

# Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra

A Detailed Exposition

by Living Buddha Lian Sheng, Grandmaster Sheng-Yen Lu

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.

## Contents

15 The Merit of Upholding the Sutra.....	3
Discourse 50.....	4
Discourse 51.....	10
Discourse 52.....	15
16 The Ability to Purify Karma.....	19
Discourse 53.....	20
Discourse 54.....	25
Discourse 55.....	28
Discourse 56.....	32
17 Ultimate No-Self.....	36
Discourse 57.....	38
Discourse 58.....	42
Discourse 59.....	46

## 15 The Merit of Upholding the Sutra

“Subhuti, in comparison to good men and good women who devote their lives as an act of giving amounting to the grains of sand in the Ganges River—and they do so at sunrise, midday, and again at sunset for an infinite number of kalpas—a person who generates a faith without resistance upon hearing this sutra will have blessings surpassing the former. It is even more so if he also writes, upholds, recites, and expounds it to others.

“Subhuti, in sum, this sutra has inconceivable, immeasurable, and infinite merit. It is spoken by the Tathagata for practitioners of the Greater Vehicle and the Supreme Vehicle.

“Should there be a person who can uphold, recite, and extensively expound it, he will be recognized and known by the Tathagata, and he will attain merit that is immeasurable, incalculable, infinite, and inconceivable.

This person will bear the anuttara samyaksambodhi of the Tathagata. Why? Subhuti, because a practitioner of the Lesser Vehicle who clings to a view of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan cannot hear, accept, recite, or expound this sutra.

“Subhuti, all the worldly, celestial, human, and asura beings should make offerings to the place where the sutra exists. Know that this place is like a stupa which should be respected, paid homage to, and circumambulated, in which all kinds of flowers and incense should be offered and sprinkled upon it.”

**You are awakened  
if you are aware of your own delusions  
and thereby control  
your own sensations, perceptions, and mental formations.  
Thereupon, you are enlightened!**

## **Discourse 50**

January 15, 2022

Today is Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva group practice at the Seattle Leizang Temple. We have group meditation practice for one of the eight primary deities every Saturday night at 8 p.m. Lately, every time I meditate my entire self disappears completely. You may think Grandmaster has fallen asleep on this dharma throne earlier, but I didn't slouch, right? I have trained myself to maintain an upright posture. [laughs] I didn't hear anything, not even the MC, until toward the end when I faintly heard their invitation to perform the overall merit dedication. Luckily, I remembered that tonight's practice was Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. [laughs]

I was totally unaware of you or of my whereabouts. A slice of time had completely gone. Time was nonexistent, and so was everything else. I disappeared, everybody else disappeared, and the temple disappeared. Where did they all go? They all disappeared.

What is happening is very good. I have completely merged with the cosmic space. It coincides with the *Vajra Sutra*—the non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. The disappearance of time is essentially the non-phenomena of lifespan, whereas the disappearance of everything means the non-phenomena of sentient beings. Please note that it was not sleep because some clarity and lucidity were still present. In the state of no-mind, something is vaguely there—ever so slightly, very clear and lucid. If you say that I fell asleep, I did not!

This has occurred in multiple group practices and during my solitary meditation. On one occasion, I started at 1 a.m. and when I opened my eyes, it was already 4 a.m. The entire time between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. vanished. I was unaware of how much time had passed and completely lost track of time. This indicates the non-phenomena of lifespan.

I asked the Worthy Leader Bodhisattva, "What is this I am experiencing?" He replied, "This is existence amid nonexistence." I wondered, "So when it is nonexistent, how come there is still existence? Existence amid nonexistence?" He explained, "Something still exists amid

nothingness.” This answer coincides with Laozi’s statement, “Vaguely, as if in a haze, there seems to be something.”<sup>1</sup>

I happily told the Worthy Leader Bodhisattva, “I have attained *siddhi*!<sup>2</sup> This is my attainment!” He retorted, “Nonsense! Attainment? What attainment?! You are not a siddha if you still hold the thought of attaining siddhi. It’s arrogant to think you have an attainment. If one often thinks and states that they have gained enlightenment, that shows that they are not enlightened.”

I asked the Worthy Leader Bodhisattva, “What should one say then?” He replied, “It’s inexpressible, unspeakable. No need to say anything. If you are enlightened, you are enlightened. You know it yourself! There is no need to express it. But if you keep saying you are enlightened, you are no different from a mundane being.” What the bodhisattva said made much sense.

*“No eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, or mental formations; and no realm of the eyes, up to the realm of the consciousness. There is no ignorance or the ending of ignorance, up to no aging and death, or the ending of aging and death.”*

In the *Heart Sutra*, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva states that there is no difference between form and emptiness in the deepest meditation. Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. In the deepest meditation, there is nothing, so both form and emptiness are gone. He subsequently states that there are no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind.

We think that we exist in this saha world—this is because of our own sensations. What are the sensations? They are what you see through your eyes, what you hear through your ears, what you smell through your nose, what you taste with your tongue, and what you touch with your body, as well as any mental formations due to your thoughts. You perceive that you exist in the saha world through the six senses. If you had no senses, you would not experience existence in this world.

This is related to the philosophy of existentialism by René Descartes. He said, “I think, therefore I am.” In other words, I think, therefore I exist. And I see, therefore I exist; I hear, therefore I exist; I breathe, therefore I exist; I taste, therefore I exist; I touch, therefore I exist; and lastly, I think, therefore I exist.

When these six senses are nonexistent, this is the realm of Avalokitesvara’s meditation: no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or mental formations; there is no realm of the eyes...no ignorance or the ending of ignorance—even ignorance is gone.

Grandmaster Lu is telling everybody now that what is written in the *Heart Sutra* is the ultimate truth of enlightenment. The *Vajra Sutra* is also the sutra of enlightenment. Both contain the

---

<sup>1</sup> 恍惚, 恍惚, 其中有物

<sup>2</sup> *Siddhi* means “spiritual attainment.” A *siddha* is one who has attained siddhi. A *mahasiddha* is a great siddha, a high adept with great attainment.

“ultimate truth.” Yet, humans exist amid these sensations. If sensations do not exist, nothing exists.

True awakening comes when you recognize your delusions and thereby control your sensations [as well as perceptions and mental formations]. I am here to awaken you and guide you in your spiritual cultivation toward enlightenment. Spiritual cultivation trains you to leap out of your own sensations and detach yourself from any cognition. Detached and in control, you have a chance to be enlightened. Being awakened from your sensations is called awakening. However, if you are deluded and ruled by your sensations, you are just a mundane being. Enlightenment is gained through spiritual cultivation by abandoning perceptions, volitions, and mental formations.

Let us now continue to discuss chapter fifteen—*The Merit of Upholding the Sutra*. Today we will discuss the following excerpt:

*“It is even more so if he also writes, upholds, recites, and expounds it to others.*

*“Subhuti, in sum, this sutra has inconceivable, immeasurable, and infinite merit. It is spoken by the Tathagata for practitioners of the Greater Vehicle and the Supreme Vehicle.”*

People read and write the *Vajra Sutra*. Some people read it morning and night, and some people copy it. The key is in the “upholding,” as I have explained earlier. Not only do you need to understand the essential meaning of the *Vajra Sutra*, but you should also uphold it. The key here is in the application of the essence of the sutra! It is crucial!

As we know, the essence of the *Vajra Sutra* revolves around non-phenomena. The “non-phenomena of self” alone is nearly impossible to uphold, since it is very difficult to simply have no self. So to uphold the essence of the *Vajra Sutra*, you should first practice being devoid of self. Free yourself from the notion of self!

Do you lose your temper? Are you sure you won’t lose your temper today? If you’ve never lost your temper, please raise your hand. No one raises their hand because everyone has a temper. Hot temper runs in our [Grandmaster Lu’s] family. When I was young, I often wrote that we were a clan of “red-faced ducks,” a Taiwanese metaphor referring to faces suddenly turning red from rising tempers when hearing upsetting things or encountering disagreeable situations. The fire of anger rises, the face turns red, and the resulting reaction can be verbal, and sometimes turn physical.

I heard stories about my grandfather Lu Chang. My mom told me that once, as my eldest cousin was sewing, she said something as my grandfather was walking by. He became upset and pushed her head hard against the sewing machine, which was made of metal, so blood gushed out as her head slammed against it. That was my hot-headed grandfather.

My father inherited such a temperament from his father. He was chauvinistic like a traditional Japanese husband. He had a Japanese wooden sword (bokken) that was very thick. Miyamoto Musashi was an acclaimed Japanese swordsman with incredible swordsmanship, as seen in the

movies. He held the sword this way [Grandmaster demonstrates] and performed a motion that mimicked a swallow's tail, a swordsman technique developed by Sasaki Kojiro. My father beat me with it until it broke. Imagine breaking wood that thick. I guess my body is made of iron rather than flesh, as iron triumphs over wood.<sup>1</sup> Furious, I sharply turned my head and warned him, "I will never forget you beating me like this."

One time, when I was about three years old, I refused to take medicine. My father walked up from behind, grabbed me from the dining chair, lifted me above his head, and threw me into the air as if throwing a basketball. The floor was made of cement! I flew in the air and—crash! My mom rushed over to check if I was still breathing. Luckily, I was still alive.

I was beaten up so much as a child I swore to the sky that no matter what, I would never beat my children. True to that promise, I have never beaten Fo-Ching and Fo-Chi. However there was one time when I was meditating, and they were giggling, fooling around, and pushing each other near me. So I pushed them slightly away with my hands; I did not beat them. Yet they still remember that one occasion when I pushed them. When I told them I had never beaten them, they responded, "You did once." I asked, "When?" "One time, you pushed us away." You see, they remember.

Everybody has a temper. But if you can cultivate until you reach the state of no-self, you have become a sage as you no longer have a self. All you do is give and help without holding onto any notion of self, like a bodhisattva. I hold no animosity toward my father and respect him, nonetheless. Without him, I would not have grown up. I harbor no hatred toward anyone, and you should do the same. Moreover, I always think for the sake of others. This is the non-phenomena of self.

I have mentioned this is like Mother Teresa, who treated everyone as God. You would never beat God, right? Of course not. Mother Teresa showed compassion and respect to everyone. Master Lian Wang mentioned one important thing about her. Catholicism upholds canonization, the declaration of a deceased person as an officially recognized saint. Mother Teresa once said that even if she were canonized, she still chose to stay in the darkest places in the world to continue helping sentient beings instead of going to heaven. She was a real saint. In her heart, she never had any animosity. She was just like Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, who vowed not to become a buddha before all hells are emptied. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and Mother Teresa embody the non-phenomena of self.

The spirit of selflessness is also called the "non-phenomena of self" in Buddhism. Basically, the "self" does not exist at all. In the state of no-self, you no longer think for your own sake—instead, you solely think for the benefit of other beings. There is no hatred, only love for sentient beings. So practice this first! Be like Saint Teresa and Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva. They are saints and sages,

---

<sup>1</sup> In the concept of the five elements of water, wood, fire, earth, and metal, each element brings advantages and disadvantages to the other elements. For instance, while wood is good for fire, it can be weakened by metal, and it is also nourished and strengthened by water.

yet instead of going to the sagely realms, they choose to stay in the darkest places to serve sentient beings.

It is important to uphold...*and expound it to others*, as I am doing now. The most important thing is to uphold and expound the essential meaning of the *Vajra Sutra*, such as the non-phenomena of self.

*“Subhuti, in sum, this sutra has inconceivable, immeasurable, and infinite merit.”*

Sakyamuni Buddha says there is infinite merit, yet there is no merit if you think about merit. We do not think about merit, because we generate merit only when not keeping it in mind. So in whatever we do, we should not think about its merit. Sakyamuni Buddha says that only if one does not keep merit in mind will there be infinite merit. Thus, [upholding and expounding the *Vajra Sutra*] has inconceivable, immeasurable, and infinite merit.

*“It is spoken by the Tathagata for practitioners of the Greater Vehicle and the Supreme Vehicle.”*

Sakyamuni Buddha speaks this dharma for practitioners of the greater and highest vehicles. In Buddhism, five vehicles are associated with the realms of the humans, heavens, sravakas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas.

The first is the vehicle for the human realm. It teaches how to be a decent human being, going with the flow without violating moral ethics (precepts). You can follow your wishes as long as you don't breach the precepts. Confucius in the *Analects—the Record of Rites, the Classic of Odes, the Classic of Poetry, the Classic of Documents*, and the *Book of Changes*—as well as Mencius speak on the ways of the human world. This is considered part of the Human Vehicle in Buddhism.

The second is the vehicle for the heavens, which Jesus teaches. One can go to the heavens by being virtuous, upstanding, and kind, and generating merit by performing good deeds. This is the Heavenly Vehicle. The third is the Sravaka Vehicle, also known as Theravada or the Lesser Vehicle, which allows the attainment of sravakahood. They liberate themselves but do not widely deliver sentient beings. The fourth is the Bodhisattva Vehicle, or Greater Vehicle, which is a high level. Bodhisattvas are there only for sentient beings and never for themselves. The above is a quick and easy classification, without elaborating the details.

The highest vehicle is the Buddha Vehicle. Once you are enlightened, you act without any conditions. Whatever you do, you don't keep it in mind. In addition to liberating oneself, a buddha also delivers others. Most importantly, a buddha expounds and explains dharma to others. [A buddha has perfected their conduct to comply with their realizations.]

So for whom did Sakyamuni Buddha expound the *Vajra Sutra*? For practitioners on the higher vehicles who strive for bodhisattvahood and buddhahood. Bodhisattvahood is attained through the Greater Vehicle (Mahayana), and buddhahood through the highest Supreme Vehicle. A



bodhisattva has awakened themselves and others and thus has attained perfect enlightenment and realization.<sup>1</sup> A buddha applies his ultimate enlightenment to his conduct and activities. A buddha has actualized his realization to perfection.<sup>2</sup>

Again, the five vehicles refer to the vehicles to reach the realms of the humans, heavens, sravakas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas, with the Buddha Vehicle being the highest. The *Vajra Sutra* is spoken for those striving to become bodhisattvas and buddhas.

Om mani padme hum.

---

<sup>1</sup> Perfect realization also refers to perfect enlightenment.

<sup>2</sup> 覺行圓滿

If you still lose your temper  
or feel envious,  
then you are not upholding the Vajra Sutra.

## Discourse 51

January 16, 2022

Let's continue discussing chapter fifteen—*The Merit of Upholding the Sutra*.

*“Should there be a person who can uphold, recite, and extensively expound it, he will be recognized and known by the Tathagata, and he will attain merit that is immeasurable, incalculable, infinite, and inconceivable.*

*“This person will bear the anuttara samyaksambodhi of the Tathagata. Why? Subhuti, because a practitioner of the Lesser Vehicle who clings to a view of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan cannot hear, accept, recite, or expound this sutra.”*

I am fully aware that the *Vajra Sutra* is a sutra—ultimate sutra— that leads us toward the ultimate enlightenment. What is the so-called “ultimate sutra”? It refers to the Buddha’s teaching that leads to the understanding of Dao. Conversely, non-ultimate sutras teach the human and heavenly vehicles; they include the worldly dharma, Buddhism on earth, humanity, and the methods for reaching the heavens.

Sakyamuni Buddha speaks on both ultimate and non-ultimate sutras. *The Vajra Sutra*, *Heart Sutra*, *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, and many other sutras are considered as ultimate sutras as they lead to the realization of Dao. Any sutras that do not teach this realization of Dao are considered non-ultimate.

Clearly, only those who have realized Dao are qualified to expound the *Vajra Sutra*! Otherwise, any explanation would be superficial or literal since it will not directly point to its key meanings and quintessence.

*“...uphold, recite, and extensively expound...”*

Reciting is easy. Anyone can recite or even copy the *Vajra Sutra*, but accepting and upholding its essence is much harder. The key is in the upholding—not only accepting. Let me put it this way. Like I said yesterday, do you still have a temper and habitual tendencies? If you do, it means you cannot uphold—even if you understand the *Vajra Sutra* and can comprehend its meaning. You may accept it, but you cannot uphold it if your habitual tendencies remain.

To accept and uphold, you must gradually diminish your habitual tendencies. You must eliminate habitual human tendencies such as greed, anger, delusion, doubt, pride, envy, jealousy, and so on. Otherwise, it will be impossible to uphold! If you still have a temper, or you can tolerate everyone except that one despicable person you despise, then you still hold animosity. This means you still have a self—you have not actualized the non-phenomena of self. Indeed, it is extremely difficult to uphold the non-phenomena of self! That's why it is called the ultimate!

If one can achieve the ultimate, one has reached the four sagely realms and is considered a sage. By upholding, reciting, and especially expounding it to many people, one will be recognized and known by the Tathagata (the Buddha) and all the buddhas. Why is this so? Because buddhas know other buddhas! When you reach such a realm, then of course the buddhas know. How could they not know? The buddhas know your attainment and understand you when you become a sage. At such a time, you will attain merit that is immeasurable, incalculable, infinite, and inconceivable. Yet let's not mention merit, although it is boundless and limitless.

One must cultivate spiritually until one sees [realizes] Dao and subsequently practices it. Tantric Buddhist practices are wonderful; they use visualization, mantra recitation, mudra (hand gestures), and samadhi. By visualizing, chanting mantras, and forming mudras, you purify your mind, speech, and body. You are pure if you can visualize, form mudras, and chant mantras throughout all your activities—no matter what you do in this saha world. This is the benefit of Tantric Buddhism: in the purification of the body, speech, and mind, you transform the three karmas into the three secrets.

In visualization, what do you visualize? You visualize the eyes, eyebrows, ears, and mouth—everything that constitutes an image of the tathagata. While visualizing, you are very focused. Having no other thoughts, you purify your mind. When you chant mantras, your speech is purified. When your hands or body forms a mudra, your body is purified. This is a method of spiritual cultivation to purify the body, speech, and mind. It can be applied to everything we do, including sexual union. If you can visualize, chant mantras, and form mudras [at all times], you will be seen and known by the Tathagata. The Buddha knows, and you will know too!

What is the Tantric Buddhist consort practice? Many religious sects criticize and denigrate it, arguing, "How could such a practice be considered spiritual cultivation?" Nevertheless, consort practice requires visualization, mantra chanting, as well as the forming of mudras. This practice thereby transforms such an act into a spiritual practice—very simple! It is also pure. Yet mundane people cannot understand and thus disparage it.

The fact is that any activity can be transformed into spiritual cultivation, and one can cultivate day and night, even in dreams. Tantric Buddhist practices are certainly extraordinary.

When a practitioner reaches such a state, Sakyamuni Buddha will see and recognize them. Such a person can do anything because whatever he does is in accordance with buddhadharma. At such time, it is said that he *bears the anuttara samyaksambodhi of the Tathagata*, meaning that he has undertaken Dao. He takes responsibility for all the paths. He undoubtedly attains merit that is

immeasurable, incalculable, infinite, and inconceivable—a realm with no boundaries. Such is the realm of no-self; it is limitless! And it is unspeakable, of course!

Since it has no phenomena of self, it has no limit. It is beyond the world as we know it. A solar system is just one small-thousand world. Three thousand of the small-thousand worlds is one medium-thousand world, and three thousand of the medium-thousand worlds is one great-thousand world. The three-thousand-great-thousand-world is inconceivably vast! The world [cosmos] is so incredibly vast, yet the merit of a person in such a realm is even more boundless than this. The merit of the *Vajra Sutra* is infinitely enormous. This is the sutra for ultimate enlightenment.

The Buddha told Subhuti,

*“Subhuti, because a practitioner of the Lesser Vehicle who clings to a view of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan cannot hear, accept, recite, or expound this sutra.”*

When a person still holds the notion of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan, they will not be able to accept, recite, or expound this sutra to others, because they have not reached such a realm themselves.

Being enamored by money is greed. Lust is also greed. Being greedy means that one still holds the view of self. Confucius says that food and lust are part of human nature. In spiritual cultivation, one must eliminate the habitual human tendencies like the desire for wealth, sensual pleasures, fame, food, and sleep.

During lunch, I mentioned that I was initially a little worried, but then I said, “Whatever, just let it be!” What was I talking about? For ten years, Shimu and I spent half a year in Taiwan and half a year in the United States. We are both now in old age. With the pandemic in its current state, a long quarantine is required should we return to Taiwan. In Taiwan, Grandmaster has four homes and Shimu has two homes, for a total of six homes. Those houses are not rented out, and we keep some valuables there. Each house is worth something, although two of them are small apartments. Everything inside the house is worth some money. What should I do with that money? Shimu’s health is like this now, whereas my health is still fine, but everything is unpredictable. The weather can change anytime, and misfortune and fortune follow each other. We don’t know when impermanence will strike as anything can change anytime. I have some premonitions and know a few things since the deities secretly tell me. At this age, if I were just an ordinary human being, I would be worried about it!

According to the Taiwanese calendar, I will be seventy-eight after the Chinese New Year—almost eighty! What should I do about my residences in Taiwan? And the things in them? Just let them be! Let them be taken by whoever is destined to own them in the future—it’s of no consequence to me. What if they are stolen? So be it! Since I don’t use them, let others use them. What if I get robbed? When someone robs you of your outerwear, give them your underwear as well. This is

Grandmaster's mindset: utterly at peace and ease. It doesn't matter. Why? Because if I don't use them, it's as if I don't own them.

What about my homes in the United States? I have two homes here: the True Buddha Tantric Quarters and the South Mountain Retreat. I also have valuables inside them. Do I hide them? No! If they go missing, it's fine. If people like something and want to take it, let them take it. These things are not mine anyway; even my physical body is not mine. Do you understand? Even "I" don't belong to me; my shell [physical body] is not mine, let alone those things. So let them be. If we are open-minded, nothing—except Dao—is important to us. Once you attain Dao, you can return to the home of the tathagata, which is the everlasting home. The rest is false [without any reality or truth in it].

This world is blind—very, very blind. Everyone is blind except you. You are the only one who is clear-sighted. Buddhas and bodhisattvas can see you since you are the only one with clear lucidity. You are not attached to worldly things, including your houses, cars, physical body, wealth, assets...which are not yours anyway. But if you still have greed, hatred, anger, delusion, doubt, pride, jealousy, envy, selfish love, or the like, you won't be able to find your way back home.

The only real thing is the way back to the tathagata's home—the Way or Dao! This alone is real! And only such a person is qualified to expound the *Vajra Sutra*. Simply put, the Buddha made it very clear in this passage that [in such a realm] you assume the responsibility of the tathagata.

*"Subhuti, because a practitioner of the Lesser Vehicle who clings to a view of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan cannot hear, accept, recite, or expound this sutra."*

The key here is that a practitioner of the Lesser Vehicle cannot explain or expound the *Vajra Sutra*. Why did I wait until I reached this old age before expounding the *Vajra Sutra*? Because one needs perfect comprehension of the sutra to expound it properly.

Some might argue that since Grandmaster takes everything lightly, we no longer need to make offerings to him. Let me tell you, offerings are still necessary. How should I say it? You should still do what you're supposed to do! However, let it happen naturally. You follow your affinity, while Grandmaster too goes with the flow. Everything is voluntary for Grandmaster. One of the epithets of a tathagata is Worthy of Offerings. [It's appropriate that we, as disciples, make offerings to our guru. In fact, we generate great merit by doing so.]

Grandmaster is currently in a physical body that needs to eat. In the US, Grandmaster needs to fill his car with gas, and in Taiwan he needs to buy water. He still needs to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner, though almost all his daily necessities are taken care of by others. Having said that, Grandmaster has no attachments. If I were to be attached, I'd say that Grandmaster and Shimu built the Rainbow Villa with our own money. Master Lian Shi helped hire construction workers to build it, and I paid for it, right? We are now performing ceremonies here. [Someone states, "It belongs to Grandmaster!"] But I'm telling you, that's not how I think. This place is now under

other people's [the temple's] names, not under Grandmaster's or Shimu's. It's used to perform dharma work to deliver sentient beings.

During the ten half-years I returned to Taiwan, I assisted Taiwan Lei Tsang Temple with its completion. They had financial difficulties and couldn't continue its construction; the steel bars had completely rusted. The construction was half-finished, so I stepped in to help complete it. Later they also constructed a seven-story administrative building, which consumed most of the funds I raised for them. Now Master Lian Zhe, the temple's abbot, wishes to build a nursing home. He's applied for and received the necessary permit. However, since Grandmaster has not returned to Taiwan these past two years, no more money has been raised. I told Master Lian Zhe to please build only when he has the money. If you insist on building it now, it's as if you're forcing me to work very hard to earn more money for you.

Grandmaster is already seventy-eight, and you expect me to work for another ten years to build a nursing home for you? Who knows if I can live to be eighty-eight? [Audience loudly replies, "Yes!"] My lifespan is limited, and I don't think I can live that long! Sakyamuni Buddha only lived to be eighty years old. How many years do I have left? Please spare a thought for me and consider my situation!

Please, don't start building the nursing home now! If you do, I'll feel heavy pressure to conduct ceremonies there. Moreover, the pandemic must subside before overseas people can go and support the Taiwan temple. Master Lian Zhe is reasonable enough to understand this. Just do what you can with the money you currently have. This is what I told Master Lian Zhe, the temple's abbot. I understand the arduous permit process and that the permit has an expiration date, but please just wait until you have the funds! If necessary, we can reapply. As far as I know, you don't have enough money for its construction, which will cost a lot. Even with the development of the administrative building, the developers complained about losing money as material prices have risen. So Master Lian Zhe, please only do what you can within your means; don't force it! When I return, I can help you since this is also for the sake of sentient beings and the elderly.

In sum, Grandmaster is qualified to expound the *Vajra Sutra* because Grandmaster is never for himself. If you are still for yourself and cling to *a view of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan*, [you] *cannot hear, accept, recite, or expound this sutra*. This is the reason.

Om mani padme hum.

**If one shall die, then one will die.**

**If one shall live, then one will live.**

**Why worry about it?  
If your body has pain and ailments,  
that indicates the eradication of karma.**

## Discourse 52

January 22, 2022

Sakyamuni Buddha said,

*“Subhuti, all the worldly, celestial, human, and asura beings should make offerings to the place where the sutra exists. Know that this place is like a stupa which should be respected, paid homage to, and circumambulated, in which all kinds of flowers and incense should be offered and sprinkled upon it.”*

This passage is very good. The Buddha told Subhuti that the heavenly, human, and asura beings of the three virtuous realms should respect and make offerings to the *Vajra Sutra*, like one would to a stupa. The place of the *Vajra Sutra* is regarded as a precious stupa. It should be respected and paid homage to, circumambulated, offered to, and sprinkled with all kinds of flowers and incense as you would around a stupa. You pay homage and make offerings by sprinkling fragrant flowers—like the Goddess Who Sprinkles Flowers.

We know that the Buddha also says, “Where there is a stupa, there is a buddha.” Stupas are often found in a monastery, and we also have the five-element-wheel stupas at the Rainbow Temple. You circumambulate them because where there is a stupa, there is a buddha.

In earlier times, a Tantric Buddhist altar was set up by placing buddha statues (representing the buddhas’ body) in the middle, stupas (representing the buddhas’ mind) on the dragon side,<sup>1</sup> and sutras (representing the buddhas’ speech—dharma) on the tiger side. The *Vajra Sutra* represents both the mind and the speech of the Buddha, so it can either be placed with the stupas or the sutras.

Once, I saved a ghost with the *Vajra Sutra*. I was writing my book when the sky suddenly turned dark, thunder rolled, and lightning struck continuously near my study. It happened not only once but dozens, even hundreds of times, creating an incredible noise. How strange! I wondered why thunder and lightning were repeatedly striking near my study.

By chance, I saw something move near my leg under the desk. So I took a closer look. Good heavens! There was a very beautiful female ghost hiding under my desk. She was extremely beautiful, almost fairy-like. It was rare to see such a beautiful ghost. Upon seeing that I was looking at her, she pleaded, “Grandmaster Lu, save me!” I quickly realized that the God of

---

<sup>1</sup> Dragon side refers to your right as you are facing the altar, whereas the tiger side refers to your left side.

Thunder was trying to capture this female ghost, and he was surely trying very hard! He was pacing around my study while lightning kept striking, attempting to capture this female ghost.

Compassion arose in my heart. Luckily, a copy of the *Vajra Sutra* was on the bookshelf behind me, so I quickly placed it on the ghost's head. The God of Thunder knew that Grandmaster Lu was protecting the female ghost. With the *Vajra Sutra* on her head, it was as if the Buddha was sitting there. The thunder and lightning [gods] could not possibly strike her. Shortly after, a tree next to the study toppled with a loud crack. The sky brightened and the ominous dark clouds cleared. This indeed happened. I saved a female ghost using the *Vajra Sutra*, and she was deeply thankful. That's just how I am. If someone begs me to save them and pleads, "Grandmaster, please save me, please..." my heart softens. I saved the ghost immediately, especially since she was begging so sweetly. Later, I guided her to change her evil ways, so she took refuge and became my attendant.

So you see, the *Vajra Sutra* can save lives! Having the *Vajra Sutra* on top of one's head is the same as having the Buddha seated there. As a result, the God of Thunder could not strike her! This is a true story that I've written in one of my books. I used the *Vajra Sutra* and placed it on her head [to protect and save her].

What I do these days involves ghosts. My house is home to many ghosts; they are good ghosts, and I mingle with them. I've told you this before. My house has a long corridor from Shimu's bedroom to my own. Walking along the corridor, I first pay homage to Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, the first one I see. Then I pay homage to Mahasri, Sakyamuni Buddha, Mahottara Heruka, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, High King Avalokitesvara, Amitabha Buddha, Guru Padmasambhava, the Black Wrathful Dakini, Golden Mother of the Primordial Pond, Guru Padmasambhava, Acalanatha, Amitabha Buddha, Vajrasattva, Yamantaka, all the earth gods, Tiger Head Vajra, and all the deities. I acknowledge each deity as I pass them on the ground floor and call upon the ones in the basement collectively as "all the deities."

[Sometimes] as I walk, a head pops up with a bang along the hallway's walls. Then with another bang, another head appears, then another, and so on. The loud bang is startling since no one else is around. There are so many heads that they form a long line along the wall. On one occasion, I asked, "What are you all doing? Are you trying to scare me?" They said, "No, we simply ask for blessings from Grandmaster Lu." So as I walked by, I gave them blessings on their heads, one by one.

With the ghosts around, there are many strange noises inside my house. When I reach the bamboo bonsai, there is a succession of bangs. Shimu, who has good hearing, can hear it, and so can others living in my house. Every time I walk by the fridge, it also makes noises. The walls make noises. Sometimes, the door closes by itself when I walk by dark areas like the exercise room. Once, I pushed it open, asking, "What's happening? It's late at night—why are you closing the door?" The ghosts replied, "We're having a meeting." I pushed the door further and peered inside; indeed, there was a huge crowd of ghosts—hundreds, even thousands of them gathered.



These days, living with ghosts has become part of my daily life. They're quite afraid of me. When I walk past the bathroom, there's often a noise from the toilet seat, even though the toilet is in good shape. Sometimes I intentionally stop just before reaching the bathroom because I don't hear any sounds, but as soon as I extend my leg to move forward, the toilet seat makes a noise. Anytime I pass by it, it makes a noise; otherwise, it remains silent.

Well, it's quite interesting to live with ghosts. All those who come are well-intentioned. No need to be scared! There are also many gods, buddhas, and bodhisattvas. When I get to my bedroom door, I pay homage to the Golden Mother of the Primordial Pond and all the deities. Afterward, I raise my head to pay homage to [the image of] Golden Mother on the wall, who radiates light upon me. During this time, I hear footsteps. Sometimes it's the sound of leather shoes slowly approaching along the hallway, step by step. There's no need to be scared; these things happen.

If I'm a little late to perform the bardo deliverance of the thousand dharma vessels, and I'm still flossing my teeth while sitting on the sofa, they rush me by saying, "Hurry up, hurry up! Clean your teeth quickly!" They nudge me with their fists from behind the sofa. I tell them, "Hush! Leave me alone! I will ascend the dharma throne as soon as I finish cleaning my teeth and washing my face. No need to rush me." Then they leave me alone, withdrawing their fists. All these things are very real. If you have a third eye, you should come to my house and take a look.

The *Vajra Sutra* is tremendous, the king of all sutras. If you can comprehend this sutra and put it into practice, you will be liberated from the cycle of rebirth—the transmigration in the six realms of samsara. All afflictions will disappear. Nothing will bother you since [you comprehend that] no one ever gains anything. Since there is nothing to gain, what is there to worry about? The *Vajra Sutra* states it very clearly.

What are you envious of? What are you jealous of? Bill Gates is incredibly wealthy. Do you envy him? Having money is just the same as not having it. Let me tell you—he doesn't truly own the money. "Nothing to gain" has been stated in the *Vajra Sutra*. So what is there to be envious of? What is there to be jealous of? Everything comes into existence due to the coming together of causes and conditions. All things arise with affinity and cease when affinity ceases. What are you jealous of?

In time, our habitual tendencies will disappear. Our afflictions will also be gone. Why are you afflicted? If one is to die, then one will die. If one is to live, then one will live. Why worry about it? There is nothing to worry about! If there is pain and illness in your body, that indicates the eradication of karma. Once all illnesses are gone, it's time to die. Isn't that a positive thing? Karma is being eradicated as it should. What is there to be afflicted about? Absolutely nothing!

What if you were to get cancer? Let me tell you, cancers are your enemies from past lives creating havoc in your body. Grandmaster can clearly see your karmic creditors make little balls to throw at you. If they strike your brain, you develop brain cancer. If they hit your throat, a tumor will grow there. Tumors or cancers appear in whichever part of your body they target. These are the deeds of your karmic creditors and enemies.

As pure, innocent people, we should empathize with our enemies. We should love our enemies. As buddhas with the wisdom of equal-nature, we love all sentient beings, including our enemies.

It is not enough just to read the *Vajra Sutra*; you must understand and also put it into practice. Comprehension is easier, but its application is a lot more difficult. It is extremely difficult to eliminate one's habitual tendencies, but we should still strive to change. Because if we don't change, how can we liberate ourselves from the rebirth cycle?

Very simple. Easy. You don't need to worry, but you do need to eliminate your habitual tendencies. If people praise you, you shouldn't become elated. You should now fully realize there is nothing to gain, so what is there to be concerned about? What are you envious of? There is "nothing to gain." Do you envy the wealthy? They worked so hard that they are pitiful! Those who want to be in politics, the leaders with heavy responsibilities, people in high positions—they are all so pitiful! Especially the big bosses, how many people must they take care of? Look at how big their companies are, with so many employees. What a heavy responsibility they must bear, so we empathize with them. We, the ordained with shaved heads, are the lucky ones, yet we are unaware of how fortunate we are.

Om mani padme hum.

## 16 The Ability to Purify Karma

“Also, Subhuti, if a good man or good woman is belittled or ridiculed when upholding or reciting this sutra, it is due to their karmic retribution from past lives, which would have resulted in the lower realms. By being ridiculed in this lifetime, their karmic retribution will be eliminated, and they will attain anuttara samyaksambodhi.

“Subhuti, I recall during the countless asamkya kalpas, I made offerings and served without fail 84,000 million nayuta buddhas in front of Dipamkara Buddha. In comparison, if there is a person in the dharma-ending era who can uphold and recite this sutra, his merit will exceed my merit from offering to all the buddhas by more than a hundred times, a trillion times, or beyond any calculation and comparison.

“Subhuti, there may be someone—upon hearing my statement on the merit of a good man or good woman who upholds and recites this sutra in the dharma-ending era—who would become utterly confused, skeptical, and in disbelief.

“Subhuti, know that the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, and karmic retribution is also inconceivable.”

**Your life is a movie,  
and you are the main character.  
If you realize that life is just a movie  
and you are watching yourself acting in it,  
then you achieve liberation.**

## Discourse 53

January 23, 2022

We will now discuss chapter sixteen—*The Ability to Purify Karma*. The title is very easy to explain: the *Vajra Sutra* can purify your karma. Once your karma is purified and cleared, you will be liberated. Once liberated, you can ascend to the highest level of Sukhavati. Without karma, your body will naturally radiate light, so of course you can go to the Pureland of the Eternal Serene Light.

You can also go to the purelands for sambhogakaya buddhas: the Magnificent Pureland of Real Rewards (the third level of Sukhavati) and the Abundant Pureland for Convenience (the second level of Sukhavati). Having the attainment of the four sagely realms—buddhahood, bodhisattvahood, pratyekabuddhahood, and sravakahood—you can travel to all the buddhaverses in the ten directions.

This chapter indicates that the *Vajra Sutra* can purify karma. Once karma is eliminated, one will be liberated. Once liberated, one can go to the purelands.

The *Vajra Sutra* talks about emptiness. The non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan refer to emptiness. Likewise, the *Heart Sutra* is also about emptiness.

*“No eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, or mental formations; and no realm of the eyes, up to the realm of the consciousness. There is no ignorance or the ending of ignorance, up to no aging and death, or the ending of aging and death.”*

Both the *Vajra Sutra* and the *Heart Sutra* discuss emptiness and unattainability. There really is “nothing to gain” in this world!

Here I am giving a dharma teaching while all of you are listening. According to the *Vajra Sutra*, there is no speaker, no listener, and no such thing as dharma. This is emptiness—the threefold wheels of intrinsic emptiness.

In Texas, we have the Three Wheel Leizang Temple. When I bestowed the name “Three Wheel,” the head of the temple commented, “Grandmaster, how come you gave me only three wheels? All cars have four wheels.” I chose this name to remind you to contemplate on the nature of emptiness—the three wheels are intrinsically empty, as mentioned in the Buddhist sutras.

Speaking of which, I have an analogy to share. This is how I view my life now. This “I” is merely the audience<sup>1</sup> entering a theater to watch a movie. The male lead in the movie is called Sheng-Yen Lu, while the female lead is called Li-Hsiang Lu. They are acting in a movie called “life.” There are plenty of scenes, supporting roles, extras, and different settings—like Kaohsiung and Taichung—in the storyline. They perform all the way to Seattle in the United States. This Sheng-Yen Lu becomes Grandmaster Lu, who is now seated here, giving dharma teachings. He establishes True Buddha School and gains many followers.

I am merely watching this movie as I enter the movie theatre—as the audience. The title of the movie is “The Life Story<sup>2</sup> of Sheng-Yen Lu.” The movie plays from when he was born until he dies, marking the end of the movie as “The End.” When the movie is over, I exit the theatre as I am done watching it.

While watching the movie, I am naturally touched by the emotions it displays—happiness, anger, sadness, joy—and the plot sweeps me along as Sheng-Yen Lu and Li-Hsiang Lu, as well as the supporting characters and cast—men or women—play out their roles. But once the movie is over, it’s game over, *owari*<sup>3</sup>—it’s the end, and the main character “I” is dead. The movie is over, and I make my way out.

The real Sheng-Yen Lu is watching a movie about the fake Sheng-Yen Lu. As spoken in the *Vajra Sutra*, the one giving dharma teachings here is the fake Sheng-Yen Lu, while my buddhanature is the real Sheng-Yen Lu. The real Sheng-Yen Lu is watching the fake Sheng-Yen Lu acting in the movie that will eventually come to an end.

Now that you’re done watching the movie, let me ask you: What relation do the characters and the various scenes in the movie have to the audience? The audience and the actors are unrelated, although you, as the audience, might become engrossed in the movie while you watch it. When they laugh, you laugh. When they cry, you cry. When they are angry, sad, or happy, you

---

<sup>1</sup> “Audience” refers to the “true self,” i.e., the “buddhanature” that is watching the movie played by the “fake” self. In this context, “audience” is considered uncountable, neither singular nor plural. We prefer the term “audience” over “viewer,” “participant,” or “observer.” “Audience” implies a certain amount of involvement, but not as much as “participant.” “Viewer” is too passive, while “observer” is perhaps too intense.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, the title should be translated as “The Origin of Sheng-Yen Lu.” However, based on the context, “Life Story of Sheng-Yen Lu” is also appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> *Owari* [Japanese 終わり] means the end.

are also angry, sad, or happy. But after you finish watching, you realize it was just a movie—you are just the audience, watching yourself acting in a movie. These two beings are separate. This is the essence of the *Vajra Sutra*.

The characters in the movie are of course, all fake, even though they resemble the real ones. The real one is the buddhanature, which is the true Sheng-Yen Lu, the audience. The Sheng-Yen Lu in the saha world is the fake Sheng-Yen Lu, the actor. The real and the fake Sheng-Yen Lu are totally unrelated.

All the actors are fake, much like everything is fake, referring to the non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. Yet the buddhanature is autonomous and independent. After watching the movie, I—the buddhanature—remain completely unrelated to the fake Sheng-Yen Lu. I am the buddhanature.

I am telling you this so that you can understand what buddhanature is and what liberation is. The real Sheng-Yen Lu is the one who is liberated, and the fake one and everything in the movie is not real. However, if the character Sheng-Yen Lu in the movie violates precepts and carries karma, he will be bound to the rebirth cycle in the six realms of samsara [which will also be played out in the movie]. Therefore, we can say that the rebirth cycle is also fake. If you do not recognize and comprehend this, you will forever be bound by the transmigration in samsara [and will forever remain inside the movie].

On the other hand, if you recognize that you are merely watching a movie and that the movie will end, you have already liberated yourself and reached an attainment. You become autonomous and have self-control. Liberation is being unbound by transmigration in the six rebirth realms.

On the contrary, if you regard the fake Sheng-Yen Lu as the real Sheng-Yen Lu, you will remain bound by the rebirth cycle. You will bear the consequences of your misdeeds and transgressions against the precepts. For this very reason, I am now expounding the *Vajra Sutra*, so you can understand how to purify your karma and liberate yourself!

The Sixth Patriarch, Huineng, said, “Do not think of good; do not think of bad.” Good and bad are irrelevant to him. After reading the *Vajra Sutra*, you liberate yourself and now know you are only watching yourself acting in a movie of your life. However, you must first purify yourself to escape the rebirth cycle. Without karma purification, it is impossible to free yourself from this bondage.

One day, when I die—when the fake Sheng-Yen Lu dies—I will leave behind three [Chinese] words: “*wuganshe*,”<sup>1</sup> meaning “no interference,” “irrelevant,” or plainly as “nothing to do with me.” I have nothing to do with that fake Sheng-Yen Lu; he did not interfere with me! I am merely an audience watching his performance. Does this make sense to you?

Understand that human life is just a movie, and each of us plays a role in it. We are all just actors performing in our own movies, with ourselves as the main characters. One day the movie will

---

<sup>1</sup> 無干涉

come to an end. If you do not realize your buddhanature [and not become a mere audience], you will always believe that the movie is a reality, and that you are inside it. You will continue acting inside the movie, remain immersed, and be swept away by it. You will endlessly tumble in the rebirth cycle because your karma has not been eradicated.

However, if you understand the *Vajra Sutra*, you will understand the non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. You will choose not to act in the movie anymore and instead work on purifying yourself. You will step out from the movie and become an observer, watching yourself [the lead character] avoid any wrongdoing. This way, you don't have to continue acting in the movie of endless rebirth. You have stepped out of it and achieved liberation. Then you can clear your own karma. I am explaining this to you very clearly!

You will be liberated once you rid yourself of greed, anger, delusions, doubt, and pride, and shut off the six thieves—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or mental formation will exist. No more sensory organs and no more sensations. You are liberated when there is no more desire for wealth, sensual pleasures, fame, food, or sleep! Only the fake Sheng-Yen Lu can be reincarnated, but the true Sheng-Yen Lu will never transmigrate.

Speaking of desire, two days ago, after Shimu and I finished our late-night snack, she returned to her bedroom to sleep. I helped her apply some eye drops, tucked her in, and set up protection around her room. She uses a mobility scooter when she has trouble walking. She uses it to move around the house, say from her room to mine. As she reached her room's door, she glanced at the scooter and said she saw a young lady sitting on it. My first reaction was, "Is the lady beautiful?" and she gave me a look. I asked her again today, "Was the lady on the scooter you saw that day beautiful?" She retorted, "Beautiful or not, she's a ghost. I'm still jealous." She didn't answer my question. I'm unsure if she's telling the truth, but my first reaction was to ask whether the ghost was beautiful. This is the behavior of the fake Sheng-Yen Lu! We're talking about ghosts and the intangible, yet I still asked if she's beautiful. The fake one does these things...

Whenever I reach my bedroom, I join my palms to Golden Mother and chant, "*Om jin-mu siddhi hum*" three times. The Golden Mother of the Primordial Pond rises to the sky, and her brow point radiates light toward my brow point.<sup>1</sup> At this time, I usually hear the sound of high heels from far away in the hallway, "click-clack, click-clack..." until the sound stops beside me. This truly happens every day—I am not making this up. I hear the footsteps of high heels or a man's leather shoes, slippers, or some other kind of shoes walking toward me—good thing it's me who hears it! If it were you, you would have been covered in goosebumps!

I also tell them that there's no need for them to make loud noises to greet me. Why bother? I know that they're trying to let me know of their existence by making sounds and clacking their shoes. I told them that I would greet them instead. It's not that I'm afraid of them, but sudden

---

<sup>1</sup> The area between the brows where the third eye is

loud noises can sometimes startle me. These days when I greet them first, they become very quiet.

The spirit world exists; intangibles also exist. Why are you wearing masks if there is no such thing as intangibles? We consider the COVID-19 virus invisible since you can't see it with the naked eye. Likewise, spirits can't be seen with the naked eye, but their presence is evident. From my personal experience, I can affirm that the netherworld does exist, and ghosts do exist. I would like to remind you not to become ghosts or netherworld spirits.

In the future, everyone should be able to purify their own karma, just as this title says—*The Ability to Purify Karma*. By putting the *Vajra Sutra* into practice, you can purify and eradicate your karma.

Om mani padme hum.



**Any karma  
generated from previous lifetimes  
can be eradicated by chanting and upholding the Vajra Sutra.  
Thereupon you will attain anuttara samyaksambodhi.**

## Discourse 54

January 29, 2022

*“Also, Subhuti, if a good man or good woman is belittled or ridiculed when upholding or reciting this sutra, it is due to their karmic retribution from past lives, which would have resulted in the lower realms. By being ridiculed in this lifetime, their karmic retribution will be eliminated...”*

This is the law of cause and effect. When there is a cause, there is an effect. Without a cause, there will be no effect. Karmic retribution is not without a cause.

Sakyamuni Buddha said that if a good man or good woman is belittled or ridiculed when reading or reciting this sutra, it means that they have karmic retributions, which would have resulted in rebirth in the lower realms. But by being ridiculed while chanting the sutra in this lifetime, one’s karmic retributions from past lives are eliminated. This is the benefit of reciting the *Vajra Sutra*—to purify karma, as stated in the title of this chapter, *The Ability to Purify Karma*. The *Vajra Sutra* is emptiness, so karmic transgressions amid emptiness will dissipate completely.

In Tantric Buddhism, there is the Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Mantra, which we always chant three times [at the end of our dharma practice]. It can eradicate transgressions by returning them to emptiness. What is the hundred syllable mantra? As I’ve said before, it too is [about] emptiness. Chanting the hundred syllable mantra annihilate all your karmic transgressions and karmic retributions. It is the best mantra for eradicating karma.

After completing a hundred thousand recitations of the hundred syllable mantra, you can use the divine duster [or broom<sup>1</sup> to chant and accomplish the following]:

*“The first sweep clears afflictions.  
The second sweep purges misfortunes.  
The third sweep eradicates karma.  
The yidam and blessings will manifest immediately.*

---

<sup>1</sup> There is also a special broom made for this purpose. It is available through Tbboyeh Foundation.

*Om bie-zha sah-do hum.*  
*Om bie-zha sah-do hum.*  
*Om bie-zha sah-do hum.”*

*Om bie-zha sah-do hum* is the shortest version of the hundred syllable mantra, also known as the Vajrasattva Mantra. You will eradicate your own karma by reciting it a hundred thousand times. The stream of emptiness will completely empty you and your karma. The *Vajra Sutra* has the same power.

*“...and they will attain anuttara samyaksambodhi.”*

You will attain anuttara samyaksambodhi once karma has been eradicated. It is crucial to eliminate our own karma first. This is extremely important!

From my own experience, this complies with *Lamdre*, which I have expounded before. According to *Lamdre*, through inner tantric practices, we open our five cakras (the brow, throat, heart, navel, and sacral cakras) by fusing our lightdrops and inner fire together. The opening of cakras has a specific meaning. As a cakra is opened, one ascends two grounds of bodhisattvahood. When one opens the five cakras, one reaches the tenth ground of bodhisattvahood. By opening the crown cakra, one reaches the twelfth ground, and when the *usnisa*<sup>1</sup> is opened, one reaches the twelfth-and-a-half ground. When you reach the thirteenth ground, you reach buddhahood, according to the Tantrayana tradition. However, in Mahayana Buddhism, buddhahood starts at the eleventh ground, with only ten grounds of bodhisattvahood.

How does one attain bodhisattvahood and buddhahood by opening the cakras? The key reason is that by opening a cakra, you purify that part of your body, reaching a certain level of purity [meaning a percentage of karma has been eradicated]. This is what it means!

You start from the first ground of bodhisattvahood—the Ground of Joy—and continue all the way to the tenth ground—the Ground of the Dharma Clouds. Your purity level indicates the ground of your bodhisattvahood. The first ground of bodhisattvahood indicates that your purity level is still at its initial stage. Eradicating karma is the same as purification. Thus you eradicate your karma until you are completely pure—this is anuttara samyaksambodhi. This is Dao. You then become one with Dao.

*“...would have resulted in the lower realms.”*

The three lower realms are the worst. Why are ghosts afraid of Grandmaster? They certainly are afraid of me! When they see me coming, they scurry away while making noises. When I enter a haunted house, the ghosts also scamper and make a series of noises. [At my home] you can hear the noises, whether they hide in fridges, walls, cabinets, closets, washrooms, sinks, bonsais, kitchens, etc. A crowd of ghosts comes to my house every night; they are allowed in after being checked [for some sort of netherworld proof or registration]. They all come for the Bardo

---

<sup>1</sup> Protuberance of the apex of the crown, a mark of perfection of a buddha.

Deliverance of the Thousand Dharma Vessels, which I perform every night. The vessels are always filled to their full capacity.

Shimu saw the ghosts too, and so did Teresa Wei from California. Shimu saw them having a party, and some wore ancient clothes. When they saw Shimu, they scurried into the cabinet—the cabinet door opened, all the ghosts ran inside, and as the door was closing, a hat was caught in the door, and a hand extended out to grab the hat. All these things really happened, as I have experimented [to ensure that they were sounds made by ghosts]. Since they often startled me with their sudden noises, I asked them not to be so noisy—especially late at night. Now they let me greet them first, and sure enough, it's quiet now. I told them there was no need to be afraid. This has been happening for the past two years. I greet the ghosts as well as the buddhas and bodhisattvas. I treat every being equally.

This is all cause and effect. The lower realms refer to the three lowest realms of hell, hungry ghost, and animal. They are the worst! The human realm is half good and half bad but still full of suffering. Any karma generated from previous lifetimes can be eradicated by chanting the *Vajra Sutra*. Upon doing so, you will attain anuttara samyaksambodhi. Having explained it this way, you can now clearly understand, right?

Om mani padme hum.

**Emptiness is all-encompassing.  
It can embrace  
and give rise to all things in the universe.  
Everything comes from emptiness,  
and eventually, everything returns to emptiness.**

## Discourse 55

January 30, 2022

In his discourses, Sakyamuni Buddha often called out the name of the disciple asking the questions—in this case, “Subhuti!” The Buddha said,

*“Subhuti, I recall during the countless asamkya kalpas, I made offerings and served without fail 84,000 million nayuta buddhas in front of Dipamkara Buddha.”*

Dipamkara Buddha (the Buddha Who Ignites the Light) is also called the Fixed Light Buddha. Trillions of nayuta buddhas—wow, such a great number of buddhas! Sakyamuni Buddha made offerings to all of them without missing a single buddha, serving each one.

*“In comparison, if there is a person in the dharma-ending era who can uphold and recite this sutra, his merit will exceed my merit from offering to all the buddhas by more than a hundred times, a trillion times, or beyond any calculation and comparison.”*

Sakyamuni Buddha compared the merit of a person who upholds and recites the *Vajra Sutra* as being exceedingly greater than the merit of offerings to countless buddhas.

As I have stressed before, the key is upholding—as this generates merit beyond any calculation. In contrast, Sakyamuni Buddha’s merit generated through continual offerings and serving countless buddhas is still calculable, whereas the merit derived from “upholding” the *Vajra Sutra* is incalculable.

Like Sakyamuni Buddha, Grandmaster Lu also uses comparisons and analogies to explain. However, let me first tell you something few people have ever emphasized: do not compare! Avoid comparing at all costs!

Grandmaster Lu states: never compare! Why not? Because the act of comparing is the source of all afflictions. When comparing, “self” exists. If the self has disappeared, who is comparing? If there is no self, then what are you comparing? You compare because you still have a self.

Although Sakyamuni Buddha talked about comparison in this chapter, I am telling you not to compare! Never compare! How can you compare? Comparing is the source of all afflictions.

Suppose you saw a beautiful woman when you were out today, and then you saw how your wife looked when you got home. You started smashing things around the house—except the valuable antiques perhaps. Why? Because by comparing a pretty woman to your mediocre wife, you became upset, “How come this is my wife and not those beautiful women?!”

You should never compare! Affliction comes from comparison. Behind the Seattle Leizang Temple is the Microsoft Corporation, which keeps getting bigger and bigger, buying all the land around it. The temple is down the hill, while Microsoft is up the hill. Long ago, before the Seattle temple was built, I passed by the plot of land now occupied by Microsoft and told the people in the car, “Whoever buys this piece of land will become the richest person in the world. This land has superior geomancy; it’s the kind of land that belongs to the richest person in the world.”

How can you ever compare to Bill Gates? How can you compare?! For him, charitable donations are in the billions of dollars. To tackle extreme poverty in Africa, he donated millions of dollars so they could raise chickens in Africa—chickens are also exported from Africa. He is very generous in his giving; each donation is in the millions or billions. As for the Sheng-Yen Lu Foundation—well, I’m not exactly sure how much we have donated, but it’s probably a few million dollars. How can we compare! If we were to compare, we would feel terribly upset.

If we were to compare True Buddha School to Tzu Chi Foundation, we would not even be worth the last digit<sup>1</sup> of what they have, let alone when compared with all their money. What about Fo Guang Shan? Our temples are so tiny compared to their colossal temples around the world. Fo Guang Shan even built temples in South Africa. Look at the Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Dashu District, between Pingtung and Kaohsiung, Taiwan. It’s so huge that it covers the whole mountain! There’s no way we can compare! As soon as you compare, you give rise to afflictions.

Chung Tai Shan Monastery has a lot of valuable antiques. We can’t compare to even one of their antiques. If you go to the Dharma Drum Mountain, you will see a gigantic bell that dignitaries—including the president and vice president—strike together on New Year’s Eve. We don’t have such big bells; all we have is this vajra bell. [Chuckling, Grandmaster picks up a vajra bell and rings it.] Their bell is so huge that it requires multiple people to ring it. There is no way for us to compare to Dharma Drum Mountain, Tzu Chi Foundation, Chung Tai Shan, or Fo Guang Shan.

Again, I would like to emphasize never to compare. Comparison is the source of all afflictions! The *Vajra Sutra* is all about the meaning of emptiness: the bell is empty, the temple is empty, the money is empty, the antiques are empty. If you apply [the notion of] emptiness to embrace everything, then everything is included—emptiness encompasses everything.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the last digit of 123 trillion is three, so in this example it would be 3 trillion.

Upholding the *Vajra Sutra* is far superior to serving and making offerings to infinite buddhas. Since the *Vajra Sutra* is all about emptiness, if you uphold the *Vajra Sutra*, you are also emptiness. Emptiness embraces all things, and it also gives rise to all things in the universe.

You must understand the meaning of the comparison Sakyamuni Buddha gave: the merit of offering and serving infinite buddhas is far less than the merit of upholding and reciting the *Vajra Sutra*. Why? Because the *Vajra Sutra* is emptiness.

If you comprehend the *Vajra Sutra*, emptiness can generate innumerable dharmas, meaning you can manifest anything. Everything originates from emptiness. Earth, water, fire, and wind all originate from emptiness. We know that the five elements are earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Space is emptiness. Although emptiness is the last one on the list, it can encompass earth, water, fire, and wind. Emptiness encompasses everything.

Sakyamuni Buddha uses comparisons so people can understand. Grandmaster, too, uses comparisons for clarification. However, let me stress that comparing is the root of all afflictions. Whatever you encounter, don't compare! For instance, you drive an expensive brand car, such as Maserati, an Italian-made sports car. When you encounter a Lamborghini or a Ferrari, both fancier and pricier than a Maserati, you feel unhappy and inferior. But you feel superior when you come across Japanese cars made by Honda, Infinity, Suzuki, or Subaru. When someone compliments, "Nice car!" you feel great! But when a Lamborghini zooms by, you feel unworthy. This is a small comparison, but whenever you compare, afflictions are there.

Let me reiterate, do not compare! The *Vajra Sutra* speaks of the non-phenomena of self—having no self, who is there to compare? It states the non-phenomena of others—no self and no others, so who is comparing with whom? When there is no phenomena of sentient beings, again, who compares with whom? Lastly, it mentions the non-phenomena of lifespan—there is no time dimension and no such thing as comparing and comparison.

I often use the Moon as an analogy. There is nothing there—thus, it is non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. Who compares with whom there? What is good? What is bad? What is buddhadharma? What is meat? What are vegetables? It doesn't matter there. There is only emptiness. You feel at peace and ease when you don't compare yourself with others.

Accept and uphold and read and recite the *Vajra Sutra*. Understand its meaning and recognize emptiness. Once you gain a deeper understanding of emptiness, you are enlightened. If you can actualize this emptiness, then you have become a sage. This is the greatest, indeed!

You will have no more afflictions, attachments, habitual tendencies, or even merits. What will you be attached to? There will be no more attachments. In particular, little things like moods or emotions will also be gone. Mood swings arise because you make comparisons, yet once you stop comparing, they will not arise.

Furthermore, since you have no self, your habitual tendencies will also disappear, becoming non-existent. What habitual tendencies are there? This is the way to eliminate them! When immersed in emptiness, you embrace all dharmas [everything and anything]. This is the essential meaning of the *Vajra Sutra*.

Om mani padme hum.

**The law of cause and effect (karma)  
is inconceivable.  
It can never be ignored.**

## Discourse 56

February 5, 2022

Now let's discuss the last passage of chapter sixteen—*The Ability to Purify Karma*.

*“Subhuti, there may be someone—upon hearing my statement on the merit of a good man or good woman who upholds and recites this sutra in the dharma-ending era—who would become utterly confused, skeptical, and in disbelief.*

*“Subhuti, know that the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, and karmic retribution is also inconceivable.”*

Sakyamuni Buddha says that the *Vajra Sutra*—the king of all sutras—is difficult to understand because its quintessence is extremely profound. Therefore, it is hard for people to believe it. Even if they do believe, they may still have some skepticism.

The most important statement the Buddha makes is that the meaning of this sutra—the principle conveyed in this sutra—is inconceivable. The law of cause and effect (karma) and karmic retribution are also inconceivable.

What is the essential meaning of the sutra? It includes the ability to purify karma by upholding and reciting the sutra. The key is upholding, which means accepting, cultivating, and putting it into practice. To recite includes reading and chanting, in addition to upholding—which I have emphasized as crucial. How can one clear karma by upholding the sutra? Many people know that the *Vajra Sutra* can purify karma, but they can't explain its profundity.

This principle is very profound. Let me explain. Karma can be purified through the wisdom of marvelous observation of Amitabha Buddha. Among the five wisdoms, Amitabha Buddha embodies the wisdom of marvelous observation. We have all heard of it, but what does it really mean? What is being observed? This wisdom is to observe yourself, your actions, and most importantly, your thoughts! Upon understanding the essential meaning of the sutra, you apply the wisdom of marvelous observation to observe, reflect, and most importantly, correct your thoughts. This is upholding!



Observing thoughts is key; nevertheless, Sakyamuni Buddha does not say it explicitly. Many thoughts cross your mind throughout the day, but typically you don't pay attention to them. Instead, you observe and pay attention to others' actions. You have incessant thoughts running through your mind, but have you ever paused and pondered what you are thinking about? These are two separate things: thinking, and being aware of what you are thinking about. Since you never observe your own thoughts, you are unaware of the many erroneous thoughts you have generated.

You may encounter an unpleasant situation, like when you are bullied or criticized. Feeling wronged, you retaliate with thoughts of revenge—a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye. Most people react this way, but this is wrong.

When it comes to the act of killing, you might think it is acceptable to kill tiny insects, cockroaches, mosquitos, flies, lizards, mice, and the like. You think it's no big deal, so you kill them without a second thought. You know they are living beings, but you justify the killing by telling yourself they deserve to be killed. This is incorrect thinking!

As Buddhists, we must chant the deliverance mantra for any beings that we kill. Take a poisonous snake, for example. If we must kill, we should do so while chanting the deliverance mantra. It is best never to harbor any thoughts of killing. Not even for a fleeting moment! You should never think, "That person is awful to me. I hope he gets hit by a car!" Such a thought appears and disappears very quickly, so you're unaware of it—especially if you don't observe your own thoughts. Such an ill-intentioned thought should never occur in your mind.

If someone steals your money, you curse the thief. When you find money on the ground and nobody is around, you take it as your own. You might be tempted to take a nice pot from someone else's kitchen when nobody notices. You think all these are small matters, so it's okay. But it's not, as this is a thought of stealing! Such thoughts—despite being common—are wrong.

When a man sees an attractive woman, she stays on his mind. As he constantly thinks of her, his thoughts may transform into something else. Likewise, when a woman sees a wealthy, tall, and handsome man, he'll be imprinted on her mind, and subsequent imaginations and fantasies appear. These sorts of thoughts are also wrong. Have you ever observed your own thoughts? You'll find that many of your thoughts are improper.

The *Vajra Sutra* states that it can purify your karma. How? By observing your own thoughts to stop negative thoughts and encourage positive thoughts. Only in this way can you purify karma. The key is to observe the thoughts because thoughts eventually become actions!

Spiritual cultivation generally implies correcting one's conduct; however, it is important to also purify one's thoughts. You purify your karma by observing both your actions and thoughts. This is the key point!

You may not understand the deeper meaning of its ability to purify karma by simply reading the *Vajra Sutra*. Hence, let me reiterate: to purify karma, one applies the wisdom of observation to

observe one's own thoughts and actions and correct them accordingly. One then decreases negative thoughts and increases positive thoughts.

Reading and chanting the *Vajra Sutra* alone does not equate to upholding [putting it into practice]. You must also observe yourself. Now you know how to purify your karma. Does my explanation make sense? Nobody else explains this chapter as clearly as this.

Everything follows the law of cause and effect. One reaps what one sows. If you create a bad cause, it will result in a bad retribution.

One might have an absurd thought such as this, *"Since the Vajra Sutra talks about emptiness, everything is hence emptiness. Therefore, I don't have to concern myself whether I do good or bad deeds. Good is empty; bad is empty. So I'm free to kill, steal, commit sexual misconduct, and perform all sorts of misdeeds. I can disregard the law of cause and effect. [I can do anything because cause and effect are empty.] The law of cause and effect only applies to mundane beings; it doesn't apply to me because I have this understanding and therefore am a sage. I understand the intrinsic emptiness spoken in the Vajra Sutra. So killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct...these are all emptiness. I can do them all."* How ridiculous!!! You've misconstrued the meaning of the *Vajra Sutra* and become *utterly confused!*

Hence, the law of cause and effect can never be dismissed. There is no exception! You cannot ignore karma. Sakyamuni Buddha states it very clearly,

*"...the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, and karmic retribution is also inconceivable."*

Karma does exist, and it is inconceivable! Otherwise, why must we purify karma if everything is about emptiness? It is wrong to think that karma is empty because everything is empty. It is wrong to think that one can do whatever one desires without suffering its retribution! As mentioned in this chapter, one can become utterly confused by this wrong mindset. One cannot defy the law of cause and effect!!

Sakyamuni Buddha states that *the meaning of this sutra is inconceivable, and karmic retribution is also inconceivable*. Therefore, we must never think that karma does not exist. It is wrong to say there is no cause and effect just because the king of all sutras—the *Vajra Sutra*—emphasizes the non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. Otherwise, why would the Buddha state that *karmic retribution is also inconceivable*? Being inconceivable, this phrase implies that karma—the law of cause and effect—indeed exists. The Buddha states that karma does exist.

This sutra is inconceivable and it can purify karma. How does one purify karma? Primarily by upholding [the *Vajra Sutra*], in addition to reciting it. The key to upholding the sutra is to observe your own actions and thoughts, eliminate negativities, and enhance the positive and right ones. This is the correct way to purify karma. If I don't explain it, you won't know.

I am teaching you to observe your own actions and thoughts instead of observing other people's actions and speech. Remember, spiritual cultivation is to cultivate yourself. Once enlightened, you

can enlighten others—[such as] teaching others how to purify karma. Today, I am teaching you methods to purify your karma.

Om mani padme hum.

## 17 Ultimate No-Self

At that time, Subhuti asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, when good men and good women give rise to the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi, how should they dwell in their minds, and how should they master their minds?”

The Buddha replied, “When good men and good women give rise to the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi, they should generate the mind to deliver all sentient beings; yet upon deliverance, not a single sentient being has actually been delivered. Why?”

“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva holds the phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan, he is not a bodhisattva. Therefore, Subhuti, there really is no one generating anuttara samyaksambodhi.

“Subhuti, what do you think? Did the Tathagata attain the dharma of anuttara samyaksambodhi at Dipamkara Buddha’s place?”

Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One, as I understand it from the true meaning of the Buddha’s teaching, the Buddha did not attain the dharma of anuttara samyaksambodhi at Dipamkara Buddha’s place.”

The Buddha said, “Just so, Subhuti! There is no such thing as a tathagata attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi. Subhuti, if there is such a thing as the Tathagata attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi, then Dipamkara Buddha would not have prophesied: ‘In your future life, you will be a buddha named Sakyamuni.’

“There is no such thing as attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi; hence Dipamkara Buddha endowed me with this prophecy: ‘In your future life, you will be a buddha named Sakyamuni.’ Why? A tathagata—The One Seemingly Coming—upholds this same notion for everything.

“Someone may say, ‘The Tathagata attained anuttara samyaksambodhi.’ Subhuti, there really is no such thing as the Tathagata attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi.

“Subhuti, the anuttara samyaksambodhi attained by the Tathagata is neither real nor unreal. Therefore, the Tathagata says: ‘Everything is buddhadharma!’ Subhuti, the so-called all-dharma is not all-dharma; it is merely called all-dharma.

“Subhuti, take the example of a tall and big human body.”

Subhuti said, “World-Honored One, the Tathagata says, ‘A tall and big body is not a big body; it is merely called a big body.’”

“Subhuti, likewise if a bodhisattva says, ‘I will deliver innumerable sentient beings,’ then he is not a bodhisattva. Why? Subhuti, there is no such thing called a bodhisattva. Therefore, the Buddha says: ‘Everything has no phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan.’

“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva says, ‘I adorn the buddhaverse,’ then he is not a bodhisattva. Why? The Tathagata says adorning is not adorning; it is merely called adorning.

“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva truly comprehends the notion of no-self, then according to the Tathagata, he is a true bodhisattva.”

Learn the spirit of the Buddha.

Learn the spirit of Jesus.

Learn the spirit of Saint Teresa.

This is how you learn to relinquish “self.”

## Discourse 57

February 6, 2022

The title of chapter seventeen is *Ultimate No-Self*. How do we explain the meaning of this title? Please raise your hand if you can explain it. What do we have here? [Grandmaster picks up a Chinese gourd pendant.] This calabash gourd is very beautiful. The saying goes that from a calabash, we can obtain gold, silver, and all sorts of riches. It will be yours if you can explain this title to Grandmaster’s satisfaction. It’s not about right or wrong, but your answer must correspond to what Grandmaster has in mind. Who will raise their hand? How do you explain the title, *Ultimate No-Self*?

[A few people answer.] There is nothing wrong with your statements, but they don’t necessarily explain this title. To achieve the ultimate attainment, one must be without self. *Ultimate No-Self* means that to reach the ultimate attainment, one must have no-self. That’s it! I will keep this gift.

We know that the ultimate attainment is the highest realm, and it includes the four sagely realms—buddhahood, bodhisattvahood, pratyekabuddhahood, and sravakahood. A sage has everlasting life and eternal existence. Once we reach the ultimate attainment, we are liberated from the rebirth cycle. We are no longer bound to endless transmigration in the six samsaric realms—heaven, asura, human, animal, hungry ghost, or hell.

When Sakyamuni Buddha was a prince, he was not aware of the sufferings in the world. Once, he traveled to the four gates and saw birth, aging, sickness, and death. He was taken aback by the fact that human beings cannot escape from the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. From birth to death, life is full of suffering. Upon discovering this fact, he then decided to pursue the path of spiritual cultivation to gain enlightenment so he would not have to return to the human realm again.

In the *Vajra Sutra*, Sakyamuni Buddha states that one must have no self to reach the ultimate attainment. This is the title of chapter seventeen, our topic today.

Let's first discuss "no-self." It is extremely difficult for anyone in this world to annihilate the self since human beings have habitual tendencies. Every person is born with habitual tendencies [and is bound by karma from past lives]. Some are bad-tempered, some have flawed thinking, and some are tainted by society. Society itself is a melting pot; some people get involved in fraud or become hooligans, robbers, thieves, etc. Sexual misconduct, which many people commit, is also a habitual tendency. Most people have improper thoughts and incorrect mindsets!

So, what is "no-self"? It is quite difficult to talk about "no-self," and I realize that it is even more difficult for a human being to learn to be without "self."

I have mentioned Mother Teresa, who has shown the phenomena of no-self. To her, nothing was related to the self. She regarded every person as God, someone to serve. Can anyone do the same? Nobody can. This was why she was honored by the Catholic Church as Saint Teresa [of Calcutta]. She lived in India and founded a charitable organization with the golden saying, "To serve everyone as God."

Let me ask everyone, can you do the same? Can you treat every single person as God? It is highly unlikely. This is because love and hate are part of human nature. Love and hate include the sentiments of likes and dislikes. There will always be someone you like and someone you don't. In a group setting, there will inevitably be people you favor and those you don't. It's evident in the workplace when a boss prefers one employee over another.

On the contrary, Mother Teresa had no self and treated everyone as God. Likewise, to be a sage, you must treat everyone as a buddha! We should learn this spirit from her. "I treat everyone as a buddha." Can you do that? Can you be respectful and pay homage to every being as you would to the buddhas? We respect the buddhas and pay homage to their images, which represent the embodiment of the buddhas. If you can, this is a prime example of "no-self."

Saint Teresa also said that even if she could, she would prefer not to go to heaven. Instead, she wished to remain in the most desolate places, serving sentient beings in need. There was a story of how she treated a leper whose skin was rotting and oozing pus; she was able to disregard the foulness and used her tongue to alleviate the itching and swelling. This is clearly the spirit of no-self.

Have you ever heard of anyone else caring for people the way she did? She preferred not to go to heaven despite being well qualified for it. Instead, she wished to stay in forsaken places to serve the sick and needy forever. This is an excellent example of one without self.

Let me ask you one more thing. Can you love your enemies? Can you love someone who abuses or hates you? Can you generate love for that kind of person? It seems impossible! What about someone dreadful who often insults, bullies, and scolds you? Are you expected to love this person?! [Not in a million years!] You hate this person so much that your teeth are itching to bite a piece off of him. He should consider himself lucky that you have not bitten him. You can barely hold yourself back. How can you possibly love him?

Who was it that said, “Love your enemies?” Jesus did. This teaching is not only found in Buddhism but also in Christianity. Jesus Christ says that you should love your enemies. This is “no-self”!

Frankly speaking, I also disliked someone. The way he walked was disagreeable, as he would sway excessively. I found him quite irritating, but I immediately corrected my thoughts. I reminded myself to avoid finding his faults or passing judgment, labeling him as wrong, bad, or wicked. I stopped myself from thinking negatively—to not think about his bad sides. I reminded myself to think of his good attributes and be more empathetic and respectful. I constantly observe myself and correct my thoughts. This is called spiritual cultivation.

It is wrong to give rise to a thought such as: “This person makes me feel very uneasy, [he is my adversary].” Such a mindset is incorrect. You should remind yourself of that. My guru, Jesus, says that we should love our enemies, and Saint Teresa showed that one should treat everyone as God. I regularly adjust my way of thinking by keeping these two in mind. I treat everyone as God, as a buddha. Even if they are loathsome and vile, you must forgive and treat them even better.

Throughout your spiritual cultivation, have you ever encountered someone who seemed downright offensive? Anyone? Yes, you have. I thought this way about the Ghost Witch. I wrote five books—and various articles in other books—out of indignant righteousness. I thoroughly rebuked her [to guide her back to the right track and to show others what the wrong path is]. In retrospect, I really shouldn’t have done so, even after she did what she did: worshipping ghosts, employing ghosts, and affecting people with ghostly energy—leading them to become ghostly pale, mentally ill, or even commit suicide.

Reflecting on it now, I say that her actions are due to her causes and conditions. Everything that happens has corresponding causes and conditions. If you end up following Ghost Witch, you do so at your own will, which is also your own causes and conditions—your own affinities. This is how I think now. You see what happens and think she’s very wrong, but who knows? Perhaps she’ll turn around and steer the people she has harmed back onto the right path in the distant future. It’s possible that the people following her also have an affinity with ghosts, so you can’t force anything on them. Looking back, writing those five books wasted a lot of my time. Why did I bother?

In any case, you should not despise her, even though she’s a ghost witch who worships and employs ghosts. After all, it is nobody’s business. You might argue, “But she was a disciple of the True Buddha School and created havoc by spreading ghostly influence all over the school.” Well, disciples with affinity with you [Grandmaster] will follow you, and those with affinity with her will follow her. Why should this concern you? They would not have strayed if they had an unwavering [correct] spiritual commitment.

I know full well that she has her own causes and conditions. She also has the right to survive within her means. In hindsight, I could have helped those ghosts as well—despite being odiously evil, they could have been the recipients of my bardo deliverance. This is my mindset now.



It is all irrelevant to you. Even if she's rebuilding her ghost empire, it's not your concern. You should still respect her and regard her as a buddha. [Grandmaster uses "you" to point to himself here.] So why should it concern you? Why should it concern the True Buddha School? Even True Buddha School will not be yours in the future. How is anything related to you? All you need to do is focus on your spiritual cultivation and continue improving. You must show respect to her and the ghosts. That is the correct approach.

Look at Saint Teresa—she regarded everyone as God. I too, should regard Ghost Witch as God, as a buddha. In guiding those who strayed back onto the right path, I should have been more empathetic, and let them be when they did not heed my guidance. I should regard everyone—including her followers—as God. Only this is called "no-self." Now do you understand my explanation?

Only with this mindset can you truly reach the ultimate attainment. Any hatred and animosity toward anyone will prevent you from reaching the ultimate attainment. Even a hint of anger indicates that you have not fully emptied yourself. This is my mindset, and I am applying it accordingly.

Grandmaster was born with a hot temper, a trait both my father and grandfather possessed. Curiously enough, my father never accepted that I was his son. I still respected him nonetheless because I wouldn't have grown up without him. At first, I was raised by my maternal grandmother. When she passed away, I was cared for by my aunt—my mother's younger sister. Later when she got married, I was sent back home. Even though my father abused me, I wouldn't have grown up without him. Thus I offered him my respect and gratitude. I could not disown my father simply because he treated me terribly. He was still my father! I still respected him and performed bardo deliverance for him upon his death. This is how it is.

In sum, embody the spirit of the Buddha. Learn the spirit of Jesus. Take inspiration from the spirit of Saint Teresa. Always keep this in mind: if feelings of anger, grudges, or resentment still linger in your heart, you need to discard them right away. Don't lose your temper because that is a bad habitual tendency that some of you might be born with. I, too, used to be prone to anger, and I lost my temper easily back then. Now however, I am learning from the sages, understanding the phenomena of no-self.

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

The generation of bodhicitta  
should be devoid of mind  
and non-dwelling.  
This is very deep and profound.

## Discourse 58

February 13, 2022

This is the beginning of chapter seventeen—*Ultimate No-Self*.

*At that time...*

Let me first discuss “*at that time*.” It refers to a moment during the transmission of this sutra. What exactly happened *at that time*? Were any of you here present at this dharma teaching on prajna? Dig into the memories of your past life. Were any of you present back then? [Some in the audience answer, “Yes.”] If so, can you tell me what happened *at that time*?

At that time, something significant happened right before the Buddha spoke on this chapter, *Ultimate No-Self*. If you can say it, this jade gourd is yours. [Grandmaster blows his breath on it to bless it.] Those present would know what happened then, and those who were not would naturally not know. Everyone is so quiet here. What about those who raised their hands earlier? Does no one want this gourd? It’s a splendid charm, yet no one has taken it despite being offered a few times. This is a nice treasure to have. If you can recount it, it means you were present at the dharma ceremony at the Vulture Peak—and the gourd is yours.

Typically, no one talks about the significance of the phrase *at that time*. Can anyone describe what happened at Vulture Peak (Gadhrakuta) when the Buddha was teaching about the great wisdom encapsulated in the *Maha Prajnaparamita Sutra* and the *Vajra Sutra* right before he talked about the *Ultimate No-Self*? No one has ever shared this before.

What exactly happened at that time? Let me share it with you. During the dharma ceremony, before the Buddha expounded on the *Ultimate No-Self*, the Dragon Princess<sup>1</sup> offered her precious jewel of light and dedicated it to Sakyamuni Buddha. This is of great significance because at that time, Sakyamuni Buddha said to the Dragon Princess, “I bestow upon you the prophecy that you will attain buddhahood.” In that instant, she became a buddha. That was what happened “*at that time*.” We have heard of the story of the Dragon Princess attaining

---

<sup>1</sup> The daughter of the Dragon King

buddhahood—it occurred when she offered her precious jewel to Sakyamuni Buddha. But it was not mentioned exactly when it happened. It happened prior to the Buddha teaching on the *Ultimate No-Self*.

*At that time, Subhuti asked the Buddha, “World-Honored One, when good men and good women give rise to the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi, how should they dwell in their minds, and how should they master their minds?”*

How should you dwell? The answer is you do not dwell! There is no dwelling! How should you master your mind? By having no mind. Now onto the next question, why is it “non-dwelling” and “no-mind”? Non-dwelling and no-mind are the states of bodhicitta; the generation of bodhicitta should be non-dwelling and in the state of no-mind. This passage is very deep and profound.

The Buddha has spoken on the non-phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. If there is no self, who dwells? If there is no self, how can you have a mind? What mind do you need to subdue? Is there the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi? No, there is not. In my merit dedication during the homa ceremony earlier, I said, “Pure! Be pure! May everything be pure!” What kind of realm is that? It is the realm of emptiness. What is the purest? Emptiness is the purest. When there is non-action, there is non-dwelling. What about no-mind? When there is no-self, there is no-mind. That is considered absolute purity—where everything is completely pure.

I often use this analogy. Is there a mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi on the Moon? No. On the Moon, do you act out of any cause? No. On the Moon, do you still need to subdue any mind? No. Just like on the Moon where everything is pure, how can a mind exist there? Impurities exist due to human beings and sentient beings. Without the phenomena of sentient beings, where would such impurities originate? Because there is a self, self-interest exists. If there is no self, then naturally there will be no self-interest. Sakyamuni Buddha emphasizes this point—one becomes a bodhisattva only when one has no self.

Self-interest causes countries to be at war, families to quarrel, and relationships to suffer. Conflicts are everywhere. If self-interest exists, problems arise. “I don’t like you, and you don’t like me.” They don’t get along and are bothered by each other. Whether as large as a country or as small as an individual, selfishness indicates the presence of “mind” and “dwelling.” Without mind and dwelling, everything will be empty; this is absolute purity!

Buddhism is a religion with no contention. Do you understand “no-contention”? It means conflicts never arise. Why do heated disputes continue to occur today between religious groups, even within Buddhism? It’s because they are human and still possess the phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. Sakyamuni Buddha explains it very clearly in this chapter on *Ultimate No-Self*. Only emptiness is pure.

We must empty ourselves of self-interest and cultivate until we are like a true bodhisattva. We should at least get closer and closer to it. That’s why I often remind you to watch over your thoughts. Correct your thinking and transform your negative thoughts!

There is a person who I sometimes find disagreeable. She walks strangely and talks pretentiously. Her eyes are not quite right, and her nose is crooked. I am not very fond of seeing her. However, I know this kind of thinking is wrong, as this means that I have developed a kind of dislike, uneasiness, or animosity toward this person. I need to think positively. At least she greets me with “Hi, Grandmaster”—right? You must transform your negative thinking. She is harmless to you, so why do you generate animosity?

Always think about the strengths and positive aspects, not the weaknesses and negative traits. Just focus on the good parts and ignore the bad parts. Uphold this mindset and always be mindful of it! Spiritual cultivation is observing your own thoughts and correcting them. It is a gradual process, but always remember to watch over your thoughts and transform all negative thoughts into positive ones.

Never create enemies or harbor any hatred within you—never! As soon as you do, you will be the first to suffer! Not them, because they don’t even know that you hate them. Even when you don’t show your dislike or antipathy, you are in fact tormenting yourself and feeling disturbed inside. So always think positively. When we correct our thoughts, the object of our thoughts becomes good, and everything turns positive.

When you extend positive energy toward everyone, you will receive positive energy in return. This is correcting our thoughts. Observing and correcting our thoughts is part of spiritual cultivation.

We can’t possibly empty ourselves instantly and entirely, as suggested by Sakyamuni Buddha in the *Vajra Sutra*. We still have thoughts. However, if you don’t observe your thoughts, you can become more and more negative without realizing it. Hating someone is essentially hating yourself! “I hate you! I want to kill you! You are dirty! You are garbage!” [Grandmaster does an impression and chuckles.] Why do this to yourself? Then you tie knot after knot in your heart, becoming entangled and miserable. You are only harming yourself! You find that you can’t sleep or eat well, your mental health raises concerns, and you just can’t bring yourself to be happy and well.

Look! Grandmaster is always happy, every single day! I have always corrected my thoughts. I am kind and good to everyone and perceive everyone to be good as well. I like everyone—every single being. Don’t I always say, “I love you” [in numerous languages, including special sign language]?

No matter what happens, I don’t harbor any negative emotions. In fact, nowadays I even think that Ghost Witch has her positive sides. I corrected my thoughts about her. Previously at the beginning of each year, I said “do re mi” to her [a mocking gesture done by children in Taiwan]. What did I mock her for? She kept saying that I would die at seventy-three for more than ten years. Yet I am very much alive to this day! According to the Taiwanese calendar, I am already seventy-eight this year, and by the Gregorian calendar, I am nearing seventy-seven. I used to mock her, but now I don’t. Not anymore. After all, she prompted me to be very cautious during

my seventy-third year! [Grandmaster says it in a joking tone, and the audience laughs] I was careful when climbing stairs or taking a shower—not using any soap on the soles of my feet, afraid that it might cause me to slip and fall. I was so careful that I would lean against the wall while putting on underwear. Can you see the positive impact she had on me? I was very careful with every move. I survived and was thankful to her. Really, she also brought some benefits.

By altering my mindset, I no longer view her as an enemy, and I hold no animosity toward her. It has been completely emptied, and thus, everything becomes perfect. There is no room left for enmity. Why would you harbor hatred toward anyone? You are the first to suffer! Reflect upon yourself, on how miserable you become when you have animosity in your heart. Let your heart be wide open and empty your mind, and everything and everybody will be just fine. Such is the state of “no-mind.” And it brings joy, happiness, peace, and ease.

Om mani padme hum.

**Only when dharma is nonexistent is it the ultimate real dharma!**

**This is the realm of the ultimate.**

**If dharma still exists, then it is not the ultimate.**

**In the highest realm, there is no such thing as dharma.**

**Nonexistent dharma is true dharma.**

## **Discourse 59**

February 19, 2022

I will continue with chapter seventeen—*The Ultimate No-Self*.

*“When good men and good women give rise to the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi, they should generate the mind to deliver all sentient beings; yet upon deliverance, not a single sentient being has actually been delivered. Why?”*

*“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva holds the phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan, he is not a bodhisattva.”*

I will discuss this part first, as this chapter is quite lengthy, and this passage is very difficult to explain. The Buddha teaches us to generate the mind of anuttara samyaksambodhi and deliver sentient beings to become a bodhisattva. Yet here, the Buddha also says that even after you deliver them, not a single being has actually been delivered. What is happening then? It is very difficult to explain. Ponder the following phrase:

*“Subhuti, if a bodhisattva holds the phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan, he is not a bodhisattva.”*

A bodhisattva does not hold the notion of self. This means they generate bodhicitta and strive to deliver sentient beings without being attached to it. They just do it! Whether the sentient beings have been liberated or not is irrelevant. They do not keep it in mind. Neither do they contemplate the merit of their actions. If they do, they still hold onto a “self.” If they are still concerned about delivering sentient beings or how many they have delivered, they still hold onto the notion of sentient beings.

Therefore, a bodhisattva simply acts! They generate the mind to help sentient beings and act without concern for the result, its merit, how many beings are involved, whether they have been delivered or not, and so on. This is my simple explanation of it.

If you still hold any notion of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan, then you are not a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas do not keep any of these in mind. What is a bodhisattva? They just do [whatever they are supposed to do], but they do not hold onto any phenomena. The Buddha teaches us this principle.

For instance, if we are still concerned about the number of True Buddha School disciples—whether they are five, six, or seven million—then we are still clinging to the phenomena of others. Someone once said, “It’s been five million for a while, so it must be six or seven million by now.” As I’ve said, five million is five hundred times ten thousand, and five hundred means many. How many is “many”? We don’t need to think or talk about it.

When you dwell on it, you still have the phenomena of self. If your thoughts dwell on the sentient beings, their deliverance, or the number of beings—if any—that means you still hold onto the phenomena of others. Sakyamuni Buddha teaches us not to have any phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan. This is what the Buddha means, and some people just can’t understand it.

*“Subhuti, what do you think? Did the Tathagata attain the dharma of anuttara samyaksambodhi at Dipamkara Buddha’s place?”*

*Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One, as I understand it from the true meaning of the Buddha’s teaching, the Buddha did not attain the dharma of anuttara samyaksambodhi at Dipamkara Buddha’s place.”*

The Buddha asked Subhuti if there was any dharma transmission from Dipamkara Buddha to Sakyamuni Buddha. Subhuti replied that no dharma was transmitted. He understood the true meaning of the Buddha’s teaching.

When Sakyamuni visited Dipamkara Buddha—and made an offering of lotus blossoms—what happened was that Dipamkara Buddha gave a prophecy that Sakyamuni would become a buddha in the future. There was no dharma ever transmitted. How could this be? Does anyone know?

Fundamentally, there has never been such a thing as dharma! Since dharma does not exist to begin with, how can there be a dharma transmission? There is no dharma being transmitted! Thus the Buddha did not attain the dharma of anuttara samyaksambodhi at Dipamkara Buddha’s place. This is the ultimate meaning!

There was no dialog involving the “ultimate truth” between Sakyamuni Buddha and Subhuti. If self were to exist, Dipamkara Buddha and Sakyamuni Buddha were to exist, and Dipamkara Buddha transmitted dharma to Sakyamuni Buddha, then [we could say that] dharma existed. However, as a true buddha, Dipamkara Buddha transmitted only emptiness, not dharma! And Sakyamuni Buddha comprehended Dipamkara Buddha’s “emptiness.”

In emptiness, dharma does not exist. There is no dharma amid emptiness. Yet emptiness also encompasses all dharma; it includes everything. Sakyamuni Buddha understood this! He

comprehended that the only thing Dipamkara Buddha transmitted was the [notion of] “emptiness.” By understanding this “emptiness,” he also understood all dharma because emptiness includes everything.

According to Zen Buddhism, everything is a creation of the mind. Everything manifests because of its existence in the mind.

Let me illustrate this with an example. Suppose I, Grandmaster Lu, were to die today without control over my own life and death (without transcendence of life and death). Death would appear to me in the form of the Black and White Impermanence, the Seventh and Eighth Lords in Taiwan. The Seventh Lord is very tall and white [wearing a tall hat bearing the words] “Lucky for You to See Me,” while the Eighth Lord is very short and black. They are associated with the temples of the city gods.

As Taiwanese, these images are imprinted in our minds. These ideas submerge into our subconscious, so when we die, they appear automatically. If you have not transcended life and death, they are the ones who will take you. Would these images appear to someone unfamiliar with the lords of death in the form of the Black and White Impermanence? No, because there are no imprints of the Black and White Impermanence in their mind. Instead, what will appear to, say, a Caucasian, is the Grim Reaper—a manifestation of death cloaked in a robe and carrying a sickle—because that’s the image they hold in their mind. See? Everything is created by the mind.

The hells also come into existence in this way. The Yama Kings of the Ten Halls are all portrayed as Chinese. How come there are no other races? Hells are different for different people. For some, hell is the hell of fire. Buddhism and Taoism depict it as eight hells of extreme heat and eight hells of extreme cold. Those who believe in the Ten Yama Halls will have to pass through these ten halls. If you hold images of hells in your mind, then hells will appear to you.

Thus everything is created by the mind. Sakyamuni Buddha says that if you do not have any mind, how can there be dharma? Dharma exists because it is present in your mind. When there is no mind, there is no dharma. When there is no phenomena of self, others, sentient beings, and lifespan, everything is emptiness. In emptiness, there is no dharma. The only thing that can be transmitted is “emptiness”; yet this emptiness encompasses everything. That’s all I can say to explain it. Do you understand?

Heavens and hells exist and appear based on what they have in their minds. The heavens and hells in Buddhism also differ from those in Taoism. Thus the retribution you receive is based on what you create in your mind. Everything is created by the mind.

*Subhuti replied, “No, World-Honored One, as I understand it from the true meaning of the Buddha’s teaching, the Buddha did not attain the dharma of anuttara samyaksambodhi at Dipamkara Buddha’s place.”*

Only when dharma is nonexistent is it the ultimate real dharma! This is the realm of the ultimate. If dharma still exists, then it is not the ultimate. In the highest realm, there is no such thing as



dharma. Nonexistent dharma is the true dharma. Because whenever there is dharma, limitations still exist. Now does this make sense?

*The Buddha said, “Just so, Subhuti! There is no such thing as a tathagata attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi. Subhuti, if there is such a thing as the Tathagata attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi, then Dipamkara Buddha would not have prophesied: ‘In your future life, you will be a buddha named Sakyamuni.’”*

The transmission is from emptiness to emptiness. Emptiness is the greatest dharma, and the greatest dharma is emptiness. It is emptiness transmitting emptiness. Do you understand this?

*“There is no such thing as attaining anuttara samyaksambodhi...”*

Anuttara samyaksambodhi is merely a name. In fact, anuttara samyaksambodhi is emptiness too. If you can realize “emptiness” and apply “emptiness” to dissolve and annihilate everything, then you have reached [the ultimate] attainment.

In his teachings, the Buddha discusses precepts. However, if there are no human beings, what use are the precepts? The precepts are void and empty. Without a human being, what is meditation? It is emptiness as well. How about wisdom? It is likewise empty. Wisdom and prajna are merely terms; they are all emptiness.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of your spiritual cultivation, you are introduced to the threefold training of precepts, meditation, and wisdom. But once you have gained a “true understanding,” you realize that your inherent nature is emptiness. Upon attainment, you are emptiness, and you are buddhanature. This “understanding” is much too profound to discuss!

Buddhadharma indeed exists. We often hear of the threefold training of precepts, meditation, and wisdom, the four noble truths, the five roots and five powers, the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment, the eightfold noble path, and the six perfections—all of which are buddhadharma! How can one say that buddhadharma does not exist?

What about the *Vajra Sutra*? Does it exist? What are you explaining then? Yes! However, the *Vajra Sutra* states the annihilation of everything! Everything—including all the above buddhadharma and all phenomena—exists amid emptiness.

Dipamkara Buddha transmitted emptiness to Sakyamuni Buddha. What Sakyamuni Buddha attained was emptiness, not dharma! His comprehension of emptiness led Dipamkara Buddha to bestow upon him the prophecy that he would become a buddha named Sakyamuni. It is extremely profound and difficult to explain.

Om mani padme hum.