

Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra

A Detailed Exposition

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Translated into English by the Vajra Lotsawas

Homage to the most precious root guru,

the embodiment of all dharma realms.

Homage to Sakyamuni Buddha.

Homage to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

We offer our humble translation to the lineage root guru of

True Buddha School,

His Holiness Living Buddha Lian Sheng,

Grandmaster Sheng-Yen Lu.

This translation is only possible due to his tremendous blessings.

May sentient beings receive immeasurable benefits

from reading and penetrating this sutra.

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**The Vajra Sutra is truly magnificent!
It is the sutra about the highest perfect enlightenment!
Yet only a few people can reveal its essential meaning.
For this reason,
I will begin a detailed exposition of the Vajra Sutra.**

Prologue

July 24, 2021

Today I will begin my exposition on the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*, in short, the *Vajra Sutra* (*Diamond Sutra*). I just completed my detailed exposition on *Lamdre*, which was very difficult to explain. No one explains it in depth these days. Many masters have discussed the *Vajra Sutra*, but I consider the *Vajra Sutra* even more difficult to explain than *Lamdre*.

The *Vajra Sutra* is truly magnificent! Very few people can reveal its essential meaning. For this reason I will begin its detailed exposition. Do you know that many people, when explaining the *Vajra Sutra*, first explain the title *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*, then plainly state, “Translated during the Later Qin Dynasty by Kumarajiva, Master of Tripitaka”?

The Buddhist sutras were spoken by Sakyamuni Buddha, but who wrote them down? For the most part, the authors of the Buddhist sutras in the Sutric tradition are unknown. Kumarajiva translated the *Vajra Sutra* into Chinese, but who was the original author? There is no known author. Such is the case for almost all sutras—there are no authors, only translators.

But this is not the case for Tantrayana texts. Have you noticed? All Tantrayana texts name their authors and translators. For instance, Virupa was the author of *Lamdre* (*The Path and Its Fruit*), and the translator was someone else. One can always find the authors of Tantric Buddhist texts. Tsongkapa authored the *Ngakrim Chenmo* (*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Tantric Path*) and the *Lamrim Chenmo* (*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*). The Five Major Treatises have authors as well. For instance, Maitreya Bodhisattva authored a few treatises. Asanga and Vasubandu authored the yogacara texts. Nagarjuna and Aryadeva authored the madyamaka texts. Thus, the treatises have authors.

The authors of the sutras in Sutric Buddhism (Hinayana and Mahayana) are anonymous. Only the names of their translators—and not the authors—are given. However, Tantrayana texts include the names of authors and translators. This is a matter worth further exploration.

The sutras, of course, were all spoken by Sakyamuni Buddha. But in ancient India when Sakyamuni Buddha gave dharma teachings, it would be unthinkable for his disciples to take notes while he was speaking since that would be disrespectful. Nowadays it is perfectly acceptable, but not so in that era. Thus there were the so-called first, second, third, and fourth compilations of what people heard and believed the Buddha had said.

Ananda had an exceptional memory and could narrate what he had heard. Upon confirmation by other disciples that those were the words of the Buddha, they recorded them. Nowadays who has such a powerful memory? I have given dharma teachings for a very long time and forgotten many of them. Where did I give my first dharma teaching? At Toubiankeng River in Taichung. That day I had given a fengshui consultation. We had some free time afterward and since I love to swim, we went to the Toubiankeng River. We all swam. Afterward I put my clothes on, climbed on top of a water tower, and gave my first teaching. I spoke on the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra* (*Lotus Sutra*).

Is there anyone here who was present at that time? Masters Lian Shi and Lian Zhu were there; they are long-time disciples. Among all of you sitting here today, can anyone remember all the dharma talks Grandmaster [referring to himself] has given from the very beginning to now? Anyone? Does anyone remember every word of my dharma teachings since taking refuge? If you can remember them all, please tell me. In the past, you could have been Ananda, or you must be a reincarnation of Ananda. [joking] It is very difficult to find such a person.

Om mani padme hum.

The Vajra Sutra
reveals the wisdom that annihilates everything
and allows the attainment of buddhahood.

Discourse 1

July 25, 2021

Today is the beginning of the *Vajra Sutra* exposition, and we will first talk about the word *vajra*. What is a vajra? This is a vajra [pointing to a vajra embroidery on Grandmaster's dragon vest]. This vajra scepter is also a vajra [picking a vajra scepter].

In ancient India, a vajra was a weapon used in battles between warring countries to destroy enemies. A vajra, as a weapon, is very strong and indestructible. Its function is to destroy anything and everything. Vajra has many meanings. It represents indestructibility. It's very strong and doesn't deteriorate, and it can destroy and annihilate anything and everything.

A wrathful vajra deity (*heruka*) holds a vajra scepter with the wrathful mudra. Our True Buddha School's Mahabala is a heruka, and he can destroy everything. Mahabala is called the Heruka with Great Power, as is the dharma protector Dorje Shugden. So Dorje Shugden is also called Mahabala. Explore them on your own if you would like to know more.

Many people don't know the true meaning of the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*. What is the real meaning of this sutra? It is the annihilation of everything, as revealed by its title—*Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita*. The shortened title of the sutra is the *Vajra Sutra*.¹

Everything is destroyed! For this reason, when Bodhidharma gave his dharma teaching, he went up to his seat, slapped the table once, and then got off his seat. That's all there was to his dharma teaching. As for my discourse on the *Vajra Sutra* today, what is there to discourse when everything has been annihilated? When the dharma itself has been destroyed, what dharma is there to discourse?

No one has ever talked about the *Vajra Sutra* in this way. Speakers usually speak at great length, leaving the audience entirely baffled. What is being discussed? Instead, I am saying that the

¹ Grandmaster advised the translator to use "*Vajra Sutra*" for its English translation instead of continuing to use the popular translation "*Diamond Sutra*." Vajra has often been translated as diamond or symbolized as thunderbolt in English: thus the name *Diamond Sutra*. As Tantric Buddhism has gained popularity in the West, a term like *vajra* becomes more commonly known. Especially since the term *vajra* is closely related to the sutra, we use "*The Vajra Sutra*" as the English name for this sutra.

essential meaning of the *Vajra Sutra* is in the destruction of everything! Even the buddhadharma itself is destroyed. Contemplate it!

Let me ask you now. Suppose you became a buddha—say, Adharma Buddha, Vairocana Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Aksobhya Buddha, Ratnasambhava Buddha, or Amoghasiddhi Buddha. Would you still practice buddhadharma every day? Would you need to?

In the realm of no-practice, buddhadharma can be discarded because you have become a buddha, correct? So when you reach the realm of no-practice, practicing is the same as not practicing, and not practicing is practicing. This is called attainment. When you have attained buddhahood, will you still perform *homa* (fire offering)? If you are still performing *homa* after becoming a buddha, then to whom are you offering? Is there a deity who is not, in fact, you? Do you offer to ordinary human beings? What do you offer? Instead of making offerings, you should be receiving offerings. Do you understand?

What is *prajnaparamita*? We know that *prajna* means wisdom, but *prajna* does not refer to ordinary wisdom. *Prajna* is the wisdom of the buddhas, not conventional wisdom or knowledge of the world. *Prajna* does not belong to worldly knowledge; it is beyond-worldly knowledge used to transcend the world. *Prajna* is the wisdom needed to abandon the mundane. When this wisdom is perfected, it becomes the realm of emptiness, where everything has been annihilated.

Paramita refers to *Paramitayana*, which is equivalent to Mahayana—the vast and boundless Greater Vehicle. *Prajna* is the wisdom that destroys everything, *paramita* is the vast and boundless vehicle, and *vajra* means indestructible.

The meaning of the title *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* is “the indestructible supreme wisdom of the Tathagata that annihilates everything by means of the vast and boundless Greater Vehicle.” This sutra reveals the wisdom that annihilates everything and allows the attainment of buddhahood. Its essence is in the obliteration of everything.

Today we are merely discussing names. *Vajra* means both indestructibility and annihilation. *Prajna* means wisdom. And *paramita* has several meanings, including vast and boundless, arriving at the other shore, and attainment of buddhahood. The sutra’s name is quite long.

Its translator was Kumarajiva, Master of Tripitaka, who lived during the Later Qin Dynasty. He came from India. Was he an Indian? Could he have been a Chinese man who immigrated to India, became an Indian, and returned home? [laughs] There actually was such a dharma teacher, Sri Singha, the guru of Guru Padmasambhava. He was a Han Chinese who traveled to India to learn buddhadharma. Later as an Indian, Sri Singha transmitted buddhadharma to Guru Padmasambhava, who was also Indian.

That’s all for today. Om mani padme hum.

The Vajra Sutra is likened to the wheel of time.

As time passes, everything will disappear.

**This is the dharma of severance,
to cut off everything from your mind,
good or bad, big and small.**

**It is the wisdom to annihilate everything
and arrive at the highest attainment.**

Discourse 2

July 31, 2021

Let us now discuss the title: *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*. The vajra—an indestructible weapon—also represents Vajrayana. Do you believe that this vajra scepter is indestructible? If you throw it against the wall or smash it onto the ground, it won't break and will keep its shape. We use this weapon to symbolize indestructibility, and that is what this *Vajra Sutra* is all about. It is indestructible and it can destroy everything.

The full name of the sutra is the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*. It contains an indestructible wisdom that annihilates everything to arrive at the highest attainment. This is the quintessence of the *Vajra Sutra*—it entails the highest attainment.

Paramita represents Mahayana. It also represents unparalleled attainment. This is a sutra of the indestructible vajra-like wisdom that annihilates everything to allow the attainment of the highest enlightenment.

I relate this sutra to Kalacakra. Who emanated Kalacakra Heruka? Sakyamuni Buddha. He transmitted the Kalacakra Dharma to King Sucandra, the King of Shambala, at Sri Dhanyakataka Stupa in South India.

What does *Kalacakra* mean? The wheel of time. As the wheel of time turns, everything is destroyed, without exception. Would the lifespan of houses, like those of the True Buddha Tantric Quarters, be longer than Grandmaster's? Houses typically have longer lifespans, right? Some even have a lifespan of a hundred, two hundred, or even several hundred years. They continue to exist even if they have become ancient. But will they disappear eventually? Yes, as time passes, the wheel of time turns, and everything will vanish.

The real meaning of Kalacakra is that the gigantic wheel of time will obliterate everything. Do cars break down? Do houses deteriorate? Can human beings vanish? Yes. How? Through time. You are born as a baby and grow to be a child, you go through youth, middle age, and old age, and

then you die, and you are gone. What causes it? The wheel of time. Over time, everything will disappear.

We have learned from physics that the Earth has undergone seven transformations in the past seven hundred million years. Mountains became fields, fields became mountains, the oceans became mountains, and the mountains became seas. As time goes by, nothing stays. Everything will be annihilated. Kalacakra—the wheel of time—annihilates everything.

Remember? Bodhidharma went to Tibet and was called Dampa Sangye. He transmitted a dharma called Body Severance (*Chöd*) to Machig Labdron. This is a dharma to cut off or cut through. What is cutting? It's the act of destroying. You offer your body to all buddhas of the three times in the ten directions, all bodhisattvas and mahasattvas, as well as all samsaric sentient beings in the six rebirth realms. This is the true spirit of forsaking and offering. Only when a spiritual cultivator has such a spirit will they have attainments.

Now do you understand the key meaning of the sutra? I am discussing only the title, and that alone is taking quite some time. After listening to my overview of the *Vajra Sutra*, you now know to sever everything, including good and bad thoughts. Purge all matters—big and small, good or bad—from your mind. Don't keep anything in your mind. Wipe everything out!

Why are you upset for three days just because someone says something? Do words or some small matters provoke you? Because of it, do you not want to come here anymore? If I were to say, "I'm not pleased, so I won't go. I don't want to give dharma teachings anymore," would that do? No! You are a spiritual cultivator, so don't keep all this garbage inside you. It's not worth it! Take out the garbage! Money, wealth, career, romantic love, familial love, everything including your body should all be discarded completely.

Let's take romantic love. Don't you know that it is only momentary? It's fleeting. At this moment you have love. But once you die, what love will you have? Once you die, what precious items will you have? Once you die, what houses and cars will you have? Once you die, you don't even have your physical body anymore.

Remember everything is a blessing in disguise. Everything is the best arrangement. However, the best arrangement implies that something still matters. This notion, too, should be discarded. This is what the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* is all about.

To reach attainment you must discard your own body, let alone career, love, fate, fengshui, astrology—which the Buddha says are all rubbish. He shuns them. The one who knew fengshui was Sariputra, one of the Buddha's principal disciples, the one with the greatest wisdom. These means are merely used to help sentient beings and entice them onto the path. They are useless otherwise.

I further elaborated on the title *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* today. It's related to the Severance Practice—the practice of forsaking our body. It's also related to Kalacakra—the dharma of the wheel of time. As time passes, everything ceases to exist. When a person dies,

everything is gone. To them everything in the world disappears. What money? What love? They are all gone! In the same way, everything in the world will eventually vanish.

My exposition will be different from others. Perhaps you are familiar with the *Vajra Sutra* and chant it daily, but do you understand its key essence? The *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* is the wheel of time. It's the dharma of severance. It's to cut off everything.

Om mani padme hum.

1 The Setting of the Dharma Teaching

Thus have I heard. One time the Buddha was staying at Anathapindika Monastery at Prince Jeta's Grove, near the great city of Sravasti, with an assembly of 1,250 monks. When it was mealtime, the World-Honored One donned his kasaya robe, took up his alms bowl, entered Sravasti, and went door to door asking for food. After the almsround he returned to the monastery and ate his meal. He then put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, prepared his seat, and sat down.

**There must be certain causes and conditions
for the Buddha to speak.
The Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra
came into existence as
Subhuti—
the one foremost in the comprehension of empty-nature—
asked the questions.**

Discourse 3

August 1, 2021

I will now start my exposition on the *Vajra Sutra*. Let us discuss the title of chapter one—*The Setting of the Dharma Teaching*.

There are certain causes and conditions for the Buddha to speak. First there is a main actor, the speaker—Sakyamuni Buddha. Second there is the audience, or more importantly, a supplicant—the person asking questions. Most of the sutras spoken by the Buddha are in the form of answers to questions from his disciples. A disciple asks questions and Sakyamuni Buddha explains. That is how the sutras came about.

In the *Vajra Sutra*, the supplicant was Subhuti. Why Subhuti? Because he was foremost in the comprehension of empty-nature. Subhuti was one of the ten chief disciples. The disciple with the foremost wisdom was Sariputra, while the disciple with the greatest supernatural power was Moggallana. The disciple who best comprehended empty-nature was Subhuti. It was Subhuti's questions that Sakyamuni Buddha answered in this sutra.

There are causes and conditions for each dharma gathering. They include the speakers of the sutra, the audience, the questions and answers, the entire process, the location, the period, the setting, and the event—what is going on. The *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* came into existence over 2,600 years ago, and the location was Anathapindika Monastery at Jetavana in Sravasti, India.

Sakyamuni Buddha once traveled to Trayastrimsa Heaven to discourse on the *Ksitigarbha Sutra* to his mother, Queen Maya, and disappeared for some time. When the Buddha returned, Uppalavanna was the first one who ran to the Buddha and said, “I’m the first one to greet you on your return.” Uppalavanna was the most beautiful nun in the sangha and because of that, many shaven-headed monks followed her around. In response, Sakyamuni Buddha told her that somebody else had greeted him already. She insisted that she was the first to greet the Buddha and had not seen anyone else. The Buddha continued, “There was another person before you, and that was Subhuti.”

Subhuti knew that Sakyamuni Buddha was about to descend from Trayastrimsa Heaven. He was in meditation; he stood up but then sat back down and used his mind to greet the Buddha. Sakyamuni Buddha knew immediately that Subhuti was the first to greet him, welcoming him in an intangible way. Although Uppalavanna appeared first to welcome the Buddha back physically, Subhuti was still first.

In this sutra, there are two actors: Sakyamuni Buddha, the speaker, and Subhuti, the supplicant who is asking questions. Because of these two actors, we have the *Vajra Sutra*.

Today we will only discuss the title of chapter one—*The Setting of the Dharma Teaching*. Most speakers just read the words when they explain this passage. Everybody can understand these words, but perhaps not the deeper meanings behind it that I will explain for many days.

At that time in Sravasti, India, Sakyamuni Buddha and his many followers of 1,250 people went out on the almsround and returned. After they finished eating, they put away their robes and bowls and washed their feet. Then the Buddha rose to the dharma seat.

You can understand this passage, right? This portrayal of the daily routine of Sakyamuni Buddha seems simple, but it’s not that simple. You might not be aware of the many profound meanings within this text. What are they? Think about it. Next Saturday, I will discuss more. Wait for it.

That’s all for today. Om mani padme hum.

The Buddha says,
“One is partial toward the poor,
while the other is partial toward the rich.
They are both wrong
since they have no mind of equality.”
A practitioner should have no discrimination.
Remember,
if one discriminates,
one is on the wrong track.

Discourse 4

August 7, 2021

The *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra* is about the indestructible wisdom by which one reaches supreme attainment. It is the indestructible wisdom which annihilates everything. By annihilating everything, one attains the ultimate perfect enlightenment.

The dharma teaching on the *Vajra Sutra* begins now!

Thus have I heard.

The “I” in this phrase refers to Ananda and the rest of the audience listening to Sakyamuni Buddha’s dharma teaching. This phrase connotes “as if you were there” listening to the teaching.

It is said that Ananda’s memory was extraordinarily powerful, and he could remember everything the Buddha said. So “I” in this sutra refers to Ananda, supplemented by the other bhiksus present who compiled the scriptures together. They discussed what the Buddha said and recorded it. As such, every sutra starts with *Thus have I heard*. This phrase refers to Ananda and the assembly of bhiksus in the audience.

As far as I know, there is no one in the world with a memory so powerful that they can commit all of Sakyamuni Buddha’s words to memory. Such a person doesn’t exist, at least not nowadays. My memory is certainly not up to such a task. Earlier this morning, I was thinking about the quantum physics research of my disciple, Prof. Zhu Shiyi (Shih-I Chu). I could not remember the word “quantum.” Was it particle, electron, neutron, or...? Suddenly, the word “quantum” popped up in

my brain; that's how I remembered it. Prof. Zhu was an expert in quantum physics, yet it took me a while to remember the word "quantum." I must have memory lapses! [laughs]

One time, the Buddha was staying at Anathapindika Monastery at Prince Jeta's Grove, near the great city of Sravasti...

The Buddha was in Sravasti, as everybody knows. *Anathapindika Monastery at Prince Jeta's Grove* is commonly called Anathapindika Monastery at Jetavana, or Jetavana for short. Sakyamuni Buddha had three main residences. At first, he lived in a cave at Vulture Peak. Then he stayed at Venuvana Vihara (Bamboo Grove Monastery). Lastly, he resided at Anathapindikarama (a monastery built by Anathapindika).

Anathapindika was a great philanthropist in Sravasti. He was extremely wealthy and greatly helped the needy. His nickname meant "an elder who looks after and provides food and a place to stay for desolate people such as orphans, widowers, unmarried men, and the poor."

What is Jeta? Jeta refers to Prince Jeta. Some people misinterpret Jeta as a kind of tree, or the rootless tree as written in Chinese. But that's wrong! Jeta is a transliteration of the Sanskrit name of a prince; it refers to Prince Jeta, who owned the grove.

Anathapindika wanted to donate land to Sakyamuni Buddha. Sariputra looked around Sravasti for a place with good geomancy and found this wonderful location belonging to Prince Jeta. Prince Jeta told Anathapindika if he could cover the ground with gold, the prince would sell the land. Anathapindika had enough money to buy and offer the grove to the Buddha. So Prince Jeta sold him the grove. There were many trees in the woods, and since they were not covered in gold, Prince Jeta told Anathapindika that he wanted to donate the trees to the Buddha. Anathapindika donated the land and Jeta donated the trees. This is the origin of the names Jeta's Trees and Anathapindika's Grove. This place is called Jetavana for short.

...with an assembly of 1,250 monks.

It was an assembly of 1,250 monks, so many people were there. At mealtime, the Buddha wore his robe, took his alms bowl, and went into the great city of Sravasti to ask for alms.

...it was mealtime...

Eating in Taiwanese is called *chiah peng*. In Cantonese, it's called *sik fan*. In Malay or Bahasa Indonesia, it's called *makan nasi*. In Mandarin, it's *chi fan*. We say "lunchtime" at noon, "dinnertime" at night, and "breakfast" in the morning. Language aside, there is further meaning related to this "eating."

Mahakasyapa especially chose poor people to ask for food. The Buddha asked him, "Why do you beg only from the poor?" He answered that he wanted the poor to gain merits and become rich in future lives. Therefore, Mahakasyapa looked like Lian Xu [a very thin monk in the audience].

Ananda begged only from the rich. The Buddha asked him, “Why do you beg only from the rich?” Ananda replied, “I want to lessen the burden of the poor. I find it hard to bear that poor people still offer me food despite their poverty.” So he begged only from the rich. For this reason, Ananda looked like Xuanren [a fat and round monk in the audience].

You can see a big difference between the two. Mahakasyapa was skinny while Ananda was fat and round. Each had their own reasoning. The Buddha indicated that what they said made sense, yet at the same time, it also made no sense. It showed that they did not have equality in mind.

When you go for alms, you eat whatever is given—you don’t choose. If you choose, then you are partial. Sakyamuni Buddha is impartial, as this is how monastic people should be—one eats whatever food is offered. If one encounters a poor person, one eats whatever food the poor person offers. If one encounters a rich person the next day, one eats whatever food the rich person offers. One must be indiscriminate and should not choose what to eat.

There is a deeper meaning to eating. The Buddha says, “One person only begs from poor people while the other only begs from the rich. Neither has the mind of equality since they are partial.” One is partial toward the poor while the other is partial toward the rich. They are both wrong. One should eat whatever is offered. This should be the mindset of a practitioner: no discrimination. Remember, if one discriminates, one is on the wrong track.

The eating, lodging, dressing, and traveling mentioned in this excerpt have a deeper meaning. Mahakasyapa was truly remarkable! He was foremost in ascetic monkhood cultivation. What he ate, how he lived, what he wore, and how he traveled were different from the other monks.

How did he eat? He visualized before eating. Just as we do, he offered to all buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities, and sentient beings. Then he visualized food as poo and soup as pee before eating them. This is the practice of an ascetic monk. No kidding. Drinking pee and eating poo is the way of an ascetic monk. It’s not only about a mind of equality, but they also visualize what they eat as being inedible [to decrease their desire].

Where did he live? He lived in caves, under trees, or in the cemetery between graves. He slept in the sitting position and never lay down. That was the real Mahakasyapa. He was recognized as a great disciple, an exemplar. He was foremost in monkhood cultivation and in abiding by the ascetic precepts.

Unlike him Ananda slept like a pig. For this reason, Ananda and Mahakasyapa did not get along. Their body shapes were two extremes, one being very fat, and the other so skinny with fingers as bony as chicken feet.

We will now discuss dressing. How did Sakyamuni Buddha wear his clothes? He just used a piece of cloth! How did Mahakasyapa, the exemplar monk, wear his clothes? He wore cloth that had been used to wrap corpses found at burial grounds. He wrapped himself in this burial shroud. That’s how he dressed.

Monks in ancient India dressed similarly to the Thai monks, who still maintain this ancient tradition of wrapping cloth around their bodies. Back then, the rough cloth was like the burial shrouds used to wrap corpses in India. But it has all changed now. Our lama outfit is made up of skirts and tops. Do you know how to wear a piece of cloth like the ones worn by the Theravada monks? There is a deeper meaning in dressing.

Back in those days, they walked barefoot. Then later, some wore straw sandals, and nowadays monks wear slippers or even leather shoes. It rained a lot during the monsoon season in India, resulting in many insects appearing on the ground. To avoid stepping on them and killing them accidentally when walking outside, the monks went on retreat for the three months of the monsoon season.

After the almsround they returned to the monastery—Jetavana Vihara—and everyone ate their meal, put away their robes and alms bowls, and washed their feet. Since they went barefoot, their feet were dirty and needed to be washed. Then they prepared their seats, placing their mats down and sat. The Buddha's seat was a rather wide seat with a cushion on it, sort of like a bed. We have covered how ascetic monks eat, dress, live, and travel.

Later, Mahakasyapa left the sangha. Why? Because Sakyamuni Buddha went to live in Venuvana Vihara and Jetavana Grove, which were luxurious mansions. Mahakasyapa was not comfortable living there. In his earliest time, the Buddha lived in caves. Then someone made an offering of Venuvana Vihara. Later another patron donated a more luxurious, beautiful, monastery, the Anathapindika Monastery at Jeta's Grove on a magnificent piece of land Sariputra found.

Sakyamuni Buddha also began to accept meal offerings as benefactors invited the Buddha and the sangha, so the Buddha accepted offerings of banquets later in his life. The clothing also changed from burial shrouds to kasaya robes, which were pieces of discarded cloth patched together. That's called *bainayi* in Chinese, meaning ragged robe of old cloth patches.

Now I have finished this chapter. Do you understand my explanation? Our spiritual cultivation nowadays is too easy, too nice, and too relaxed for all of you monks and nuns. Lian Xu is skinny not because he restrains himself from eating but due to bad digestion. He is not like Mahakasyapa at all. Mahakasyapa visualized food as feces and urine before eating, even when he received delicious food.

It's a different tradition for tantric practitioners. Our lives are so fortunate, even our lama robes are nicely tailored. But we must visualize and perform bardo deliverance before eating.

Om mani padme hum.

**The profundity of the first chapter
is in the annihilation of daily life activities,
the destruction of all desires,
and the shutting off
the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.**

Discourse 5

August 8, 2021

Yesterday we started to discuss chapter one—*The Setting of the Dharma Teaching*. I was curious if everybody understood what I meant, so I asked some people afterward. I would like to further explain the deeper meaning of these daily activities.

Someone asked how I cultivate spiritually, to which I answered, “Eating and sleeping.” That person immediately responded, “Everyone can do that!” Spiritual cultivation is about eating and sleeping—that is correct. This chapter, too, talks about eating, dressing, going for an almsround, and sleeping, so those activities are essentially eating and sleeping. The person who questioned Grandmaster was very pleased because he thought he knew how to cultivate spiritually.

Yet, that’s not it! There is more meaning to these activities. The life of the Buddha seems like that of an average person. However, it has a very different meaning. Eating and sleeping are activities that everyone can do, but the Buddha brings much more significance to them. At their deepest level, they are very different. It’s wrong to think that the daily activities of a buddha are the same as those of an ordinary being. Don’t equate them!

When asked how Grandmaster Lu cultivates spiritually, I answered, “Eating and sleeping.” Everybody can eat and sleep, but let me tell you, few people can do the real thing. Eating is not as simple as it seems. When you eat, you make offerings. When you eat, you perform bardo deliverance. When you eat, you purify. These are the true meanings of eating.

What about sleeping? Did you know that it also has a special meaning? A spiritual cultivator knows their dream is a dream, but do you? During sleep, are you aware that it’s a dream? Can you change your dream? When I have a bad dream, I can transform it into a good one. How about you? I can do dharma practice in my sleep and perform purification. Do you know how? A tantric practitioner should know. This is the real meaning of “sleep,” so there is a difference between the two kinds of sleep.

Eating, dressing, lodging, and traveling are all spiritual cultivation and purification. Mahakasyapa epitomized ideal monkhood practices, and his ways of eating, dressing, lodging, and traveling were extraordinary. He slept between tombstones in cemeteries, under trees, or inside caves. He never slept on beds and never touched money. In fact, he had no money at all. He never gazed at a bhiksuni or any woman and would lower his head instead. He never cared for name or fame either. The foremost monkhood cultivation was as such. His ascetic practice was through annihilation, as an arhat does. What was he eliminating? The six thieves (senses): eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

On the contrary, when a man looks at the eyes of an attractive lady, he is electrified. He is finished if he dares to gaze into her eyes. The monk Xuanzang of the Tang Dynasty was unscathed when he met the spider genie. If that had been you, you would have been glued to her spider web and eaten alive.

Mahakasyapa left the sangha due to contentions within it, where Devadatta contested Sakyamuni Buddha. Devadatta was an advanced cultivator who had obtained thirty major marks and eighty minor marks of perfection—very close to those of the Buddha, with a difference of only two marks. Yet, he still desired to lead and replace the Buddha. He felt that the aging Buddha was hanging onto his post and not allowing anyone to take over.

Devadatta wanted to lead because he craved status and power. His desire for a name became his downfall. There were also instances of downfalls due to food. In contrast, look at Mahakasyapa! He ate the cheapest things. In his mind, food was poo and drink was pee. He destroyed all five major human desires for wealth, sensual pleasures, fame, food, and sleep. This is the profound meaning of the first section. Nobody except Grandmaster Lu has explained it this way, right?

Ananda was a fat, lustful, and lazy pig who loved food and women. He just wanted to enjoy life. Among the ten chief disciples, Ananda was the only one who did not reach attainment before the Buddha entered parinirvana. Only afterward did Ananda start to cultivate spiritually. The other nine chief disciples had attainments by the time the Buddha entered parinirvana.

The other chief disciples were Sariputra and Moggallana. Both were elders before they joined the Buddha's sangha. They found Sakyamuni Buddha's teachings to be truly remarkable, so they led their followers to take refuge in the Buddha. That's how the Buddha's sangha became so large. Sariputra was first and foremost in wisdom, and Moggallana was first and foremost in supernatural power.

The Buddha respected Sariputra and Moggallana, who themselves were leaders, and the Buddha also respected Mahakasyapa. Even though Mahakasyapa left the sangha, the Buddha repeatedly asked him to return. Yet he only complied when the Buddha was about to enter parinirvana, rushing back to bid farewell to his teacher. He returned to the Buddha's side only then. Ananda wanted to light the Buddha's cremation fire, but the lighting was unsuccessful despite several tries. Only after Mahakasyapa returned could the fire be lit. That showed that Sakyamuni Buddha waited for his return; he truly respected Mahakasyapa.

Sakyamuni Buddha highly respected Mahakasyapa as he was most earnest in his spiritual cultivation. On the contrary, Ananda often played hooky. Mahakasyapa did not respect Ananda, and they never got along. Ananda was the close attendant of Sakyamuni Buddha, yet he was very lazy, so Mahakasyapa quietly left the sangha. Due to Mahakasyapa's admonishment, Ananda eventually put his heart into spiritual cultivation. As for Mahakasyapa, he guided many people onto the path and gathered many followers.

This is the exposition on the first chapter. Its profundity is in the annihilation of daily life activities such as eating, dressing, lodging, and traveling; in the destruction of desires for wealth, sensual pleasures, fame, food, and sleep; and in shutting off the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These are the key points of this section.

Has anybody expounded the *Vajra Sutra* in this way? Have you ever heard similar explanations from other people? Perhaps and perhaps not. In any case, I am exposing the profundity for you all.

Om mani padme hum.

2 Subhuti's Request

At that time, the Venerable Elder Subhuti was present at the assembly. He rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, and with palms joined, respectfully bowed and addressed the Buddha, saying, "World-Honored One, the Tathagata's sublime mindfulness of and entrustment to the bodhisattvas is indeed extraordinary.

"World-Honored One, when good men and good women give rise to the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi and strive for perfect enlightenment, how should they dwell in their minds, and how should they master their minds?"

The Buddha said, "Excellent, Subhuti. As you said, the Tathagata is mindful of the bodhisattvas and entrusts the bodhisattvas. Now listen carefully while I tell you how the minds of good men and good women should abide when they strive for the perfect enlightenment of anuttara samyaksambodhi and how they should master their minds."

"Wonderful indeed is your teaching, World-Honored One. I will pay heed to what you say."

Why did Subhuti have so much anger in his heart?

**How did he eliminate it
and later become a master of unborn endurance?**

How did he create affinity with the Buddha?

And how did the Buddha save him?

Discourse 6

August 14, 2021

Let us discuss the second chapter—*Subhuti's Request*. [In the Chinese translation, the translator subdivided the original text into chapters and added a title to each chapter. In the title of chapter two, they used Shanxian instead of Subhuti. Shanxian is Subhuti's other name. Thus, the literal translation of the Chinese title is *Shanxian's Request*. However, this English translation uses *Subhuti's Request*.]

Let me ask you all. Who is Shanxian? [Shanxian means Good Manifestation.] Masters, you often chant the *Vajra Sutra*, so when you read the word “Shanxian,” do you know what it means? If you know who Shanxian is, please raise your hand. Master Lian Wang, do you know? [Master Lian Wang guessed it was Subhuti.] Was it a wild guess? [laughs] Please be seated. He guessed correctly.

Subhuti had three names. The first name was Born Empty. The second name was Good and Auspicious. And the third name was Good Manifestation or Shanxian. This chapter uses his third name in the title [of the Chinese translation, but not in the English translation]. Many people don't know that Shanxian is Subhuti's other name. There were reasons why he got those three names.

First let's talk about the name “Subhuti,” which is transliterated as Xuputi in Chinese. Some people split the name into Xu, meaning “needing,” and Puti, meaning “bodhi.” So Subhuti becomes “needing bodhi.” Is that right? Well, it's right to say that we need bodhi, but Subhuti is a person's name, referring to the Venerable Subhuti. We should not break up his name.

There were in fact two people named Subhuti among the Buddha's disciples. One Subhuti belonged to royalty. The other Subhuti belonged to the Brahman caste. In India they have social classes, and spiritual cultivators belong to the Brahman caste. The Subhuti in the *Vajra Sutra* was the Brahmin, a spiritual cultivator.

I will tell you something that only I know; it's not even written in the *Avadanasataka Sutra*.¹ People typically talk about three lifetimes of the past, present, and future, but I talk about four lifetimes. Only Grandmaster Lu knows about Subhuti's earliest lifetime, and after I talk about it, everybody will know.

The *Avadanasataka Sutra* contains an account of Subhuti's known past lives. What I want to talk about now is an earlier life of his. It's not in the sutra, and nobody knows about it. How do I know? Because Subhuti told me. In one of his past lives, he was also a spiritual cultivator. He took care of children who were discarded by their parents. The temple was well-known for it, and people left their unwanted children at the temple, knowing that Subhuti would care for the orphans.

At the time, Subhuti was the temple's abbot. The news spread. A group of robbers thought the temple must have a lot of money, and they believed Subhuti must have been rich to be able to care for all the orphans. They went to rob the temple, but no matter how hard they searched, they could not find any money. They were very cruel in forcing Subhuti to give them money. But Subhuti had no money. The robbers demanded, "If you have no money, how can you take care of the orphans?" He explained, "When we go out for alms-begging, we ask for a little more to feed these orphans." The robbers didn't believe him. They seized several crying orphans and threatened Subhuti, "If you don't tell us where you hide the money, we'll kill the orphans." Subhuti was exasperated, "But I really have no money! I just feel pity for the orphans, so I care for them by begging for alms. I just eat a little bit and then share the rest with them."

The robbers didn't give up, and they shouted, "If we don't kill the orphans, you won't tell us where the money is hidden!" Then they killed a child! Blood was all over the ground. Subhuti cried in desperation. He really didn't have any money. If he had any money, it wouldn't have been so horrifying. The robbers killed a second child, then another one, and another one, until all the orphans were killed. Subhuti could not produce any money to stop it! When they finally realized that Subhuti did not have any money after all, they left. Subhuti was left all alone! He was so furious, and his heart burst with hatred. He hated humans and did not even want to be human.

Because all the orphans had been killed, he left the temple. He went deep into the mountains and lived in a cave until he died. Subhuti told me this story that no one else knew. His strong revulsion toward mankind and his deep hatred started then. That was one of Subhuti's earlier lives. That's how he lived his life then.

His subsequent lifetimes were recorded in the *Avadanasataka Sutra*, where Sakyamuni Buddha talked about Subhuti's background. In this lifetime, he was also an abbot and a spiritual cultivator. He had many followers whom he brought to go for alms, begging for food. But one by one his disciples left him because Subhuti's anger still brewed in his heart. He constantly scolded and chastised everybody because he hated human beings to start with. He said that all human beings

¹ 百緣經 Also called *The Sutra of Hundreds of Noble Deeds (Avadana)*

are no good. The way he cursed and rebuked was very harsh, and subsequently, all his followers left him. They lost their faith in him. In this lifetime, he also hated human beings.

Because he had hatred for two lifetimes, he became a poisonous dragon for five hundred lifetimes. What is a poisonous dragon? In India they don't differentiate between dragons and snakes, both of which are called *naga*. He became a poisonous snake for five hundred lifetimes. One day his retribution as a poisonous snake ended, but his hatred remained. A garuda grabbed the snake from the sea, clutched it with its claws, and flew into the sky. The garuda was ready for a nice big meal.

At this time Sakyamuni Buddha had just attained buddhahood, and he knew of this incident. He manifested himself as a monk sitting halfway up the mountain, meditating. The garuda carrying the snake passed by the monk. The snake cried out for help and nodded his head to the monk to pay homage. He was about to become food and gestured to the monk, "Please save me." But the monk—Sakyamuni Buddha—did not save him, and the snake ended up being eaten by the garuda. Although the snake cried for help from Sakyamuni Buddha and nodded his head respectfully, Sakyamuni Buddha did not save him. That was also one of his lifetimes recorded in the *Avadanasataka Sutra*.

In a later lifetime, he was reincarnated as a child in a Brahman family. This Brahman family was very wealthy and had many houses filled with gold, silver, and precious items. However, at the time he was born, everything was gone. That's why his family named him Born Empty. His family said, "As soon as you were born, all our treasures disappeared, and we became empty of wealth." So they named him Born Empty. They went to see a mystic, who told them it was an auspicious sign. The mystic said the good child was a symbol of auspiciousness, so his name was changed to Good and Auspicious. Seven days later, all the treasures and luxurious manors reappeared, and his family gave him a third name, Good Manifestation. Therefore, Born Empty, Good and Auspicious, and Good Manifestation (Shanxian) were all Subhuti's names.

Shanxian is used in the title of chapter two. Shanxian is Subhuti. This means it is Subhuti requesting Sakyamuni Buddha to give a dharma teaching. Master Lian Wang's wild guess was like trying to catch a fish in a dark pond, and he caught it! Shanxian is Subhuti's third name.

At that time, the Venerable Elder Subhuti was present at the assembly. He rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, and with palms joined, respectfully bowed and addressed the Buddha...

Why did Subhuti bare his right shoulder and kneel on his right knee? The right knee is a tradition in the Indian kingdom. You bare the right shoulder and kneel on your right knee primarily to show that everything moves clockwise. Clockwise represents the correct path or the proper way. When we are on the right path, we symbolize it by baring the right shoulder and kneeling on the right knee. Whenever we circumambulate around a stupa, temple, mountain, or lake, it's always done clockwise and never counterclockwise. It's the same when you turn the mantra wheel; it's always clockwise, never counterclockwise. Clockwise represents the right dharma.

If it's counterclockwise, it symbolizes the deviant or the wrong path. If you show your right shoulder or right arm, that means you are on the right path. Tibetan lamas always bare their right shoulders. We asked them once, "Why do you bare your right shoulder?" One *geshe*, whose name I won't disclose, joked that it's sexier that way. If that's the case, right or left shoulder makes no difference, right? So it's not to show off your sexiness as the *geshe* said. The title *geshe* is like a doctorate degree in [Tibetan] Buddhism, and there are several levels of *geshe*.

That's all for today. Om mani padme hum.

**Enduring is spiritual cultivation,
and it is a very high attainment.
If you cultivate the perfection of endurance,
then nothing will bother you.
Conversely,
all kinds of problems will affect those
who cannot endure.**

Discourse 7

August 15, 2021

Let's talk more about the Venerable Elder Subhuti. Subhuti was born with high intelligence, but he still carried the seed of hatred and anger from his past lives. Therefore, Sakyamuni Buddha first taught Subhuti the paramita (perfection) of endurance. He eventually attained the samadhi of non-contention. From the samadhi of non-contention, he attained the samadhi of emptiness.

One time on a dharma propagation trip, the Buddha visited the village where Subhuti lived. Subhuti had heard that the Buddha was very wise, though he also considered himself to possess a high level of wisdom. He attended the Buddha's teaching, listening to the Buddha speaking while standing at a far distance.

The Buddha explained that all sentient beings are equal—there is no difference between self and others. The Buddha spoke on the ultimate dharma, the highest kind of dharma. He also said, "Sentient beings are me, and I am sentient beings. There is no difference between self and others. All beings are fundamentally equal."

Standing afar, Subhuti joined his palms with reverence upon hearing this. His heart echoed what Sakyamuni Buddha said. Afterward, Subhuti went to where the Buddha stayed and paced back and forth outside the Buddha's door. Sakyamuni Buddha knew about it and invited Subhuti to come in. They had a dialogue and connected right away since they had great affinity. Where did the karmic connection come from? The causes and conditions originated when Subhuti was a poisonous snake captured by the garuda. While flying in the sky, the snake asked for the Buddha's help and nodded his head to the Buddha. By asking for help and praying to the Buddha, he created an affinity with the Buddha.

Affinity—causes and conditions—is extremely crucial. This is precisely why the Buddha says it is impossible to deliver anyone without affinities. This is one of the three things a buddha is incapable of.

Grandmaster, too, cannot do anything if there is no affinity. People come from distant places to plead with me to solve their problems and sicknesses. If their karmic connection with me is slight, I feel no dharma power flowing when I extend my hand, and I know it will be impossible to cure their illness. No matter what I do, I won't be able to help them due to the lack of affinity.

But for those with strong karmic connection, miracles occur. Elizabeth [a disciple from Indonesia] is here, and she has a strong affinity with Grandmaster. When she visited Seattle [in 2014], she had a tumor inside her brain as shown in the MRI results. The night after meeting Grandmaster, she had a dream of Grandmaster becoming a surgeon, wheeling her into an operating room, performing surgery on her brain, and taking the tumor out, leaving just a little bit of skin residue behind. In the dream I told her I had removed her tumor except for a bit of skin. Did you feel pain? No. Surgery in dreams is not painful, but would you want to try it in real life? With anesthesia you might not feel the pain. In dreams you won't feel anything either. That night Elizabeth saw the surgeon was Grandmaster, but I am not a surgeon—I never studied medicine. I don't even dare to kill chickens, but my mom did. She beheaded them while chanting, "Chicken, chicken, your life is endless suffering. Let me help you get a better new life." Cut!

I operated on Elizabeth's brain tumor in the dream. I do that in dreams although I dare not use a knife in real life. From then on, no more headaches for her. On the way home to Indonesia, she stopped by Singapore for a medical check-up, and the doctors could not find the tumor. It had disappeared with only a piece of skin left. I was able to help her because of affinity.

Elizabeth herself knew of her karmic connection with Grandmaster in her past lives. Having affinities, she was able to make a swift recovery. Many people have karmic connections with Grandmaster from many past lives, and they all have miraculous experiences. It can only occur due to affinities. Without any causes and conditions, it is impossible.

To take refuge in the Buddha, one needs affinity. Subhuti's affinity was created when he called out to Sakyamuni Buddha for help when he was a snake. Having this affinity, he encountered and took refuge in the Buddha in his subsequent life. The Buddha knew about his past lives and talked openly about it, that Subhuti carried hatred and anger in his heart. The Buddha wanted to alleviate his hatred by teaching him to practice the perfection of endurance. He eventually attained the samadhi of non-contention and reached the state of unborn endurance—a very high-level spiritual realm.

It's not easy to reach that realm; in fact, it's extremely difficult. Just like the itch when a chicken feather tickles your nose, a few disagreeable words make you feel agitated or perhaps even aggressive. A couple should not fight, otherwise, the marriage is on the brink of disaster. Fights leave scars in the hearts, brewing anger and resentment. You must not chide or speak harshly either, "Didn't I tell you to do it this way?! Why didn't you listen?" If you throw a fit and yell at

someone, they will feel indignant and become even more defiant, thinking, why should I listen to you?! Not in a million years!

Have you heard of this joke? A husband constantly scolded his wife, and she usually argued with him. One day, she stopped arguing. Instead, she took a toothbrush and cleaned the toilet every time he rebuked her. What happened? So he asked her why she brushed the toilet every time he scolded her. To which she replied, "Oh, I am using your toothbrush to clean the toilet." See? Resentment and revenge made her do that!

Getting along with people is difficult. As human beings, we experience three main difficulties: difficulty in rising to heaven, earning a living, and getting along with people. Human relationships are complicated, and you must practice until you can endure it all. This is the endurance paramita (the perfection of endurance).

No matter what others said, Subhuti stayed unaffected since he held the notion that everything would ultimately return to emptiness. Hence, he attained the samadhi of emptiness. He also attained the realm of unborn endurance, eliminating the seeds of anger and hatred from his past lives. That was the Great Subhuti.

What is spiritual cultivation? What do we cultivate? Endurance. We need to know how to endure. Enduring is spiritual cultivation. If you cultivate the perfection of endurance, then nothing matters. On the other hand, all kinds of problems will arise for those who don't practice the perfection of endurance.

If you can't endure, you are like a kindergarten baby; you don't know how to be patient. Many disciples don't know how to endure at all. You fight with each other even when you live under the same roof. Fellow disciples take refuge in the same guru, yet they still fight, backstabbing and denigrating each other.

Learn from Subhuti! He cultivated the perfection of endurance by reverting everything to emptiness. He discarded all the garbage from his heart and mind. Why do you keep garbage inside you? What for? Throw it out; empty your heart and mind! Nothing really matters. If you don't empty your heart and mind, the garbage within you will start to rot, and you will go crazy from it. When you hold anger, grudges, resentments, or hatred in your heart, you yourself are the victim. This is very foolish! Instead, you should master the perfection of endurance.

Here Grandmaster is teaching you to learn the perfection of endurance from Subhuti. Empty yourself, discard all your garbage, and empty your mind until nothing matters. Empty it until nothing exists! You will then be at peace and at ease!

If instead, you keep this garbage inside you, then it will rot and become toxic and poisonous. It will poison your heart and mind and it can kill you! You might not get COVID-19, but you will die from your own poison and toxin. When you have seeds of anger and hatred, you will be born in places where poisons and toxins exist in your future lives. Today you have heard that Subhuti was the one who practiced the perfection of endurance and attained the samadhi of non-contention.

Om mani padme hum.

**Subhuti cultivated
to a state called the samadhi of non-contention.**

**No contention
means there is no contending
—competing, arguing, insisting,
getting into conflicts or disputes, and the like.**

Discourse 8

August 21, 2021

We have not even started discussing the content of chapter two. Let's continue talking about Subhuti, and it may take some time. The Buddha put a lot of effort into teaching Subhuti, observing his past lives. I have mentioned that in his past lives, Subhuti was an extremely angry person. Therefore, the Buddha's first lesson to Subhuti was the perfection of endurance, which I have previously discussed. To what extent must one cultivate and master endurance? To the point where "there is no more endurance."

What do I mean when I say, "There is endurance, and yet there is no endurance"? Endurance is practiced until finally there is no longer a need to endure. Endurance is still there, but it has become so natural, it's as if there is no enduring.

In the beginning we must endure, even when it's unbearable. It's not easy to remain unaffected when someone insults you. You might be calm at first, but a thoughtless comment or a disagreeable remark can make you fly all over like a pile of ashes! This type of person is described as "ashes scattering in the wind." With the slightest breeze, one scatters all over the place.

As for Subhuti, when the Buddha taught him the endurance paramita, he endured and endured and kept on enduring until finally, endurance became natural. Slander, accusation, ridicule—whatever it was, he just let it come and go naturally. He no longer felt anything at all. When one reaches this point, there is no longer "endurance," because one does not feel that one is enduring anything. It has become so natural that there is no more enduring. This is what you want to achieve.

A step further from the perfection of endurance is *unborn endurance*, which Subhuti attained. In this state, accusations are not accusations; slander is not slander; insults are not insults. Since these never arise to begin with, they don't exist. What insult? What slander? This state is called

“unborn.” When one reaches this state, one attains the fruition of unborn endurance. The Buddha told Subhuti that to realize unborn endurance, he must reach this state.

Can you understand that there is no defamation, accusation, scorn, and the like? None of those exist; in fact nothing exists. You might not understand it at this point, but as I continue my exposition, you will begin to understand. This is what the *Vajra Sutra* is about! It is one of the essences of the *Vajra Sutra*.

Slandering never really exists, so there is nothing to endure. The so-called defamation never exists either, so there is nothing to endure. Nothing inherently exists! Since nothing exists, what is there to endure? The real endurance is when there is no endurance.

Subhuti cultivated to such a state, which in Buddhism is called the samadhi of non-contention. No contention means there is no contending—competing, arguing, insisting, getting into conflicts or disputes, and the like. Subhuti reached this level of attainments: the samadhi of non-contention and subsequently the samadhi of emptiness. By understanding that everything is non-arising, one can attain the samadhi of emptiness—a meditative state through emptiness. Subhuti achieved the samadhi of emptiness.

It’s recorded in the sutras that Subhuti encountered two phenomena in his samadhi of emptiness. The first was when he was living and cultivating in a cave at Vulture Peak. Countless celestial goddesses appeared, showering him with flowers. Flower petals fell from the sky and covered half his body, so he sat amid an annulus of flowers around him.

He was awakened by it, looked up, and exclaimed, “So many swirling flowers coming down everywhere! Who are you? Why are you showering me with flowers from the sky?” Indra replied, “I am the Lord of the Trayastrimsa Heaven, and I am leading the celestial beings to pay respect to you. In your samadhi of emptiness, your entire body radiates light throughout the whole cosmos. We saw this inconceivable light and came down to see what was happening. We discovered it was coming from you, Subhuti, in the samadhi of emptiness. To show our praise, we showered you with flowers.”

Lord Indra praised Subhuti because he had entered the samadhi of emptiness. What is the meditative concentration of emptiness? It’s when one is totally free from afflictions and attachments including self-grasping. Subhuti then explained the principles of entering the samadhi of emptiness to the celestial beings. The three principles are: no self, no phenomena, and no afflictions. By applying these principles, one enters the samadhi of emptiness.

The second incident occurred when Subhuti got sick one day. You might ask, how Subhuti could still get sick if he had attained the samadhi of emptiness. Was he not supposed to have no “self” when he mastered the samadhi of emptiness? Subhuti got sick because he still had a physical body. When he was hungry, he had to eat and beg for alms. He still had to follow the Buddha around. As humans how can we remain free from sickness? Nobody can; there are no exceptions.

It's true that I never have LASIK surgery or wear eyeglasses; that's because I perform an eye exercise every morning. I taught you this practice before. Every morning upon waking up, stand by the window where you can see as far as possible, close your eyes, and rotate your eyeballs clockwise fourteen times. They must be big rotations. Then open your eyes wide and look to the distance as far as possible. I look at the furthest two trees from my window. I have trained my eyes this way for many years. As a result I can clearly see every letter, even the smallest print, without any glasses. One must persist in this exercise to get results. This is also a kind of perseverance.

Another exercise is to tap your teeth thirty-six times. I tapped and tapped, and one time a piece of a tooth fell off. A dentist disciple, Dr. Hong Guiqing (Kuei-Ching Hung), glued it back on. I can't say my teeth don't have any problems as I had some issues with them and an infection in my gums as well. An infected tooth is also considered an illness.

I also exercise my ears with a practice called ear drumming. Cover both ears with your palms and tap the back of your head with your fingers like you are drumming. I tap seventy times while chanting, "one, two, three, four, five, six, Amitabha, two, two, three, four, five, six, Amitabha," and so on. Altogether, seventy times.

My hearing is still excellent, and my eyesight is also excellent. My tooth couldn't be helped. The rest of my body is still okay. Didn't they say that human life starts at seventy? What starts at seventy? One starts to lose teeth at the age of seventy. Joint pain, lower back pain, all pain starts at seventy. That's the way it is.

One time when Subhuti was ill, Lord Indra descended. Subhuti asked Indra, "I'm sick. How come you are here again?" The Lord replied, "We have come to sing for you and comfort you." Then he started singing, accompanied by all the celestial beings in the sky. Subhuti's heart blossomed, and as soon as the flowers in his heart blossomed, Subhuti got better.

What did they sing? They sang a praise for Subhuti, "Subhuti's virtues are as high as a mountain and his conduct is higher than the sky. His cultivation merit and effort are as incessant as the flowing water." As music is healing and therapeutic, Subhuti immediately recovered from his illness.

Do you remember when Grandmaster had cellulitis? The Venerable Elder Xu Yun was passing by in the sky and noticed that I was sick. From high above he extended his hand—passing through the clouds and the roof of my house—touched my head and blessed me as I lay in bed. Do you remember the Venerable Elder Xu Yun? I have a statue of him offered by Master Changren from the Dzogchen Center Ltd. in Hong Kong.⁵ This statue is now at the True Buddha Tantric Quarters [in Redmond, Washington, USA]. I have an affinity with the Venerable Elder Xu Yun. Because of

⁵ Headquarter of the Lotus Light Charity Society in Hong Kong, also referred to as the True Buddha School Ten Directional Chapter.

this affinity, he saw that I was sick as he was passing by and gave me a blessing on my head and comforted me.

Also when I was living in seclusion, I suffered from head-splitting syndrome. It felt like my skull was splitting open; I had vertigo and was on the brink of collapse. I visited Korea to pay homage and circumambulate temples and pagodas, and paid homage and made prostrations to a huge outdoor statue of Medicine Buddha. On the way back home, I had a vision of Medicine Buddha (Bhaisajyaguru), Medicine King Bodhisattva (Bhaisajyaraja), Medicine Lord Bodhisattva (Bhaisajyasamudgata), Sunlight Radiance Bodhisattva (Suryaprabha), Moonlight Radiance Bodhisattva (Chandraprabha), and the Twelve Great Medicine Generals. They all appeared before me and consoled me. I knew then that I would recover from my illness.

It was like how Indra descended to comfort Subhuti when he was sick. Indra and the celestial beings came down and sang for Subhuti. Why did Subhuti deserve to receive praise such as a showering of flowers and singing from heavenly beings? Because he could truly enter the meditative concentration of emptiness.

The samadhi of emptiness is the main topic of the *Vajra Sutra*. Destroying everything means emptiness. In Zen Buddhism, the *Vajra Sutra* is the yardstick to determine whether one has been enlightened.

That's all for today. Om mani padme hum.

**It is rare indeed to encounter a buddha,
and it is rare to be perfectly enlightened.
Anuttara samyaksambodhi
means
perfect enlightenment.**

Discourse 9

August 22, 2021

I will begin to expound on chapter two—*Subhuti's Request*.

At that time, the Venerable Elder Subhuti was present at the assembly. He rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, and with palms joined, respectfully bowed and addressed the Buddha...

Baring the right shoulder and kneeling on the right knee was a tradition in ancient India. It connotes the proper path, the right path, instead of the deviant or heretical path.

...addressed the Buddha, saying, "World-Honored One, the Tathagata's sublime mindfulness of and entrustment to the bodhisattvas is indeed extraordinary.

"World-Honored One, when good men and good women give rise to the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi and strive for perfect enlightenment, how should they dwell in their minds, and how should they master their minds?"

At first, Subhuti stated that it was rare indeed to encounter a buddha—Sakyamuni Buddha—to be alive in the world, and that the buddhas always support and help all bodhisattvas. Then, Subhuti asked the Buddha a question.

Let me first ask everyone, "What is the *anuttara samyaksambodhi* mind?" The answer is in four words, and you will receive a gift if you are right. [One master gave the correct response, and he received the gift.] *Anuttara* means "unexcelled," and *samyaksambodhi* is translated into Chinese as "right equality and right realization."

What does *good men and good women* refer to? It refers to those who give rise to the mind of *anuttara samyaksambodhi*. If one has not given rise to the mind of *anuttara samyaksambodhi* and striven for the highest enlightenment, then they are not called good men and good women. Its meaning is quite broad, and it also refers to *upasakas* and *upasikas*. *Upasaka* refers to the male

and *upasika* to the female lay Buddhist practitioner, not just to kind people with good hearts. You may think that good men refers to men with good hearts, and good women to kind women. No, good men and good women refers to those wittingly trained in the authentic buddhadharma—those on the path to attain the highest enlightenment in the future.

“...how should they dwell in their minds, and how should they master their minds?”

The key here is: how they should master their minds when they give rise to the mind that strives for perfect enlightenment?

The Buddha said, “Excellent, Subhuti. As you said, the Tathagata is mindful of the bodhisattvas and entrusts the bodhisattvas. Now listen carefully while I tell you how the minds of good men and good women should abide when they strive for the perfect enlightenment of anuttara samyaksambodhi and how they should master their minds.”

Then Subhuti responded to the Buddha, saying,

“Wonderful indeed is your teaching, World-Honored One. I will pay heed to what you say.”

Regarding supporting and entrusting all the bodhisattvas, Sakyamuni Buddha is also referred to as the Master Adjustor,⁶ calling back the ones who veer off track or down the wrong path. But what should we do if they don't want to come back? Then let them be! Just like letting the cows graze the grass.

Frankly speaking, I feel sorry for Ghost Witch, who had been cultivating on the right path for years before turning into a ghost worshipper. By chance she encountered ghosts and became entranced by them. She took a ghost tablet from the ghost temple and brought it back to her residence in Guoxing. Later she moved it to her new place after Master Lian Dong's father finished the renovation. Two bhiksunis took care of the ghost tablet and died soon thereafter, as everyone knew. Master Lian Dong's father was the one who transported the ghost tablet, and the ghosts attached to him. He shaved his head to mimic a samurai—all shaven on the side with a little tuft of hair on the top. He got rid of all the statues from his own altar at home and lost his mind! Do you know how much time and energy I spent to cure him? [shaking head with pity] The ghost tablet is now placed in the dharma protector hall, inside one of the two buildings built by Ghost Witch in the Guanyin Village, Taoyuan County, Taiwan. She got off track onto the wicked path—the ghost path.

I asked her to return to the right path, but she refused. What else can we do? So I just let it be, let the cows graze the grass. But it will be good if she can repent, correct herself, and return to the right path. That is called the mindfulness, protection, and support of the Master Adjustor, who calls upon those who are lost or on the wrong path.

⁶ *purusa-damyas-sarathi*

People elaborate on anuttara samyaksambodhi in various ways. In one example, in Chinese samyaksambodhi contains the character “three,” so some people associate anuttara samyaksambodhi with the three dantians, i.e., the upper, middle, and lower dantian. Some say that they are the three bodhis. Some say it’s the three kayas, i.e., dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya. Some explain samyaksambodhi as Vairocana Buddha, Locana Buddha, and Sakyamuni Buddha.

However, the real meaning of anuttara samyaksambodhi is perfect enlightenment. Do not make it more complicated than it is!

Om mani padme hum.