person as one who is “omnipresent”, meaning they know what is happening somewhere else without being there. Their consciousness is wired into the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual environments of the people around or away from him. This is the highest state of awareness and consciousness.

three thousand great thousand world disintegrate into dusts, what does that mean? Are those dusts not numerous?” Subhuti answered, “Yes. They are numerous. Bhagawan, why is that so?” Buddha then said, “If it is really true that the dusts are

numerous, I would not say the dusts are numerous. Why is that so? I say those dusts are numerous, not considered numerous by some but are numerous.” Subhuti then said, “ Bhagawan, you mention about the three thousand great thousand world, not considered the world by some but considered the world by you. Why is that so?” Buddha then answered, “If the world really exists, it must exist in unity. I mean unity, not considered unity by some but I consider it unity. Subhuti, the concept of unity is hard to describe in words. However, ordinary people are too obsessed with their own things to understand it.” **(See Note (50))**

(50) Buddha says this universe consists of the same atoms, and we are all one with our universe. Because we are too preoccupied with our daily chores, we do not really understand it.

Unity is an important concept in Buddhism, meaning everything in this universe belongs to the same energy field. When we pass away, we return to the same energy field. All the physical,

Buddha continued, “Subhuti, if people say that Buddha says we see everything

mental, emotional and spiritual universes all belong to one gigantic energy field. Buddha says the unity concept is too profound for ordinary people to grasp while they are busy making a living.

in terms of people, beings and mortals, What does it mean? Do they understand what I say?” Subhuti replied, “ No. Bhagavan, those people do not understand what you say. Why is it?” Buddha answered, “ We see in terms of people, beings and mortals, not considered by some as in terms of people, beings and mortals, but we see in terms of people, beings and mortals. Subhuti, all the people who set their heart on enlightenment should know all the enlightenment ways as they are, and understand them as they are, and should not be dogmatic. Subhuti, what I mean by dogmatic, may not be considered dogmatic by some but I consider it dogmatic.” **(See Note (51))**

Buddha continued, “ Subhuti, if there are people filled with immeasurable and myriad worlds of seven precious jewels, and if they

steadfastly practice giving, and if there are virtuous and benevolent men and

(51) Because we have the habit of viewing everything in terms of people, beings and mortals, it is difficult for us to understand enlightenment. There is also a tendency for us to be dogmatic about our views, which is also a matter of relative perception. Therefore, we should understand all enlightenment ways as they are and to the best of our abilities without being dogmatic. On many occasions Buddha warns against the perils and pitfalls of being dogmatic and obsessed with doctrines. Buddha explains that our ability to understand the enlightenment is constrained and influenced by our preconditioned perception of our social and cultural environments, which blinds us from seeing the true reality in life. That is why Buddha teaches us to understand the enlightenment ways as they are to the best of our ability without being fanatical and dogmatic because our understanding could be flawed. "Seeing in terms of self,

women who are compassionate and merciful, and who abide in this sutra and all the verses therein, and

people, beings and mortals” means that our mindset and cognition is tainted by our social and cultural upbringing and influences. In other words, we need to elevate ourselves from the subjective consciousness to the objective consciousness of “devoid of self, people, beings and mortals”.

steadfastly recite this sutra, and speak to other people about it, then their blessings will be more than others, what is more if they speak to others not based on appearances and image perception which as a result cannot move or influence them. Why is that so? **(See Note (52))**

(52) In closing, Buddha summarizes the three important principles of Diamond Sutra, namely unconditional charity, reciting the Diamond Sutra and spreading the Diamond Sutra, all being conducted without the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals.

Everything is governed by principles;
It may appear like dream or bubble;
Like dew or like lightning;
All should be observed as such. “ (See
Note (53))

(53) Buddha's final observation is: Our world is in a bewildering state of flux and it seems so ephemeral and unreal, but there are underlying governing principles, and we should observe the chaotic world as it is.

These are the final words of Buddha in concluding the Diamond Sutra and they are very important. There are three important things he teaches us to do:

1. Constantly practice giving and doing charity.
2. Behave in a virtuous, benevolent, compassionate and merciful way.
3. Constantly read and recite Diamond Sutra.
4. Constantly preach Diamond Sutra to other people.

In closing, Buddha describes life as a dream and mirage, so unreal and fleeting, sometimes quiet sometimes tumultuous, and he says we all

Buddha has spoken a long time on the sutra. Elder Subhuti, and other monks

should observe it objectively as such because it is too profound for us to understand. However, there are underlying principles governing our life and universe.

and nuns, male and female followers of Buddha, all worldly and heavenly beings, and asuras, upon hearing Buddha's words, are all very happy. They faithfully receive Buddha's words and put them into practice.

END OF DIAMOND SUTRA

Lessons Learned from Diamond Sutra in Modern Perspectives



What relevant lessons do we learn from Diamond Sutra?

1. A Clean, Pure and Peaceful Heart.

Buddha teaches us to possess a clean, pure and calm heart that is free of desires. We shall not let anything dwell in our heart. Our heart should be free to behave. We should let go of all desires of our heart. Calmness in our heart will bring perspicuity of our mind. Buddha preaches equanimity. Peace of heart brings clarity of mind and wisdom. Intelligence demands

clear and creative thinking to scope out the feasible set of alternatives; and wisdom requires clear and insightful analysis to make the right strategic choice from the set of feasible alternatives.

In life, sometimes we are overwhelmed by circumstances beyond our control, and maintaining a clean, pure and peaceful heart will help us weather any storm. Difficult situations most often inspire fear and desperation, and emotions cloud our thinking to find the best solutions. Moreover, emotions often cause rash actions which result in dire consequences.

When we let go of our heart desires, we feel free and unencumbered spiritually. Certainly we will feel carefree and stress free. Only after our hearts are free can we feel reinvigorated and empowered spiritually and mentally to lead a meaningful and successful life. Keeping a clean, pure and calm heart should not be misconceived as a passive approach to life. But rather it is a foundation to actively inspire meaningful visions in life. Integration and alignment of soul, heart, mind,

body, thought, speech and action should be our ultimate goal in life.

People often talk about letting go of baggage in life, emotional baggage in particular. If we cleanse our hearts of all desires, it is far easier for us to shed our baggage in life. This is because the emotional bond of our baggage will be broken by emptying our heart desires.

It is often said that success in life and career depends largely on positive attitudes. Positive attitudes often equate with meaning and doing good to yourselves and others. To do so we need to keep a clean, pure and peaceful heart which helps to demolish negative attitudes and nurture positive ones. The so-called "Zen" is in essence a meditative practice based on a clean, pure and peaceful heart in order to achieve a higher consciousness of mind. This higher consciousness may enhance physical health, mind awareness, intelligence and creativity.

In this age of internet, cell phones, cloud technology and social media, we are constantly bombarded and inundated with information. We become restless. This information

overload and noise unfortunately makes our life more stressful. As a result, it is difficult to maintain a calm and peaceful heart under those circumstances. It is therefore prudent for us to avoid information overload and noise in order to maintain our spiritual, mental and physical health.

2. Unconditional Charity.

The most important theme of Diamond Sutra is that Buddha teaches us to give ourselves to unconditional charity which is devoid of image perception. This means we should do charity without regard to sex, creed, religion, race and other discriminatory practices and personal motives.

It is not known how much of our life is controlled by predestination and how much by self-determination, and how much is due to luck and how much due to our effort. However, it seems logical to think that a lot of things in life are due to circumstances beyond our control, and many are a direct result of our thoughts, words and actions. Luck and fortune is therefore important to bring about circumstances which

give us a better life. And doing incessant charity will augment luck and fortune, according to Buddha.

Contrary to popular conception, Buddha advocates unconditional charity as the principal religious practice and not doctrine. Practice and not theory, says Buddha. If we practice giving without dwelling on doctrine, our spiritual power within us will be unleashed, and our mind will see the true reality around us. It seems ironic that the more wealth we give away, the more wealth we shall receive. That is exactly what Buddha preaches.

Unconditional charity also embraces the human values of empathy, care and love for others.

3. Reciting and Preaching Diamond Sutra.

Coupled with that, by reciting Diamond Sutra daily and preaching Diamond Sutra constantly, we also accumulate merits and good fortune. Reading Diamond Sutra daily will help us develop virtuous roots and moral behaviors crucial to a meaningful and successful life, and eventually it will

lead to personal enlightenment. By preaching Diamond Sutra, we are helping other people to practice virtuous and meritorious life, to gain enlightenment, and to bring about a better humanity as a result.

4. Devoid of Image Perception

Buddha also tries to make us understand that we are all captive to our image perception of self, people, beings and mortals around us. This means that our mind and behaviors have been unconsciously pre-programmed and inculcated by our social environments since birth. Buddha teaches us to free ourselves from the habit of image perception and aim for complete objectivity. The information from our bodily senses has been filtered through the unconsciously inculcated mindset, and the biased information processing could result in emotions and actions of dire consequences.

The notion of no image perception is important to foster creativity. So often our mind is closed because of our preconceived ideas and assumptions which lead us to

illogical conclusions and actions. Freeing our mind of the biased image perception will be the first step. We need to let our mind roam freely to be able to think outside the box. Image perception only serves to stymie our ability to see strategic solutions from completely objective perspectives. We have to be aware of our cognitive habits, preconception and predisposition as a result of our image perception. These are stumbling blocks to our creativity. Removing the preconception and predisposition is therefore imperative. Even more so is freeing ourselves from the bondage of image perception. We understand we all morph slowly as we go through life under the influence of our environments. Mostly these changes are beyond our control because of our habit of image perception. To a certain degree these changes may influence our destiny and the course of our life. Hence to change our destiny requires controlling these changes in our life, physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally and socially. If we are

free from image perception, it is easier for us to unlearn and learn these behavioral changes with conscious effort. Of course many of the behavioral changes require underlying attitudinal changes based on the idea of no image perception.

We often attribute what we see as right or wrong; good or bad, based on our preconception. This usually results in negative thought, speech and action. It is not uncommon for us to instinctively misconstrue other people's ideas and actions as wrong if they do not jive with our own preconceived ideas. Bear in mind that the concept of right or wrong, and good or bad is not absolute but relative because they are all based on image perception. Therefore, it is meaningless and futile to argue right or wrong; good or bad for that matter. In order to avoid the pitfall, we need to habitually question our image perception, and uncover and challenge our hidden assumptions. In this context, if we can get rid of the pitfalls of image perception, we can help create a

more harmonious world by fostering better inter-racial understanding and communication.

When Buddha teaches us to free ourselves from the shackles of image perception, he basically reminds us that what we see is not the reality but a perception. Unfortunately the perception is constrained by our physical faculties and the limits of our senses. More importantly the perception is biased by the social pre-programming in our earlier life. The social and political conflicts that we see today can be largely attributed to this preconceived cultural divide. Human creativity is the main engine of human progress. The power of human creativity can be unleashed if we can free ourselves from the shackles of image perception. That may involve a cyclical process of unlearning and learning based on no image perception. Free and unconventional thinking entails removing presumptions from our mindset that forces us into a particular mode of thought, and getting rid of image perception will help remove those presumptions.

5. Forbearance

Forbearance means forgiving others of trespassing on your rights. It also means forgoing the standard of justice of tit for tat. In a way it can mean repaying others with kindness and goodwill in return for harm and injury done unto you. In a larger context, forbearance means accepting adverse circumstances with equanimity. It is note-worthy that forbearance is hard to achieve without first ridding ourselves of the habit of image perception. When we are wronged, we feel vindictive to avenge the wrong we suffer. This is the standard of justice our society has imbued in us. Buddha explains that because of image perception, we are predisposed to feel and act that way. Forbearance will bring merit and fortune in life. Buddha preaches magnanimity and not vengeance.

Forbearance also means the ability to take hits from adverse environments without retribution. This attitude will promote spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well-being. It is easier for us to practice

forbearance toward our fellow beings if we understand that some of our attitudes have been preprogrammed in our earlier life without our awareness.

6. Do not Dwell on Senses of Sight, Sound, Smell and Taste.

Buddha admonishes us not to rely on and indulge in our senses because it is against enlightenment. What we see is not what it appears to be. We all filter sensory information through our mindset which is unconsciously molded by our social environments beyond our control since birth. Our perception is therefore distorted based on biased selective reception of sensory information. In addition, our senses also bring pleasure and pain which can lead to emotions and actions that harm ourselves and others.

The main threat to our spiritual well beings comes from material excesses. Overindulgence in sensual pleasures will crimp our desire to gain spiritual enlightenment. Also sensual pleasures encourage vice and vile behaviors, leading to immoral life. That is contrary to the teaching of Buddha advocating a virtuous and benevolent life.

7. Do not Be Dogmatic

Buddha teaches us not to hold fast to religious dharmas and doctrines because they are the results of image perception of self, people, beings and mortals. He says we should focus on practice and not on theory; and internally on cultivating a clean and pure heart, and not on external religious appearances. Because of the limits of our faculties, and also our preconditioned mindset, we constantly misconceive the physical reality around us. That is why Buddha teaches us to perceive the physical reality as it is without over-construing it, regardless of how perplexing and surprising it appears to be. The physical environment can be sometimes chaotic and sometimes peaceful; and sometimes tumultuous and sometimes still. None the less we must always remain calm and composed. We must always see the reality around us as it is without being inflexible and rigid about our perception.

Buddha preaches flexibility. He asks us not to hold fast to any doctrine or principle because of human limits. What we see is not real but what we

do not see is real. That is why Buddha repeatedly emphasizes the importance of having no image perception to blind us from the reality. More importantly, dogmatism breeds religious extremism, causing social unrest and strife that threatens human society. Buddha explains that dogmatism is a result of image perception of self, people, beings and mortals, leading to misconception and eventually fanaticism. Anything of perception is subjective and relative, and it involves the arbitrary judgment of good or bad, or right or wrong depending on the captive mindset that we acquire unconsciously from our social milieu since birth.

8. Unity with Universe

Buddha reminds us that we all consists of precisely the same atoms that make up the whole universe. We all belong to the same energy field with our universe, and follow the same universal principles in spite of the confounding occurrences that we witness around us. Therefore we do not live in our own cocoon. We should rise above our own self to see

life in a larger perspective. We all should strive to relate meaningfully to our fellow humanity and other beings because we all belong to the same universe in essence. All differences are a result of our biased image perception.

Enlightenment is a way to reconnect back with our universe.

9. Nothingness

Buddha says all sages produce ideas out of nothing. The concept of nothingness is difficult to grasp. Buddha uses *nothingness* as the principle of enlightenment. *Nothing* dwells in our heart. *Nothing* stirs our heart. Our heart expects *nothing*. Our heart wishes *nothing*. When there is *nothing* in our heart, something is produced, which is revelation. Let *nothing* of sight, sound, smell and taste stir us. *No* image perception influences us. *No* dharma or religious teaching controls us. Charity is based on *no* image perception. Nirvana is based on “*no* remainder”. Enlightenment has *no* concreteness and has *no* illusion. In a nutshell, all enlightenment principles boil down

to the concept of nothingness. Nothingness in our heart enhances creativity and awareness of mind, leading to higher stages of consciousness. Some people use Zen or meditative practices to experience nothingness and higher consciousness.

10. Imagination

Buddha says all sages create something out of nothing. He must be talking about imagination and creativity. It is a great mystery in life how imagination and creativity come about. It is not surprising that enlightenment does depend on imagination and creativity, and not on any rigid regimen. Therefore Buddha tries to make his disciples understand that enlightenment ways could not be passed from one person to another, very much contrary to popular conception. The only thing Buddha can do was to teach his disciples the approaches to enlightenment as explained above, and let enlightenment take its course.

We know a free heart and mind will help imagination and creativity, a

heart that is clean, pure, calm and free from desires, emotions and external influences; and a mind that is free from shackles of image perception and preconceived mindset. Overindulgence of our senses of sight, sound, smell and taste will only dull our imagination and creativity.

11. A Happy Life

Buddha lays down the principle of a happy life which is to serve all sentient beings. We will live a happy life if we are virtuous and benevolent. We will also live happily if we do not over-indulge in sensual pleasure of sight, sound, smell and taste. Happiness means letting go of all heart intents and ambitions. Happiness also means being forgiving and generous, and

“I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”

-- Albert Einstein

practicing unconditional charity. In a modern society, human relationship is governed mostly by special or monetary interests to the neglect of human values. Maintaining a clean and pure heart is the first step in re-instilling meaningful human values into our social relationships. As a result, social harmony and cohesion is achieved despite cultural, religious and political chasms. Furthermore, once we understand that we are all captive to our own preconceived mindset, we will be more tolerant and forgiving of other people's conduct that offends us. We understand that we are predisposed to judging other people's speech and conduct in terms of right or wrong, and good or bad. The judgment is based on our preconceived mindset which is incorrect. Liberating ourselves from this shackle of preconception will help us communicate positively and effectively with our fellow human beings, smoothing out ruffles in relationship and leading to a happy life.

12. Science, Reason and Logic

In his conversation with his student Subhuti, Buddha often asks the question why. This shows Buddha wants his students to think through what he says instead of accepting them blindly. In other words, he wants them to apply reason and logic. Buddha also often uses the expression: it is something, and it is not something, and it is something. At first glance, this seems confusing, illogical and contradictory. However, on second thought, this makes sense if it is something subjective and relative, and solely a matter of perception. Unfortunately, the perception is based on our captive preconception. Therefore, Buddha teaches complete objectivity, and the main hurdle will be our preconceived mindset. More importantly, Buddha reveals some truths about our natural universe. He says we human beings are in unity with our natural universe. In spite of confounding chaos and calmness in the observed universe, there are principles governing the phenomena. Because of our limits,

we should observe and understand the natural phenomena as such, and should not be obsessed with it to the extent of distracting us from living our normal lives.

When we apply reason and logic, we must be aware of subjective traps. Reason and logic goes hand in hand with objectivity. So often we are ensnared in our individual perception of reality that we lose the objectivity to use reason and logic correctly. It is not surprising that Buddha again and again asks us to remove the blind of subjective perception and open our heart and mind to the true reality in life.

13. Learning

Learning is an important process in life. We constantly learn how to adapt in order to survive in our environment. We learn how to make a living in our career and profession. We learn how to manage our health and wealth. We learn how to manage family and relationships. In other words, learning is a lifelong process. Those who have mastered the art and science of learning are more likely

to succeed in life than those who have not.

What is learning? Learning is acquiring knowledge and skill, as defined in a dictionary. Learning involves assimilation of ideas through the process of image perception. Invariably, learning is therefore influenced by our preconceived mindset. The preconception may either help or obstruct learning in a particular circumstance. Most people are slow or unable to learn and adapt because of their preconception. Uncovering and removing such constipating preconceptions is the key to learning. In this vein, learning actually involves unlearning. It is critically important that we unlearn the fallacies in our preconceived mindset and free up our mind to be able to understand and internalize the ideas we are trying to learn. We need to empty our cup of stale coffee before filling it up with fresh one. Just a metaphor.

Science is the brain; religion is the heart; life is the journey. So why don't we make our journey more meaningful using our brain and heart?

14. Longevity and Health

It has been proven scientifically that mental and spiritual well being has a significant influence on our physical health. First, charity creates a sense of happiness which helps strengthen our body defenses against diseases. This jives with Buddha's teaching of unconditional charity. Second, Buddha teaches forbearance which helps foster human interaction and relationships. Harmonious and meaningful human relationships also promote our physical health. An 80-year old study by Harvard University proves beyond doubt that stable personal and social relationships are the key to longevity and good health. Third, Buddha teaches us not to indulge in our senses. We all know that eating right and doing exercise are imperatives for good health, and it takes a lot of will power and discipline to implement a healthy lifestyle. That is why Buddha teaches self-restraints and discipline for a moral and healthy lifestyle away from indulgence, material excesses and gratification of our senses. Fourth, Buddha asks us to maintain a calm and peaceful heart. We should let nothing dwell in our

heart. A carefree and stress-free life is a healthy life. Stress weakens our body defenses in many ways. In order to have serenity in our hearts, Buddha teaches us to empty our hearts of desires, fears and worries because they create stresses in life. Too often we are caught up in the rat race of relentlessly pursuing material wealth and celebrity status that not only our health is adversely impacted but also happiness in life eludes us. We attain material successes and ephemeral sensual gratification at the expense of health. In most cases, our heart desires may not be good for us and cannot be realized. It is therefore important that we take our circumstances in stride, and put our life in the right perspectives. Seeing our lives beyond ourselves in a large humanity perspective is necessary to inject meaning into our lives.

15. Meaning and Purpose in Life

Buddha says our life would be meaningful and purposeful if we live a virtuous and benevolent life to help all sentient beings in general and human beings in particular without fixating on image perception,

bodily sensations and religious teachings and customs.

15. Quantum Sciences and Buddhism

Human beings have made phenomenal progress in understanding the universe and lives on earth since the Enlightenment period in late 17th century when reason and logic as well as liberty and scientific methods began to take root. We have progressed from classical Newtonian physics to Einstein's Relativity to Quantum Mechanics; from atoms, electrons and neutrons to quarks to bosons; from Quantum Mathematics to Quantum Physics to Quantum Chemistry to Quantum Biology to Quantum Psychology. Quantum Mechanics has indeed revolutionized the ways we understand our universe and lives on earth. As we relentlessly venture into the unknowns, we also encountered more questions and uncertainties about what we have known. This is an important paradox in our quest for knowledge.

Advances in Quantum Sciences seem to point to the fact that the reality we perceived around us is an illusion and constructed reality. This is confirmed by an odd space experiment whereby photons are bounced off satellites to allow the researchers to confirm that an observer

can make the decision even after a photon has made its way almost completely through the experiment. This view of reality is what Buddha has been saying, "What we see is not real, but what we do not see is real." That is the reason why Buddha teaches us not to be dogmatic about our perception of realities around us. They are illusory and deceptive.

Quantum Mechanics also confirms the existence of parallel and multi universes. That is why Buddha has frequently mentioned three thousand great thousand worlds in his discourse.

Quantum Mechanics also brings forth a strange phenomenon of Quantum entanglement when groups of particles have dependent quantum states even they are separated by long distances. This confirms Buddha's view that this universe must exist in unity.

In addition, Quantum Mechanics also revolutionized our understanding of time. Our concept of time as a progressive continuum is called into question. Maybe Einstein was right in saying, "...the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." That is why Buddha says when a person is enlightened, he is omnipresent

and omniscient.

16. Devoid of Self, People, Beings and Mortals

What does it mean to be devoid of self, people, beings and mortals? Self is an individual person as the object of his or her own reflective consciousness. Thus self is a reference of a subject to the same subject. We attempt to find meaning and make sense of our world by invariably establishing a frame of reference from ourselves and from our own perspectives and perceptions. The self frame of reference will determine our perceptions and interactions with other people, beings and mortals. In other words, we are held captive to our own self whether we are aware of it or not. Unless we break free from this captivity of self, we can never achieve enlightenment. The way to do it is to go beyond oneself and see things without conscious reference to self. The other way is the refusal to find meaning and purpose in our thoughts, words and actions because meaning and purpose inextricably entangled with self. We need to see our world as it is without reading too much into it. We need to live our lives as they are

without dwelling too much on them. Just let life flow us by, free of care, worry and burden.

17. In Praise of Agnosticism

What does agnosticism mean? It is neither the belief nor the disbelief in divine or supernatural which is unknown and unknowable. It can also mean indifference, not liking or disliking. The emotion of liking or disliking certain thing will not only bias our thinking but also cloud our judgment. Therefore it is important to maintain an indifference attitude in all things so that we see things in an unbiased perspective. Additionally, we also tend to exercise moral judgment of right or wrong in whatever we encounter. This moral judgment is based on our preconditioned mindset and cultural upbringing. As a result, our emotions of righteousness could be misdirected. To be truly objective and rational, knowing our limitations, therefore it is only wise of us to be agnostic and indifferent, not seeing everything with like or dislike, or with right or wrong.

Buddha's Gems for Thoughts

"For all types of beings, no matter if they are born from eggs, or from wombs, or from moisture, or from transmutation; or from substance or non-substance; thinking or non-thinking; without thoughts or not without thoughts, I will lead them to enter Remainderless Nirvana in order to expire and deliver them."



"If bodhisattvas possess the image perception of self, people, beings and mortals, they are not bodhisattvas."



"In regard to dharmas, bodhisattvas should never dwell on them. They must practice giving. I mean giving without dwelling on visual sensation, and also giving without dwelling on senses of sound, smell and taste which are in conflict with enlightenment. "

"If bodhisattvas give without dwelling on image perception, their blessing will be inconceivable."



“Any possession of physical form is not real. If you see physical form as non-physical form, you will see Buddha.”



After Buddha has passed away for five hundred years, if there are people who steadfastly exercise self-restraints in order to enhance their karma, and develop true conviction of these words that I say, and treat my words as truths, you know they are unlike one, two, three, four and five buddhas in terms of planting virtuous roots. In fact, they are like immeasurable millions of buddhas planting virtuous roots. After they have heard such words, they will wholeheartedly develop clear and pure conviction.

"All Bodhisattvas as such should bear a clean and pure heart. Their heart should not dwell on visual sensation to arouse desires. Their heart should also not dwell on sensation of sound, smell and taste to arouse desires, which is in conflict with the enlightenment way. Their heart should not dwell on anything at all and let it be free to behave."



"If those virtuous and benevolent men and women maintain conviction in the verses of this sutra and preach the four line gathas to other people, their blessings will surpass previous ones"



"Again if there are people who hear about this sutra, and believe with a clean and pure heart, they will develop true perception of reality. You know such people will be foremost successful in achieving extraordinary merits. I say true perception, not considered true perception by some, but is named true perception."

"Because the perception of self is not a true perception, and so are the perceptions of people, beings and mortals. That is why you have to depart from all image perceptions to become a buddha."



"I say the foremost paramita, not considered the foremost paramita by some, but the foremost paramita, is forbearance."



"That is why, Subhuti, all bodhisattvas should depart from image perception to develop an enlightening heart. They should not dwell on visual sensation to arouse desire. They should also not dwell on sensations of sound, smell and taste which are in conflict with enlightenment. They should let their hearts dwell on nothing and be free to behave. That is because if there is any dwelling of the heart, it is in fact not a real dwelling. I say the heart of a bodhisattva should practice giving without dwelling on visual sensation."

"Subhuti, if a bodhisattva's heart dwells on doctrine while practicing giving, he is like entering into a dark room and seeing nothing at all. On the other hand, if he does not dwell on doctrine while practicing giving, it is like he has eyes and will see all sorts of colors as if in bright daylight."



"Subhuti, in the coming generations, if there are virtuous and benevolent men and women who steadfastly recite this sutra, they will be like Buddha and have Buddha's wisdom. What I know and see is that those people will achieve immeasurable and boundless merits."



"If someone says I achieve enlightenment, Subhuti, there is no clear way to achieve it. Subhuti, the enlightenment that I achieve in essence is intangible but real. I say all enlightenment ways are the Buddha ways. "

"Subhuti, those heart desires could not be satisfied in the past, and cannot be now, and will not be in the future."



"Again, Subhuti, such way is fair and equitable, and is thus called enlightenment way. It is based on the idea of devoid of self, people, beings and mortals, and encompasses all virtuous and benevolent ways. This will lead to enlightenment."



"If one uses visual manifestations to see me, or uses sound to implore me, such person is practicing deviant way, and he cannot see me."



"I have obtained enlightenment not from the complete physical appearances of excellence. Subhuti, if you think like that, all the people who set their heart on enlightenment will say all the enlightenment ways are obliterated. "



"If someone says it is like I have come, have gone, have sat down or have lain down, he does not understand the meaning of what I say. Why is that so? This is because an enlightened person is omnipresent and omniscient, and is like he comes from nowhere and goes nowhere."



"If the world really exists, it must be perceived as in unity."



"Subhuti, all the people who set their heart on enlightenment should know all the enlightenment ways as they are, and understand them as they are, and should not be dogmatic."



“Subhuti, if there are people filled with immeasurable and myriad worlds of seven precious jewels, and if they steadfastly practice giving, and if there are virtuous and benevolent men and women who are compassionate and merciful, abide in this sutra and all the verses therein, steadfastly recite this sutra, and speak to other people about it, then their blessings will be more than others, what is more if they speak to others not based on appearances and image perception which as a result cannot move or influence them.”



***"Everything is governed by
principles;
It may appear like dream or
bubble;
Like dew or like lightning;
All should be observed as such."***

